(IM)POSSIBLE WOMEN: GENDER, SEXUALITY AND THE BRITISH ARMY

Joanne Bower

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ABSTRACT

British Armed Forces personnel policy currently prohibits gay men and lesbians from military service. This thesis, informed by feminist and Foucauldian theory, comprises two discourse analytic studies: the first examines the ways in which gender and homosexuality are constructed in British military policy documents (The Discipline and Standards Paper and the Armed Forces Policy and Guidelines on Homosexuality); the second (an interview study) examines the ways in which 26 lesbians in the British Army construct accounts of gender, sexuality and military service.

The policy documents analysed in Study 1 deploy a particular construction of civilian society (as diverse, individualistic, socially irresponsible and lawless) to re-establish and re-inscribe the moral boundaries around the military institution and to legitimate the military’s divergent regulatory arrangements. The accounts analysed in Study 2 can be read as the reiteration and negotiation of a series of productive contradictions explicating participants’ constructions of their experiences of the military. They construct an account of the military that renders lesbianism both possible (through its abundance) and simultaneously impossible (through its zealous regulation). Being a woman in this context is similarly constituted within contending exhortations for gender-role compliance and occupational competence.

Taken together, these analytic texts (both Studies 1 and 2) are interpreted as representing a power struggle over the discursive domain in relation to the meaning and signification of non-conforming sexualities in the military context. In this respect, to justify and maintain gay and lesbian exclusion, the military policy documents expend considerable discursive resources in rendering homosexualities different and ‘other,’ whereas participants’ discursive investments centre on rendering lesbianism ‘normal’ and thus viable in the military context. Although the exclusionary policy is directed primarily at gay men and lesbians, it also sustains and secures gender subordination in the military environment. Implications for political intervention with respect to the military policy are discussed.
ADDENDUM

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Since the submission of this thesis, the British Government has rescinded the policy prohibiting gay men and lesbians from service in the British Armed Forces. This policy change was enacted on 13 January 2000 and is a response to the European Court of Human Rights ruling against the Ministry of Defence in September 1999. This ruling dictated that the policy barring homosexuals from military service is not legally sustainable as it violates the right to respect for private life. The policy has been replaced by a code of social conduct that applies to all military personnel and that recognises sexual orientation as a private matter.
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This thesis could not have been completed (or initiated) without the courageous contributions of the women who have served and continue to serve 'in silence' in the British Army. The best thanks I can give them is to publish this work and their words. I hope my written rendering of these women's narratives will vindicate the trust they placed in me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: ORIENTING THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

There is one section of the community for whom nothing has changed at all since the pre-1967 days of witch-hunts and secrecy. Lesbians and gay men serving in Britain's armed forces continue to live with the constant fear of blackmail, exposure, loss of career, ruin by informants or spies, the threat of repeated investigation and interrogation, sometimes strip searches and forced physical examinations, even warrantless raids on their homes... Members of the armed forces enjoy none of the modern privileges or rights of their civilian colleagues if they happen to be lesbian or gay (Hall, 1995, p. 2).

British Armed Forces policy states that homosexuality is incompatible with military service and that serving military personnel who admit to being homosexual, or who engage in homosexual activity, will be dismissed. The following policy, which is still in effect, was issued in March 1994:

Homosexuality, whether male or female, is considered incompatible with service in the Armed Forces. This is not only because of the close physical conditions in which personnel often have to live and work, but also because homosexual behaviour can cause offence, polarise relationships, induce ill-discipline, and as a consequence damage morale and unit effectiveness. If individuals admit to being homosexual whilst serving and their commanding officer judges that this admission is well founded they will be required to leave the services (MOD, 1994, p. 1).

If an individual serving in the British Armed Forces is suspected of homosexuality an investigation ensues. This investigation is usually undertaken by the service police and invariably involves a thorough search of the individual’s accommodation, the confiscation of potentially ‘incriminating’ personal effects (e.g., letters, photographs, etc.), and several hours of interrogation. In some cases, individuals are strip-searched and have to endure physical examinations (Hall, 1995). Accordingly, the consequences of admitting to being homosexual or of being discovered to be homosexual during military service are severe and the result is invariably expulsion from the service.

This chapter provides an introduction and background to the thesis, including my motivations in undertaking this research, the origins of the study, the aims of the
research, and the research questions. It concludes with an outline of the thesis and the contributions of the research.

The terms 'homosexual' and 'homosexuality,' although limited, are used throughout the thesis, where applicable, to provide consistency with the British military policy documents. These terms are used in military policy documents to refer to all instances of same-sex attraction and behaviour and no use is made of, nor any distinction drawn between, for example, the terms lesbian, gay or bisexual. The policy states: "for the purposes of this document a homosexual is defined as 'a person who is sexually attracted to a member of the same sex', and homosexuality is defined as 'behaviour characterised by being sexually attracted to a member of the same sex' " (MOD, 1994, p. 1). Following Harris-Jenkins and Dandeker (1994), the terms 'policy' and 'policies' are used to refer to the current aims and objectives of the British military as declared in the official Ministry of Defence (MOD) documentation regarding the employment of personnel, specifically homosexuals.

1.2 Background to the Study

1.2.1 British Military Policy on Homosexuality

The 1967 Sexual Offences Act (SOA) decriminalised male homosexual behaviour conducted in private between consenting adults over the age of 21 (in 1994, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act lowered the age of consent for male homosexuality to 18). Although still restrictive, one consequence of this Act was that, in many circumstances, adult male citizens had the legal freedom to engage in practices defined as homosexual. A notable exception to the provisions of the SOA (1967) was the British Armed Forces. Section 1 (5) of the Act contained a declaratory statement maintaining that homosexual acts now decriminalised in civilian law would, nonetheless, remain criminal for persons subject to military law. This applied regardless of whether the behaviour occurred on military property or in a completely civilian environment, and equally to both on and off duty military personnel.

1 The Sexual Offences Act 1967 still restricted male homosexuality; for example, the scope of the term 'private' was problematic and it did not apply to Scotland or Northern Ireland (see Weeks, 1990).
In military law there was, however, no specific offence of 'homosexuality' (or lesbianism). The service disciplinary offences affected by this legislation (and which have no analogue in civil law) were contained in the following sections of the Army Act 1955: disgraceful conduct of an indecent kind (Section 66); conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline (Section 69); or scandalous conduct by officers (Section 64). (These disciplinary offences also applied to the Air Force Act 1955 and the Naval Discipline Act 1957.) Notably, each of these offences specifically relates to matters of conduct, not status. However, in addition to the legal prohibitions on homosexual activity, the British Armed Forces also had the option of dealing with individuals suspected of being homosexual administratively, under the disciplinary provisions of the Army General and Administrative Instructions (AGAI, Volume 5, 1955). In practice, although these disciplinary offences and procedures applied equally to servicemen and women, the provisions of military law seem to have been used primarily for prosecuting gay men. For example, between 1987 and 1991, 39 men were dismissed from the British forces under military law for homosexual conduct. In this period, however, a further 296 people were discharged for homosexuality by administrative action and over half of these were women (Harris-Jenkins and Dandeker, 1994; Muir, 1992). It should be noted that these are the official statistics provided by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1991. The actual number of dismissals is likely to be higher because of inconsistencies in the administrative categories used and the fact that some individuals are given the opportunity to 'voluntarily' resign.

In 1990—91, the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill examined the prohibition on homosexuality in the military.2 The committee reported that it was not convinced that the time had come to remove the military ban on homosexuality. The Committee did recommend, however, that military law should be changed to reflect civilian law: "we see no reason why Service personnel should be liable to prosecution under Service law for homosexual activity which would be legal in civilian law" (Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill, 1991, para. 41). This recommendation was

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2 In the British Constitution there is a provision that the existence of the military is approved by Parliament every year. In practice, this is enacted every five years and is used as an opportunity for Parliament to examine military law and military disciplinary procedures.
accepted in 1992, but it was another two years before it was implemented in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. This meant that Section 1 (5) of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 was repealed and homosexual acts, not considered criminal under civilian law, were no longer criminal under military law. It was also in 1994 that the British Army updated its policy and guidelines on homosexuality:

The Armed Forces policy was supported by the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1991 who stated in their report that they were not persuaded that the time had come to require the Armed Forces to accept homosexuals or homosexual activity. However, the Committee recommended, and MOD accepted, that homosexual activity of a kind that is legal in civilian law should not constitute an offence under Service law (MOD, 1994, p. 1).

However, Armed Forces Guidelines still contain a caveat allowing the military to prosecute “a serviceman or woman who has committed an otherwise legal homosexual act on the grounds that, for example, the act was to the prejudice of good order and service discipline” (MOD, 1994, p. 2). Moreover, although personnel will no longer, generally, be prosecuted under service law they are still to be administratively discharged. This change in legislation, therefore, has meant that it is more difficult for the military to prosecute service personnel for homosexual activity, but it has not prevented the enforcement of the administrative policy. Moreover, there is a danger that in practice the decriminalisation of homosexuality means that individuals may forego certain rights that they would have been entitled to under military law and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984). For example, individuals handled administratively do not have to be ‘cautioned’ when interviewed under investigation even though their statement can be used against them for the purposes of dismissal, and it is more difficult for individuals to mount a legal defence against allegations of homosexuality. However, this danger is not a direct result of the decriminalisation; all individuals dealt with administratively (which is the majority of gay men and almost all lesbians) have faced this difficulty. Consequently, although the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the British military does establish some equity between military law and civilian criminal law, for both gay men and lesbians serving the British forces it does not provide protection from the investigative procedure or from dismissal. Furthermore, suspicion of homosexuality alone can be grounds for initiating an investigation:
It is not possible in a document of this nature to set out every circumstance which might lead to suspicion that a serviceman or woman is homosexual. It would be invidious to try to define all behaviour that might lead to suspicion ... In most circumstances, however, the interests of the individual and the Armed Forces will best be served by a formal investigation of the allegations or suspicion (MOD, 1994, p. 2).

The primary purpose of these investigations is to elicit a confession of either ‘homosexuality’ or homosexual conduct. However, even if a serviceman or woman (prior to an investigation) voluntarily admits homosexuality, an investigation is still initiated. If the investigation yields a “high standard of proof of an individual’s homosexuality,” ‘administrative action to terminate service’ is taken (MOD, 1994, p. 2). The military authorities justify such practices on the grounds that they must establish an individual’s guilt or innocence, otherwise heterosexual men and women may claim to be homosexual in order to leave the forces. However, given that dismissal from the service for homosexuality can carry with it considerable stigma and that there are other effective and legitimate ways of leaving the forces (for example, ‘premature voluntary release’), this justification seems questionable.

In March 1996, the MOD issued a directive to all Commanding Officers for the purpose of briefing their officers and soldiers about British military policy on homosexuality. This directive argues that “any relaxation of the existing policy is likely to have a detrimental effect on operational effectiveness” and that the MOD believes its policy to be the correct one and “intends to defend it robustly” (MOD, 1996, p. 2).

1.2.2 Challenges to the Policy

The imperative to ‘defend’ the exclusionary policy (prohibiting gay men and lesbians from military service) is in response to a number of recent challenges levelled at the policy and the way it is enforced. In 1991, for example, the British organisation Rank Outsiders was formed. This is a national support group for gay, lesbian and bisexual armed forces personnel. In addition to providing support to service (and ex-service) personnel, Rank Outsiders is also committed to campaigning:

within the limitations of UK law and on an apolitical basis, to overturn the blanket ban on homosexuals serving in the British Armed Forces, to seek justice for all those who have, and will be, affected by that Ban and to
challenge discrimination and ignorance regarding sexuality wherever it may be encountered (Rank Outsiders, 1998, p. 1).

In 1995, four former service personnel who were dismissed from the British Forces for homosexuality brought cases against the MOD in the High Court for a judicial review of the legality of the exclusionary policy. The High Court found in favour of the MOD, as did the subsequent Appeal Court hearing. However, according to Rank Outsiders, in both cases the Courts were critical of the current policy and indicated that the “rejection was only due to timing and that the courts would no longer tolerate a ‘blanket’ ban on homosexuals in the Military” (Rank Outsiders, 1998, p. 4). At the present time, this case, which is being backed by the British gay rights group Stonewall, is waiting to be heard by the European Court of Human Rights. The plaintiffs claim that the exclusionary policy breeches Articles 8 (the right to privacy), 14 (discrimination), 3 (degrading treatment), and 10 (the right to freedom of expression) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In the United States, although the policy differs slightly from the current British policy, similar developments are also evident. For example, challenges at the Federal Court level have successfully argued that the US policy is unconstitutional (Ferris, 1993; see also Jacobson, 1996). The US policy has differed from the British policy since 1993 when President Clinton announced his intention to end the exclusion of lesbians and gay men from service in the US military. Clinton failed to completely overturn the military ban on homosexuality. However, enforcement of the exclusionary policy was held in temporary abeyance during the debates and Senate hearings, and ultimately a ‘compromise’ policy, labelled “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue,” was issued (Friedman, 1993). Under its terms, homosexuals remain excluded from the military because a self-declaration of homosexuality and/or homosexual conduct is still grounds for dismissal. However, in theory, personnel can no longer be questioned or pursued on these grounds. In this respect, it differs from the current British policy according to which, as discussed, suspicion of homosexuality can be sufficient reason for initiating an investigation.

Although the ‘compromise’ policy was partly designed to protect serving gay men and lesbians (from, for example, blackmail or malicious informants), recent reports suggest that it does not differ from the previous US exclusionary policy (or the
current British policy) in the way it is enforced. That is, individuals are still pursued and investigated on suspicion of homosexuality. Since its introduction, a number of authors have argued that the proportion of gay men and lesbians dismissed from the US military did not decrease in 1994 or 1995 (Moss, 1995; Osburn and Benecke, 1996; Pine, 1995; Schmitt, 1995; Shenon, 1996) and significantly increased in 1996 (Sarbin, 1996).

Theory and research in the social sciences have also presented a challenge to the exclusionary policies. Research studies undertaken on behalf of the Pentagon, for example, have reported that there is no evidence to support the exclusionary policy rationale that homosexuality is incompatible with military service. As early as 1957, the Crittenden Report suggested that gay men pose no security risk in terms of susceptibility to extortion. The first US Defense Personnel Security Research and Education Centre (PERSEREC) Report suggested that homosexuality was unrelated to job performance in the military (PERSEREC/Sarbin and Karols, 1988). (A list of abbreviations used in the thesis is at Appendix 1.) The second report concluded that in terms of background characteristics prior to entering military service, gay men were "as good or better than the average heterosexual" in terms of suitability for positions of trust (PERSEREC/McDaniel, 1989, p. 21). The Crittenden Report was suppressed for 32 years and the first PERSEREC Report (Sarbin and Karols) for almost a year. Both were ultimately released in 1989. The former under federal court order, the latter in response to congressional pressure. In addition, the RAND Corporation undertook a large cross-national comparative study, which included Canada, Germany, Israel, France, the Netherlands, the United States, and the United Kingdom (National Defense Research Institute, 1993). The RAND Report also recommended that sexual orientation should not be considered in decisions regarding military service suitability and concluded that the military could successfully reverse the ban providing such a reversal was supported by strong leadership.

At the present time, and despite opposition, military authorities have managed to convince both the US and British governments that an exclusionary policy of some

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3 I am concentrating specifically on challenges to the policies in this section, however, it should be noted that not all social scientists have unreservedly opposed the ban (see e.g., Henderson, 1985; Moskos, 1994; Richardson, 1978).
description is not just desirable but essential to the maintenance of an effective fighting force. This is currently justified on the grounds that the presence of homosexuals in the military would damage morale and unit cohesion to such an extent that ‘operational effectiveness’ would be compromised. However, as opponents of the policies have pointed out, there are significant numbers of Western countries that do not have explicit ‘exclusionary’ policies with regard to homosexuality (e.g., Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and The Netherlands (Gade, Segal and Johnson, 1996)) and, to date, they have not reported experiencing the difficulties the MOD and the Department of Defense (DoD) envisage. At the present time, Britain and Turkey are the only countries in NATO operating an exclusionary policy (Stonewall, 1998). Comparing the policies of other countries is complicated, partly because of differences in conscription and partly because some countries do not have any formal policy with respect to the employment of gay men and lesbians. Nevertheless, both Australia (Caron, 1998) and Canada (Park, 1994) (which, like Britain and the US, operate a volunteer military) have had inclusive policies since 1992, without reporting reductions in morale or unit cohesion (Gade et al., 1996). In addition, Bawer (1993) observes that revoking the ban in Canada caused little or no controversy. Harries-Jenkins and Dandeker (1994) argue that during the Select Committee discussions in 1991, the MOD (despite being repeatedly pressed on the issue of the experience of other countries) defended the British exclusionary policy with “either anecdotal evidence or personal conviction” to justify the argument that the employment of homosexual personnel would have a negative impact on morals and discipline (p. 202).

MacCoun (1996) has also contested military claims that the presence of gay men and lesbians would adversely affect morale and unit cohesion (see also, Devilbiss, 1994; Shawver, 1996). MacCoun (1996) suggests, for example, that evidence from foreign militaries, the American police and fire departments and the lessons from racial desegregation in the military, all suggest that heterosexual and homosexual personnel can work together effectively in the military environment. Devilbiss (1994) argues that in actuality “the banding together of dominant group members against women, gay men and lesbians has contributed to negative cohesion that compromises, rather than enhances mission performance, group spirit and organisational integrity”
Shawver (1996) also argues that the conclusion that homosexuality will disrupt cohesion is simply conjectural, unsupported by data and a "glib way of rationalising discrimination and prejudice" (p. 99).

Herek (1996) points out that abandoning the exclusionary policy would probably eliminate the prejudicial attitudes of heterosexuals, cited by the military as one of the reasons the policy is necessary. Drawing on social psychological research data, Herek (1996) argues that heterosexuals who have some contact with gay men and lesbians (including friends, family members and more general contact) ‘manifest significantly more favourable attitudes towards gay men and lesbians than those without contact experiences’ (p. 214). Doran and Yerkes (1995) argue that this is also the case for military personnel (see also Miller, 1994). Herek (1996) argues that the probability of favourable attitudes resulting from contact is greater if a heterosexual has contact with more than one lesbian or gay man. According to Herek (1996), multiple contact not only helps to break down negative stereotypes of gay men and lesbians, but it may also reduce the likelihood of particular individual (and non-stereotypical) behaviours being discounted as atypical. Sarbin (1996) is also confident that social psychological work can be employed to dissolve negative stereotypes and contribute towards changing the attitudes and beliefs of members of the military.

Some researchers have also challenged the argument that an exclusionary policy is necessary to protect heterosexual modesty and privacy rights (e.g., Herek, 1996; Shawver, 1995, 1996). Shawver (1995), for example, argues that this justification assumes that privacy situations that occur in living quarters (e.g., undressing, etc.) will be sexualised if gays and lesbians are present. This, she suggests, is based on the mistaken assumption that opposite sex undress is inevitably erotic for heterosexuals and, by analogy, that this will also be the case for homosexuals (Shawver, 1996). Shawver (1995) argues this is an assumption without foundation, the consequence of a heterosexual modesty myth that has no empirical support. Indeed, she suggests that gays and lesbians carefully conform to the "heterosexual etiquette of disregard" and frequently share privacy situations with heterosexuals without revealing their sexuality and "without their control being overwhelmed" (p. 43–44). In a similar vein, Herek (1993) argues that gays and lesbians routinely frequent communal facilities (e.g., locker rooms, dormitories) without such situations being sexualised. Relatedly, Rank
Outsiders (1998) note that military personnel who have been investigated for homosexuality and lesbianism (and are thus known to be homosexual) continue to live in standard accommodation while awaiting dismissal, often for periods in excess of six months, without any difficulties and without encountering any hostility (see also Hall, 1995).

Opponents of both the British and US policies argue that they are ‘expensive’ policies in terms of both human and financial costs (Hall, 1995; Osburn and Benecke, 1996; Shilts, 1993). For example, Hall (1995), a dismissed Royal Navy officer, argues that between 1990 and 1994 approximately 600 individuals were discharged from the British Armed Forces on the grounds of homosexuality.4 In the US, Shilts (1993) estimates that as many as 2,000 gay men and lesbians are dismissed from service each year. Neither the MOD in Britain nor the General Accounting Office (GAO) in the US systematically maintains financial records on the cost of sustaining these policies. Although, for the period from 1991 to 1994, the GAO estimated the cost of training service members to replace military personnel dismissed on the grounds of homosexuality to be $86.5 million (Osburn and Benecke, 1996). This figure does not include adjustment for inflation, investigative costs, or holding and administrative costs. Hall (1995) suggests the British costs are higher because although the initial training requirements are similar (and of comparable cost), Britain maintains a smaller force; training costs per person, therefore, increase. He estimates that enforcing the current British policy in the period from 1990 to 1994 incurred costs between £40 and £50 million. It is impossible to accurately verify Hall’s estimate due to the unavailability of accurate statistics, which is confounded by the military’s use of administrative categories (e.g., “services no longer required”) to discharge lesbians and gay men. Nevertheless, as Hall (1995) convincingly argues, the four pilots alone, dismissed from the British forces on the grounds of homosexuality between 1992 and 1994, will have cost the British taxpayer in excess of £3 million.

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4 Edmund Hall was dismissed from the Royal Navy in 1988 following an investigation into his sexuality, during which he admitted to being gay.
In addition to the potential financial cost of sustaining an exclusionary policy, both Hall (1995), writing from the British perspective and Shilts (1993), writing in the US, argue that the ‘human’ cost of maintaining these policies is unacceptable:

In the past decade, the cost of investigations and the dollars spent replacing gay personnel easily amount to hundreds of millions. The human costs are incalculable. Careers are destroyed; lives are ruined. Under the pressure of a purge, and in the swell of rumors that often precedes one, despairing men and women sometimes commit suicide (Shilts, 1993, p. 4).

Although the policies apply equally to men and women, Hall (1995) argues that women are much more seriously affected by the policy than are men. This seems to be supported by the statistics on dismissals for homosexuality. Muir (1992) suggests that allowing for the fact that women comprise only 6% of the British Army, women are twelve times more likely to be dismissed for homosexuality than are men (see also Harris-Jenkins and Dandeker, 1994). Some researchers argue that this is partly because of differences in the ways in which the policies are enforced. For example, the procedures for dealing with lesbianism have often included random ‘checks’ of female accommodations and military ‘witch hunts’ have been used to identify and dismiss large numbers of lesbians (see e.g., Benecke and Dodge, 1990; Enloe 1988; Faderman, 1991; Muir, 1992; Shawver, 1995). In contrast, gay men are usually dealt with individually (Hall, 1995; Shilts, 1993).

1.2.3 Women and the Military

The question of lesbians in the military appears to pivot on issues concerning biological sex, gender and sexuality. At the present time, women are excluded from some ‘combat’ roles, in particular, service in the infantry and armoured regiments. However, they are no longer excluded from other arms involved in combat for example, the Royal Artillery. The infantry and armoured (including cavalry) regiments have the longest history of all the corps and regiments in the British Army. Although now largely mechanised, they continue to represent the arms most likely to be involved in close combat with the enemy. Combat roles are the most organisationally powerful in the military; it is these roles that define the military mission, referred to in most of the current documentation as the “operational imperative.” Excluding women from these roles effectively bars women from the highest ranks of the military.
because they have only limited experience of the military's primary function—combat. However, contemporary warfare means that all service personnel in an operational environment are potentially implicated in combat, irrespective of their specific role. For example, Muir (1992) argues that over 34,000 British, American and Canadian women served in the Gulf war in 1991 in a variety of functions and although they were not officially engaged in combat, eleven women were returned home in body bags.

The exclusion of women from these roles has been justified, principally, on two grounds. First, women in combat (like gays and lesbians in the military in general) are perceived as damaging unit cohesion and, consequently, effectiveness in battle. Second, women are considered unsuitable for combat activities because they are (essentially) biologically different from men. This argument is explicitly illustrated by General Robert Barrow’s comments following the Gulf War, which were presented as a plea against women being allowed to encroach any further upon the battlefield:

Combat is finding...closing with...and killing or capturing the enemy. It’s killing. And it’s done in an environment that is often as difficult as you can possibly imagine. Extremes of climate. Brutality. Death. Dying. It’s ... uncivilised! And women can’t do it! Nor should they even be thought of as doing it. The requirements for strength and endurance render them unable to do it. And I may be old-fashioned, but I think the very nature of women disqualifies them from doing it. Women give life. Sustain life. Nurture life. They don’t take it (General Barrow, New York Times, 21 July, 1991).

The issue of gender compounds the issue of biological sex differences. All servicewomen occupy a non-traditional occupation by virtue of their military membership. Military service “makes men,” where man is explicitly understood to mean both adult and male (Boulègue, 1991, p. 349). Non-traditional occupations for women can usefully be defined as those occupations that have been exclusively male (Thomas and Thomas, 1996). When women enter these occupational fields, these positions cease to function as markers of masculinity. Restricting women from certain roles, therefore, retains the masculinising function of those roles as a ‘rite of passage into manhood’. Benecke and Dodge (1990) argue that a further way of countering this ‘demasculinisation’ is through the labelling of women who enter traditional male occupations as deviant or lesbian (i.e., not women). Accordingly, women in the services (irrespective of their sexuality) often face what a number of researches have
called 'lesbian baiting' (e.g., Benecke and Dodge, 1990; 1996; DePauw, 1988; Thomas and Thomas, 1996). Lesbian baiting involves threatening to denounce a woman as lesbian, which DePauw (1988) asserts is the most prevalent form of sexual harassment in the military. In the case of women, Thomas and Thomas (1996) argue, the exclusionary policy is used as both a reason for the harassment of lesbians and as a tool to potentially harass all women. Accordingly, the lesbian label carries a heavy cost in the military for all women: “any time a woman is called a ‘dyke,’ her reputation, her career, and even her liberty are on the line” (Benecke and Dodge, 1996, p. 84). To avoid accusations of lesbianism, some researchers suggest that women accede to unwanted sexual demands (Benecke and Dodge, 1996; Muir, 1992) but when they do, they risk being labelled a ‘whore’ or more usually other military derivatives such as ‘unit bicycle’ or ‘platoon groundsheet’ (Hall, 1995; Meyer, 1996).

Femininity is critical for both compliance with traditional gender role expectations and for sustaining its complement—masculinity. However, women are often required to undertake duties that are distinctly 'un-feminine.' Competence violates femininity and threatens masculinity and both leave women vulnerable to accusations of incompetence and lesbianism, respectively. Paradoxically, the more successful a woman is in the military, the closer she moves towards the stereotype of the masculine lesbian, whereas the more successful a man is, the further away he moves from the stereotype of the effeminate gay man (Hall, 1995; Stiehm, 1994). The more masculine women are perceived to be, the more likely they are to be investigated and dismissed (Bérubé 1990; Enloe, 1988; Hall, 1995, Meyer, 1996; Muir, 1992). Moreover, consistent with these stereotypes and the perceived masculinity of the military in general, there may be an expectation that lesbians will enlist, unlike gay men, who have traditionally been constructed as feminine. This may account for some of the differences reported in the ways gay men and lesbians are dealt with in the military.5 Women appear to be caught in a double bind: marginal initially by virtue of their biological sex, they tread a fine line between an appropriate level of femininity

5 This could also be because there is a disproportionate number of lesbians in military service. Until recently, recruiting policies prohibited the enlistment of women with families and the British Army dismissed all women who were pregnant. This might have had the effect of discouraging some heterosexual women from entering military service and affected the retention of heterosexual women.
necessary to counter accusations of lesbianism and an appropriate level of masculinity required to exemplify occupational competence (see also Lehring, 1996).

Although there is now a burgeoning academic literature in the US examining military policy regarding the employment of gay men and lesbians, there is very little literature available in Britain. There are only two academic papers (Deakin, 1995; Harris-Jenkins and Dandeker, 1994) addressing some of the theoretical issues and debates pertaining to the British policy, but there are no empirical research studies directly examining the British military policy documents. Accordingly, it is not clear, for example, why gay men and lesbians are presumed to “damage morale and unit effectiveness” or what assumptions underlie the British policy (although Deakin provides a theoretical discussion in this respect). This is a significant omission, given that the military is arguably an integral part of the maintenance and reification of particular social arrangements, which permeate and structure both society in general and the military itself. Equally, at the present time, there is no psychological research on lesbians in the British military. There is no literature, for example, examining how these women construct their identities or account for their experiences in relation to military concepts of gender and sexuality or in relation to (the often competing) wider societal constructions.

1.3 Origins of the Research

The motivation for the thesis has three primary origins: the absence of British psychological empirical research examining the issue of homosexuality (and in particular lesbianism) in the military; my own military service in the British Army (1983–1990); and my commitment to the feminist movement which is centrally concerned with social justice principally (but not exclusively) for women.

The absence of psychological research concerning this group of women is not surprising. They are a difficult population to access partly because it is, in general, difficult to gain access to the military from outside of the institution itself, and, more specifically, it is almost impossible to access lesbians in this context. Because lesbians are prohibited from service and, therefore, cannot be ‘officially’ acknowledged or identified and because it is unlikely that lesbians themselves would agree to take part
in a research study about sexuality while still serving since this could potentially compromise their employment status, this population is difficult to research. Fear of discovery and threat of recriminations (e.g., investigations and/or loss of employment) prevent these women from making their presence visible. Thus, they represent a largely invisible and silent population. This thesis represents my attempt to bring these ‘voices’ into the research literature and, accordingly, into the domain of public discourse.

My own military service provided me with both the research opportunity and a further motivation for the thesis. The research opportunity presented itself through my almost unique access to serving military lesbians by virtue of having made contacts while still serving in the British Army. In addition, my military experience also suggested that military membership as a woman and as a lesbian was potentially fraught with contradictions and conflicts. In particular, I witnessed and experienced various forms of sexism and anti-gay and lesbian discriminatory practices within the military, and the attendant frustration of having to remain silent. Although there are ways of redressing some gender (and racial) injustices within the military (due to the recent implementation of guidelines for redressing explicit racial and sexual harassment), lesbians and gay men, if they wish to continue their employment, have no such forms of redress. Consequently, although the military is, in general, a context characterised by inequitable distributions of power (through, for example, class based hierarchical rank structures), this distribution of power also pivots on the axes of gender and sexuality. This is not unusual in many contexts; as Segal argues, for example, “forms of policing lesbian and gay sexuality” are ubiquitous (Segal, 1997, p. xvi). However, in the military these ‘forms of policing’ are legitimised and maintained partly through the formal regulations that restrict the employment of women and prohibit the service of gay men and lesbians. Moreover, in these two respects, military personnel policy is exempt from equal opportunities legislation. It is this explicit and legitimised regulation of sexuality (and gender) that marks the military context as different from most other British organisations and State institutions. Principled and systematic resistance to such regulations and their related practices is unrealisable within the military, especially (in the case of sexuality) for individuals who are not exclusively heterosexual and, therefore, more vulnerable. Leaving the service is one of
the ways in which people resolve individual difficulties and dilemmas, but it does not challenge the interests, values and problematic assumptions on which these regulations are based and which maintain the status quo. An important motivation for this study, therefore, was to direct attention towards an examination of the policies and the assumptions that inform them.

Feminism, concerned as it is with directly challenging inequalities in women's lives, forms an important link between my experiences of military service and ways of potentially contributing to political change. Specifically, feminist political challenges have often focussed on the axes of gender and sexuality and the ways in which these categories have been constructed and used in the service of maintaining (usually) patriarchal power. Minimally, feminist theory allows me to ask questions about gender and sexuality in relation to the expression of power, while also providing a politically motivated perspective and a commitment to change. In relation to the present research, I am especially interested in feminism's attention to the empowerment of women, particularly those who are marginalised and silenced and the ways in which feminist research has sought to bring women's voices (historically often excluded) into the domain of public knowledge.

In bringing the voices of this currently under-researched, largely 'invisible' and to date 'silenced' group of women into the academic literature, I concur with Haraway's (1991) assertion that writing the narratives of marginal groups is an important and meaningful practice for liberatory politics. Writing accounts of experience into the literature aims to empower marginalised groups by 'giving them a voice' and an opportunity to enter into the struggle over meanings and interpretations, without claiming to be "epistemologically privileged or incontestable" (Sawicki, 1994 p. 306). (I discuss the tensions inherent in this approach, and particularly, in my explicitly linking research to a political perspective in Chapter 4.)

1.4 Aims of the Thesis and Research Questions

The aims of this research are twofold: First, to examine the ways in which the military constructs homosexuality in order to provide an understanding of military policy and the assumptions on which it is based. Second, to present new accounts of
gender, sexuality and military service from a currently under-researched group of women in order to introduce their accounts into public discourse. Both of these aims are politically motivated, in the sense that they are explicitly intended to intervene in the public debate currently evident around homosexuality and the military. In the broadest sense, this study asks two questions. First, how is homosexuality constructed in military policy documents? Second, how do lesbians in the Army construct accounts of gender, sexuality and military service?

There are two aspects of these questions I want to highlight at this point. First, in framing my research questions in this way, I am focussing on an analysis of the ways in which meaning is constructed in accounts. Moreover, I am taking the unit of research to be the accounts (i.e., the texts) not the military (or its ‘policy makers’) or individual participants. It is my intention, therefore, to examine the ways in which these accounts are constructed and analyse what assumptions underpin and sustain these accounts. In relation to both research questions, I am interested particularly in how these accounts produce and reproduce meanings about gender, sexuality and military service and how such meanings might produce the ‘identities’ and ‘realities’ that constitute subjectivity. (I discuss my use of the term ‘subjectivity’ in Chapter 2.) Second, these questions, while concentrating on accounts that refer to the military, also necessarily include the wider cultural context. For example, lesbians in the British Army are not only members of the military, but also participants in (at least) three different domains of experience: the military, the dominant culture (and heterosexuality), and lesbian (and gay) minority culture. Equally, although the military does appear to enjoy some separation from wider society, it is not immune from societal influence and necessarily exists within, and in relation to, the wider social and cultural environment. Both sets of texts will, therefore, convey meanings that are drawn from both the military and more widely available linguistic resources. In summary, this thesis is about homosexuality, lesbianism and the British Army. It comprises two discourse analytic studies: the first examines the ways in which homosexuality is constructed in British military policy documents; the second, an interview study, examines the ways in which lesbians in the British Army construct accounts of gender, sexuality and military service.
1.5 Outline of the Thesis

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework informing this thesis. To this end, Foucault's theory of discourse is discussed and examined for its potential to provide a theoretical basis for feminist psychological research. The importance of language and, more specifically, discourse in constructing meaning and in constituting both 'subjects' and subjectivity is emphasised. Relevant feminist theoretical approaches and feminist responses to Foucault's work are also introduced and discussed.

Chapter 3 broadly follows Foucault's genealogical method in an effort to locate the military, social science research, and gendered and sexual subjects in their social, political and historical contexts. This is achieved by combining a critical historical review of sexuality (specifically, theoretical contributions in psychology), with a discussion of the ways in which the military has responded to changing theoretical insights and socio-political conditions. Building on Chapter 2, the primary aim of this chapter is to emphasise the fundamentally constructed 'nature' of sexual categories and to illustrate the different ways in which these have been understood in different historical periods. I argue that these constructions have all, to differing degrees, produced contemporary understandings of gender and sexuality, and they have significantly contributed to the ways in which subjects (and 'their' subjectivities) are constituted.

Chapter 4 discusses methodological issues pertaining specifically to research and the research context. In this respect, issues of 'validity,' warrants for research, reflexivity and power are examined. I also explore and contrast different approaches to the analysis of textual material in contemporary research. The differences (and commonalities) between, for example, critical linguistic analysis, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis, are discussed as are the ways in which researchers using these and other 'qualitative' approaches have validated and justified their analyses. Finally, I summarise the methodological (and analytic) approach utilised in this study.

Chapter 5 presents Study 1: the analysis of the military policy documents. I discuss the methodological and analytic approaches utilised in Study 1 and present the analysis and a theoretically informed discussion pertaining to this study.
Chapter 6 presents Study 2: the analysis of the interview data. The procedures and methods used in this study are explained, including participant recruitment, issues pertaining to confidentiality and demographic information. I also provide a detailed explication of the analytic process used to interpret the interview data. The analytic chapters of both studies are drawn together in a general discussion in Chapter 7. Provisional conclusions and the limitations of the study are discussed. Finally, possible directions for future research are suggested.

1.6 Contributions of the Research

This research makes the following contributions. First, it brings new accounts and new texts into the psychological research literature. This provides an original research contribution through its presentation into psychology of new empirical data. In addition, the analytic contribution of this study provides a new research account about the ways in which both the military policy documents and participants in this study produce forms of knowledge about gender, sexuality and the military in relation to prevailing knowledges. Second, this thesis also contributes, through its theoretical and analytic approach, to the growing literature in critical and feminist psychology that aims to challenge and transform what it is that comes to count as research. Finally, bringing these accounts into the academic literature (and public discourse) also writes these voices into the existing and continually revised cultural texts of gender, sexuality and the military. This provides a political challenge, from within psychology and academic feminism, to the regulatory policies and the knowledges that sustain them, in an attempt to disrupt their power and expose their partiality.

1.7 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the British military policy on homosexuality (and lesbianism) was introduced and some of the recent challenges that have been directed towards this policy and its comparable counterpart in the United States were discussed. I also argued that while there is now a growing literature in the US, in Britain there have been very few academic interventions in the debates. Although the exclusionary policy applies equally to men and women, it was suggested that women are more seriously
affected. Overall, I argued that the issue of (homo)sexuality and the military is a significant research issue. This is partly because the military is one of the institutions that reproduces and reifies particular social arrangements and social practices. My motivations and the origins of this research project were outlined, as well as specifying the thesis aims and the research questions guiding the analytic studies. The chapter concluded with an outline of the forthcoming thesis chapters, as well as briefly detailing the contributions of this research.
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DISCOURSE, FOUCALUT AND FEMINISM

2.1 Introduction

Throughout the last thirty years the traditional epistemological underpinnings of knowledge in the social sciences have been systematically challenged (See e.g., Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Bhaskar, 1978; Buss, 1975; Derrida, 1976; Foucault, 1978; Gergen, 1973; Harré, 1979; Harré and Secord, 1972; Kuhn, 1970; Lacan, 1992; Shotter, 1975, 1984. For specifically feminist challenges see e.g., Acker, Barry and Esseveld, 1983; Fee, 1981; Fine, 1985; Harding, 1986; Kitzinger, 1987; Sherif, 1979; Smith D., 1974; Squire, 1989; Weisstein, 1968, 1971; Weskott, 1979; Wittig, 1985). These challenges precipitated a significant theoretical shift in (some) psychological theorising and have resulted in the emergence of a number of different theoretical approaches to the study of human social behaviour. These include, for example, 'critical psychology,' 'deconstruction,' 'postmodernism,' 'poststructuralism,' 'discourse theory and/or analysis,' and 'social constructionism.' Some feminist theoretical work, while distinct, has also aligned itself with these approaches, as in for example 'feminist poststructuralism' (e.g., Lather, 1991; Weedon, 1997). Although each of these theoretical approaches differs in important respects, they share a number of common concerns, all of which have important implications for theorising individuals and the social, historical and institutional contexts in which they are embedded. These include: a rejection of transcendental, objective, ahistorical knowledge forms, in favour of historical, cultural and (often) political specificity; the (related) rejection of universal, absolute and discoverable truths, in favour of produced, constructed 'truths' and knowledges; a rejection of grand theories or metanarratives, in favour of multiple, local and provisional knowledges; an increased emphasis on language, communication and social practice in constructing and producing social realities and individual subjects; and (usually) an increased attention to the operation of power, particularly authoritative, institutional power that operates in 'fields of knowledge.' In addition, most of these approaches dissolve the individual-social dichotomy, reject 'essentialist,'
stable, and pre-determined conceptions of individuals and posit instead fundamentally unstable, constructed ‘subjects’ thoroughly inseparable from, and embedded within, social and historical contexts. ‘Identities,’ from these perspectives, are constructed and provisional as opposed to essential, ‘natural’ and inherent features of individuals.

In this chapter I set out the theoretical framework informing this thesis. To this end, I introduce Foucault’s (poststructuralist) theory of discourse in order to establish the extent to which his work can inform understandings of the social subject and, in particular, the gendered and sexual subject in relation to institutional sites of regulation (e.g., the military). Foucault’s theory is also assessed for its potential to contribute to a political (specifically feminist) research project, and in this respect I introduce and discuss some feminist theoretical approaches to the study of gender and sexuality and feminist interpretations and critiques of Foucauldian theory. Foucault’s work represents a significant part of the theoretical shift discussed above, and accordingly, shares a number of concerns common to poststructuralist approaches. However, as Butler (1992) notes, the term ‘poststructuralism occludes very significant theoretical differences.’ Moreover, poststructuralism resists definition, or at least ‘a consensus as to its definition’ (Simons and Billig, 1994). This is partly because definition itself risks fixing and oversimplifying the concepts in a way that potentially stagnates and de-radicalises the approach (Gavey, 1997). In addition, central to the poststructuralist perspective is a concerted attempt to avoid normative injunctions, authoritative accounts and grand metanarratives (including its own) that threaten to universalise aspects of individual subjectivity and human social life (Lather, 1988).

In The History of Sexuality (1978), Foucault refuses notions of transcendental and stable categories of sex/sexuality and argues that throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries human sexuality has been constructed and regulated in very specific ways through the production of institutionally sanctioned knowledges about sex. Foucault examines this authoritative body of knowledge arguing, that not only did it constitute and regulate subjects in specific ways, but it also defined the discursive field around sexuality, which prevented alternative knowledges from entering into public discourse and from considerations of ‘truth.’ Foucault’s intent in The History of Sexuality is to present an alternative historical account (a ‘genealogy’) of human sexuality. Thus, this text not only serves as ‘an elaboration of the immanence of power
in the construction and dispersion of knowledge and truth' (Bailey, 1993, p. 111) but it also represents a concerted attempt to recover and reclaim previously excluded ('subjugated') knowledges (see also Foucault, 1988a, 1995). Foucault's account, accordingly, has the potential to provide a solid theoretical grounding for work that aims to examine existing regulatory knowledge forms and their implications, and introduce new, marginal or excluded knowledges into public discourse. In these two respects, Foucault's theoretical approach, particularly when coupled with feminist theory, would seem to be consistent with both aims of this thesis: to examine the construction and regulation of homosexuality and lesbianism in military policy documents, and to introduce new accounts of gender, sexuality and military service constructed by lesbians in the military.

2.2 Foucault's Concept of Discourse

Foucault argued that 'objects' of social 'reality,' for example, 'personalities,' 'cognitions,' 'attitudes,' and individual subjects (and 'their' subjectivities) are formed and constituted in 'discourse' (e.g., Foucault, 1972, 1978). 'Discourse' has been the focus of a number of contemporary theoretical approaches in psychology (and other disciplines) and has numerous alternative definitions, for example as speech or dialogue, as a piece of text, or group of signs (see e.g., Mills, 1997). Potter and Wetherell define discourse as “all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds” (1987, p. 7). Foucault (1972), despite resisting fixing the meaning of the term, intended a somewhat broader definition:

Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word 'discourse', I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements (Foucault, 1972, p. 80).

Foucault, accordingly, used the term discourse to refer not only to language (i.e., utterances and texts) as in the 'general domain of all statements,' but also to regulated social practices. In this respect, Foucault suggests that discourses can be defined as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). These 'objects' are not anterior to discourse and awaiting discovery, definition and classification, but are rather brought into 'existence' through their entry into
discourse. As Prior (1989) succinctly notes, “[objects, events and experiences] are not referents about which there are discourses but objects constructed by discourse” (original parentheses) (p. 3). Accordingly, discourses are not simply disembodied representations (linguistic statements or otherwise) of a pre-existing ‘reality’ but rather produce (i.e., form and constitute) what it is that individuals come to think of as reality. Foucault’s use of the term discourse, therefore, is not limited to language but rather includes a variety of objects, events and practices. For Foucault, discourses are not reducible to language and speech (Foucault 1972). He notes that, ‘discourses are composed of signs but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). This represents a significant shift from the idea that language (and symbolic material) reflects, or transmits, pre-existing meanings, to the idea that discourses actively produce meaning and relay meaning through culture.

This is not the argument that there is no material reality outside of discourse, although critics of Foucault have sometimes argued that in stressing the productive powers of discourse Foucault denied the existence of the real (for a review see Taylor, 1986). In the Archaeology of Knowledge (1972), Foucault did not specifically define the ‘real’ (although he considered the materiality of the world undeniable) but rather argued, that what is perceived to be real is dependent upon discursive practices. Material reality is questioned only in the sense that Foucault denies that objects can be constituted (as objects) outside of any discursive conditions of emergence (for further discussion see e.g., Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). These ‘discursive conditions of emergence’ are historically specific and particular discursive formations are only possible at certain historical and discursive junctures. For example, Foucault (1978) traces the development of the medical discourse on sexuality to the introduction of the concept of ‘population.’ He argues that the eighteenth century population growth brought with it a number of new concerns about, for example, birth rates, marriages and sexual relationships which, in turn, required new forms of management and control. This represented a shift from understanding ‘subjects’ as individuals with certain obligations, to understandings of the concept ‘population,’ “with its specific phenomena and its peculiar variables: birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, state of health, frequency of illnesses, patterns of diet and habitation” (Foucault, 1978, p. 25). From this basis, Foucault argues, it became essential for the State to know,
understand and administer sexuality (and in particular procreation) and accordingly "a whole web of discourses, special knowledges, analyses and injunctions settled upon it" (p. 26). At the interstices of this 'web of discourses and special knowledges,' the medical discourse on homosexuality and lesbianism (and the beginnings of their establishment as objects) emerged. (I discuss the discursive emergence of homosexuality and lesbianism in detail in Chapter 3.)

The development of discourses on (homo)sexuality did not only emerge from concerns about population, but from a host of other historically specific discourses and social conditions. In this sense, Foucault is not concerned to find the absolute origins of discourses but rather to provide a possible account of their origins and development. Indeed, Foucault considers the search for definitive origins impossible, as McNay (1992) notes this is, for Foucault, an ‘epistemologically problematic quest for ahistorical, asocial essences’. This is partly because the boundaries of discourses are not clearly delimited. Indeed, although he characterised discourses as ‘regulated systems of statements’ these ‘systems’ are thoroughly dispersed and their (presumed) unity always provisional. This means that although it is possible to identify particular discourses, such identification is not ‘definitive or absolutely valid; it is no more than an initial approximation that allows other relations to appear and which may erase the limits of the initial outline’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 30).

In summary, discourses are fundamentally productive. That is, they produce ‘things’ (e.g., objects, social institutions, individual subjectivities and 'subjects') and they have real effects. In this way discourses have a fundamentally material dimension; they productively constitute objects, individuals and social realities in particular ways. Discourses that achieve dominant status (e.g., medical and patriarchal discourses) have the power to define, legitimise, and delimit possibilities for action and understanding. Within patriarchal discourse, for example, the possibilities (e.g., the legitimacy of certain behaviours) for men and women are differently constituted and the discursive field that distinguishes between individuals on the basis of biological sex regulates these possibilities. For Foucault, such ‘discursive effects’ are the products of the complex interaction between truth, knowledge and power in discourse.
2.2.1 Truth, Knowledge and Power

Truth, for Foucault, is not a (more or less) accurate representation of some underlying reality, or an intrinsic quality of texts or utterances, or a knowable, absolute or objective ‘ideal’ to which science can aspire, it is rather a discursive production which does not reflect but rather produces ‘reality.’ According to Foucault, ‘the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth and for fictional discourse to induce effects of truth’ (1980, p. 193). Foucault argues:

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is the types of discourse it harbours and causes to function as true: the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements, the way in which each is sanctioned: the techniques and procedures which are valorised for obtaining truth: the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1979a, p. 46).

A quintessential example of the ‘mechanisms’, ‘techniques’ and ‘procedures’ that are ‘valorised for obtaining truth’ is the ‘scientific method.’ Knowledge gained through the application of scientific principles bestows on that knowledge the status of ‘scientific fact,’ which in turn confers authority and legitimacy (I discuss the issue of scientific knowledge further in Chapters 3 and 4). Indeed, in order for a body of knowledge to be established and to secure the entry of its objects into discourse a “legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge” must be defined (Foucault, 1977a, p. 199). Institutional sanctioning thus provides an ‘expert’ perspective for the agent of knowledge which confers an authoritative ‘right to speak’ (Mills, 1997, p. 51). Discourses that achieve a dominant status are usually those that are (directly or indirectly) institutionally supported.

Once established, ‘bodies of knowledge’ regulate the discursive field through achieving a taken-for-granted status, which precludes other knowledges from considerations of truth. The early medical discourse, for example, produced homosexuality as a congenital abnormality, and it marginalised other ways of knowing and understanding homosexuality. This is not simply because the ‘medical institution’ sought to promote and support particular understandings, but also because the discursive field was delimited by the prevailing historical and social conditions. However, the authoritative ‘right to speak’ functions effectively to exclude or discredit other ‘voices’ from entering into discourse and achieving the status of knowledge.
Indeed, Foucault's historical/theoretical method (the 'archaeology of knowledge') aimed to trace some of the conditions of emergence of prevailing knowledge forms in order to question their legitimacy and expose their partiality. In this way previously discredited voices (or alternative knowledges) can potentially emerge.

Underlying this account of institutionally sanctioned knowledges is the issue of power. However, Foucault did not conceive power to be a possession, disproportionately held by some (e.g., members of the medical profession) and wielded over others (e.g., the marginal and 'oppressed'). Rather Foucault theorised power as existing only in its exercise and specifically as operating through the production of knowledge (Foucault, 1980). The imbrication of power and knowledge is at the heart of Foucault's account of discourse. Indeed Foucault often referred to these as 'power/knowledge' to emphasise their thoroughly interdependent relationship:

We should admit ... that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (Foucault, 1995, p. 27).

2.2.2 Power and Resistance

In addition to the power inherent in the institutional sanctioning of 'expert' knowledge, power and knowledge in discourse are interrelated in other (discernible) ways. For example, Foucault argues that all knowledge emerges from power struggles over which versions of events are sanctioned and which are excluded. In scientific research, such power struggles are evident in the critiques that always accompany theorising, for example, within and between sexology and psychoanalysis at the turn of the century (discussed in Chapter 3) and in, for example, contemporary debates around the 'scientific status of psychology'. ⁶ The discourses of critical, feminist and qualitative psychology, for example, challenge traditional psychological discourse, in an effort to challenge its hegemonic authority and its partiality, and expose its

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⁶ See, for example, the debate in the October 1998 issue of *The Psychologist* between Cooper and Stevenson (1998), Morgan (1998) and Sherrard (1998).
assumptions and contradictions. Prevailing knowledges emerge from, and are the result of, such power struggles between competing discourses. For this reason, discourses do not occur in isolation but rather in dialogue; they are always part of a 'system of reference, which includes other discourses, other texts and other practices' (Foucault, 1972, p. 23). It follows, then, that discourses are always being simultaneously reiterated and reaffirmed, and contested and resisted. This resistance is not confined to struggles within and between institutionally sanctioned knowledges but rather occurs at all sites of knowledge production. It is perhaps most evident in political challenges, for example, feminist, and gay and lesbian activist movements, but it is not restricted to organised identifiable groups; power and resistance are fundamentally dispersed throughout all social relations. Moreover, it is the power inherent in discourses that potentiates resistance:

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowances for the complex and unstable processes whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (Foucault, 1978, p. 100–101).

Discourses always embody both power and resistance. As Burr (1995) notes, “for Foucault power and resistance are two sides of the same coin. The power implicit in one discourse is only apparent from the resistance implicit in another” (p. 64). For example, the definitional categories of homosexuality and lesbianism that emerged at the turn of the century rendered a number of alternative knowledges around sexuality possible. Although the delineation of abnormal sexual categories functioned to reinstate and reinforce the normality of heterosexuality, they also rendered the power inherent in hegemonic heterosexuality visible and thus fragile and contestable. Dollimore (1991) calls this the “perverse dynamic” which refers to the ways in which the production of, for example, ‘perversities’ always internally disorder the normative category; that is the category against which the ‘perversions’ are defined. Thus, in defining and categorising homosexuality, lesbianism and other perversities, hegemonic heterosexuality is disordered, (unintentionally) exposed, and rendered vulnerable. From this perspective, the successful passing of Clause 28, for example, can be
understood as an attempt to regulate against the possibilities of homosexuality and lesbianism disrupting and contaminating what seems to be perceived as a vulnerable and fragile heterosexuality. In other words, if heterosexuality is such a fundamentally natural and stable category, why is it so often necessary to furnish it with 'protective' regulation and legislation? (The extent to which the explicit prohibition of non-heterosexual sexualities in the military is a function of this discourse will be examined in Study 1.)

2.2.3 The Constitution of Subjects and Subjectivity

Inherent in Foucault's account of discourse is a re-conceptualisation of 'the individual.' Individual subjects are, in the West, traditionally conceptualised as unique, relatively stable and governed and regulated by an internal (pre-discursive) self. This 'sovereign' self, while susceptible to external societal influences, is seen as a separate and discrete entity (with a unique inner essence) and only (usually) influenced by, or interactionally related to, outside 'forces' and stimuli. As Kitzinger (1992) has argued, this "individuated self-concept is a powerful influence in the West—one of our most cherished values, structuring our vision of the world in our everyday lives, in our political thought, and in our formal psychological theorizing" (p. 229). It is evident in the ways, for example, humans think of themselves as having unique personalities, characteristics, dispositions, etc., and a sense of self as private, inner, real and constant. The 'discourse of individualism' is pervasive, derived, Kitzinger (1992) argues, originally from "the autonomous individualism of liberal political theory" it probably represents the most dominant discursive formation currently identifiable in Western culture in terms of its unquestioned, taken-for-granted status, in both lay and academic discourse. In sharp contrast, Foucault argues that it is necessary to:

dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that is to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework...without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history" (Foucault, 1980, p. 59).

In place of the ahistorical sovereign subject, Foucault argued for an understanding of individuals as formed and constituted in discourse and accordingly, inseparable
from historical and socio-political contexts. Foucault (1980) argued specifically that subjects are constituted as effects of the various ‘power/knowledge’ matrices embedded within discourses. For Foucault, power and knowledge do not function here by influencing or moulding ‘pre-discursive’ individuals but rather produce and define possible forms of being through the sets of sanctioned statements embedded within discourses. Discourses, thus produce subjects, bring them into being and determine the ways in which individual ‘selves’ can be constituted:

The individual is not to be conceived of as a sort of elementary nucleus … on which power comes to fasten… In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourse, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals (Foucault, 1980, p. 98).

From Foucault’s perspective the subject is de-centred, no longer originary and distinct but thoroughly inseparable from the social; even the body is constituted in, and regulated by, discursive practices (e.g., Foucault, 1978). This means that all categories of identity, for example, race, gender, sexuality etc. are not natural or universal, and they do not have their origins in individuals but are rather discursive constructs, historically specific and thoroughly political. ‘Homosexuality,’ for example, is not a description of particular individuals and their essential characteristics but is rather an empty category that takes on different meanings within different, historically and politically contingent discourses. This conception of the ‘subject’ is in direct opposition to the fully autonomous pre-political subject of the modern era, that is separate from, and enters into, the realm of the social and political. From this perspective, as Butler (1992) succinctly suggests, “the subject is an accomplishment regulated and produced in advance. And is as such fully political; indeed, perhaps most political at the point in which it is claimed to be prior to politics itself” (p. 13).

Discourses and the power/knowledge strategies within them do not only produce subjects but also individual subjectivities. The term ‘subjectivity’ embraces, for example, thoughts, emotions, identities, ways of thinking and self-understanding all of which are “the results of a practice of production which is at once material, discursive and complex, always inscribed in relation to other practices of production of discourse” (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, and Walkerdine, 1984, p. 106). Subjectivity is constituted by discourse through the exercise of power within which
personal ‘identities’ are generated. In this way, discourses do not only produce individuals rendering them intelligible, visible and recognisable to others but also construct the ways in which individuals come to recognise themselves.

Discourses produce ‘subject positions’ which individuals occupy and from which they can speak or be addressed (Foucault, 1972, p. 51). For example, discourses of gender generally offer two (and only two ‘legitimate’) subject positions that individuals can occupy: male or female. These subject positions provide a particular ‘vantage point’ (Burr, 1995) from which individuals come to experience the world and themselves. Subject positions like those offered in the discourse of gender (or, for example, parenthood) are often occupied for long periods of time; others can be more transient, limited, for example to particular social relationships or interactions. The availability of subject positions is, to an extent, a function of the establishment of (usually binary) ‘norms’ within discourses. The establishment of ‘norms’ effects a closure of signification, in which other possibilities and meanings are (provisionally) excluded. For example, the norms established within the discourse of biological sex offer the subject positions ‘man’ or ‘woman,’ foreclosing the possibility of viable signification outside of this binary. Individuals identified as hermaphrodite or ‘intersexed’ (Fausto-Sterling, 1993) do not represent additional significations (expanding the intelligibility of the binary) but are rather excluded, and usually surgically altered, to conform to the norms of sex. Fausto-Sterling (1993) argues that along the biological sex continuum lie “at least five sexes—perhaps even more” (p. 21). The important point, however, is not how many variations of biological sex there may be, but rather that there are only two intelligible subject positions, and significantly, rather than expanding the binary, (all) individuals are pressed into, and understood as, conforming to one or other.

As Walkerdine (1986) suggests, the subject positions offered in discourses are multiple, shifting and often contradictory. This means that not only are subjectivities historically contingent, but also that they are always unstable, fragmented, often contradictory and dispersed. This fragmentation and contradiction is due to the proliferation of discourses (and their subject positions) which present conflicting and competing ways of understanding and giving meaning to the world (Gavey, 1997). Foucault (1972), rather than referring “to the unity of the subject,” refers instead to
“the various enunciative modalities [which] manifest his dispersion. To the various statuses, the various sites, the various positions that he can occupy or be given when making a discourse. To the discontinuity of the planes from which he speaks” (p. 54). However, because some discourses are more dominant, authoritative and taken-for-granted than others, subjectivity achieves some coherence and continuity. As Gavey argues:

dominant discourses appear ‘natural,’ denying their own partiality and gaining their authority by appealing to common sense. These discourses, which support and perpetuate existing power relations tend to constitute the subjectivity of most people most of the time (in a given place and time) (Gavey, 1997, p. 54).

The operation of power/knowledge, therefore, is not simply repressive but is, conversely, fundamentally productive. It produces ‘reality, domains of objects, rituals of truth’ and individual subjectivities (Foucault, 1995, p. 194). These subjectivities are constituted through the exercise of power within which multiple (and often conflicting) identities are generated and inscribed in (internalised) ideals of being and behaviour. It is this attention to the constitution of subjectivity that firmly locates this thesis within psychology. From a discursive perspective, psychological phenomena (e.g., identities, including gender and sexual identities, attitudes, personalities, emotions, etc.) do not have their origins in the private sphere of individuals but rather have a public and collective reality (Burman and Parker, 1993) and they are thoroughly saturated with (disciplinary) power.

2.2.4 Disciplinary Power

Power for Foucault does not operate in a sovereign form in modern Western societies, that is, as a unilateral ‘force relation’ which is imposed upon the subjugated (and repressed) population which is, in turn, forced to conform to particular social arrangements. It is rather ‘disciplinary’ operating through what Foucault called hierarchical surveillance and normalisation procedures and it is fundamentally productive:

The individual is no doubt the fictive atom of an ‘ideological’ representation of society, but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called ‘discipline’. We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it
'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality.... The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (Foucault, 1995, p. 194).

Foucault draws on Bentham’s ‘Panopticon’ to illustrate how disciplinary power functions. The Panopticon (a penitentiary) is an architectural arrangement comprised of a central observation tower surrounded by an annular peripheral building divided into cells that are open on the side that faces the tower. The Panopticon, Foucault argues, induced in its inmates “a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assure[d] the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1995, p. 201). In the Panopticon, power functions automatically because the inmates can always see the outline of the surveillance tower from the cell. However, panoptic power is also unverifiable because the inmates never know at any given moment whether they are being observed or not, but know that it is always possible. The Panopticon, therefore, is a generalisable principle, symbolic of (the possibility of) constant surveillance and it functions to produce self-disciplining individuals by rendering them always potentially visible:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection (Foucault, 1995, p. 202–203 ).

Power/knowledge operates by placing individuals within a ‘field of surveillance,’ which not only renders them visible to public scrutiny but which also produces self-disciplining individuals. In this respect, Foucault’s account of power can be distinguished from accounts that posit a more direct power relationship between oppressors, who exercise power over, and the oppressed who are deprived of certain freedoms and liberties. In the Panopticon, the ‘observer’ (who potentially exercises, but does not ‘hold,’ power) is unseen, anonymous or even absent. In this way, the exercise of power is automated and de-individualised but its effects and its operation are fully realised in the individual. Accordingly, it is not necessary to use force to constrain individuals; constraint is, rather, achieved through the omnipresent possibility of surveillance.
The production of a field of knowledge engenders inequitable power relationships through constituting some objects as normal and others as abnormal. For Foucault, the “fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts or theories” is a key element in power/knowledge strategies (Foucault, 1977a, p. 199). Discourses regulate and discipline by subjecting individuals to ‘normalisation procedures,’ in which individuals are assessed, measured and categorised in relation to particular social norms, for example, norms of ‘sanity,’ ‘sexuality’ and ‘femininity.’ In addition, individuals self-assess and self-monitor in relation to established norms. ‘Normalisation procedures’ operate with (and through) other mechanisms, notably ‘hierarchical surveillance’ and ‘the examination,’ which Foucault argues, function together as the three most dominant forms of social control in modern societies (Foucault, 1995). Defining certain individuals as abnormal (i.e., insane or homosexual) not only renders them visible and constrained through external observation, but also potentiates (and constrains) a number of specific social practices (e.g., segregation, cure, incarceration, treatment, etc.). The power/knowledge embedded in discourses, thus, establishes a variety of ‘norms’ (usually achieved through explicitly defining the abnormal) that function to legitimate particular social practices, discipline individuals and regulate populations.

Disciplinary power operates, therefore, in two thoroughly interconnected ways: it subjects individuals to a ‘normalising’ public gaze which categorises and measures them in relation to particular social norms; and it constitutes self-regulating and self-constraining individuals through the internalisation of such norms. Individuals, in positioning themselves in relation to established ‘norms,’ are thus actively enlisted in their reproduction and enforcement. The frequency with which gay men and lesbians have sought treatments for homosexuality is illustrative here. This has included, for instance, homosexual men ‘volunteering’ for Steinach’s (c.1920) castration operations (discussed in Chapter 3) and gay men and lesbians seeking therapy. Psychoanalytic therapy, in particular, is for Foucault, emblematic of the way in which subjects are both disciplined and self-discipline through the discourse of confession. This discourse, the origins of which Foucault traces to the middle ages and Christian penance, is one of the main (disciplinary) rituals on which modern humans rely for the production of truth:
For a long time, the individual was vouched for by the reference of others and the demonstration of his ties to the commonweal (family, allegiance, protection); then he was authenticated by the discourse of truth he was able or obliged to pronounce concerning himself. The truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power (Foucault, 1978, p. 58-59)

Central to the truthful confession was sex, and throughout the twentieth century, Foucault argues, it came to be thoroughly constituted in scientific terms. For example, Foucault notes that “there was scarcely a malady or physical disturbance” that was not imputed “some degree of sexual etiology” (1978, p. 65). Accordingly, the sexual confession was combined with scientific methods of examination (e.g., hypnosis or free association) and extracting the ‘truthful confession’ became a fundamentally expert matter. Professional intervention both enabled individuals to discover that which was hidden (from themselves), and was ultimately required to interpret and decipher all of the revealed details. The expert, thus, not only had the power to forgive and direct, but also to verify and render the confession scientifically valid. Ultimately, the truthful sexual confession was categorised and medicalised, placing it “under the rule of the normal and the pathological” (Foucault, 1978, p. 67). For Foucault, these elements constitute the “scientia sexualis,” which developed in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the scientific incitement to speak (and discover) the truth about sex.

Confessional discourse produces a subjectivity that generates its own self-discipline, and it is most effective because it conceals the mechanisms through which it operates:

The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer see it as an effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, “demands” only to surface (Foucault, 1978, p. 60).

The (discursive) incitement to conform by ‘freely’ subjugating oneself to an ‘internal’ disciplinary regime (regulated by internalised social norms) is most effective when it is not recognised as an effect of power. For Foucault, power is almost by definition, the operation of hidden or concealed mechanisms (e.g., taken-for-granted norms) that function most effectively when they are not recognised as reiterating power relations:
power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms... For it, secrecy is not in the nature of an abuse; it is indispensable to its operation (Foucault, 1978, p. 86).

Power, thus characterised, resembles some accounts of ideology. For example, Fairclough (1989) notes that "ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible" (p. 85). Foucault, however, deliberately distinguished his concept of discourse from ideology:

The notion of ideology appears to me to be difficult to use for three reasons. The first is that, whether one wants it to be or not, it is always in virtual opposition to something like the truth ... The second inconvenience is that it refers, necessarily I believe to something like a subject. Thirdly, ideology is a secondary position in relation to something which must function as the infrastructure or economic or material determinant for it (Foucault, 1979a, p. 36).

It is possible to add definitional difficulties to Foucault's list. Eagleton (1991), for example, finds at least 16 definitions of ideology currently in circulation, not all of which are compatible with one another. In addition, ideology has also been defined as: 'knowledge deployed in the service of power' (Thompson 1990); 'lived experience or lived relations' (Althusser, 1971); 'the power to project one's practices as universal and 'common sense' (Fairclough, 1989, p. 33); 'dilemmatic' (Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton and Radley, 1988); and 'all belief systems or theoretically articulated positions about reality' (Berger, Berger and Kellner, 1973).

Foucault was primarily arguing against the classic Marxist view of ideology as 'false consciousness' (see e.g., Burr, 1995). Briefly stated the notion of 'false consciousness' refers to the idea that there is some 'truthful reality' (e.g., the oppression of employees) but individuals do not recognise this reality because it is obscured by widely held (ideological) beliefs and values. This is problematic for Foucault because it suggests that there is the possibility of consciousness that is not false (i.e., unmediated by social, historical and institutional pressures), which is in opposition to his critique of truth. As I noted earlier, for Foucault there are many discursively produced 'regimes of truth,' none of which are necessarily more 'truthful' than any other. Moreover, Foucault considered it impossible to stand outside of discursive frameworks in, for example, the position of critique and objectively analyse ideas, practices and knowledges. As Mills (1997) notes, for Foucault all knowledge, including
theoretical knowledge (and, accordingly, Foucault’s own work), is produced within the limits of prevailing discourses.

Foucault’s concerns with ideology also centre on his conceptualisation of power as a relation, circulating through society, ubiquitous, unstable and fundamentally dispersed. Foucault was at pains to emphasise, for example, that, although the State is important, “relations of power … necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State” (Foucault, 1979a, p. 38). Power, therefore, is not confined, for example, to parliaments or economic relations in a simple oppressor/oppressed binary, but is rather intimately bound up (through discourse) with all personal relations and social practices. In this sense, there are no ‘values’, ‘belief systems’ or social practices that do not embody power relations; hence, as Eagleton (1991) notes, the term ideology tends to lose its significance. Accordingly, if ideology is taken to denote ‘false consciousness’, disciplinary power, for Foucault does not operate in an ideological form. (The extent to which the term ideology can usefully complement Foucault’s theoretical work is discussed later in this chapter.)

In the preceding sections I introduced some of the theoretical insights provided by Foucault’s work. This has not been an exhaustive account, but has rather focussed on aspects of his work that can potentially provide a theoretical basis for understanding the regulation of gender and sexuality in the military and for understanding individual accounts of gender, sexuality and military service. In these respects, Foucault’s work can inform understandings of knowledge and power, and in particular, the ways in which institutionally sanctioned knowledges not only establish regimes of truth and define ways of being, but also, in so doing, render resistance possible. In addition, Foucault’s work provides a way of understanding how subjects (and their identities and subjectivities) are constituted as the effects of power/knowledge strategies in discourse. In this way, Foucault’s work displaces traditional understandings of the subject as private, rational, ahistorical and stable and instead posits the subject as a discursive production and, as such, an unstable amalgam of multiple and often contradictory subject positions in discourse. Identities, such as gender and sexuality, are not theorised as essential, transhistorical inner features of individuals, but rather discursively produced norms that function as regulatory and disciplinary mechanisms. From this perspective, individual identities and the meanings ascribed to them, can be
conceptualised as sites of productive power struggles: allocated normative categories that are always provisional and contestable.

Foucault's work, while offering productive ways of understanding the relationships between realities, truth, knowledge/power, subjects and subjectivities, also presents a number of important theoretical (and methodological) difficulties for theorists and researchers committed to a political agenda. In particular, Foucault's deconstruction of identity categories, his questioning of the concept of truth and his dispersed concept of power all potentially problematise feminist politics. Is it possible, for example, to claim the truth (and reality) of women's oppression? Is it even possible to meaningfully refer to the universal categories 'woman' and 'lesbian' if there are no stable essential concepts of gender and sexuality? Without such stable concepts, how can an emancipatory politics proceed and effect social change? Moreover, Foucault is thoroughly sceptical of the utility of totalising emancipatory movements, and by implication feminism, where it aims, for example, to end the oppression of all women. Equally, if power and resistance are ubiquitous, that is, as Macdonnell (1986) puts it, "if every power situation is immanent in itself, why should there ever be resistance? From where would resistance come and how would it even be possible?" (p. 122).

This raises the question of agency. If subjects are discursive productions rather than originary, autonomous, self-contained agents, how is agency conceptualised or even possible? In the remainder of this chapter I deal with these and related issues in assessing the extent to which Foucault's work can be combined with feminist theoretical insights and concerns, and as such, provide (in whole or part) a theoretical (and political) basis for this research.

2.3 Feminism and Foucault

Feminism represents a diversity of political agendas, epistemological priorities, and theoretical perspectives. As Ussher (1991) notes, there are 'virtually as many different theories and arguments in the feminist debates as there are feminists' (p. 187). It is impossible to do justice to the variety of feminist contributions to both academic theory and political practice in this thesis. Moreover, it is impossible (and undesirable) to attempt to explicate an overarching 'feminist perspective,' which would falsely homogenise feminism and limit its (current) potential to challenge political injustices
on many levels, using a variety of approaches and strategies with which to effect social and political change.

Despite notable points of tension, many feminist theories reflect similar concerns to those evident in Foucault's work. Indeed, Bordo (1993) rightly observes that 'feminism has provided a significant contribution to the major theoretical shifts of the last twenty years' although she notes that this contribution is rarely acknowledged (see also Burman, 1990). For example, she argues that male theorists such as Foucault have been credited with the shift from 'conceptualising the body as a purely biological form to a political site of social control' despite this being a central feature in feminist Western politics in the 1960s and 70s. Feminists, like Foucault, have been severely critical of claims to 'objectivity' and the concept of 'transcendental' knowledges or, what Bordo (1990) calls "the view from nowhere" arguing instead that all knowledge is historically and culturally specific, value-laden and always represents a 'view from somewhere' (see also, Harding and Hintikka, 1983). Feminists have also, as Humphries (1997) notes, questioned taken-for-granted dichotomies around knowledge creation, particularly, such dichotomies as reason/emotion, grand theorizing/lay theorising and researcher/researched. In recent years, many feminists have also resisted essentialist concepts of gender and sexuality. In relation to gender, for example, they have questioned the conferral of an abstract universality on all women and the production of 'grand' theories of women's oppression (e.g., Butler, 1990; Fraser and Nicholson, 1990; Harding, 1986; hooks, 1984, 1988; Jagger, 1983; Smith, D. 1990b; Lugones and Spelman 1983). Additionally, many feminists share with Foucault (and other poststructuralist accounts) a recognition of the importance of language and an interest in the ways in which language affects understanding and structures social action (e.g., Daly, 1979; Faganis, 1994; Gavey, 1997 Smith, D. 1990a; Spender, 1985). Feminists and Foucault also share a common concern with power and with redefining the scope of the political. In this sense, Foucault's concept of power is not incompatible with feminist claims that the 'personal is political.' Foucault argues, for example, that, "to say that 'everything is political' is to recognise the omnipresence of relations of force and their immanence to a political field" (1979b, p. 72).

Nevertheless, despite some key areas in which Foucault and feminism converge, feminists have also criticised a number of aspects of his theorising and raised potential
difficulties inherent in translating Foucault (and poststructuralism in general) into feminist political concerns. In the sections that follow, I introduce these critiques noting, where appropriate, their specific relevance to Foucault’s theoretical work.

2.3.1 The Critique of Truth and the Dangers of Epistemological Relativism

One of the most trenchant criticisms levelled at work in the poststructuralist tradition concerns its inability to align itself with any particular political perspective (Burman, 1990). This difficulty potentially arises from a number of related elements in Foucault’s work (and poststructuralist accounts in general). Burr (1998), referring specifically to social constructionist accounts, frames one aspect of this problem as follows:

Abandoning the idea of an ultimate truth appears at first to be a liberatory move, but brings with it the question of how one is then to decide between alternative perspectives. In wishing to advocate some change for ourselves or for others, the usual foundation on which to base this is removed. How can we say, for example, that certain groups are oppressed, if these ‘groups’ and their ‘oppression’ are constructions which can have no greater claim to truth than any other? How can we claim that some groups and not others should be given a social ‘voice’? If our concern is to give greater social space to marginal groups, does this include, for example, the National Front and if not, why not? And who is in a position to arbitrate such choices? (Burr, 1998, p. 14).

Underlying this concern is the issue of ‘epistemological relativism’ (Willig, 1998a) and it arises when truth, as a warrant for knowledge claims, is questioned or abandoned. In this case, as Burr notes it becomes more difficult to subscribe to a particular political perspective based, for example, on the truth of women’s oppression, and to assess competing claims to knowledge. The danger is that in depriving knowledge claims of the warrant of truth, all knowledge claims become thoroughly relative and potentially equally valid. To follow Bordo’s (1993) terminology, the largely discredited “view from nowhere” is replaced by the “view from everywhere,” in which all perspectives have equal epistemic claim and there is no clear way of deciding between them. Ultimately, this potentially results in a form of liberal pluralism, in which ‘anything goes’ and which precludes collective political struggle.

One approach that attempts to deal with the ‘epistemological problem’ directly is feminist standpoint theory, proposed most notably by Harding (1993) and Hartsock
Hartsock argues that Foucault's account is the theory of a coloniser which rejects and resists the colonisers but which "fails to provide an epistemology which is usable for the task of revolutionizing, creating and constructing" (p. 164). This, Hartsock (1990) argues, is because Foucault is unable to think from the perspective of the colonised. As Sawicki (1994) notes, it is significant that Hartsock links this particular criticism of Foucault's work to his social location as a privileged white male because it 'commits her to the view that certain situations are more likely to produce distorted knowledges and partial visions than others' (p. 297). Indeed, Hartsock (1990) is explicit in this respect and argues that "epistemologies grow out of differing material circumstances" and calls for "theories that begin from the experience and point of view of the dominated" (p. 158). For Hartsock, (1990) the experience of domination provides a privileged vantage point from which knowledge claims can be warrants. Hartsock's basic thesis is not dissimilar to Harding's (1991, 1993, 1995) approach. Like Hartsock, Harding (1993) also considers knowledge to be grounded in social location and argues that although the oppressed are socially disadvantaged they are epistemologically privileged and in a position to produce "maximally objective" knowledge (p. 54). Harding, while rejecting the traditional concept of 'objectivity' calls instead for 'strong objectivity,' which is objectivity 'delinked from the ideal of neutrality' (1995, p. 331). Her concern is that the traditional linkage of objectivity and neutrality (which she labels 'objectivism') "certifies as value-neutral, normal, natural, and therefore not political at all the policies and practices through which powerful groups can gain the information and explanations that they need to advance their priorities" (1995, p. 337). Accordingly, like Hartsock, Harding regards an important starting point for alternative knowledges to be the lives of the oppressed.

In many respects, standpoint approaches such as those proposed by Hartsock and Harding, are not entirely incongruous with a Foucauldian approach. Each of these approaches takes the view that transcendental knowledges are impossible and that claims to such knowledge are pervasively linked to power, politics and legitimacy. With respect to the 'scientific endeavour' and its claims to neutrality Harding (1995) notes, for example, that the "neutrality ideal functions more through what its normalizing procedures and concepts implicitly prioritize than through explicit directives. ...This normalising politics frequently defines the objections of its victims..."
and any criticisms of its institutions, practices or conceptual world as agitation by special interests” (p. 337). In this respect, both approaches acknowledge that all knowledge is produced from specific locations, that there can only be ‘situated knowledges’ (see also Haraway, 1988) and that (in various ways) some knowledges are excluded or de-legitimised. Moreover, both approaches reject scientific ideals of neutrality, although Ransom (1993) criticises Foucault for implying that the method involved in his textual analysis distances him from his object of study. Ransom (1993) argues that this is problematic, since Foucault’s textual analysis involves labelling which is not a neutral activity. For example, she argues that Foucault presents the label ‘the hysterization of women’s bodies’ (Foucault, 1978) as a neutral characterisation of a specific historical period, however, from a feminist perspective this label could be seen as a product of sexual privilege. I think Ransom is right about the implicit values in Foucault work, however, I am not convinced that Foucault intended his method to be neutral or disinterested as Ransom suggests. (I return to this issue in Chapter 4.)

The most significant point of difference between Foucault’s work and standpoint theories lies in the latter’s claims that disadvantaged social location produces (or has the potential to produce) more accurate knowledge than knowledge originating from other, more ‘dominant’ perspectives. For example, Harding argues in relation to research efforts, that feminist standpoint theory “claims that starting from women’s lives is a way of gaining less false and distorted results of research” (Harding, 1995, p. 346) and that:

The distinctive features of women’s situation in a gender-stratified society are being used as resources in the new feminist research. It is these distinctive resources, which are not used by conventional researchers, that enable feminisms to produce empirically more accurate descriptions and theoretically richer explanations than does conventional research (Harding, 1991, p. 119).

Most antithetical to Foucault’s approach, is the claim of epistemic privilege. Both Harding and Hartsock appear to explicitly link knowledge to some conception of substantive truth and privileged ‘knowing.’ Harding (1995) however, is cautious, noting that the concept of truth is too strong for scientific claims; she argues instead that some research is “less false” (p. 346). This is a helpful move but it still relies on some direct notion of knowing that ensures ‘more accurate’ knowledge. For Harding
and Hartsock, it is the occupation of a marginalised social location (or ‘being oppressed’) that provides the ‘privileged vantage point’ (Hartsock, 1983) and which guarantees “less false” knowledge. However, as Gill (1998) succinctly notes, identifying oppression (and oppressed groups) is not straightforward and it cannot be done independently of epistemology (see also Griffiths, 1995). Moreover, Gill (1998) rightly points out that “who is and who is not oppressed is profoundly contested” (p. 28). From these standpoint perspectives, in principle any non-dominant group can claim epistemological privilege and it is difficult to assess competing claims, albeit now limited to those of the ‘oppressed.’ Accordingly, while I have no argument with the contention that ‘social locations (and the communities within them) produce forms of knowledge,’ paradoxically, this perspective also threatens to lapse into a form of pluralism, although the liberal influence is now somewhat undermined. A related difficulty, is that the epistemic privileging of marginality ultimately results in claims to knowledge based on ‘speaking from locations of authentic otherness’ (Minha-ha, 1989; see also Martin and Mohanty, 1986). Not only does this exoticise and fetishise ‘otherness’ but also, in so doing, it reverses, rather than challenges, existing hierarchical categorisations (Lennon and Whitford, 1994). In addition, as Lal (1996) notes, it also potentially obscures the possibility of non-oppressive, non-colonialising knowledge forms emerging from non-subjugated standpoints.

A ‘feminist standpoint’ is a political perspective and Harding (1991) emphasises, somewhat paradoxically, that it does not bear any necessary relationship to the lived experiences of women and accordingly she denies “experiential foundationalism” (p. 311). This seems confusing, but as Gill (1998) notes, it marks a distinction between ‘claims on the basis of experience’ and ‘standpoints,’ where a standpoint is the outcome of a collective struggle and not an inevitable consequence of being a member of an oppressed group. However, this means that there may be many (and conflicting) standpoints that claim to speak from the perspective of, for example, women’s lives (Gill, 1998) and again no clear way of evaluating among them (Willig, 1998a). Moreover, the standpoint at issue is clearly that of the theorist and not necessarily that of the ‘oppressed group’ and as Marshall, Woollett and Dosanjh (1998) observe assuming that (feminist) researchers share a singular feminist standpoint at all is problematic (see also Willig, 1998a). Ultimately, although both Harding and Hartsock
are thoroughly opposed to identity politics and the idea that there is a 'universal essential woman's life,' Gill (1998) rightly argues that 'identity positions still act as the guarantor of the worth of knowledge' (p. 33). Moreover, it is an identity position that is, to some extent, imposed upon the marginalised group in question. (I discuss identity politics in more detail below). The associated danger is that, identity markers, such as "class, 'race', gender and sexuality are treated as unproblematic independent variables, and Harding risks re-inscribing an essentialism that treats socially constructed categories as unitary" (Gill, 1998, p. 28; see also Flax, 1990).7

Gill (1998) suggests, rightly I think, that standpoint perspectives are politically strategic, in that they represent a concerted attempt to "secure speaking rights for people working from the standpoints of the oppressed, in a scientific community still steeped in positivism" (p. 33). Indeed, much of Foucault's work, not unlike feminist standpoint theory, is also located in the specific struggles of marginal groups, notably, prisoners (1995), mental patients (1988a), and homosexuals (1978), and is concerned with creating the space necessary for the introduction of previously excluded knowledges. The important difference is that Foucault aims to distance himself from science and its rhetoric (including its truth/knowledge claims), whereas ultimately standpoint approaches (as Harding recognises) risk 'relegitimating scientific rationality' (Harding, 1995, p. 347) and accordingly re-affirming the discursive (institutional) power of (particularly modern European) science.

Different social locations produce different knowledges, minimally because, from a Foucauldian perspective, discourses both produce and position individuals within different 'fields of visibility' and, accordingly, produce and install different ontological effects. However, 'starting off from the lives of those who least benefit from institutionalised power imbalances' does not, I think, guarantee 'less distorted' "more accurate and comprehensive knowledge" (Harding, 1995, p. 344). As Stanley and Wise (1993) observe "'a way of seeing' is also 'a way of not seeing' for feminism as much as it is for all other people" [original emphasis] (p. 44). However, starting from a particular standpoint does have the potential to produce different knowledge forms. As such, it provides an important opportunity for marginal knowledges (and 'voices')

7 Gill (1998) acknowledges Ann Phoenix for drawing her attention to this point.
to enter into the public domain where they can enter into the struggle over meanings and thus potentially challenge dominant knowledge forms and their related practices.

Questioning and problematising Truth (however this is characterised) need not eventuate in liberal pluralism or a fatalistic political nihilism, however, it does require a fundamental shift in emphasis. Such a shift, to paraphrase Brown (1995) means feminism replacing ‘truth with politics, philosophy with struggle and privileged knowledge with a cacophony of unequal voices clamouring for position’ (Brown, 1995, p. 43; see also Phelan, 1993). However, such a politics must, I think, be based in an ongoing engagement (and struggle) with the (fluid) discursive structures that form and constitute all subjectivity and realities and all understandings of social and material contexts. For this reason, for both research and politics, the issue pivots not on concepts of truth but rather on whose (unavoidably epistemologically relative) version of reality does one relate to, act upon (Willig, 1998a) and when and why. In this sense, I think Willig (1998a) is right to argue that these decisions (and the politics informing them) need to be (reflexively) justified, and continually evaluated. (I discuss the issue of reflexivity, its importance in feminist theories (Griffin and Phoenix, 1994) and the problem of ‘the tolerance of multiple meanings’ as they relate specifically to research in more detail in Chapter 4). The shift from truth to politics underlies Foucault’s work and contrary to some critics, it does not automatically deprive feminism of its political purchase. However, questioning the concept of truth (or perhaps more specifically for Foucault politicising ‘truth’) is not the only aspect of Foucault’s account that presents potential difficulties for political movements, it is also Foucault’s account of power and his emphasis on difference and the particular (discussed below).

2.3.2 Problematics of Power

One of the difficulties inherent in incorporating Foucault’s work into a politically motivated project concerns his dispersed, unstable concept of power. According to Foucault, both power and resistance are so thoroughly dispersed throughout discourses that it is almost impossible to predict and control discourses and their ‘effects.’ The problematic implication here is that the outcome of any directed, organised political struggle is somewhat arbitrary. Potentially compounding this difficulty, is Foucault’s concern that traditional emancipatory movements, with their
tendencies towards 'totalising theories,' (inadvertently) either replicate and reinforce the dominating and oppressive tendencies to which they are opposed, or replace them with similarly oppressive regimes. Foucault’s concerns are, to some extent persuasive, and feminism itself, as Grimshaw (1993) points out, ‘has not been innocent of divisive, exclusionary and oppressive tendencies’ (p. 56). Grimshaw argues, the eliding of differences between women has resulted in exclusionary practices, and attempts at democracy within feminism have sometimes resulted in a “‘tyranny of structurelessness’; a pragmatic domination by the more experienced and articulate” (1993, p. 57; see also Sawicki, 1994; Humphries, 1997).

Foucault’s scepticism regarding the prediction and control of discursive effects coupled with his rejection of the notion of ‘total emancipation,’ renders his account potentially problematic. The difficulty, according to Fraser (1989), is that in the absence of a normative framework, there is no way of distinguishing between malevolent and benign forms of power or effective and ineffective forms of resistance (see also Grimshaw, 1993). Fraser (1989) suggests that this leaves Foucault two choices; either he has to acknowledge inevitable nihilism and pessimism, or he has to appeal to certain values, which means acknowledging that power is disproportionately held by some over others (see also Said, 1984). Best (1994) however, criticises, Foucault for having ‘normative commitments while simultaneous denying they exist,’ a problem, he argues, that is compounded in Foucault’s later work, in which he ‘employs normative terms, such as ‘liberty’ and ‘autonomy,’ without explaining why we should be free of domination’ (p. 46). It is difficult to know the extent to which it is possible to completely avoid normative concepts and still construct a coherent account. The question is, does this leave Foucault with a nihilistic and pessimistic account and, if not, does it entail a re-conceptualisation of his account of power?

Foucault does not deny the pessimistic tendencies in his work, however, he argues that this does not mean “apathy but rather hyper- and pessimistic activism” (Foucault, 1986, p. 343). Foucault’s argument is ‘not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which means we always have something to do’ (Foucault, 1986, p. 343).

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\*Despite this criticism, Fraser (1989) appreciates many aspects of Foucault’s work and, in particular, his imbrication of knowledge and power, his politicisation of expert knowledge, and his emphasis on concrete local struggles.
The 'site' of this 'activism,' and as such of political struggle, for Foucault, is knowledge and the vehicle for the struggle is his historical-textual analyses. Foucault's work on the genealogies of power/knowledge, for example, involves analyses of the discursive structures that support particular knowledge forms. In this sense, Foucault's method is 'deconstructive;' it analyses discourse itself and the relationships, objects and elements that discourses establish, and the 'truths' and 'realities' they generate. While this is, to some extent, a dismantling of, for example, normative injunctions and the totalisations of power and knowledge, it is also fundamentally productive. The deconstruction creates a space, but this space is not a deficiency or a void, it is rather space within which it is possible to think and act. In this sense, Foucault's theories and politics are not nihilistic, but they are provisional; never final, complete or enclosed but are rather always in the process of 'becoming' in the changing specifics of time, space and localised struggle.

A re-conceptualisation of Foucault' account of power is not necessary for a feminist politics. Foucault, as Fraser (1989) rightly notes, explicitly resisted characterising power as a possession, but he did not deny that in its exercise, power has disproportionate effects; not all individuals and groups are positioned and constituted equally within discourses. What he does undermine are unilateral power relations (e.g., of men over women), arguing instead that power is capillary; it seeps up from below, through discourse and all relations, taking the form of a web or network (Foucault, 1980). In this way Foucault's account is pluralistic but it is conceptually distinct from liberal forms of pluralism (see also Ransom, 1993). It is important, I think, to point out that Foucault did not deny the negative repressive force of the State, but he did insist that power relations are much more complex. As Lemert and Gillan (1982) suggest, for Foucault, the "State segregates, labels, creates and oppresses, but it does not exhaust the political economy of power-knowledge" (p. 112). Moreover, Foucault's attention to dominant discourses is not incompatible with aspects of Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony. Both Gramsci and Foucault are interested in the means by which hegemonic (or dominant) discourses are transmitted through history, politics and culture. The difference between them as, Cocks (1989) suggests, is that Foucault has "no trust in power emergent that seeks to replace power entrenched" (p. 74). Feminists have also characterised hegemony in a way that is, I
think, thoroughly compatible with Foucault's work. Smith A.M. (1995) notes, for example, that hegemony:

does not take the form of brute domination; it entails instead the delimitation of the intelligible...To fail to achieve an adequate ‘fit’ within an officially recognized position is to be de-authorized—to be denied recognition as an author of a text, and to have one’s text dismissed from the start as incoherent, illegitimate, or unbelievable (Smith A.M., 1995, p. 169).

Foucault's dispersed and pluralistic concept of power has clear advantages in the sense that in all social relationships there is always power and (the possibility of) resistance. For some feminists, this has heralded a move away from theorising women as simply the oppressed victims of male domination, towards an emphasis on the many ways in which women resist particular discourses and the power/knowledge formations within them (see e.g., Bartky, 1990; Malson, 1998; Mills, 1991; Sawicki, 1991; Smith, D. 1990a). This aspect of Foucault’s work is also particularly useful in this thesis. It allows me to ask questions, for example, about how lesbians in the military resist and (discursively) negotiate the formal regulatory policies, without assuming they are simply or only the victims of repressive military regulation.

A further problematic element inherent in Foucault’s dispersed concept of power concerns, I think, the difficulty associated with the anonymity of discourses. As I noted earlier, the emergence and temporal continuity of particular discursive formations is, to a large extent, dependent on prevailing social, historical (and discursive) conditions. And while social and institutional pressures combine with existing discourses (and as such the emergence of particular discourses is not entirely arbitrary), Foucault did argue that they always exceed individual and institutional expectations. It is partly for this reason, that Foucault theorised discourses as anonymous. Some contemporary authors have noted, that this makes it difficult to apportion individual or institutional responsibility for, the production and reiteration of ‘problematic’ discourses (see e.g., Burr, 1995; Grimshaw 1993; Mills, 1997).

Dominant discourses often have a long (although not unchallenged) history partly because they achieve a taken-for-granted status through their introduction as knowledge, which is (usually), ascribed some form of truth status. For example, arguably one of the most pervasive dominant discourses throughout Western history is patriarchal discourse, and it has maintained its dominant status primarily through
recourse to the, apparently self-evident and taken-for-granted biological status (different and inferior) of women. However, as Mills (1997) notes, with respect to colonial discourse, while it is difficult to blame individual agents for their part in imperialism, it is also clear that there is considerable variation in the extent to which individuals "championed, acquiesced or challenged" colonial discourse (p. 122). Accordingly, although it may not be necessary (or even possible) to hold individuals responsible for, the dominance of, what Mills (1997) calls, 'large-scale knowledges', for example, patriarchy or colonialism, it is possible (although not always easy) to identify individual and collective accounts that sustain and perpetuate such discourses. Identifying 'problematic' discourses however, is not necessarily straightforward. Gavey (1996) points out, for example, that some feminist theorising has, inadvertently, reinforced dominant traditional constructions of, for example, sexuality and unwittingly colluded with "technologies of heterosexual coercion" (p. 56).

The difficulty associated with predicting (with any certainty) the meanings that will be made of theoretical/political research efforts, and ultimately their effects, is important. In relation to this research, for example, it implies that in introducing alternative knowledges about sexuality, gender and the military I may (inadvertently) arm the military with knowledge that can be used to justify increasingly 'oppressive' practices. This raises again, I think, the importance of (political) reflexivity and the requirement to thoroughly locate research in its historical, social and political context. To this end, in Chapter 3, I trace the historical and discursive construction of (homo)sexuality and assess the implications of a number of different theoretical/political approaches that have emerged in the struggle to achieve lesbian (and gay) 'equality.' While this alone does not ensure the emergence of an 'unproblematic' knowledge form, it does facilitate a thorough discussion of the assumptions underlying particular knowledges, and their potential consequences. Moreover, while it is undoubtedly difficult to predict the meanings that will be made of research efforts and perhaps undesirable to attempt to fix meaning, it is possible to be clear about the intended meanings of theoretical, political and research efforts. (I return to this issue, briefly, in Chapter 3 and in more detail in Chapter 4.)
2.3.3 Ideology and Discourse

Earlier in this chapter, I noted that Foucault rejects the term ideology, particularly when ideology is defined as ‘false consciousness.’ However, even when ideology is detached from concepts of truth and falsity, and power is conceived of as more than the simple imposition of, for example, dominant beliefs on a group of subjects (Mills, 1997), the distinction between ideology and (dominant) discourses is still difficult to determine. As discussed throughout this chapter, for Foucault certain knowledge forms achieve dominance in a number of ways, and are ultimately established through their ‘taken-for-granted’ (ideological?) status. Is ‘patriarchy,’ for example, a dominant discourse or an ideology or both? Is there an ideological function within discourses, or is ideology the larger term within which there are particular discourses and forms of signification? Many contemporary feminists generally retain some concept of ideology. However, often the intended meaning of the term is undefined and, accordingly, it is difficult to establish the extent to which these concepts of ideology differ from (or complement) Foucault’s concept of discourse.

Foucault’s attention to the constitution of subjectivity suggests that there is no easy line to be drawn between ‘ideology as a system of beliefs’ (or the content of thought) and discourses as linguistic, symbolic systems and social practices. Moreover, such a distinction tends to reiterate the self-social dichotomy that Foucault was anxious to avoid. To recall Gavey’s (1997) argument, ‘dominant discourses support and perpetuate existing power relations and they tend to constitute the subjectivity of most people most of the time’ (p. 54). Eagleton (1991) argues that although “ideology is ‘subject-centred’, it is not reducible to the question of subjectivity. Some of the most powerful ideological effects are generated by institutions such as parliamentary democracy; impersonal political processes rather than subjective states of being” (p. 223). However, Foucault does not argue that discourses are reducible to subjectivity, although, his reasons for rejecting the term ideology suggest that he considered this to be a difficulty for ideological accounts. There is, however, a potential difficulty inherent in Foucault’s account. As Eagleton (1991) notes, the “category of discourse is inflated to the point where it imperializes the whole world, eliding the difference between thought and material reality...the new ‘transcendental’ hero is discourse itself which is apparently prior to everything else” (p. 219).
Eagleton (1991) argues for retaining the term ideology and suggests that it can be viewed as "a particular set of effects within discourses" (p. 194). Using the example of bourgeois ideology Eagleton argues:

Bourgeois ideology includes this particular discourse on property, that way of talking about the soul, this treatise on jurisprudence and the kind of utterances one overhears in pubs where the landlord wears a military tie. What is 'bourgeois' about this mixed bunch of idioms is less the kind of languages they are than the effects they produce: effects for example of closure whereby certain forms of signification are silently excluded, and certain signifiers 'fixed' in a commanding position (Eagleton, 1991, p. 194).

Foucault's concept of discourse, however, does not appear to differ substantially from this concept of ideology. Foucault does not theorise discourses as purely linguistic, (or as 'kinds of language') and he also argues that discourses produce particular effects. For example, in the following extract, although focussing on the domain of the speakable, he implies that he includes systems of signification. In this sense, Foucault's account of the relationship between silence, forms of signification and discourse is not at variance with Eagleton's approach:

Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side of which is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions along side the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorised, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses (Foucault, 1978, p. 27).

That discourses can have ideological effects (in Eagleton's sense) is thus not precluded by Foucault's account, however, I am not sure that Eagleton's characterisation of ideologies as effects of discourse, fully captures the relationship between the two terms. Griffin suggests, for example, that discourses “operate in the ideological domain ... power provides the link between discourse and ideology” (Griffin, 1993, p. 7). This implies ideology is the larger term within which there are discourses rather than ideologies being more strictly discursive effects. Frow (1994) also suggests a different relationship between discourse and ideology. He argues that “in so far as power invests all discourse, the category of ideology is a way of referring to systems of
value in which all speakers are enclosed and which is the productive basis of all speech” (p. 296).

Unlike Eagleton, Frow (1994) positions ideology as the productive basis of discourse, which implies that ideology underpins discourses. I think this is a helpful move. If, as Frow (1994) suggests ideology can be loosely defined as a ‘system of values,’ then it is possible to conceive of ideology as embedded within and supporting particular discursive structures, rather than being just their effects. In this way patriarchal ideology, for example, supports, sustains and reinforces, but is not reducible to, patriarchal discourse (nor am I suggesting that discourse is reducible to ideology). However, discourses can be understood as mediating and indeed producing ideologies. The relationship between ideology and discourse I am suggesting is thus, to some extent, circular; ideologies underpin discourses but discourses are also the site of ideological production, reinforcement and contestation.

Ideology and power are thoroughly imbricated. However, the extent to which ideologies function only (or primarily) in the interests of dominant groups, or only as the underpinnings of dominant discourses is debatable. Burr (1995) argues, for example, that discourses have the “potential to be deployed ideologically, that is, in the service of power and in the interests of … relatively powerful groups in society” (p. 85). Frow (1994) echoes this point:

In so far as power is always asymmetrically split, the category [ideology] … is both a ‘universal’ category and a category that refers to the tactical appropriation of particular positions by a dominant social class … The hegemonic practice of the ruling class attempts to ensure that subordinate classes operate within limits defined by the dominant ideology. (Frow, 1994, p. 296)

However, ideologies are not confined to dominant groups or to underpinning dominant discourses. For example, feminist discourse is subordinate, in the generally accepted use of the term, to patriarchal discourse, but both are supported by and embody particular ideologies. Ideology is thus not confined to dominant groups although there is clearly an important mutually reinforcing, reciprocal relationship between dominant discourses and dominant ideologies, and, in this sense, I think Burr and Frow point to an important distinction between dominant and subordinate discourses and ideologies. The limits of ideology, like the limits of power for Foucault,
are not reached at the limits of the State, however, States are, in general, more heavily
invested in some discursive domains and these domains rely on, reinforce and
reproduce 'dominant ideologies.' As Frow (1994) observes "the concept of ideology is
still predominantly reserved for systematic and immediately political or propositional
conceptualization—for 'opinion' or 'world view' (p. 298). The difficulty here, Frow
notes, is that it restricts the ideological sphere and does not acknowledge that "all
meaning is, in the fullest sense of the word, political" (1994, p. 298).

Once ideology is detached from concepts of truth and falsity, displaced from its
traditional location within consciousness and its scope broadened to include the
possibilities of meaningful signification outside of hegemonic forms, it can I think, be
used productively with discursive concepts. The relationship between ideology and
discourse that I have outlined here suggests that the domain within which ideology
can be accessed is discourse. With respect to this thesis, this means that the
ideological system of values that underpins the military and its associated policies, can
be understood through the domain of military discourse. 9

2.3.4 Agency, Ontology and the Subject

Foucault has attracted a further important criticism from feminists and critical
scholars. In particular, Best (1994) argues, that a 'serious deficiency in Foucault's work
is his lack of a theory of agency and his reduction of the subject to an effect of
discourse and disciplinary mechanisms' (p. 46). In a similar vein, Stavro-Pearce (1994)
argues that post-structural accounts (and she includes Foucault), in seeing 'the subject
as essentially constituted by shifting discourses are unable to theorise how the subject
develops a critical perspective that is not simply reducible to these discourses' (p. 222).
Both Best and Stavro-Pearce seem to mistake the discursively constituted subject for
the determined subject and, as Butler (1990) notes, assume that discursive constitution
forecloses the possibility of agency.

Foucault does not deny agency but he does argue that the possibilities for agency
are generated by, and within, the discursive. Butler (1990) succinctly echoes this point

9 I am using the terms 'accessed' and 'understood' deliberately here, to emphasise that I am not
suggesting ideology critique.
with respect to socio-linguistic construction: "construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible" (p. 147). Framed this way, the persistent demand in some contemporary theorising for agency to be located (and 'originate') in a (usually) foundational pre-discursive subject seems puzzling. At the very least it appears to re-articulate a number of problematic binary oppositions: subject/object (Sawicki, 1994) self/social, mind/body, and free will/determinism (Butler, 1990) which reflects the dichotomous thinking inherent in the discursive legacy of Cartesian dualism. As Sawicki (1994) rightly notes this 'binary logic is itself historically contingent, embedded within a discursive tradition that conceals its productive function by reifying and naturalizing its effects' (p. 299). Stavro-Pearce (1994) would agree on this point, and explicitly distances herself from 'the traditional dualisms of Western thought' (p. 238). However, her own theoretical approach does entail a separation between the 'body subject' (which she takes from Merleau-Ponty) and 'discursive construction.' For Stavro-Pearce, it is this separation that provides the possibility of human agency.

It is not entirely clear why Stavro-Pearce (1994) considers such a separation (or distinction) a necessary condition for agency. However, it does reveal a predilection for retaining some concept of, if not precisely a pre-discursive subject, at least an extra-discursive subject, with a capacity for self-reflection that is somehow separate from the socio-cultural sphere. Butler (1990), drawing extensively on Foucault's work, argues instead that:

The subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; "agency," then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. ... There is no self that is prior to the convergence [of discursive routes and injunctions] or who maintains "integrity" prior to its entrance into this conflicted cultural field (Butler, 1990, p. 145).

For feminists such as Butler (1990) Foucault's account of discourse does not preclude but potentiates agency, and the possibilities for subjects to constitute themselves as subjects is an unavoidable part of this potentiation (see also, Hekman, 1990; Sawicki,
As Hekman (1990) argues, for Foucault “the constituted subject is a subject that resists” (p. 73). Frow (1994) succinctly summarises the relationship between agency and discourse. He argues that “every use of discourse is at once a judgement about its relationship to dominant forms of power and either an assent or a resistance to this relation” (Frow, 1994, p. 296). Foucault’s subjects are thus able to act, however, the possibilities for action are not centred in subjects but rather in discursive practices and are thus constrained by historical and socio-political contexts. Foucault effectively destabilises the dichotomy between free will and determinism; the Foucauldian subject is regulated, but neither wholly determined nor wholly arbitrary and voluntaristic. Foucault’s central concern, is not to deny agency but rather, to paraphrase Ransom (1993), to undermine the liberal essentialist concept of the subject, which provides the basis for all humanist thought and action. For Foucault there is no originary, rational subject at the centre of agency, and, in this way, Foucault undermines the dichotomy between subjects and the social context; the subject and the wor(l)d thoroughly imply, and are thoroughly implicated in each other.

Stavro-Pearce (1994) rejects this conception of the subject for a number of reasons, but they centre on two primary issues. The first, concerns ontology; the second pertains to the status and possibility of (stable) identities, and their related politics (discussed below). Regarding ontology, Stavro-Pearce (1994) argues that feminist poststructuralists (most notably, Butler, 1990, 1992) in conceiving the subject (and its related identity categories) as a discursive production, ‘separate the material and empirical from the symbolic and discursive’ (Stavro-Pearce 1994, p. 226). This, she argues, results in an underestimation of the significance of categories such as gender, ‘race’ and class in terms of how ‘actually existing practices and institutions oppress women’ (p. 233) which underestimates the impact of such categories in terms of women’s ‘lived realities’ (p. 239), and loses sight of ‘real existing women’ (p. 240).

I do not think Butler’s account entails a denial of ontology in this sense or a denial of the ontological implications of particular discursive practices. For example, in

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10 Butler is often resistant to being categorised, for example, as a feminist or lesbian. With respect to lesbianism, for example, she argues, “this is not to say that I will not appear at political occasions under the sign lesbian, but that I would like to have it permanently unclear what precisely that sign signifies” (Butler, 1991, p. 301)
relation to biological sex, Butler (1994) suggests that it is usually argued that one of the most salient characteristics of women's biological sex is that, unlike men, women can be impregnated. This she argues is one of the most common ways in which it is claimed there are real biological differences. However, the point for Butler, is that such a statement is not a neutral statement about the materiality of the body, but rather a re-iteration of the norms of the social institution of reproduction, that discursively enforces itself. The issue for Butler therefore, pivots not, on whether there are certain kinds of biological differences, but rather, on how norms are discursively imposed and enforced upon bodies and taken to be their 'real' defining characteristics. “Ontology” she notes, “is, thus, not a foundation, but a normative injunction that operates insidiously by installing itself into political discourse as its necessary ground” (1990, p. 148). In this way, the often conceived of as foundational categories, such as gender, ‘race’ and class (to follow Stavro-Pearce), are not ontologically prior to discourse but rather normative sanctions that, through particular discourses, establish and install ‘ontological effects.’ From this perspective, to paraphrase Brown et al. (1998) ontology is relative; ‘a process of becoming, a perpetual re-invention, of as-yet-unthought orders of the real’ (Brown and Pujol with Curt, 1998; see also Phelan 1993 on the perpetual and always incomplete process of ‘becoming lesbian').

Perspectives such as Butler's, while changing the ways in which ontology is understood, do not separate the material and discursive quite as neatly as Stavro-Pearce (1994) alleges. Moreover, they do not underestimate, but rather prioritise, the significance of normative categories in terms of their political and ontological implications and, accordingly, their effects in terms of 'lived realities.' Butler (1994), for example, notes that an effect of the discourse of reproduction is that a woman who cannot, does not, or will not bear children finds it difficult to “inhabit her gender without an implicit sense of failure or inadequacy” (1994, p. 34). Butler suggests that whatever the reasons some women do not have children: “it takes a pretty vigorous (and politically informed) community ...to alleviate the possible sense of failure, or loss, or impoverishment, or inadequacy—a collective struggle to re-think a dominant norm” (1994, p. 34).
2.3.5  *Identity Politics, Feminism and the Deconstructed Subject*

Foucault has been criticised by feminists for not attending to biological sex or
gender and the different ways in which these are discursively constituted, regulated
and disciplined (see e.g., Bordo, 1993; de Lauretis, 1987; McNay, 1992; Morris, 1979;
Soper, 1993). In addition, feminists problematised the androcentrism inherent in his
work (Braidotti, 1991; Hartsock, 1990; Fraser, 1989; Morris, 1979; Sawicki, 1991;
Soper, 1993). However, while Foucault's lack of attention to gender and his
androcentrism are significant, they do not negate or undermine his theory of discourse
in general. Indeed, a number of feminists have drawn explicitly on aspects of
Foucault's work in order to expand his analyses to include a focus on the discourses
supporting and sustaining gender and, thus, addressed what some have seen as a
deficiency in his work.\[1\]

One important feminist contribution, that draws extensively on Foucauldian
concepts, is Butler's (1990, 1993) work. Her work is significant because it subjects all
identity categories to a thoroughgoing critique and provides, along with the work of,
for example, Sedgwick (1990) and Seidman (1995), the theoretical underpinnings for
some recent approaches to sexual politics, most notably, queer theory (discussed in
Chapter 3). In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) is centrally concerned with problematising
'the epistemic regime of presumptive heterosexuality which produces and reifies (the
ostensibly ontological) categories of gender' (p. viii). Drawing on Foucault's argument
that power works through discourse, in part, to produce (and destabilise) subjects,
Butler (1990) focuses her analysis on the discursive production of gendered and sexual
subjects and how these function as critical normative elements supporting the
argues not only against any concept of a natural authentic gender identity, but more
specifically for a thorough deconstruction of all such foundational categories of

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\[1\] See e.g., Bartky, 1990 on disciplinary technologies and the fashion/beauty complex; Bordo 1992,
Diamond 1985, and Malson 1998 on anorexia nervosa and disordered eating; Fine and Addelston, 1996
on discourses of sameness and difference in relation to gender and power; Gavey, 1996 on heterosexual
violence, coercion and women's desire; Jacobus, Keller and Shuttleworth, 1990 on body politics,
women and scientific discourse; Mills, 1991 on women and colonial discourse; Smith D., 1990a on
femininity and discourse; Walkerdine, 1996, on the discursive construction of working class women in
academic literature.
identity altogether. She argues, for example, that the presumed universality of women is both theoretically and politically dangerous, as women are marked by an inexhaustible number of identity categories. “Theories of feminist identity,” she argues, “that elaborate predicates of color, sexuality, ethnicity, class and ablebodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed ‘etc.’ at the end of the list” (Butler, 1990, p. 143). This ‘etc.’ is instructive for Butler because it indicates that the effort to ‘encompass a situated subject’ is invariably incomplete, and thus a tacit reminder not only of the possibilities of exclusion, but more productively, of the impossibility of fixing and exhausting identity categories:

If identities were no longer fixed as the premises of a political syllogism, and politics no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects, a new configuration of politics would surely emerge from the ruins of the old. Cultural configurations of sex and gender might then proliferate or, rather, their present proliferation might then become articulable within the discourses that establish intelligible cultural life, confounding the very binarism of sex, and exposing its fundamental unnaturalness (Butler, 1990, p. 149).

This thorough questioning of identity categories presents a difficult problem, for both feminism and gay and lesbian activism, not least because both have, traditionally at least, organised around some notion of a stable identity. Indeed, much important feminist work has focussed explicitly on producing women as subjects (as distinct from ‘objects’) in response to the historical ontological erasure of women under the system of signification, in which the unitary, autonomous, self-conscious subject is traditionally taken to be male. Moreover, in appealing to a shared identity under the construct ‘woman’ the possibility of collective political action, organised around common concerns and struggles, is possible. From Butler and Foucault’s perspectives, however, all identities (including political identities) are rendered fundamentally unstable. No longer theorised as having any essential meaning, identities are rather complex normative injunctions, discursively produced and reinforced and as such fluid, multiple, fragmented and, to some extent, illusory. Accordingly, an emancipatory politics based on shared identity categories becomes more difficult to sustain. Feminism, for example, would appear to require some structural and definitional account of what (and who) constitutes ‘woman.’ It is this concern that underlies Stavro-Pearce’s (1994) critique of poststructuralism and of Butler, in particular. She
argues that Butler’s ‘hyperconstructivist position, which would jettison the category woman,’ makes things thoroughly problematic for feminism (p. 229).

Butler (1990) certainly argues for the deconstruction of identity categories, however, she argues that this does not mean the end of politics, but rather the re-establishment of identity terms as political and she calls for the radical proliferation of such terms outside of their restrictive dichotomies. For Butler, feminist identity politics erroneously assumes that identities must be in place in order for political action to proceed. She calls instead for a reformulation of politics based not on essential or foundational identities, but rather rooted in the “very signifying practices that establish, regulate and deregulate identity” (1990, p. 147). For Butler, like Foucault, these regulatory practices are fundamentally discursive:

The subject’s production takes place not only through the regulation of the subject’s speech, but through the regulation of the social domain of speakable discourse. The question is not what it is that I will be able to say, but what will constitute the domain of the sayable within which I begin to speak at all. To become a subject means to be subjugated to a set of implicit and explicit norms that govern the kind of speech that will be legible as the speech of a subject (Butler, 1997, p. 133).

Most troubling, perhaps, is not so much Foucault and Butler’s rejection of universal, homogenising categories (a move which most feminists thoroughly support) but their related insistence on difference and diversity. Butler, for example, emphasises the importance of the proliferation of cultural constructions of sex and gender, for rendering intelligible new (and existing) forms of cultural life. As Farganis (1994) notes, this emphasis on “difference and the diversity, variety and constructivism found in contemporary social life” is one of the hallmarks of post-structuralism (p. 109). In particular, post-structuralism deliberately resists ‘closure of meaning’ (Kerfoot and Knights, 1994) that comes from an attachment to ‘conventional dualisms, gendered essentialisms and all other foundational forms of knowledge and truth’ (Farganis, 1994). From a Foucauldian perspective, discourses offer a multiplicity of shifting subject positions, varying temporally in their occupation and always provisional. This, while facilitating resistance and accommodating contradiction, potentially occludes the possibilities of communitarian political action. As Burman observes with respect to deconstructive approaches in general “the danger … is that it invites us to let difference stand in for political action” (Burman, 1990, p. 59).
Ultimately approaches that emphasise a politics of endless difference and diversity potentially herald an extremely fragmented and individualistic politics, which threatens to disintegrate feminism (Ransom, 1993; see also Stavro-Pearce, 1994 and Edwards, 1998 on the dangers of the fragmentation of gay and lesbian identities). Elam (1994) suggests, that some feminists have argued that deconstructing the subject is a luxury feminism politically cannot afford; “no subject means no identity, which means no identity politics, which means no feminism” (p. 72).

Hartsock (1990) argues that the emergence of Foucault’s theories (and related poststructural accounts) is suspicious, as it occurs at the point at which many marginal groups are collectively organising, achieving recognition, and constructing effective oppositional political strategies (see also Christian, 1987; Lovibond, 1993). “Why is it,” Hartsock (1990) asks, “that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than as objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic?” (p. 163). However, concerns around identity politics do not arise solely from theories that seek to deconstruct subjects and their allocated categories and identities. For example, feminists within different theoretical strands of feminism have also expressed concerns that feminist identity politics has, in any event, relied too heavily on commonality among women, and has thus not simply ignored but erased difference (Elam, 1994). As Calhoun (1995) observes, in general “feminist theorizing no longer makes the essentializing assumptions that ‘woman’ signifies a set of universal commonalities, that all women share a common oppression, and, thus that a single feminist agenda will equally address all women’s needs” (p. 211). This, she observes, has heralded a move in feminism away from the ‘woman-identified woman’ towards the ‘difference-identified woman’ (Calhoun, 1995). Poststructuralist influences aside, therefore, feminism still has the problem of negotiating the multiple sources of women’s identities without sliding into some form of essentialism based on the category ‘woman’ (Ferguson, 1993).

Calhoun (1995) discusses the implications of the move to the difference-identified-woman in relation to theorising lesbians. She argues that “if ‘woman’ has no essential meaning, but there are, instead, multiple and open-ended ways that women can be, how does one go about representing oneself outside ‘woman’ rather than differently
inside “woman”? (p. 226). Calhoun (1995) doubts whether it is possible to theorise lesbians at all from within any feminist perspective that takes “woman” as its delimiter. She sees gender as the ‘lesbian closet’ and wants to de-couple lesbianism from the signifier “woman” otherwise, she argues, lesbianism loses its potential to challenge the binarisms of gender. However, if feminism includes lesbians (and the attendant possibility of signification outside of the binaries of gender), then, she argues, feminism cannot limit itself to just women and lesbians. An extension of the binaries of gender, she argues, would include gay men, heterosexual and gay male transvestites, transsexuals, male-lesbians etc., which Calhoun (1995) suggests, is a move many feminists would reject. Calhoun makes an important point, however, I think it is possible and meaningful to theorise lesbians from within feminism, since feminism is not solely concerned with women, but with challenging all ways of knowing and understanding that involve subordination. In this way, feminism’s theoretical and political focus is on all categories of oppression, particularly, but by no means exclusively gender. Moreover, however much lesbians (and women) challenge and resist (rightly) the binaries of gender, in the wider cultural milieu, lesbians are usually still allocated the category ‘woman,’ and, accordingly, share some of the specificities and injustices associated with such positioning.

Calhoun’s (1995) discussion highlights some of the difficulties inherent in organising political strategies on the basis of identity categories. In the first instance they can be exclusionary and, as such, potentially separatist and divisive. In addition, there is a tendency to homogenise differences within groups and assume, a priori, fixed and essential differences between groups (Gill, 1998). Relatedly, identity politics tend to rely on over-arching categories under which all other identity markers are subsumed. Gender categories, for example, are often privileged and the salience of other identities minimised. Elam (1994) observes that identity politics also establishes a hierarchy of oppressions, “where individuals battle for the right to speak by collecting oppression markers: the more oppressed and victimised the individual identity, the more moral currency it has” (Elam, 1994, p. 74; see also Bar On, 1993). Elam (1994) suggests that feminist identity politics has recently attempted to solve this difficulty by paying special attention to which individuals speak for whom (as in standpoint theories). The assumption being that individuals should speak for the
categories they represent, that is, lesbians should represent other lesbians and so forth (Elam, 1994). This issue has also made its way into debates about 'interviewer-interviewee matching' when conducting research (Griffin and Phoenix, 1994). (I discuss this further in Chapter 4.)

Kitzinger (1994) broaches this issue in relation to the assumption of experiential authority. In discussing her edited collection (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1993) on heterosexuality, she argues that what has attracted the most attention is not the accounts provided by the heterosexual contributors, but rather their "right and competence, as lesbians, to edit such a collection in the first place" (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 138). This discursive linking of the experiential with the right to speak operates on all identity dimensions, and it discourages theory, critique and discussion by those outside of particular experiential worlds (see also my discussion of standpoint theories earlier in this chapter). The result is silencing and foreclosure, partly through fear of accusations of, for example, anti-lesbianism or racism, but also through what has been constructed as the requirement to maintain a respectful distance in the face of other diverse and often contradictory experiences (Kitzinger, 1994). Identity positions are, thus, thoroughly imbricated with power. However, the power operating here is disciplinary and clearly distinct from power that operates through force and imposition. In Kitzinger's (1994) example, it is not that there is a sovereign imposition, prohibiting or censoring speech and to which 'subjects,' are dutifully complying (or resisting). It is rather disciplinary power, operating through surveillance and self-monitoring and self-constraining 'subjects' and it is determined by the structuring of the discursive field in and around identity politics. This confers authority to speak on the basis of the individual experience associated with membership of a particular identity category. In this sense, it is not distinct from the conferral of expert authority (constructed in and around scientific discourse) discussed earlier in this chapter and it functions to (re)produce power relations in the same way.

Burman (1990) observes that a focus on identities threatens to shift attention away from questions of oppression, and thus individualise and depoliticise experience. The experience of oppression, and inequitable distributions of power, are thus reduced to a function of identity categories. Identity politics, operating as they do partly through their establishment as oppositional (i.e., always already in opposition to something
else), risk simply reversing existing hierarchies and re-inscribing the very power relations they seek to undermine. Moreover, power frequently operates disproportionately through the norms produced by socially constructed (identity) categories. In basing political intervention on such categories, there is the pressing risk of simply re-producing them. It is this concern that partly underlies Butler’s (1990) argument for the more thorough deconstruction of identity categories. Butler is concerned that the continual assertion of identities (through performative speech acts, naming and repetition) risks falsely essentialising, reinforcing and reifying them. It is this aspect of Butler’s work that attracts Stavro-Pearce’s (1994) criticism that she ‘jettisons the category gender’ and earns her the label ‘hyperconstructivist.’ Contra Butler, some feminists have argued that some form of ‘strategic essentialism’ (e.g., ‘nominal essentialism’) is necessary for feminist politics (e.g., Braidotti, 1989; Fuss, 1989; Spivak, 1989). However, following Butler, I think it is important to avoid reiterating the problematic language of essentialism, however much it is qualified. Not least because essentialism has a long and disturbing history (discussed in Chapter 3) and it remains a dominant and entrenched explanatory device for emphasising social difference in contemporary discourse.

Certainly, identity politics is a troubled arena in contemporary western society, given which, the utility of deconstructionist approaches seems to provide more potential. However, these approaches raise other difficulties, not least of which is that jettisoning identity categories altogether threatens to (re)erase precisely those historically marginalised ‘others,’ traditionally absent as viable subjects. In addition, identity politics, at the present time and despite the difficulties I have outlined, do appear to work effectively across the political spectrum. In this respect, Elam (1994) provides a timely reminder that identity politics does not only apply to ‘minority’ groups: ‘if “over 90% of elected officials are white men” identity politics are still working effectively in conservative ways to assure who gets elected and who runs for office’ (p. 72).

The central theoretical tension (which has significant political implications) is that, on the one hand, a focus on difference, diversity and multiplicity threatens to regress into a politically ineffective liberal pluralism and a celebration of heterogeneity that all too easily descends into individualism. On the other hand, as Stavro-Pearce (1994)
observes, any understanding of shared meanings will always be seen as homogenising difference, denying specificity and effecting cultural violence. However, while I have tended to present this, and related tensions, at their most polemic (in an effort to illustrate the potential implications and assumptions inherent in adopting a particular theoretical perspective), in actuality, many feminist, and gay and lesbian theoretical contributions are not so easily divided along these lines. Much contemporary feminist (and to differing degrees, gay and lesbian) research and theorising is thoroughly resistant to essentialising categories, the dangers of denying cultural difference and attuned to the relevance of ‘situated knowledges’ (Haraway, 1988), although most stop short of a complete deconstruction or rejection of identity categories altogether.

In her discussion of lesbian identities, Phelan (1993, 1994) advocates for a ‘postmodern coalitional politics’ based not on stable identities but on the recognition that ‘some social signifiers embody and transmit relations of oppression’ (p. 782). Phelan (1993) calls for local, strategic political interventions, founded not on ‘universal narratives of oppression’ or fixed essential identities, but rather on common concerns. Such a politics, she argues, is committed to the forging of (frequently, uneasy) alliances, alliances that have often been foreclosed by identity politics. Indeed, Fraser and Nicholson (1993) observe that feminist political practice is based increasingly on alliances rather than universally shared interests or identity. They call for feminist theory to take the same form and recognise, that while “some women share some common interests and face some common enemies, such commonalities are by no means universal; rather they are interlaced with differences, even with conflicts” (Fraser and Nicholson, 1993, p. 429). This need not mean abandoning the strategic use of identity categories (see also Davies, 1998) or attending to their real implications, indeed at the current historical juncture, the (cautious) use of such categories is fundamental in order for marginalised identities to remain visible and thus retain some ‘right to speak.’ In this respect, Phelan (1993) argues for a pragmatic strategic politics:

Deconstruction is crucial work for the long run, in the short run it is a mistake ... Voters in Colorado, or homophobes with baseball bats, will not be persuaded by discussions of gender ambiguity; I suspect it will exacerbate their anxiety. Telling them that I am not “really” a lesbian is different from saying it to readers of *Signs*; what the *Signs* audience understand as deconstruction becomes simply a return to the closet in others’ eyes (Phelan, 1993, p. 782).
Phelan (1993) argues that there is a specificity and reality of experience associated with being allocated to (or identifying with) the categories ‘woman’ and ‘lesbian.’ But Phelan explicitly resists characterising such identities as foundational or essential and instead insists that they must always be recognised as provisional (always in the process of becoming) and continually questioned and disrupted. Phelan’s approach shares many significant similarities with Butler’s overall thesis, although Phelan is concerned that Butler is too quick to abandon the stability of identity categories, which she argues (following Williams, 1992), means that Butler maintains her philosophical argument by avoiding an engagement with politics. My understanding of Butler, however, is that she re-defines the political project (in much the same way as Phelan) and while emphasising the need to dismantle and deconstruct identity categories, she also acknowledges that the judicious use of such (for Butler, political) categories is both politically advisable and unavoidable (Butler, 1991). Indeed, both Butler and Foucault provide compelling justifications for ensuring that marginal identities (while provisional) remain visible (including those as-yet-unnamed), in order that they can continue to disrupt and disorder normative categories (see also Dollimore, 1991).

It is within the theoretical, political and historical space carved out by Foucault and feminist theorists such as Butler and Phelan that this thesis is located. This approach does not resolve all of the difficulties discussed in this chapter and inevitably, in resolving some, it creates others. Moreover, I am doubtful of the possibility (or utility) of attempting to resolve such difficulties in any final way, preferring rather that they are continually reinterpreted and re-evaluated as socio-political contexts change. I have not given a complete account of, for example, Butler, Phelan or Foucault and I am not utilising any of these theories in their entirety. Butler, for example, while relying extensively on Foucault, also introduces psychoanalysis to develop her account, but I am not drawing on this aspect of her work. In an apposite vein, Foucault would approve of the application of elements of different theories, referring

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12 For related feminist poststructuralist/postmodern approaches to politics and identity see e.g., Anzaldúa, 1990; Brown, 1995; de Lauretis, 1990; Flax, 1990; Fraser and Nicholson, 1993; Haraway, 1988; Lather, 1991; Martin and Mohanty, 1986; Reagon, 1983; Sawicki, 1991; Weedon, 1997 Young, 1990. These approaches while differing significantly in focus and emphasis share certain similar assumptions to Phelan (1993) and Butler’s (1990) approaches.
to his own work as a ‘tool box’ containing many separate elements and ideas that theorists can draw on to ‘short-circuit, discredit or smash systems of power’ (cited in Mills, 1997). In this respect, Allen (1996) reminds feminists that we are under no obligation to accept (or use) the complete works of any author, and that the more important questions pivot on the ways in which elements of different accounts can be used effectively for feminist/political projects (see also Davies, 1998). In the following concluding section of this chapter, I discuss the ways in which this theoretical approach can usefully inform the study of gender, sexuality and the military.

2.4 Conclusions

The theoretical and political approach underpinning this thesis is located broadly in feminist poststructuralism. It draws primarily on Foucault and related feminist work and their theoretical and political concerns. This approach acknowledges the fundamentally discursive, constructed ‘nature’ of identities, while still recognising that such discursive identities have ontological and political effects and implications. The identities of primary concern in this thesis, ‘woman’ and ‘lesbian,’ are thus taken as having no ahistorical essential foundation, and with no universal referents. They are rather theorised as normative injunctions and sites of power and struggle. Fundamentally, they are subject positions, determined by the discourses of gender and sexuality and occupied by the individuals in this study within the context of an avowedly hetero-patriarchal society and military institution. It is thus, at the level of discourse, and the power/knowledge strategies within them, that intelligible subjects and their identities and realities are established, defined and delimited.

A focus on discourse suggests an approach to research that concentrates on texts (or other forms of signification) rather than on individuals and their lived experiences. In this thesis, the objects of analysis are the military policy documents and the interview transcripts not the individuals who constructed these texts or the assumed reality ‘behind’ them (see also Malson, 1998). This focus on discourse raises a number of questions in relation to this thesis: For example, what discourses and discursive practices constitute and regulate the military context? What implicit and explicit norms are instituted within (and around), the regulated military domain of ‘speakable’ discourse, in which the ‘subjects’ central to this thesis are (partly) produced? What is
taken-for-granted, and what forms of signification are excluded? What implications do the norms of sex, gender and sexuality operating in the military domain have for the ways in which these ‘subjects’ construct and inhabit their allocated categories? Is it possible for them to inhabit these categories within this domain without, to paraphrase Butler (1994), an implicit sense of failure or inadequacy? Ostensibly denied any discursive ontology (through the regulative prohibition), what discursive effects bring these ‘subjects’ into ‘being,’ and how do they constitute themselves as subjects? What subject positions are available and occupied by subjects? How do these subjects construct accounts of the military prohibition of lesbianism and its enforcement? What discourses underpin the policy and how is it discursively negotiated and resisted? Can the military be conceived of as a wholly regulated and disciplined society and how is power constructed as operating? Is this in a sovereign or disciplinary form or both? I examine these, and related questions in the analysis sections of the thesis (Chapters 5 and 6). Foucault’s account of discourse, however, suggests that it is only meaningful to attempt to answer such questions in the context of their historical specificity. In order to locate this research in its historical/discursive context, in Chapter 3 I trace the emergence and development of dominant discourses around lesbianism and homosexuality connecting these, where appropriate, to military policy and practice.

Focussing my analyses on the discourses produced and reiterated in texts (rather than on individuals and their lived experiences) does not, I think necessarily imply political impotence or disengagement. As discussed throughout this chapter, significant possibilities for change and political action can occur at the level of knowledge production and through analysis (and transformation) of the discursive fields that establish power relations. Challenging existing knowledges and introducing new accounts into public discourse is therefore, potentially a transformative political act. This is particularly relevant to this thesis, since at the present time there are no academic accounts examining the discursive underpinnings of the British military exclusionary policy. As discussed in Chapter 1, challenges to the formal regulations, to date, have not succeeded in overturning the policy. These challenges are critically important and need to continue; however, in addition, direct analysis of the policy provides an opportunity to examine the discourses underlying the exclusions, expose
their authority and partiality which may, in turn suggest additional, as-yet-unexplored ways in which the military ban can potentially be challenged. Study 1 consists of such an analysis.

In addition to the absence of analyses of the British military policy documents, there are, at the present time, no academic texts presenting or analysing the accounts of lesbians in the British Army. There are a number of reasons for this (see Chapter 1), not least, however, is that lesbians in the military, if they want (or need) to remain employed by the military, are prevented from making themselves visible since the policy prohibits their presence. For this reason, lesbians in the British military represent a group of relatively invisible and silent women, who are in many ways fundamentally deprived of 'speaking rights.' Poststructuralist (notably Foucault) and feminist approaches in general, provide compelling accounts that affirm the theoretical and political importance of introducing such marginalised knowledges into the domain of public discourse. As Farganis (1994) argues, like feminism:

For those who see themselves as not having had their voice(s) heard in history, the postmodern paradigm makes a theoretical case for inserting the heretofore unarticulated voices of women in new scripts, new texts, and new discourses. It is a way of dethroning the old epistemology and those who held power through it (Farganis, 1994, p. 110)."  

Introducing new knowledge forms and previously silent, excluded voices, can accordingly, function to destabilise dominant knowledge forms and the ways in which power functions through them. In many ways, this is one of the central political tasks of Foucault's 'specific (as opposed to universal) intellectual' (1980). The specific intellectual embodies the possibility of resistance, is concerned with local and immediate forms of power and oppression, and with opening up spaces for the introduction of new knowledges.

13 Farganis (1994) uses the term 'postmodernism' instead of 'poststructuralism,' which, Burman and Parker (1993) observe is not uncommon, particularly in the United States. They are often used interchangeably and the way in which Farganis characterises 'the postmodern' is not, in the relevant respects, inconsistent with my use of the term poststructuralism in this chapter.
CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: PSYCHOLOGY, (HOMO)SEXUALITY AND THE MILITARY

3.1 Introduction

In 1988, Sarbin and Karols conducted a study commissioned by the US Defense Personnel Security Research and Education Centre (PERSREC) to examine “nonconforming sexual orientations and military suitability” (Sarbin and Karols, 1988, p. 1). What is particularly interesting about this study is not so much its reported finding—that gay men and lesbians are suitable for military service—but, rather, that it provides a historical analysis of the ways in which homosexuality has been understood throughout Western history. This includes a review of the effects of relevant legal decisions, changes in public opinion and a brief summary of some of the scientific literature on homosexuality. These three “bodies of knowledge” are presented to illustrate the “historical contingency of social attitudes” and to support their argument that “behaviors, customs and laws are not permanently resistant to change” (Sarbin and Karols, 1988, p. 37). Sarbin and Karols (1988) conclude “that the military cannot indefinitely isolate itself from the changes occurring in the wider society, of which it is an integral part” (p. 37).

Relevant to this thesis, Sarbin and Karols (1988) identify four dominant historical ‘constructions’ of homosexuality: the morality (religious) construction, the criminal (legal) construction, the sickness (medical) construction and, most recently, the minority group construction (for related discussions of constructions of homosexuality see also Bullough, 1976; Foucault, 1978; Gagnon and Parker, 1995; Greenberg, 1988; Klaich, 1974; Kitzinger, 1987; Hart and Richardson, 1981; Lehring, 1996; Sarbin, 1996; Ruse, 1988; Weeks, 1990). This chapter, following Sarbin and Karols (1988), presents a historical account of the ways in which lesbianism and male homosexuality have been constructed and understood during different periods in Western history. Sarbin and Karols’ ‘constructions’ (in their original development) follow chronologically (i.e., from the early religious through to the recent minority
and although they vary in their temporal continuity and influence, their legacy is evident in contemporary understandings of homosexuality and lesbianism.14 Accordingly, to varying degrees, they impinge directly on current debates around homosexuality and the military and on currently available meanings of gay and lesbian identities.

I have retained Sarbin and Karol's (1988) term 'construction' in the organisation of this chapter to denote the broad historical periods in which particular ways of understanding (homo)sexuality emerged. However, these are not only broad social constructions (in the sense implied by Sarbin and Karols) but are also discursive productions: defining and regulating the field of sexuality and producing particular objects/subjects. Indeed, within these broad constructions (e.g., the 'medical') a number of discourses (and 'reverse' discourses) developed, however, these were often underpinned by, or resistant to, the dominant discursive construction. I thus elected to preserve Sarbin and Karols' (1988) broad terminology, but it is intended to signify both historical specificity and the fundamentally discursive 'nature' of these constructions. The historical account presented in this chapter also differs substantially from that of Sarbin and Karols (1988) in its specific aim to review and critique psychological theories of male homosexuality and lesbianism and to link these to changing social and political contexts and, where possible, to military regulations and practices. Furthermore, in addition to the four constructions discussed by Sarbin and Karols, I also argue that currently there is a fifth discursive construction beginning to emerge—the '(de)construction'—that is discussed towards the end of this chapter.

Historical narratives are not neutral or complete accounts. They are produced in accordance with particular investments and, accordingly, focus on and privilege certain historical details at the expense of others (Harris, 1997). The present account is no exception. In this respect, I am following Foucault's historical/theoretical method, genealogy, which does not aim to replace authorised histories with a more authentic

14 Difficulties with the term 'minority group' are acknowledged. My use of this terminology follows Sarbin and Karols' (1988) usage, and is intended to reflect a particular historical period, in which a number of discourses, drawing on concepts emerging from the civil rights movements, developed around male homosexuality and lesbianism.
or accurate version, but rather acknowledges the specific, interested and partial nature of all knowledge production, including historical knowledge. Accordingly, I present the psychological theories and societal influences that I consider to have been the most influential with the purpose of achieving two related but specific aims. First, to produce an account that locates this thesis in relation to specific historical, social and political contexts in which particular discourses around non-conforming sexualities have developed. Second, to introduce and examine the psychological work that has contributed to contemporary understandings of what it means to be gay or lesbian. The chapter is organised around four primary sections. I have combined Sarbin and Karols' (1988) religious and legal constructions, since professional research on homosexuality and lesbianism has its origins in the later medical construction. The 'medical,' the 'minority group' and the '(de)construction' are most relevant to the present study and, accordingly, comprise the primary focus of this chapter.

3.2 Religious and Legal Constructions

The discursive production of same-sex sexual activity as 'immoral' (or 'sinful') and later as 'criminal' has been traced to Judeo-Christian values that prohibited any non-procreative sexual conduct (e.g., Boswell, 1980; Bullough, 1976; Sarbin and Karols, 1988; Stevens and Hall, 1991). However, Biale (1997) argues that traditionally Judaism’s view of sexuality was more positive than that of Latin Christianity, albeit still not accepting of homosexuality. Unlike Christianity, the Jewish religion never endorsed celibacy, did not ban premarital intercourse, and did not forbid all non-procreative forms of sexual contact (Biale, 1997). For the Christians, non-procreative sexual conduct included any sexual act that did not serve a procreative function, for example, oral and anal sex, masturbation, and male-male and female-female sexual activity. These and related undesirable behaviours were proscribed through the invocation of 'sin' as a transgression of divine law (Law, 1988; Stevens and Hall, 1991).

The moral condemnation of non-procreative sexual acts derives originally from biblical injunctions, for example, “if a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus, 20:13; see also Leviticus, 18:22; I Corinthians 6:9). Although these
biblical passages refer most explicitly to male homosexuality, in Romans (1:26), Paul condemns women “who did change the natural use into that which is against nature” which Stevens and Hall (1991) argue resulted in most medieval jurists extending the scope of the condemnation to include lesbianism. In many parts of thirteenth century Europe, lesbianism was explicitly outlawed as a ‘sin against nature’ and was punishable by mutilation and burning at the stake (Bullough and Bullough, 1977; Crompton, 1980; Eriksson, 1980; Evans, 1978). By the Inquisition, male homosexuality and lesbianism (and other non-procreative sexual acts) were associated with witchcraft, heresy and treason (Bullough, 1974; Evans, 1978; Stevens and Hall, 1991).

Within both the Jewish and Christian traditions, women are assigned an inferior status, which is extended to include the passive partner in male homosexual acts. Law (1988) argues that in this respect, the religious condemnation of male homosexuality, is as much a response to the violation of traditional gender roles, as it is to non-conforming sexual conduct (see also Karst, 1991 on the violation of gender roles and military service). In contemporary Western society, religious discourses are still invoked to condemn ‘undesirable’ sexual behaviour (Gagnon and Parker, 1995).

The underlying categories of the legal/criminal construction of non-conforming sexual conduct are continuous with those of the religious/moral construction. That is, the religious/moral construction of ‘homosexual acts as sinful’ was extended and recast as ‘homosexual acts as criminal’ (Sarbin and Karols, 1988). This marked a discursive transition from the concept of ‘sins against nature’ to ‘crimes against nature’ and was largely an accomplishment of the secularisation and attempted legislation of morality in the sixteenth century. When the Church surrendered the task of regulating behaviour to the secular authorities, conduct previously defined as sinful was now also defined as criminal and punishable by the state. In 1533 in England, for example, sodomy, which had been established in religion as a ‘sin against nature,’ was declared a ‘crime against nature’ and it carried the death penalty (Lafitte, 1958).

Gilbert (1976) argues that the sodomy laws were particularly severely enforced in the Armed Forces from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries and, on conviction, the death penalty was almost always enforced. Gilbert suggests that the military, then as now, believed itself to have special and specific problems of order and discipline. Sexual contact between men was seen as damaging the military hierarchy and
undermining good order and military discipline (see also Weeks, 1990). Male homosexual behaviour, during this period, was constructed as both immoral and criminal in both the military and civilian society but it was the secular (or military) authorities that were responsible for punishment. Ellis (1905) reports that in eighteenth century England, “the punishment for sodomy, when completely effected, was death and it was frequently inflicted” (p. 46). Conviction for attempted sodomy conversely carried the penalty of the pillory and imprisonment. The death penalty for male homosexual acts in England and Wales was finally replaced in 1861 with a period of imprisonment from ten years to life. This punishment was extant until 1967, when the Sexual Offences Act was repealed.

Lesbianism during this period, while still considered morally sinful, was not part of the British legal construction, although Crompton (1980) notes that in Europe, prior to the French revolution, countries such as France, Spain, Italy, Germany and Switzerland legally equated lesbian acts with male sodomy and both carried the death penalty. In Britain in 1921, there was an attempt to bring lesbianism into the Criminal Law Amendment Act, however, it failed and female-female sexual contact never entered the criminal codes. Weeks (1991) suggests that this was partly because it was feared that such legislation would appraise women of the possibility of lesbianism and thus present sexual possibilities that they might otherwise not contemplate. Lesbianism did not concern the military since women were not enlisted (in an auxiliary capacity) until 1917. Prior to this time, women had been used unofficially in support of the military as, for example, nurses, cooks, prostitutes, maids, or civilian clerical workers (Hacker, 1981). Enloe (1988) argues that they were often classed as ‘camp followers’, barely tolerated by military commanders and often summarily disciplined or purged when they were no longer required. Lesbianism in military settings was unlikely to have been prevalent until the formation of the women’s corps. Enloe (1988) suggests this is partly because women who ‘sought to survive as camp followers’ could generally expect to be involved in sexual relationships with men. Notable exceptions may have been women who embarked on their own military careers disguised as men (for a thorough review of this history see Wheelwright, 1989).
Although the law did not acknowledge lesbianism, female (hetero)sexuality during this time did not escape state or military attention. In 1864, the British parliament passed the first Contagious Diseases Act. This Act (and the two that followed in 1866 and 1869) were designed to protect the health of military men, by making it a penal offence to communicate a venereal disease to a soldier (see also Enloe, 1988; Terry, 1988; Weeks, 1990). These Acts were enforced by subjecting any woman 'identified' as a prostitute to a humiliating and often painful surgical examination. Barry (1979) argues that in practice this meant that any woman who fell under suspicion was liable to be 'examined.' Notably, the Contagious Diseases Acts placed no responsibility on male soldiers; this regulatory discourse settled on the bodies of women, and it was these bodies that became the instruments of social/moral control. In 1869, after the final Act was passed, Josephine Butler organised the Ladies National Association (LNA) to campaign for the repeal of the Acts. According to Barry (1979), these early feminist campaigners saw the Acts not only in the narrow sense, as preventing venereal disease amongst soldiers, but also as the beginnings of the expanding control over women's sexuality by the state and its instrument of coercion, the military. This campaign was successful and The Contagious Diseases Acts were suspended in 1883 and finally repealed in 1886. Lesbianism, for the most part, escaped state and military purview until the turn of the century when professional research on sexuality began to emerge and, later, when women were gradually officially incorporated into the military. Although women served in both World Wars and, to an extent, between the wars, it was in an auxiliary capacity. It was not until 1949, when the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) was formed, that women were permanently employed in peacetime.

3.3 The Medical Construction

Initiated by the work of, for example, Krafft-Ebing (1894), Bloch (1909), Ellis (1905), Carpenter (1908), Freud (1915), Hirschfeld (1914), and Forel (1908), the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries mark the beginnings of professional research on male homosexuality and lesbianism. These early sex researchers (sexologists) devoted their efforts to defining and categorising a variety of human sexual behaviours and, in particular, sexual pathologies and 'perversions.' Attempts to
establish the aetiology, the characteristics of and, for many researchers, the ‘cure’ for the ‘condition’ of homosexuality (and lesbianism) was part of this effort. Foucault (1978) argues that this body of work constructed ‘the homosexual’ as a distinct kind of person. This represented a fundamental shift from the interdiction of sexual acts, previously regarded as a criminal or sinful potential in everybody, to the belief that behaviour was symptomatic of a deeper underlying inner ‘truth’ about the ‘nature’ of certain types of individuals:

Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species (Foucault, 1978, p. 43).

Driven principally by the question, ‘what causes homosexuality,’ the early sexologists almost universally claim a congenital aetiology. Krafft-Ebing (1894), for example, argues that homosexuality is, among other things, ‘an inborn predisposition to perversion,’ a ‘hereditary taint,’ a ‘congenital deformity,’ and a ‘pathological mental state’. Hirschfeld (1914) argues that homosexuality is an ‘intersexual’ stage between complete maleness and femaleness—a third sex and a form of sexual or emotional hermaphroditism. They also regard this ‘peculiarity’ as congenital but emphasise that it is a ‘natural’ disposition. Ellis, argues that male homosexuals and lesbians (both of whom he calls ‘sexual inverts’) are the result of a congenital abnormality which, he suggests, is “doubtless due to a peculiarity in the sperm or oval elements or in their mingling” (1905, p. 318).

Influenced by Darwinian concepts of evolutionary survival, religious edicts and the developing concept of ‘population’ (see Chapter 2), all forms of sexual expression were assumed to have a biological aetiology. That is, ‘natural’ sexual expression ensured procreation, which increased the population (and the wealth of the state) and guaranteed the survival of the species. From this basis, which effectively de-limited the ‘discursive field,’ homosexuality and lesbianism were also assumed to have a biological aetiology, otherwise the biological status of ‘normal’ sexuality was questionable. This is evident in Ellis’ (1905) rebuttal of claims (by some of the early Freudians) that homosexuality has its origins in association and suggestion:

It must also be pointed out that the argument for acquired or suggested inversion logically involves the assertion that normal sexuality is also acquired
or suggested...if association and suggestion were the only influential causes, then inversion, instead of being the exception, ought to be the rule throughout the human species, if not, indeed, throughout the whole zoological series...We must, therefore, put aside entirely the notion that the direction of the sexual impulse is merely a suggested phenomenon; such a notion is entirely opposed to observation and experience, and will with difficulty fit into a rational biological scheme (Ellis, 1905, p. 303–304).

The conception of homosexuality as biologically determined both essentialised and individualised homosexuality and lesbianism. “The sexually peculiar,” Foucault argues, was “imbedded in bodies becoming deeply characteristic of individuals” (1978, p. 44). Moreover “the oddities of sex relied on a technology of health and pathology” and “since sexuality was a medical and medicalizable object, one had to try and detect it—as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom—in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among the signs of behaviour (Foucault, 1978, p. 44).

The early sexologists were extremely thorough in their attempts to isolate the defining features and characteristics of the ‘perversions’ and ‘abnormalities’ they detected. In the following section I concentrate primarily (but not exclusively) on Ellis’ (1905) work, as he was the most prolific British sexologist during this time. In addition, I focus particularly on the ‘defining’ features and characteristics that were ascribed to lesbians, which not only rendered them visible (and different from healthy ‘normality’) but which also established a number of hierarchical distinctions within the minoritised lesbian category.

3.3.1 Constructing Lesbianism

Ellis (1905), Hirschfeld (1914) and Kraft-Ebing (1894) distinguish between female homosexual acts and female homosexuality. Ellis argues that female homosexual acts are relatively common in a number of situations: “it has been found, under certain conditions, to abound among women in colleges and convents and prisons as well as under the ordinary conditions of society” (Ellis, 1905, p. 195). Homosexuality, however, is not determined by behaviour but rather by ‘natural disposition’, that is, being born in an inverted state. Kraft-Ebing (1894), likewise, notes that the “natural disposition is the determining condition; not education and other accidental circumstances, like seduction” (p. 289). This distinction is important since it explicitly marks the shift from legal and religious conceptions that focused exclusively on
homosexual behaviour, to an emphasis on inherited ‘inner’ features; that is it marked a
distinction between status and conduct. One of the legacies of this distinction is that it
has formed the basis for a number of legal challenges to military exclusionary policies
on the grounds that in most areas of the law it is conduct, and not the status of the
actor, that is prohibited (see e.g., Jacobson, 1996; Ray, 1994).

The distinction between status and conduct in the early research is marked by a
division between ‘genuine’ (that is, ‘truly’ congenital inversion) and, what Ellis and
Hirschfeld, for example, call ‘spurious’ (or ‘pseudo’) inversion, which in women
referred to such ‘occurrences’ as passionate friendships and adolescent attachments in
schools:

This is a spurious kind of homosexuality, the often precocious play of the
normal instinct. In the girl who is congenitally predisposed to homosexuality
it will continue and develop; in the majority it will be forgotten as quickly as
possible, not without shame, in the presence of the normal object of sexual
love (Ellis, 1905, p. 216).

And:

No congenital inversion is usually involved. It generally happens, in the end,
either that relationship with a man brings the normal impulse into permanent
play, or the steadyng of the emotions in the stress of practical life leads to a
knowledge of the real nature of such feelings and a consequent distaste for
them (Ellis, 1905, p. 219).

In both of the above extracts, Ellis suggests that for ‘spurious female inverts’ the
‘normal impulse’ (heterosexuality) can usually be established through a relationship
with the ‘normal’ sexual object. In addition, ‘shame’, the acknowledgement of the ‘real
nature of such feelings’, or the pressures of everyday life will function to ‘normalise’
the ‘spurious’ individual. The successful (re)-assimilation of ‘spurious’ female inverts,
therefore, depended to an extent on both the continuation of societal disapproval (in
order that individuals recognise just how distasteful inversion ‘really’ is) and a
relationship with a man.

Ellis (1905) characterises congenital (or ‘genuine’) inverts somewhat differently. In
this respect, Ellis suggests that “the commonest characteristic of the sexually inverted
woman is a certain degree of masculinity or boyishness” (1905, p. 244), which is often
accompanied by “a very pronounced tendency…to adopt male attire” (p. 245; see also
Kraft-Ebing, 1894). Congenitally inverted women, he decides, are also “more muscular than normal women” and have a more “masculine type of larynx” (Ellis, 1905, p. 255) and are prone to hypertrichosis (excessive body hair) (see also Hirschfeld, 1914). Ellis characterises male sexual inverts as having “a distinctly general, though not universal, tendency...to approach the feminine type” (1905, p. 287). In addition, a high feminine voice is often noted in male inverts, along with a preference for the colour green (thought to be the favourite colour of children), and a tendency to oligotrichosis (lack of body hair) (see also, Hirschfeld, 1914; Ulrichs, 1898). Ellis also argues that “the sexual characteristics of the handwriting are in some cases clearly inverted, the men writing in a feminine hand and the women, a masculine hand” (1905, p. 290). The marked characteristics of ‘inverts’ of both sexes, are their youthfulness of appearance (“child-like faces”), a tendency for arrested development (“infantilism”) and gender non-conformity (i.e., some femininity in men and often, pronounced masculinity in women). Interestingly, Ellis makes these claims about gender non-conformity, despite many of his own case histories suggesting otherwise (Ellis, 1905). Ellis’ most famous characterisation of lesbians appears in the foreword to Radclyffe Hall’s (1928) early lesbian novel the The Well of Loneliness, in which Ellis notes that lesbians have “a masculine straightforwardness...a decided taste and tolerance for cigars [and] nothing of the sexual shyness and engaging air of weakness and dependence which are an invitation to men.” In a similar vein, Kraft-Ebing characterises lesbians as having a tendency to be tomboys in childhood, a preference for smoking and drinking and he suggests it “may nearly always be suspected in females wearing their hair short or who dress in the fashion of men, or pursue the sports and pasttimes of their male acquaintances” (Kraft-Ebing, 1894, p. 398).

Ellis discusses a further category of female inverts in addition to the ‘genuine’ and ‘spurious’ categories he outlines. This group of women he refers to as the “partners of congenitally inverted women,” and he characterises them as follows:

They are not usually attractive to the average man, though to this rule there are many exceptions. Their faces made be plain or ill-made, but not seldom they possess good figures: a point which is apt to carry more weight with the inverted woman than beauty of face. Their sexual impulses are seldom well marked, but they are of strongly affectionate nature. On the whole, they are women who are not very robust and well developed, physically or nervously, and who are not well adapted for child-bearing, but who still possess many
excellent qualities, and they are always womanly. One may, perhaps, say that they are the pick of the women whom the average man would pass by. No doubt, this is often the reason why they are open to homosexual advances, but I do not think it is the sole reason. So far as they may be said to constitute a class, they seem to possess a genuine, though not precisely sexual, preference for women over men, and it is this coldness, rather than lack of charm, which often renders men rather indifferent to them (Ellis, 1905, p. 222).

These women are explicitly distinguished from their congenital partners, but Ellis does not characterise them as ‘spurious.’ Partners of congenitally inverted women are constructed as stereotypically feminine: notably womanly, emotional, somewhat sexually passive, vulnerable, and physically and nervously weak. These defining characteristics are notable as they primarily function to distinguish these women from congenital female inverts, not from heterosexual women. Indeed, they are defined explicitly by their relationship to congenital inverts without whom they lose their significance. In this sense, Ellis is reiterating hetero-patriarchal norms in which women are defined primarily in terms of their relationship to men (e.g., as the ‘wife of,’ ‘inability to attract’ men etc.) and he constructs lesbian relationships within a circumscribed butch/femme dyad, in the image of heterosexuality. Although Ellis does not propose congenital abnormality here, he does distinguish between heterosexual women and this class of ‘inverts’ on the basis of perceived biological differences (i.e., in physical attractiveness, and capability for child bearing) which is entirely consonant with his faith in natural selection (discussed below).

Kraft-Ebing (1894), who regards lesbianism as morbid and a ‘functional sign of degeneration,’ also builds a taxonomy of lesbianism. In particular, he separates those so defined into four increasingly degenerate categories: ‘psychical hermaphroditism’ (same-sex and opposite-sex sexual activity and desire); ‘homo-sexuality’ (exclusive same-sex desire); ‘viraginity’ (same-sex desire coupled with masculine role preference); and ‘gynandry’ (same-sex desire and, with the exception of female genital organs, a masculine body). Kraft-Ebing’s latter two (and the most degenerate) categories are in many respects analogous to Ellis’ ‘genuine inverts’ and they are also most directly linked to gender non-conformity. Kraft-Ebing differs from Ellis in that he appears to separate gender from desire and sexual activity. However, Kraft-Ebing still explains same-sex desire as the product of a mismatch between the “psychosexual centre” and
the “sexual glands” (1894, p. 348), which for all of his lesbian categories means a masculine psychosexuality within a woman’s body.

‘Genuine’ female sexual inversion is, from these perspectives, reduced to an inconsistency between biological sex and inherent gender characteristics (not biological sex and sexual object choice), and only through this mismatch somewhat incidentally related to sexual behaviour. Accordingly, ‘real’ female inverts become, to some extent, inappropriately gendered individuals, which begs the question: is it primarily sexuality or gender role (non)conformity that is in the process of construction and re-iteration in these accounts? The ‘spurious’ and ‘partners of congenital inverts’ categories, for example, are not reduced to individuals exhibiting opposite gender characteristics (or those deemed to be in possession of ‘masculine psychosexuality’), but are rather understood from the perspective of heterosexuality, as opposites to their complements (masculine congenital inverts), and are notably feminine. For Ellis (1905), these differences in gender conformity appear to have been applied to the different groups of female inverts irrespective of their active sexual history.

Given Ellis’ unerring commitment to biological determinism, it is interesting that he also proposes a number of “other exciting causes of inversion” (1905, p. 269), although these are, in all cases, subordinate (in ‘real’ inverts) to inherited congenital features. These include, ‘sex segregated schools and employment’, ‘seduction by an older and more experienced person’, ‘suggestion’, and ‘disappointment in normal love’. Bearing this in mind, it is interesting that Ellis (1905) does not theorise ‘spurious’ inversion as bisexuality. In a somewhat confusing section Ellis considers bisexuality as a classification, but dismisses it because, he argues, the “bisexual group is found to introduce uncertainty and doubt” and it is then difficult to “speak with certainty of a definitely spurious class of individuals” (1905, p. 86). “In any case,” he argues (without clarification) “bisexuality merges imperceptibly into simple inversion” (Ellis, 1905, p. 278).

Ellis’ (1905) reluctance to theorise bisexuality illustrates both the salience of biology in explanatory frameworks of sexuality and the restrictive nature of binary dichotomies. This, coupled with the early lack of interest in thoroughly theorising bisexuality, perhaps partly explains why it has not achieved a particularly prominent
'identity' status in contemporary discourse. There also appears to have been some conceptual confusion around the category 'bisexual', which was often used by Freud, for example, to refer to the possession of both masculine and feminine characteristics (i.e., 'androgyny') not solely to sexual object choice (Kaplan, 1997). Kraft-Ebing's (1894) 'psychical hermaphroditism,' despite being characterised as sexual activity with both sexes also implies the psychical embodiment of both male and female, which does not appear to translate directly into 'bisexuality', as we currently understand it. To date, there is still comparatively little research theorising bisexuality (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1977; Fox, 1996) despite its apparent prevalence (Firestein, 1996; Hutchins, 1996; Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin 1948, Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin and Gebhard, 1953; Rust, 1992, 1993).

In each of Ellis' accounts, female inverts are defined, to some extent, in relation to men, as either like men, as being unattractive to men, or as requiring men to 'establish the normal impulse.' Apart from perceived femininity in male inverts (and, in 'genuine' cases, the perceived congenital inferiority of both), Ellis' (1905) account of male inversion is not constructed in relation to women. As such his account again appears to reiterate a number of patriarchal assumptions and renders sexual inversion intelligible only from within the framework of heterosexuality and through the established binary norms of sex and gender. Calhoun (1995) argues, however, that the 'third sex' (Hirschfeld, 1914), the 'boyish woman' (Ellis, 1905) and the 'masculine psychosexual centre in a feminine brain' (Kraft-Ebing, 1894) can all be interpreted as an early attempt to expand sex/gender binaries by representing the possibility of not-woman and not-man. In each of these cases, Calhoun suggests, the lesbian is constituted by her "externality to binary sex/gender categories" (1995, p. 225).

Conversely, Kaplan (1997) suggests that the 'third sex,' for example, was still defined in terms of elements of the first two and as such is actually a hybrid, rather than an attempt at radical redefinition. Ellis (1905), I think, rather than constructing the lesbian as external to sex and gender binaries, at most, de-couples (biological) sex and gender only to re-couple them with their complementary opposite. Accordingly, being 'woman' and 'masculine' (which is not precisely exterior to the original binaries) constitutes ('genuine') lesbianism.
Feminist historians argue that these early researchers, and Ellis and Krafft-Ebing in particular, explicitly linked lesbianism and the women’s movement, growing in Europe and America around the turn of the century (see e.g., Faderman 1978; Jeffreys, 1994; Stevens and Hall 1991). In particular, they argue that this research not only morbidified and pathologised lesbians, but also created a damaging stereotype—the masculine female invert—that partly functioned to undermine the first wave of feminism (Faderman, 1978; Ferguson, 1985; Jeffreys, 1994; Smith-Rosenberg, 1979; Stevens and Hall, 1991). The women’s movement, Ellis argues, has “involved an increase in feminine criminality and in feminine insanity...in connection with these we can scarcely be surprised to find an increase in homosexuality, which has always belonged to an allied, if not the same, group of phenomena” (Ellis, 1901 cited in Faderman, 1978, p. 80). Furthermore, Ellis (1905) suggests, that while the women’s movement “cannot directly cause sexual inversion” it can “develop the germs of it...due to the fact that the congenital anomaly occurs with special frequency in women of high intelligence who, voluntarily or involuntarily, influence others” (p. 262). Ellis does not fully explicate the relationship between ‘criminality,’ ‘insanity’ and ‘high intelligence’ in inverted women. However, lesbianism’s potential to damage the social order is clearly acknowledged. Moreover, he explicitly forms a connection between the women’s movement and female sexual inversion, which may represent one of the discursive origins of the later conflation of lesbianism and feminism.

Ellis (1905) bases his “theory of sexual inversion” on the histories of six women (and thirty-three men). He supplements this with other existing sexological accounts of inversion and with historical and cross-cultural observations. Overall, Ellis (1905) notes that comparatively little is known about sexual inversion in women, Krafft-Ebing (1894) gave little attention to it, and Hirschfeld (1914) appears to be the only author during this period who did consider female and male inversion concomitantly. Ellis (1905) suggests three principal reasons to account for this absence of work (and interest) in female inversion. First, he argues that generally men have been mostly indifferent towards lesbianism, whereas male homosexuality was a crime and/or cause for divorce. Second, inversion is less easy to “detect in women” (partly because greater intimacy is permissible between women than men). Third, he notes “the extreme ignorance and the extreme reticence of women regarding any abnormal or
even normal manifestation of their sexual life” (1905, p. 204). This latter claim is particularly problematic given that during this period, as Showalter (1985) notes, women who did aspire to sexual freedom (and professional independence) were “denounced as case studies in hysteria and degeneration” (p. 146). However, underlying each of Ellis’ suggestions is a common assumption: namely, that being an appropriately gendered woman is not (considered to be) simultaneously compatible with being actively sexual. This is a dominant discourse. As de Lauretis (1987) observes, “sexuality is perceived as an attribute or property of the male,” irrespective of the gender of the individual who embodies it (p. 14).

Despite the general paucity of research on homosexuality and, particularly, lesbianism, a substantial body of knowledge about both was produced during this period. This knowledge effectively hierarchically organised individuals into a variety of categories that depended on norms of sex and gender, and, in turn, produced a number of categorical norms around sexuality. These functioned to reinstate heterosexuality as healthy (and normal) and render homosexuality, lesbianism and numerous other ‘perversions’ fundamentally unhealthy and abnormal. Moreover, as Kaplan (1997) argues, it also “consigned [lesbians and gays] to a regime of silence and discretion, subjected to a knowing social gaze that defined [them] as both radically ‘other’ and perfectly transparent” (p. 163). However, in rendering homosexuals and lesbians, in all their (ascribed) minute detail, visible to society these early sexologists also produced some of the possible forms (and delimited the boundaries) of gay and lesbian subjectivity:

We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from that very moment it was characterised...less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inventing the masculine and feminine in oneself (Foucault, 1978, p. 43).

It is partly for this reason that, following Foucault, Weeks (1985, 1995) argues that this early work not only rendered homosexuality and lesbianism visible and, thus, subject to further sanctions, but it also made possible the later formation of gay and lesbian identities (see also, Ruehl, 1982).

The taxonomy of sexualities being constructed at the turn of the century represented part of a body of knowledge that became widely accepted as describing
the ‘essential’ features of particular individuals. Lesbianism and male homosexuality were a central part of this production and thus, became a medical ‘reality’, written on, or within the body (or the psyche) and detectable through the application of medical technologies. This knowledge and the norms it produced attained a legitimacy (and influence) precisely through its sanctioning by the medical institution and through the expert authority conferred by the developing discourses of science.

3.3.2 Fact Construction, Medical Science and Expert Knowledge

It was through the early sexologists’ construction of (homo)sexuality as a fundamentally biological, and therefore medical, matter that rendered it a legitimate topic of study. If homosexuality, and other variations, were natural biological ‘anomalies,’ determined by the universal laws of nature (e.g., Hirschfeld likened homosexuality to colour blindness), then the ‘facts’ could be discovered through the application of medico-scientific principles. Moreover, the expert application of such principles and their institutional sanctioning functioned to imbue the discourse with authority. Ellis, in the preface to his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, for example, argues:

I have at least tried to find out what the facts are among normal people as well as among abnormal people; for, while it seems to me that the physicians training is necessary in order to ascertain the facts, the physician for the most part only obtains the abnormal facts, which alone bring little light. I have tried to get at the facts, and, having got at the facts to look them simply and squarely in the face (1905, p. xxxvii–xxxviii).

Apart from asserting that there are discoverable ‘facts’ about human sexuality, Ellis (1905) also suggests that ‘experts’ (in this case physicians) can ascertain these facts; indeed, expert training is an essential component in their discovery. Following Foucault (1977a), this represents part of the establishment of a legitimate perspective: in order for an ‘object’ to be brought into ‘existence’ the knower must establish a right to speak. In this case, it is achieved through the discursive production of the ‘expert’ who, with the appropriate training, can obtain the facts and then understand them in a particular kind of way. Ellis (1905) points out that in an effort to discover the facts about ‘normal people,’ inevitably it is the ‘abnormal facts’ that are obtained. Indeed, an important criticism recently levelled at work on sexuality is that ‘normality’ (i.e., heterosexuality) is used as the taken-for-granted standard against which everything is
measured, but is itself left unexamined and untheorised (see e.g., Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1993). In this way 'normality' is implicitly defined and reasserted through its relationship to abnormality, and norms are established which provide the basis for the elaboration and development of theories and concepts (Foucault, 1977a).

Supporting scientific discourse and its fact claims is the concept of 'objectivity,' and it was not entirely overlooked by either the early sexologists or the early psychoanalysts. Freud, for example, offers the following basis for claiming 'objectivity' when discussing the psychogenesis of a case of female homosexuality:

The position of affairs, which I shall now proceed to lay bare, is not a product of my inventive powers; it is based on such trustworthy analytic evidence that I can claim objective validity for it. It was in particular a series of dreams, interrelated and easy to interpret, that decided me in favour of its reality (Freud, 1920, p. 42).

Claiming objectivity distances the 'expert' from the object of study, implies the research is unbiased and uncontaminated by personal involvement or politics and bestows upon it the status of fact. As discussed in Chapter 2, objectivity is not an attainable ideal, but rather a rhetorical device supporting the historically contingent discourses of science, masking their partiality and conferring authority and legitimacy. However, the inevitably subjective and impartial nature of knowledge production was not entirely overlooked by the early sexologists. Ellis (1905), for example, makes the following observations regarding psychoanalysis:

Psychoanalysis reveals an immense mass of small details, any of which may or may not possess significance, and in determining which are significant the individuality of the psychoanalyst cannot fail to come into play. He will necessarily tend to arrange them according to a system. If, for instance, he regards infantile incestuous emotions or early Narcissism as an essential feature of the mechanism of homosexuality he will not rest until he has discovered traces of them, as he very probably will (p. 90).

Ellis, however, does not apply the same criticism to his own work. Having decided that homosexuality and lesbianism are inherited congenital abnormalities, he argues for the significance of heredity, despite acknowledging that it is difficult to establish "a definite basis of fact from which to claim [its] significance" (Ellis, 1905, p. 265). In this respect, he asserts that 24 inverts said that they had reason to believe other members of their families were inverted. In 28 cases, there was "more or less
frequency of morbidity or abnormality—eccentricity, alcoholism, neurasthenia, insanity, or nervous disease—on one or both sides, in addition to inversion or apart from it" (p. 265).\textsuperscript{15} However, 26 inverts “so far as can be ascertained, belong to reasonably healthy families,” but he suggests “minute investigation would probably reduce the number of these” (p. 265).

Ellis’ evidence of ‘fundamental organic factors’ and his support for his theory of congenital abnormality was obtained through the examination of the histories of sexual inverts and he offers the following justification for selecting which individual historical narratives to admit into his study:

The histories which follow have been obtained in various ways, and are of varying value. Some are of persons whom I have known very well for very long periods, and concerning whom I can speak positively. A few are from complete strangers whose good faith, however, I judge from internal evidence that I am able to accept.... I have not admitted any narrative which I do not feel I am entitled to regard as a substantially accurate statement of the facts, although allowance must occasionally be made for the emotional colouring of these facts, the invert sometimes cherishing too high an opinion, and sometimes too low an opinion of his own personality (Ellis, 1905, p. 91–92).

Narratives judged by Ellis to be admissible, are therefore, those that he considers to be ‘substantially accurate statements of the facts.’ But he considers the ‘facts’ to be that inversion is, fundamentally, an inherited congenital abnormality. The key point, however, is not that Ellis selected some accounts over others or that he did not specify his criteria for selecting admissible accounts. It is rather that he constructs himself as the arbiter and agent of truth, and in so doing determines which histories (or forms of knowledge) and which interpretations of these count as valid and accordingly enter into public discourse. Foucault (1978) discusses Charcot’s “frequent practice” of ‘deleting from dossiers what patients had said and what the doctors themselves had seen and provoked’ (p. 56). These details, he argues were “almost entirely omitted from the published observations” (Foucault, 1978, p. 56). However, the point for Foucault was not so much to question the ‘objectivity’ or partiality of

\textsuperscript{15} Symonds (1971 [1896]) points out that there is an important theoretical difficulty with work that treated sexual inversion from the point of view of neuropathy and tainted heredity. Symonds argues that there was probably not a single person in Europe who had not inherited some neuropathic strain, accordingly, everybody was liable to a ‘diagnosis’ of sexual inversion. Given which, he argued, the principle of heredity becomes purely theoretical.
these early researchers, but rather to problematise the scientific concept of truth. Foucault notes that:

The important thing, in this affair, is not that these men shut their eyes or stopped their ears, or that they were mistaken; it is rather that they constructed around and apropos of sex an immense apparatus for producing truth (1978, p. 56).

Part of this apparatus involved the application and privileging of particular methods in order to establish and warrant research findings. In the following extract, Ellis notes not only how some accounts are discredited (and thus fail to count as knowledge) but also how psychoanalysts construct an expert perspective through the privileging of their methods for obtaining the facts:

Many years ago we used to be told that invert[s] are such lying and deceitful degenerates that it was impossible to place reliance on anything they said. It was also usual to say that when they wrote biographical accounts of themselves they merely sought to mold them in the fashion of those published by Krafft-Ebing. More recently the psychoanalysts have made a more radical attack on all histories not obtained by their own methods as being quite unreliable, even when put forward in good faith, in part because the subject withholds much that he either regards as too trivial or too unpleasant to bring forward, and in part because he cannot draw on that unconscious field within himself wherein, it is held, the most significant facts in his own sexual history are concealed (1905, p. 89).

By presenting particular methods as not only the most 'reliable' but as essential for understanding, interpreting and revealing the 'significant facts' of an individual's sexual history, these early experts constructed an (institutionally sanctioned) authoritative 'right to speak'. In turn, they became the privileged interpreters and diagnosticians of sexuality and the legitimate source of 'valid' knowledge. Other ways of knowing and understanding sexual behaviour (especially lay knowledges) were, in turn, marginalised and discredited.

3.3.3 Politics, Resistance and the Emergence of 'Reverse' Discourses

The privileging of scientific knowledge at the explicit expense of lay knowledges is not uncommon in the literature on homosexuality (see e.g., Bell and Weinberg, 1978; Hedblom, 1973; Peplau and Gordon, 1983; Tripp, 1975). However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the introduction of knowledge forms (even those that are institutionally
sanctioned) is never without contestation and resistance. Indeed, for Foucault such resistance is an inevitable consequence of the power/knowledge strategies embedded in discourse.

There is no question that the appearance ... of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty and 'psychic hermaphrodisism' made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of 'perversity'; but it also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same categories by which it was medically disqualified (1978, p. 101–102).

There are two notable examples of 'reverse' discourses that developed in Europe at the turn of the century. The first centred on Hirschfeld's untiring political campaign on behalf of homosexual rights (see also Carpenter, 1908, who was a British homosexual rights campaigner); the second originated from criticism levelled at Hirschfeld by a group of male homosexuals. Hirschfeld (1914) prepared a petition for the purpose of repealing Section 175 of the German Penal Code, which declared homosexual acts punishable by law.16 Hirschfeld's central argument was that sexual acts between persons of the same sex should be treated exactly like acts between persons of opposite sex, punishable only when they entail the use of force or involve persons under 16 years of age. According to Schmidt (1984), 5,000 signatures, supplied mainly by scientists, lawyers, doctors, artists and politicians (including Krafft-Ebing, Forel, Ellis, Moll and Bloch) backed Hirschfeld's petition. Hirschfeld argued that homosexuality was a form of sexual or emotional hermaphrodisism, specifically, an intersexual stage between the poles of complete maleness and femaleness and he regarded this 'peculiarity' as a natural congenital variation. From this basis he argued that individuals should not be morally blamed for having such a 'disposition'. Importantly, Hirschfeld chose scientific argument to warrant his claims and as his primary mode of attack; Section 175, he argued, was quite simply incompatible with 'progressive scientific thinking'. Thus, using much the same medical categories, terminology and 'evidence' that had been marshalled to construct homosexuality and lesbianism as degenerate and abnormal, Hirschfeld argued for homosexual rights.

16 As most of these documents do not appear to have been translated into English, I am indebted to Schmidt's (1984) account of Hirschfeld's petition and the Reichstag debates.
Hirschfeld's arguments were ineffective. Political opponents enlisted the support of their own scientists, psychiatrists and forensic physicians to argue (drawing on both religious and Darwinian concepts of sexuality) that homosexuality could not be natural as it did not serve the purposes of procreation (Schmidt, 1984). During this time, Hirschfeld also attracted criticism from a group of German male homosexual intellectuals. Schmidt (1984) argues that this group of early activists (who were led by a biologist, Friedländer) "revelled in their maleness, idealized Greek culture, prided themselves in their exclusiveness...were deeply misogynist [and] propagated reactionary socio-biological fantasies about an all-male culture" (p. 131). Friedländer's group, according to Schmidt (1984), attacked Hirschfeld on two fronts: firstly, they claimed that it was futile to argue for liberty from the basis of science or medicine as the issues were political, legal and moral. Secondly, they criticised Hirschfeld (and sexological theories in general) for turning male homosexuals into 'psychological monsters', 'pitiful half-women' and 'poor female souls languishing in male bodies' which, they argued, might achieve limited tolerance and sympathy, but not respect or equality (Schmidt, 1984, p. 131).

Elements of both of these 'reverse' discourses are still evident in contemporary theorising and debates around male homosexuality and lesbianism. Resistance to the pathological discourse, following Friedländer for example, is evident in much psychological theorising dating from the 1970s (see Section, 3.4). In addition, the use of the discourse of biological essentialism as a way of achieving social and political equality is still being rehearsed. For example, in 1975, lawyers for Sergeant Matlovich (who was facing dismissal from the US Air Force for homosexuality), argued (unsuccessfully) that as Matlovich's homosexuality was congenital, there were no grounds for dismissing him from military service. Their rationale being that hereditary homosexuality cannot be considered immoral, or contagious, therefore, Matlovich should be allowed to remain in service (see Shilts, 1993 for a thorough review of this case). In addition, LeVay (1991), a self-proclaimed gay activist, currently justifies his research—comparing the brains of (ostensibly) straight and gay men who died from AIDS related illnesses—by arguing that if homosexuality can be proven to be biologically determined then there is no basis for discrimination. Jeffreys (1994) notes that some gay men marshalled this argument in contesting Clause 28 of the Local
Government Act. This Act sought to prevent local authorities from assisting anyone promoting homosexuality as an acceptable family relationship. They argued, in particular, that the Clause should not be passed since homosexuality is innate and, therefore, cannot be promoted.

3.3.4 Pathology and the Discourse of Biological Essentialism

Since the 1970s, feminist (and other) critics of the early sexological (and psychoanalytic) work on homosexuality have argued that the medico-scientific categories and definitions produced at this time, profoundly pathologised and morbidified male homosexuality and lesbianism (e.g., Brown, 1995; Faderman, 1978; Jeffreys, 1994; Kitzinger, 1987; Stevens and Hall, 1991). Although some of the early sexologists (e.g., Moll and Forel) explicitly theorise homosexuality as perversion and illness, others emphasise the biological idiosyncrasy of homosexuality (e.g., Carpenter, Hirschfeld, and Symonds) rather than its pathology. Ellis argues, in the foreword to his third edition of Studies in the Psychology of Sex, that he “had not originally proposed to start the Studies with what was inevitably an abnormal subject, and to put it at the head served to excuse the not uncommon error of describing [his] studies as ‘pathological’ ” (1905, p. xxi). Faderman (1978) argues that Krafft-Ebing, who had argued consistently in his most influential work Psychopathia Sexualis that homosexuality was a profoundly pathological condition, later suggested that the term ‘illness’ should not be insisted upon since homosexuality was not necessarily incompatible with normal mental functioning.

Despite clear signs of resistance it was ultimately the pathological/illness discourse that commanded institutional support and that ultimately achieved dominance. Homosexuality was officially listed as an illness in the 1933 precursor to the 1952 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-1) and was not removed until 1973. This meant that by the mid 1930s, until at least the 1970s, persons identified as homosexual or lesbian were likely to be referred to psychiatrists or clinicians for treatment.

The pathologisation of homosexuality was not simply achieved through its construction as abnormal. Abnormal, for example, can be interpreted as simply meaning different (which was, for example, the view taken by Hirschfeld). It was
rather the explicit discursive links constructed between normality and health (and, in
turn, abnormality and illness) that were being established during this period. These
'links' formed part of what Foucault (1978) calls the "perversion-heredity-
degenerescence system" (p. 119) which provided the basis not only for explanations
of homosexuality but for all explanations of social difference. As Kaplan (1997)
succinctly observes:

The widespread acceptance of the language of pathology as an explanation of
social difference in the nineteenth century legitimised a racist rhetoric that
naturalised relations of domination effecting (sic) not only homosexuals but
also Jews, blacks, and other colonized peoples, as well as women (Kaplan,

Explaining social difference in pathological terms thus functions to legitimate
inequitable social relationships and allows "subordinate social status [to be] justified as
a reflection of biological inferiority" (Kaplan, 1997, p. 124). Foucault (1978) argues
that the 'perversion-heredity-degenerescence system' originated in the middle of the
nineteenth century and was marked by the transition from describing sex in terms of
religious morality to the medico-psychological emphasis on 'perversion' and heredity
that began equating sex with "biological responsibility" (p. 118). In short, sex became
something that needed to be judiciously controlled in order to ensure that healthy
genetic stock prevailed. Foucault (1978), although a severe critic of psychiatry and
psychoanalysis, credits Freud and psychoanalytic theory until the 1940s with
attempting to free the sexual instinct "from its ties with heredity, ... eugenics and the
various racisms" and thus opposing "the political and institutional effects of the
perversion-heredity-degenerescence system" (p. 119). Nevertheless, in sexology at
least, the "medicine of perversions and the programs of eugenics" formed the 'theory
of degenerescence' through which the state administered and regulated most forms of
social non-conformity (Foucault, 1978, p. 118). Ellis (1905), for example, although
often attempting to resist the language of pathology, explicitly forms the links between
inherited biological inferiority, social control, and homosexuality in the following
extract:

For the sake of possible offspring, also, marriage is to be avoided. It is
sometimes entirely for the sake of children that the invert desires to marry.
But it must be pointed out that homosexuality is undoubtedly in many cases
inherited. Often, it is true, the children turn out fairly well, but in many cases,
they bear witness that they belong to a neurotic and failing stock; Hirschfeld goes so far as to say that it is always so, and concludes that from the eugenic standpoint the marriage of a homosexual person is always very risky. In a large number of cases such marriages prove sterile. The tendency to sexual inversion in eccentric and neurotic families seems merely to be nature's merciful method of winding up a concern which, from her point of view, has ceased to be profitable (Ellis, 1905, p. 335).

Defining and representing homosexuality in this way produces particular forms of knowledge that transmit power through potentiating (or constraining) social practices. If homosexuality is defined as a wilful act (as in the earlier legal construction), it is likely to be punished; if it is defined as congenital (and pathological), it is more likely to be treated and judiciously discouraged from reproducing and ‘tainting’ future generations.

The early discourses that principally constructed lesbianism and male homosexuality as biologically determined were used to justify research that aimed to prevent, cure or treat non-heterosexual forms of sexual expression. For example, in the period from 1916 to 1926, Steinach, an endocrinologist, performed eleven castrations of homosexual men in an effort to cure their homosexuality. According to Schmidt (1984), these operations commonly involved the transplantation of ‘normal’ testicular tissue (from heterosexual men who had had an undescended testicle removed) into homosexual men. These operations ceased around 1926, when it was decided that they were ineffective. However, biological work continued. According to Schmidt and Schorsch (1981), between 1962 and 1979, stereostatic brain operations were performed on 30 homosexual men. This involved inserting a probe into the hypothalamus and coagulating the parts where the female sex centre was thought to be located. In the 1980s, Dörner (1979, 1983a, 1983b) suggested that homosexuality is the pathological result of prenatal hormone malfunction: caused by a lack of androgens in males and increased androgens in females. Speculating from research undertaken on rats, Dörner (1983a) argues that if his theory is correct then “it might be possible in the future, at least in some cases, to correct abnormal sex hormone levels during sexual brain differentiation in order to prevent the development of homosexuality” (p. 577).

Research underpinned by the discourses of biological essentialism, is deeply problematic and it is troubling that LeVay’s (1991) work, for example, has been
received with enthusiasm, or at least sympathetic curiosity, in the gay press (Jeffreys, 1994). Jeffreys (1994) suggests that in general, the essentialist arguments deriving from sexology have been used by gay men and not lesbians (for exceptions see Loulan, 1990; Newton, 1991) because of historically different experiences of sex/gender oppression (but see also Edwards, 1998; Kaplan, 1997; Weeks, 1995 who argue against the political utility of such explanations). Notably, Jeffreys argues that for gay men, “their freedom as men does not depend to the same extent [as it does for women] on fighting biologism” (1994, p. 76). Jeffreys’ (1994) arguments are persuasive. Biological arguments have consistently been employed to justify the (categorical) oppression of all women irrespective of their sexuality. Moreover, the early sexological theories explicitly connected lesbianism and the women’s movement, and it functioned partly to suppress women’s claims for independence.

Overall, the discourse of biological essentialism that developed during this period is profoundly theoretically problematic. Not only does it ascribe a false and permanent homogeneity to a notably heterogeneous group and potentiates the use of the language of pathology, but also it potentially legitimates a variety of problematic practices. LeVay, in justifying his own biological research, recently argued that concerns over the misuse of such work on homosexuality are no longer relevant because “the climate is changing” and “gay men and lesbians have power and influence now” (National Film Board of Canada, 1995). While biological accounts may have political utility, for example, in arguing that innate characteristics are not volitional and therefore should not be discriminated against, following Franklin (1993), I think that at the present time the dangers of characterising sexualities (and any other forms of social difference) in biological terms are more pressing than during the pre Second World War eugenics era. Not least because new medical (and, notably, reproductive) technologies are emerging, which herald new forms of essentialism under the guise of genetic ‘progress.’ These potentiate highly sophisticated forms of socio-genetic engineering through, for example, genetic screening techniques. Moreover, irrespective of the ways in which the current socio-political climate is characterised, Foucault’s account suggests that it is extremely difficult to confidently predict discursive shifts. At the very least, this means that it is necessary to be
thoroughly and reflexively circumspect concerning the potential implications of the production of any forms of knowledge.

3.3.5 The Military and the Medical Construction

Bérubé (1990) traces the origins of the military's reliance on medical models of homosexuality to the Second World War. In the military context, the majority of professional work at this time was concerned with male homosexuality rather than lesbianism. This was not only because men made up the overwhelming majority of (and were, in Britain, the only 'official') military personnel, but also because large numbers of men were required at this time specifically for combat duties. In terms of policy, military responses to the medical construction, according to Bérubé (1990), primarily involved arguing that homosexuals were unsuitable for military service on the grounds of mental illness which rendered them incompetent (see also e.g., Herek 1996). However, due to the increasing demands for manpower during the Second World War, both the British and US militaries, to some extent, relaxed their respective practices regarding the enlistment of individuals openly declaring themselves to be homosexual (Bérubé, 1990; Faderman, 1991; Kinsman, 1996; Shilts, 1993; Stiehm, 1994). This appears to have been principally because the military wanted to curtail the possibility of homosexuality being used as a reason to avoid conscription (Bérubé, 1990; Faderman, 1991; Shilts, 1993; Stiehm, 1994).

Probably the most important influence of the early theories of homosexuality and lesbianism on military policies and practices was the important shift from conduct to status. As I discussed in the beginning of this chapter, prior to professional research, the military dealt with homosexuality purely by prohibiting undesirable conduct. With the emergence of the discursive production of the homosexual as a distinct kind of person, the military was not only able to dismiss individuals engaging in homosexual conduct but could also restrict entry to individuals identified by their homosexual status. Rather than supplanting military legal prohibitions around homosexual behaviour, enlisted individuals were still subjected to an investigation in which the military police attempted to establish homosexual behaviour. This practice continues to date. British military reliance on the criminal construction is directly evident in its use in military law until 1994. Until this time, the military also argued in a somewhat
circular fashion that because homosexuality was contrary to military law such individuals were susceptible to blackmail and, accordingly, represented a national security risk (Bérubé, 1990; Herek, 1996). Consequently, although homosexual behaviour was now constructed as individual pathology it was still likely to be (legally) punished and it continued to be represented as morally sinful (Lehring, 1996). Accordingly, the introduction of medico-scientific explanations around homosexuality, far from displacing earlier discourses provided the military with new ways of dealing with and detecting (concealed) homosexuality and effectively substantially augmented the military's arsenal of justifications for continuing a policy of exclusion. All three discourses are still evident, to varying degrees, in current military discourse (I examine this further in Study 1).

Bérubé (1990) argues that in practice the policy was difficult to enforce. Partly because some medical examiners were also gay, and partly because some simply did not agree with, or stringently apply, the policy (Bérubé, 1990). There was also considerable variation in the ways in which military psychiatrists and physicians responded to the requirement to screen recruits for homosexuality. Some believed they had an ethical responsibility to protect the confidentiality of gay men, whereas others felt morally obliged to report gay men in order to protect "the morals of the nation's young soldiers" from "contamination" (Bérubé, 1990, p. 27). In addition, there was a fundamental disjuncture between the desperate requirement for manpower (and the attendant need to identify malingerers) on the one hand, and the injunction to reject ('genuine') homosexuals on the other. This, Bérubé (1990) argues, often resulted in a conflict between those psychiatrists who found themselves defending self-declared homosexuals as "honest men who admitted that they were mentally ill," and others (including some military officials) who portrayed them as shirking their military duty and trying to evade their national responsibilities (p. 25).

Considerable effort, therefore, was expended on developing methods for identifying 'genuine' homosexuals. To this end, elaborate tests were instituted, including, for example, the 'gag-reflex' test, the Rorschach inkblot test and an
assortment of sex-hormone urine tests. In addition, to the institution of various tests, military psychiatrists and physicians sought to identify certain ‘traits’ that distinguished gay and straight men. The ‘traits’ identified by military psychiatrists as characterising gay men were consistent with those employed by general psychiatry and they reflected the earlier sexologists’ formulations. However, in the military context, emphasis was most often placed on those characteristics considered most antithetical to combat duties, for example, effeminacy, passivity, a strong maternal attachment, and fearfulness (e.g., Cornsweet and Hayes, 1945; Greenspan and Campbell, 1945; Jonas, 1944; Loeser, 1945). These characteristics were inimical to the construction of the combat soldier, who was, conversely, constructed as aggressively masculine, brave, independent, and possessing a “taste for battle” (Bérubé, 1990; see also Bianco, 1996; Enloe, 1988; Muir, 1992; Hall, 1995). Despite this reliance on ostensibly inherent (and for the military undesirable) characteristics, it is interesting to note that some military psychiatrists were also among the first to provide substantial critiques of the military’s anti-homosexual policy (see e.g., Fry and Rostow, 1945, 1948; Loeser, 1945).

The ascription of particular characteristics to (male) homosexuals marked the start of the military’s recognition that the scope of the definition of ‘homosexuality’ could be extended to include (inherent) features that were independent of conduct. Lehring (1996) argues persuasively that in the military, irrespective of an individual’s service record, the newly discovered character defect—homosexuality—supplanted all other aspects of an individual’s character and their integrity, veracity and competence was thus subject to doubt. In addition, Connell (1992) argues that male homosexuality and femininity were becoming so thoroughly conflated that irrespective of sexual activity, it legitimised the exclusion of men perceived to be ‘feminine’ from military service. Rolison and Nakayama (1994) also argue that this allowed the military some latitude in

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17 The ‘gag-reflex’ test, developed by Gioscia (1950) was trialed on almost 1,500 military psychiatric patients including those who had been diagnosed as ‘sexual psychopaths’ (i.e., male homosexuals). The test involved inserting a tongue depressor into a patient’s throat and assessing their reaction. Men who did not have a gag-reflex were assumed to be genuine homosexuals because they were practised in controlling the reflex during fellatio. Those with a gag-reflex, conversely, were identified as malingerers. For a (somewhat) less intrusive, but no less problematic, method (interviews) of identifying gay men through their perceived relationship to fellatio, see for example, Cornsweet and Hayes (1945).

18 American psychiatrists undertook the majority of research in the military at this time, however, some of it was carried out in England at the Army Station hospitals serving the European Theatre of Operations, for example, Loeser’s (1945) research.
disciplining ‘one-time incidents’ or extra-ordinary homosexual behaviours engaged in by those otherwise considered to be masculine and, therefore, heterosexual and not ‘congenitally abnormal.’ In this way, the feminisation of male homosexuality sustained and re-established the complementary conflation of male heterosexuality with masculinity. Within this discursive formulation, the vehement assertion of heterosexuality, and the equally vehement denial of homosexuality, guarantees masculinity and confers ‘manhood.’ For this reason, Rolison and Nakayama (1994) argue that underpinning the exclusion of gay men from military service is the discourse of hegemonic masculinity, and it includes a degree of homophobia as a necessary constitutive element. (The extent to which this discourse underpins the current British military exclusionary policy will be examined in Study 1).

In both Britain and the US, demands for ‘manpower’ during the Second World War expanded to include the large-scale employment of women in both the military and war-related industries. This represented a key part of the war effort since it released significant numbers of men from service and support functions for combat duties. However, Meyer (1996) argues that the enlistment of women into the otherwise exclusively male military institution generated considerable speculation concerning both the effects of military service on women and the influence women might have on the sexual morality of the military institution. Notably, concerns were expressed about heterosexual promiscuity and the potential vulnerability of women in military (particularly combat) environments. For the British Army, such concerns arose from earlier experiences with the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) during the First World War. During this time, Terry (1988) argues that a number of rumours began to “circulate alleging that members of the WAAC were guilty of loose conduct and immoral behaviour” (p. 69). Such rumours reached their height in 1918 when it was claimed “that WAACs were being recruited for army brothels” (Terry, 1988, p. 70). Terry argues that many of these rumours had their origins in male barrack rooms, and were:

19 Interestingly, both Terry (1988) and Bidwell (1977) in their historical accounts of women in the British military studiously avoid using the term ‘lesbian’ throughout. Although Terry has a rare tendency to allude to lesbianism, Bidwell completely avoids it, which gives the impression that the issue of lesbianism will sully his otherwise ‘glorious history’ of women in military service.
malicious fabrications spread by soldiers who were frustrated, jealous of comrades enjoying WAAC company or just resentful of the women who had taken their safe jobs and freed them for the trenches. Many soldiers immediately blamed WAACs for their venereal disease—it was still a penal offence to communicate a venereal disease to a soldier—but in one company seven accusations were found to be untrue and three of them malicious (1988, p. 70).

Although Terry argues that there was little evidence to support these rumours, they were considered sufficiently serious to merit a Commission of Inquiry (which vindicated the women’s corps) and they were widely reported in the press. Moreover, concerns about women’s promiscuity continued through to the Second World War with the establishment of the British Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) in 1938 (Bidwell, 1977), and comparable public concerns appeared in the US with the establishment of the WAAC in 1942 (Meyer, 1996). As in the earlier British case, US army investigations into rumours of widespread sexual immorality among WAACs were also thought to have been generated by male soldiers and without foundation (e.g., Meyer, 1996).

The Second World War heralded an additional problem for both the military and a society becoming increasingly concerned with sexuality. As discussed, underpinning the early sexological and psychoanalytic theoretical work on female inversion were pervasive gender norms. Deviation from conventional notions of femininity was, therefore, seen as a potential indicator of female homosexuality. Accordingly, concerns were expressed that military service would either encourage the development of masculinity in women (and, therefore, potentially ‘sexual deviance’) or it would appeal to women who were already masculine and/or deviant (see e.g., Meyer, 1996). Indeed, Faderman (1991) argues, that “the ‘firm public impression’ during the war years that a women’s corps was ‘the ideal breeding ground for lesbians’ had considerable basis in fact” (p. 120). According to Faderman (1991), this was not simply because more women participated in war related activities in the Second World War, but also because after “the Freudian-saturated ‘20s,” more women could imagine lesbianism, and more easily conceive of it as a lifestyle (p. 120). While women in earlier decades might have explained and understood their relationships with other women as “passionate or romantic friendships,” by the 1940s, Faderman (1991) argues, such relationships were being clearly defined as lesbian. Moreover, both wars
had provided large numbers of women access to the public sphere of employment. This not only afforded women greater levels of independence but it increased their access to alternative discourses around sexuality that had previously been more limited by restrictive familial roles and expectations.

The accusations levelled against the women’s corps, of (hetero)sexual immorality and lesbianism, both presented difficulties for the military. Anti-fraternisation policies were instituted and serving men and women were segregated as much as possible, partly in an attempt to establish and maintain a respectable reputation for the women’s corps and partly to protect women from potential abuse by male soldiers and officers (e.g., Meyer, 1996; Terry, 1988). The perceived benefits of the segregation of women and men were, however, to an extent, offset by concerns about lesbianism. As discussed, the early sexologists had established certain ‘exciting causes of inversion,’ not least of which was sex-segregated employment. Accordingly, discouraging heterosexual fraternisation (and the related risks of pregnancies and venereal disease) potentially provided the very conditions deemed conducive to the emergence of (at least ‘spurious’) lesbianism. In addition, the anti-fraternisation policies generated considerable resentment among heterosexual men and women.

According to Meyer (1996), it was usually female officers that were charged with enforcing these policies, and they were often accused of being anti-male and lesbian. Accordingly, in some cases, military concerns about lesbianism were manipulated in an effort to extend heterosexual privilege.

Although the formal military policies prohibited both male and female homosexuality, in practice, Faderman (1991) argues that during the war years lesbians were rarely disciplined or dismissed. Furthermore, a number of historians argue that in the US, WAAC officers were explicitly instructed not to expose or punish lesbian behaviour unless it ‘undermined an individual’s efficiency,’ ‘the stability of the group’ or was ‘universally demoralising’ (see e.g., Bérubé, 1990; Faderman, 1991; Meyer, 1996). It also seems likely, as Meyer (1996) argues, that dismissing lesbians from the newly emerging women’s corps was discouraged, as it would have attracted intense public scrutiny and disapproval. Moreover, unlike perceived femininity in men, perceived masculinity in women does not appear to have precluded their enlistment, at least partly because they were required to perform duties that were traditionally
masculine. The military appears, therefore, to have negotiated some of the difficulties concerning the employment of women and lesbians by recourse to practical expedience rather than formal policy. For example, lesbianism, while officially condemned by the military, also worked effectively to the military's advantage. Lesbians, were not perceived as costing the military time, money or 'manpower' because of sexually transmitted disease or pregnancy (Faderman, 1991) and provided they remained hidden, they did not contribute to the prevailing 'scandals' concerning (hetero) sexual immorality within the corps. Accordingly, for a number of thoroughly strategic reasons, during the war years at least, lesbians appear to have been largely ignored. In the post war years, however, the commitment to dismissing both lesbians and gay men re-intensified and individuals suspected of either homosexual status or conduct were routinely dismissed (Bérubé, 1990; Enloe, 1988; Faderman, 1991; Meyer, 1996).

3.3.6 Summary of the Medical Construction

The early sexological research on male homosexuality and lesbianism had a number of significant discursive implications. First, it constructed a dominant and pervasive discourse based on the image of the masculine lesbian and the effeminate gay man, which clearly tied 'genuine' (or particularly degenerate) forms of non-heterosexuality to some form of gender non-conformity. Second, it fundamentally essentialised both male homosexuality and lesbianism, positing both as inherent, stable and ultimately pathological features of particular individuals, which precipitated a number of attempts at treatment or cure. Third, the codification of (numerous) sexualities produced the basis for a discursive hierarchy which, in general, distinguished between 'real' lesbians (and gay men) and those who were 'spurious imitations;' that is, those who occasionally deviated which was usually theorised as the result of being in a particular context (e.g., sex-segregated schools). Ultimately, this established a discourse in which 'real' or 'genuine' forms of 'inversion' were not understood in relation to sexual activity but rather primarily as a violation of sex/gender norms. In addition, it thoroughly minimised the salience and cultural/political significance of other 'inversions' and it functioned to delimit the number of individuals who could be legitimately classed as non-heterosexual.
This early work also formed the basis for much of the subsequent work around sexuality and its influence was reflected in research originating in the military context and in military personnel polices and practices. Sexology effectively established sex as a legitimate topic of study (and indeed privileged sex as the origin of numerous psychological phenomena). Moreover, and despite being produced prior to the introduction of, for example, logical positivism, this work represents part of the move towards establishing science and its methods as an appropriate way of studying behaviour. With respect to male homosexuality and lesbianism, a body of institutionally sanctioned knowledge was produced, generalised across the (invert) population and reified as scientific fact. In this way, norms were established within the discursive field of sexuality, which functioned to produce homosexual and lesbian objects/subjects rendering them visible, socially and biologically aberrant and eugenically dangerous.

Although this work marked the beginnings of an important shift in emphasis, from theological notions of sin and salvation, to medical notions of health and illness, it did not displace the religious or legal discourses. Kinsman (1996) notes, for example, that the language of moral degeneration drawn from Social Darwinism that was employed to explain many forms of social and sexual ‘deviation’ did not mean that the religious language of ‘immorality,’ ‘vice’ and ‘evil’ was dislodged. As Foucault (1978) argues, at the end of the eighteenth century a completely new technology of sex emerged that “for the most part escaped ecclesiastical institutions without being truly independent of the thematics of sin” (p. 116). Indeed, Foucault (1978) emphasises the ways in which the medical institution allied with other institutions of social control (e.g., religious and legal) to reiterate desired forms of behaviour through the discursive control of sexuality.

3.4 The ‘Minority Group’ Construction

Shortly after the Second World War, Kinsey et al., (1948, 1953) reported that a substantial number of men (37%) and women (28%) had, at one time or another, engaged in sexual activities with same-sex partners. From this basis, Kinsey questions the sexological construction that homosexuality is primarily an intrinsic (and pathological) feature of certain individuals, concentrating instead on the prevalence of
homosexual acts. Kinsey theorises sexual activity along a seven-point continuum, ranging from exclusive heterosexual experience to exclusive homosexual experience, and, to some extent, challenges the earlier formulations that theorised essential differences between persons defined as homosexual or heterosexual. This work argues against the rigid dichotomisation of sexual categories (at least in terms of sexual activity) and argues instead for similarity and homogeneity (see also Bell and Weinberg 1978; Gagnon and Simon, 1973; Masters and Johnson, 1979).

Kinsey’s (1948, 1953) work appears to have precipitated something of a definitional shift, evident in work emerging in the late 1960s, towards categorising ‘genuine’ lesbians on the basis of ‘regular or repetitive’ sexual activity with women (see e.g., Bieber, 1969; Kaye, 1967). This shift, however, most often applied only to definitional criteria, and sexual activity continued to be theorised as symptomatic of basic biological differences. Consistent with the earlier sexological work, a distinction between ‘real’ and ‘spurious’ lesbians was theorised, with the latter group often invalidated as, ‘contingent’ (i.e., contextually specific, due to the absence of men (Freud, 1977)), ‘going through a phase,’ or ‘pseudo’ (Defries, 1976). Indeed, in 1954, Bergler theorised twelve different types of ‘spurious’ homosexuality, and as in the earlier work, it functioned to delimit the ‘class’ of lesbians and de-legitimate some forms of sexual, emotional or political expression. Gender nonconformity also continued to be theorised as an early indicator of lesbianism. Bell, Weinberg and Hammersmith (1981) argue, for example, that “prehomosexual girls are much more likely than preheterosexual girls to display gender nonconformity” (p. 147).

Despite the influence of Kinsey’s work in relation to sexual behaviour, sexual categories remained relatively robust. This can be traced, in part, to the prevailing influences of the earlier medical discourse, and to the influence of liberalism and the civil rights movements in the late 1960s in Western culture. Originating in the nineteenth century, and notwithstanding differences between authors, the hallmark of liberalism is its emphasis on the primacy of the individual (Nisbet, 1966). In Britain and the West around the 1960s, these ideas manifested in a renewed emphasis on the importance of individual autonomy and emancipation, an emphasis on free expression and an individual’s right to equality and privacy, and (ostensibly) an increased tolerance of social difference (Cass, 1984). The civil rights movements, for example,
improved the status of culturally diverse minoritised groups, and gender barriers to employment were gradually being challenged and dismantled (Sarbin, 1996).

By the 1970s, Cass (1984) argues that gay men and lesbians were increasingly defined (and self-defining) “against a backdrop of an oppressed minority group” (p. 106). In 1969, for example, during a raid at the Stonewall Inn in Manhattan, gay men and lesbians for the first time collectively resisted the police. However, Segal (1994) argues, at the time gay men and lesbians were neither confident nor politicised. Indeed, although a gay and lesbian subculture had been developing in the preceding decades it had been forced underground and its members, reluctantly or otherwise, were still accepting an identity (albeit now shared) that centred on sickness and pathology:

I suppose the police expected us to run away into the night as we’d always done before. … After all, what were we protesting? Our right to our ‘pathetic malady’? … Someone beside me called out ‘gay is good’, in imitation of the new slogan, ‘black is beautiful’, and we all laughed. … Then I caught myself foolishly imagining that gays might someday constitute a community rather than a diagnosis (White, 1988, p. 182–183)

The Stonewall riot, however, did signal the beginnings of a new era in the development of gay and lesbian identities and heralded the later formation of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). Most significantly, members of this particular minority group became politicised: they confronted heterosexual society and attempted to end gay and lesbian oppression. In this way, Segal (1994) argues, they joined with other socially marginal groups advocating for civil rights in an attempt to overthrow the ‘present oppressive system.’

The GLF had some notable successes during this period. In particular, as a result of pressure exerted on the American Psychiatric Association, in 1973 homosexuality and lesbianism were finally removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. In 1975, the American Psychological Association also passed a resolution declaring that:

Homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgement, stability, reliability or general social or vocational capabilities…The Association deplores all public and private discrimination [and] supports and urges the enactment of civil rights legislation…that would offer citizens who engage in homosexuality the same protections now guaranteed to others on the basis of race, creed, color, etc. (APA, 1975).
Homosexuality and lesbianism, thus, rather than representing immorality, illness or criminal behaviour, became the starting point for the legitimate assertion of civil or political rights. Gay men and lesbians, thus, organised around the shared experience of being the objects of exclusion, harassment and persecution (Paul, 1982; Sagarin, 1971). Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, therefore, gay men and lesbians became increasingly identified as a ‘minority,’ analogous to, for example, ethnic ‘minority’ groups and women.

In 1952, in England, the Wolfenden Committee was appointed to consider the legal position of male homosexuality and prostitution. In its 1957 report, the Committee directly questioned the medical construction, concluding that “homosexuality cannot legitimately be regarded as a disease because in many cases it is the only symptom and it is compatible with full mental health” (The Wolfenden Report, 1957, p. 32). The Committee further recommended that, in most circumstances, homosexuality should no longer be considered a criminal offence. A key argument in the report was the identification of a private area of morality in which, it argued, the law should not intrude and in which there should be freedom of choice. The British Government at the time rejected this proposal because it argued that public opinion was not yet ready for such a change in the law. This report was significant, however, because it reflected the civil libertarian movements and directly challenged both the legal and the medical constructions of homosexuality. Moreover, it paved the way for the 1967 Sexual Offences Act that finally repealed the sodomy statutes in England. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, the revised provisions of the Sexual Offences Act (1967) did not apply to members of the British Armed Forces.

In psychology and sociology, this period heralded an increased emphasis on humanistic approaches to the individual (see e.g., Harré, 1979; Harré and Secord, 1972; Shotter, 1975, 1984). For the most part, in response to the negative valence assigned to male homosexuality and lesbianism by much of the earlier work, writers during this period generally presented both in explicitly positive terms, and sought to undermine the pathological construction of non-heterosexual categories. Some authors, however, still relied on pathological explanations, for example, Socarides (1968) argued that half of all “female homosexuals” had concomitant schizophrenia, and the other half suffered obsessional phobias, character disorders, psychopathic
personalities or some variety of addiction (p. 90). In 1980, Kronemeyer argued in a similar vein that "homosexuality is a symptom of neurosis and of a grievous personality disorder" (p. 7). Nevertheless, many theories produced about lesbianism and male homosexuality shifted in focus from a reliance on medical aetiological models to a focus on gay and lesbian lifestyles and identity development. Indeed, much of this research, which is now often referred to as 'humanist' or 'gay-affirmative research,' sought to provide evidence that the psychological adjustment of persons identified as homosexual or lesbian was no different (or 'better') than that of heterosexuals (e.g., Freedman, 1975, 1976; Ohlson, 1974; Siegleman, 1978, 1979).

Although this historical period is marked by a diverse body of work on sexuality originating from both the social sciences and feminism, in the following sections, I have chosen to concentrate on work originating in two dominant traditions: liberal humanism and radical lesbian feminism. These two traditions are in fundamental opposition, but the legacies of both are still evident in contemporary theorising (and politics) and the assumptions underpinning each have, in very different ways, been marshalled in the debates about the military exclusionary policies.

3.4.1 Liberal Humanism and the Production of the 'Well-Adjusted' Lesbian

An important contribution to the psychological literature on homosexuality and lesbianism during the 1970s and early 1980s was the 'stage' models of gay and lesbian identity development (e.g., Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Hess, 1983; McDonald, 1982; Minton and MacDonald, 1984; Raphael, 1974; Spaulding, 1982; Troiden, 1979, 1988, 1989; Troiden and Goode, 1980). Collectively, these models propose that gay and lesbian identity development proceeds through a number of (relatively discrete) stages and culminates in some form of 'positive' sexual identity. The precise labelling, number, order and significance of these stages varies according to author. Coleman (1982), for example, reverses stages two and three and Spaulding (1982) suggests that negative identity formation precedes the attainment of a 'positive identity.' Many of these theories, however, follow a general pattern, which usually involves four primary stages: First, 'identity confusion' and awareness of homosexual feelings and attractions. Second, 'identity comparison,' which includes a sense of alienation and difference, testing and exploring the lesbian and gay community, and often the first
gay or lesbian experience. Third, 'identity acceptance', which includes self-labelling, 'coming out' (to oneself) and increased contact with the gay and lesbian community. Finally, 'identity integration' which means the attainment of a 'positive' lesbian or gay identity that is thoroughly integrated with other identities and aspects of the self. Disclosure to others usually occurs during this final stage.

A 'positive identity' means that individuals accept their homosexuality or lesbianism, integrate this with other components of identity, cope adaptively with the external world of oppression and homophobia, and ultimately achieve full maturity and development. The ideal end point of this developmental sequence usually involves minimising the significance of one's gay or lesbian sexuality. In particular, individuals need to 'get over' the privileging of a gay or lesbian identity in order to be 'whole' and fully functioning individuals (e.g., Suppe, 1984). Porter (1984) suggests, for example, that well-adjusted gay men are those who see themselves as having many aspects of personality including (and almost incidentally) an emotional or sexual attraction to other men. Cass (1979) makes a similar argument: homosexual identity, "instead of being seen as the identity, is now given the status of being merely one aspect of the self. This awareness completes the homosexual identity formation process" (p. 234–235).

The primary (and important) achievement of work during this period was its re-presentation of sexual categories in 'positive' terms. The previously pathological lesbian, for example, was transformed into an individual who had at least the potential to become a healthy and valuable member of society. However, there are a number of problematic assumptions underlying this work. For example, although some theorists acknowledge that the linear sequence they describe does not apply to all of their participants (e.g., Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; McDonald, 1982), it is generally assumed that development is an orderly process, with variations (e.g., sequential disorder) theorised as deviation or regression (Rust, 1993). Accordingly, those who go through the sequence in a different order, or those who never achieved a 'positive' identity, or who go through further changes after the attainment of a 'positive' identity, tend to be ignored in these analyses. Accordingly, gay and lesbian identity development is universalised and generalised. Moreover, and more problematically, these approaches are prescriptive, in that they define what it is that counts as a viable
and legitimate ('positive, well-adjusted' etc.) identity. Politicised gay and lesbian identities are de-valued in many of these theoretical approaches because such identities are constructed as engendering hatred and anger (against heterosexual society), which inhibits 'personal growth' and individual development (e.g., Porter, 1984; Rosenfels, 1971; Lessard, 1972). Political identities are thus often positioned as the penultimate step in the developmental hierarchy (e.g., Cass, 1979) and, accordingly, a retrograde (or regressive) step if individuals develop a 'political' identity after the attainment of a 'positive' identity.

The minimisation of political identities is not only confined to the earlier stage theories. In 1995, for example, Burke published work on identity integration in lesbian and gay police officers (see also Burke, 1993a, 1993b). Burke (1995) presents his findings in the form of a four-stage career model of identity formation. This model begins with 'police prioritisation' (the prioritisation of a police officer identity), followed by 'transition' (towards a gay or lesbian identity and 'coming out'), 'sexual prioritization' (the prioritisation of a gay or lesbian identity), and finally 'identity integration.' Although Burke acknowledges the limitations of 'stage models' and emphasises that identity development is a 'progressive dynamic process,' political identification and affiliation occurs in Stage 3 (sexual prioritisation) and it is followed by full integration in Stage 4. Burke asserts that “the basic four stage model is suggestive of a gradual, unidirectional shift in primary identity from that of 'police officer', through an identity dominated by sexual orientation, towards one dominated by neither” (Burke, 1995, p. 546). Burke means this literally. The final 'integration' stage does not represent an equal commitment to both communities, but rather no community commitment at all. He notes that “the result is a commitment only to self” (Burke, 1995, p. 546). Ultimately, the fully integrated self appears to be the fully individual self unfettered by community commitments.

Sophie (1986) suggests that all of the stage theories assume that individuals start out with no identity, or with the presumption of heterosexuality. However, while some of this work does not explicitly speculate an origin for the gay and lesbian developmental sequence they describe, there is a sense in which it does assume some form of latent gay or lesbian ‘essence,’ from which these identities develop. The concept of 'coming out' (to oneself), for example, which is an important element in
the developmental sequence, suggests there is some form of latent homosexuality or lesbianism awaiting some form of recognition or expression. Indeed, gradually acknowledging, accepting and ultimately minimising this latent identity (one's 'real' or 'true' self) is seen as critical in 'positive' sexual identity development (e.g., Berzon, 1979). Moreover, some theorists, for example, Coleman (1982) explicitly posit a biological basis for sexual preference (see also Katz, 1975).

Kitzinger (1987) argues that while there was a move away from notions of pathology, much of this (and related) work did not, in actuality absolve “lesbians of the need to consult mental health practitioners” (p. 52). This is partly because, where previously, homosexuals had primarily been constructed as psychologically or congenitally inferior, now gay men and lesbians who did not accept their sexuality were seen as pathological. In 1980, for example, the psychiatric disorder ‘ego-dystonic homosexuality’ was entered into the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, and it referred to gay men and lesbians unable to accept or come to terms with their sexuality. Given that there is no comparable category ‘ego-dystonic heterosexuality,’ Davison and Neale (1982) argue that this diagnosis reflects lingering hostilities towards homosexuality and “the continuing implicit belief that homosexuality is abnormal” (p. 364). Accordingly, a different hierarchy (and a different set of norms) was produced. Within the minoritised categories, this highlighted differences between the healthy, self-accepting, fully integrated and therefore well-adjusted gay men and lesbians and those who were, for example, self-hating (captured by the category ‘internalised homophobia’), resistant to ‘socialisation’, and accordingly developmentally immature and ill adjusted (see e.g., Gartrell, 1984; Pillard, 1982). In this case individuals were encouraged to seek professional help, not necessarily for the purposes of cure or conversion as in some of the earlier work, but rather to facilitate acceptance of their sexuality and to encourage individual growth and self-actualisation. As Kitzinger (1987) rightly argues, psychology’s focus on the internal psychological functioning of lesbians and gay men is thoroughly problematic. It diverts attention away from the social and political conditions of oppression, and places the impetus for change firmly in the private realm of the individual.

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20 The APA eventually removed ego-dystonic homosexuality in 1987 (DSM-R III).
Burns (1992) takes issue with Kitzinger’s argument, suggesting that it “possibly represents an overtheorised posture” which denies the internal experience of distress, and fails to acknowledge that although the sources of such distress are external, individuals may need to engage in therapy and “self-exploration prior to choosing to engage in more political action” (p. 230). The difference between Burns’ and Kitzinger’s perspectives centre, to an extent, on the way in which the individual is theorised. Kitzinger, although not drawing explicitly on Foucault’s work, sees all identities as political constructions, that produce particular kinds of subjectivities and which are inseparable from the wider cultural milieu. At the heart of Burns’ account is the more autonomous individual, interacting with the wider culture rather than constituted by it. For Kitzinger (1987), engaging in the process of expert facilitated ‘self-exploration’ functions to reinforce the Western individuated self-concept (and the individual/social dichotomy), and it defines and produces particular desirable and compliant subjects and forms of subjectivity. Accordingly, Kitzinger is concerned to examine, for example, why it is that political identities are theorised as less ‘mature’, how such formulations function and in whose interests, and, much like Foucault, to highlight psychology’s complicity in the establishment and re-establishment of norms and (in Kitzinger’s case, patriarchal) power relations.

As noted in Chapter 2, for Foucault, the therapeutic context in many ways exemplifies the operation of disciplinary power. The concept of therapy is organised around confessional discourse and it requires that individuals submit to a relation of power. Individuals are required to develop ‘techniques of the self’, to recognise difficulties (problems and/or abnormalities) as internal and to freely subject themselves to the scrutiny of others to whom ‘inner truths’ are revealed and before whom they are ideally ultimately re-constructed as ‘well-adjusted,’ ‘integrated’, and equipped with a functional ‘positive’ identity (see e.g., Maylon, 1982; Stein and Cohen, 1984). For lesbians and gay men, confessional discourse also partly underpins the concepts of ‘coming out’ and disclosure, and reinforces the self/social dichotomy inherent in much theorising from this period to date. Coming out and disclosure are constructed as individualized acts of self-fulfilment. For example, Burke (1993b) argues, that “coming out can be terrifying … yet at the same time it is seen to emancipate; it is both therapeutic and self-actualising … it pertains to the affirmation
of identity, to the recognition of a ‘real self’ [and] it symbolizes the intention to grow towards a more honest, self-fulfilling and less restrictive lifestyle” (p. 118). In a similar vein, Herek (1996) argues that “closeted gay women and men may experience a painful discrepancy between their public and private identities” (p. 211). Disclosure is, therefore, considered important for ‘enhancing one’s mental and physical health,’ not only because it relieves the stress associated with concealing one’s stigma and ‘living a lie’ but also because withholding personal information hinders and disrupts ‘honest social relationships’ (Herek, 1996).

Since the formation of the GLF in the early 1970s, many gay and lesbian political groups have also encouraged individuals to publicly ‘come out’ and, as Weeks (1990) notes, declare and even assert one’s sexuality. This was seen as a key political liberatory strategy, a way of emphasising ‘gay pride’ and shedding years of ‘accumulated self-hatred, fear and gay self-oppression’ (Weeks, 1990, p. 192). In this way, gay and lesbian political groups sought to effect collective resistance to forms of gay and lesbian oppression on the basis of rendering visible and political non-heterosexual identities. However, in much of the social sciences literature, coming out/disclosure is not positioned as a way of emphasising and gaining acceptance on the basis of the distinctive features of gay and lesbian identity. The focus is rather on emphasising the ‘ordinariness’ of gays and lesbians and their similarity to heterosexuals. It is this similarity that is seen as the basis for effecting political change and social acceptance. Burke (1993b), for example, notes that “coming out challenges popular prejudices by demonstrating in the most dramatic way possible that the person concerned is very ordinary, and it is this course of action which would seem to lay the best path for effective and long term change” (p. 118). Herek (1996), in discussing the military ban on homosexuality, also argues that disclosure is an important element in changing societal (and potentially military) attitudes. Abandoning the exclusionary policies, he argues, may reduce the negative attitudes the military cites as one of the principal reasons for the existence of the policies in the first place. However, while I have no argument with this aspect of Herek’s (1996) account, he also notes, that social interactions among heterosexuals and gay men and lesbians can foster favourable attitude changes, especially if heterosexuals can observe “behaviours that are inconsistent with the stereotypes about gay people” (p. 216). The
stereotypes to which he refers in this respect are not clearly specified, although he
does note that the broad ‘stereotypes specific to homosexuality are that gay men are
effeminate and lesbians are masculine’ (Herek, 1996, p. 208). The implication being
that gay men and lesbians are more ‘normal’ than is usually acknowledged and rather
than questioning why effeminacy in men, for example, should be socially
unacceptable, he again tends to call for an emphasis on the similarities between
homosexuality and heterosexuality. Moreover, Herek (1996) does not acknowledge
that such ‘contact’ can lead to the dominant group selecting out examples of
behaviours that support their existing stereotypes or that the specific conditions under
which such interactions take place is of key importance (Marshall, personal
communication, 1999).

In the course of theorising lesbian and gay identities, therefore, different lesbian
and gay subjects were constructed, still self-disciplining but now formed and
constituted within a different ‘disciplinary field of surveillance.’ Unlike earlier
theoretical work that tended to exoticise gay men and lesbians, work during this
period sought to ‘normalise’ these particular forms of sexual ‘deviance.’ However, in
essence this involved minimising the importance of sexual difference and re-
constructing male homosexuality and lesbianism in forms acceptable to Western
hegemonic heterosexuality. At the very least, it encouraged the relinquishment of
distinctive aspects of lesbian and gay experience in favour of ‘blending’ (quietly and
compliantly) into heterosexual culture. From this perspective, lesbian and gay
identities are rendered merely aspects of the self, innocuous, apolitical, privatised, in
key respects ‘normal’ and fundamentally individual. The ‘positive identity’ postulated
by these theorists, Kitzinger (1987) asserts, is one that presents no threat to the
dominant (heterosexual) order: these theoretical formulations, simply shape “lesbian
subjectivities in accordance with the individualized and depoliticized ideological stance
of contemporary liberal humanist psychology” (p. 56-57). For these reasons, she
persuasively argues that this work constructs lesbianism in a way that is less politically
expedient than the earlier arguments of the ‘pathologists’ who at least acknowledged
that lesbianism was capable of “influencing the stability of our social structure” (p.
49). For her, all identities are socio-political constructions, and, following Rich (1980),
she argues that compulsory heterosexuality is the political institution into which
women are coerced, and lesbianism the political identity that most radically undermines patriarchal heterosexuality.

3.4.2 Feminism and the Social and Political Construction of Lesbianism

In 1987, Kitzinger published The Social Construction of Lesbianism. In this work Kitzinger presents her own research to illustrate how ‘liberal ideology’ operates through science in the construction of lesbian identities. Kitzinger’s work differs in important respects from the majority of earlier work on homosexuality and lesbianism, and both theoretically and politically, it bridges the gap between the ‘minority group’ and the ‘de-construction’ sections in this chapter. Kitzinger (1987) conducted a Q sort study supplemented by interviews eliciting five differentiated accounts of lesbianism.21 These can be summarised as follows. Women loading on Factor I present lesbianism as ‘personal fulfilment’. Personal happiness, self-awareness and inner-peace are privileged in this account. Lesbianism, here, is about discovering one’s true self and getting in touch with one’s ‘real’ feelings. Factor II represents lesbianism as ‘true love’. In this account, it is the person not the gender that is privileged—for these women lesbianism is just about ‘who you fall in love with’. Factor III refers to lesbianism as a ‘normal, private sexual preference.’ Lesbianism is but a small part of one’s whole self, innate in origin and just as normal and natural as heterosexuality. Factor IV refers to lesbianism as a ‘political choice’. Women falling on this factor (including Kitzinger’s own Q-sort) present themselves within the political context of radical feminism. These women see themselves as primarily women-identified and lesbianism is presented as a fundamental challenge to patriarchal definitions of woman. These women also de-emphasise the importance of sex, and “express a distaste for men” (p. 114). Kitzinger suggests that this account is in direct opposition to all of the other accounts of lesbianism. Factor V represents lesbianism as a ‘sorry state’. Only two women defined themselves in reference to this factor and Kitzinger observes that they were both Roman Catholics (one was a nun). This account incorporates both the traditional religious objection—that lesbianism is sinful, and the traditional scientific objection—that lesbianism is pathological. Lesbianism is

21 Kitzinger’s factor analysis produced seven factors, although two of these were only presented by one woman each. Accordingly, Kitzinger elects to concentrate on the remaining five.
not chosen or fulfilling for women who present this account and, in this sense, it is in opposition to the other accounts, particularly Factor I.

Kitzinger (1987) connects these accounts of lesbian identity to the socio-cultural and psychological context, associating them with particular ideologies and the political interests that sustain their promotion or suppression. In this respect, Kitzinger finds the accounts represented by Factor IV to be radical lesbian feminist, and the accounts represented by Factors I, II and III to be liberal-humanist, drawing on aspects of official morality, and in terminology "borrowed from the dominant order" (1987, p. 123). The liberal-humanist accounts, for Kitzinger, are politically inexpedient: they direct attention away from political aims, in favour of personal solutions. Moreover, Kitzinger (1987) suggests that these accounts rely on scientific concepts (e.g., normality, personal-fulfilment, etc.) and as such reinforce science and its claims to legitimacy and privileged ways of knowing. In these respects, although in this work Kitzinger does not draw on Foucault or discursive concepts specifically (cf. Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1995), her account is compatible with Foucault’s account of power/knowledge, and his emphasis on the ways in which institutionally sanctioned knowledges define ways of being and understanding.

Kitzinger’s theoretical and methodological approach is persuasive. She argues that all theoretical work is a rhetorical accomplishment, rather than a ‘revelation’ or objective discovery of truth. In this way, she avoids the essentialism inherent in many earlier accounts. For Kitzinger, the research unit is “the story (or one of the stories) a woman tells about her subjective experience of her lesbianism,” not the individual lesbians themselves and their (supposedly) ‘real’ underlying identity (1987, p. 90). Her conception of accounts as “autobiographical material … a reconstruction of the past told from the viewpoint of the present” (1987, p. 71) also avoids difficulties associated with the ‘truth’ status of individual accounts. Accounts, from her perspective, are “interesting irrespective of their literal truth value” (1987, p. 72). Indeed, interviewees may consciously lie in their accounts but the data are still useful. This, Kitzinger argues, also avoids traditional difficulties with the concepts of validity and reliability. (These issues will be discussed further in Chapter 4). Kitzinger also takes all identities to be political constructions and, accordingly, analyses her accounts in relation to the prevailing social, historical (and scientific) conditions, which made possible the
emergence of particular accounts. She takes self-definition (as lesbian) to be the only criterion for entry into her study and does not attempt to further de-limit this criterion. Indeed, her research project is primarily concerned with how women construct and define their own identities (and subjectivities), rather than imputing definitional criteria to her participants. Finally, Kitzinger is reflexive about her own location in the research process and, in particular, she notes that she has “strong beliefs about which of the identities presented here is the ‘best’”—factor IV, the radical lesbian feminist account (1987, p. 93). This is not based on the ‘accuracy’ or ‘maturity’ of one account over the others but rather on her perception of which is the most politically expedient (see Chapter 4 for further discussion of ‘reflexivity’).

Although there are a number of ways in which Kitzinger’s (1987) theoretical approach is consistent with Foucault’s concept of discourse, her conceptualisation of power differs quite substantially. Unlike Foucault, Kitzinger tends to conceptualise patriarchal power as static, universal and unilateral, viewing it in terms of oppression and repression, rather than as dispersed throughout all social relations. In this way the ‘liberal humanist’ accounts she identifies, for example, are constructed as thoroughly accepting of and complicit in the reproduction of oppressive liberal ideology and there is little sense of resistance. This relates to Kitzinger’s ascription of political categories. She notes that accounts that present lesbianism as constructed (rather than in some way ‘essential’) will also, in general, be accompanied by an emphasis on feminism (especially when used as an explanation for lesbianism), a sense of injustice vis-à-vis patriarchy, a de-emphasis on sex, and a general dislike of men. For Kitzinger (1987), these elements largely define the radical lesbian feminist account. However, it seems entirely possible for an account to cohere with the first three elements noted here and (distinct from the radical lesbian feminist view) not place particular emphasis on the latter two, without the account being necessarily ‘liberal humanist’. In other words, it is possible to endorse a constructionist theory of sexuality without choosing lesbianism because it is a political strategy predicated, to some extent, on a dislike of men or on desexualising lesbianism. Factor II, for example, in emphasising a full range of sexual categories and sexualities as fluid (about people not gender) can also be interpreted as ‘deconstructive’, ‘postmodern’, or ‘queer’ in addition to (or instead of) ‘liberal humanist’. (I discuss the extent to which ‘deconstructive’ accounts can also
represent a return to a form of apolitical pluralism/liberal individualism towards the end of this chapter.)

Kitzinger explicitly locates her work in the radical lesbian feminist tradition, which first emerged in the West in the 1970s (see e.g., Myron and Bunch, 1975; Stein, 1997). Central to this strand of lesbian politics is the claim that: lesbianism is fundamentally a political (feminist) category, and identifying as lesbian a critical strategy in undermining the “institution and ideology of heterosexuality [which is] a primary cornerstone of male supremacy” (Myron and Bunch, 1975). Undermining the ideological hegemony of patriarchal heterosexuality was undoubtedly the target for many, if not all, feminists during this period, and this is not intended to conflate the often very specific differences in forms of feminism and lesbianism that flourished in the 1970s and 80s. However, it was the construction of lesbianism as the way of undermining patriarchal heterosexuality that tended to distinguish the radical lesbian perspective from other feminisms:

The base of our ideological thought is: Sexism is the root of all other oppressions and Lesbian and women oppression will not end by smashing capitalism, racism and imperialism. Lesbianism is not a matter of sexual preference, but rather one of political choice which every woman must make if she is to become woman-identified and end male supremacy … Lesbians must get out of the straight women’s movement and form their own movement in order to be taken seriously, to stop straight women from oppressing us, and to force straight women to deal with their own Lesbianism. Lesbians cannot develop a common politics with women who do not accept Lesbianism as a political issue (Berson, 1975, p. 15).

Lesbian-feminism, thus, rejected essentialist conceptualisations of lesbianism, declaring that every woman has the potential to be lesbian providing they have the “right political convictions” (Stein, 1997, p. 120). This move appears to have been motivated, in part, by a desire to de-couple lesbianism from its associations with sexual deviancy and pathology and to form a direct link between lesbians and feminists (as distinct from the GLF) through the common experience of gender oppression. Stein (1997) argues that in the US from this early ‘constructionism’ two approaches emerged: cultural feminism, which was a universalising strategy designed to further erase the boundaries between lesbians and straight women, and lesbian separatism, a minoritising strategy that tried to re-inscribe the boundaries around lesbianism. The result, which Stein (1997) argues was probably unintentional for
cultural feminists, was the specification of a tightly defined lesbian/women’s community, which privileged politics over desire and thoroughly conflated lesbianism and feminism. Indeed, Stein (1997) suggests that the emerging concept of a ‘women’s community’ in this period referred specifically to a group of politicised lesbian-feminist women, and for the separatists this explicitly excluded heterosexual feminists.

In 1980, Rich published her classic essay *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*. This text, much like cultural feminism, also intended to reconcile lesbianism and feminism, “to sketch, at least, some bridge over the gap between lesbian and feminist” [original emphasis] (Rich, 1986, p. 24). Rich (1986) argues, much like Berson (1975) and working against the earlier essentialising and pathologising models, that lesbianism is a choice available to all women. Heterosexuality, conversely, is not a choice but is rather a political institution, highly organised, managed and, most importantly, compulsory in the sense that it primarily operates ideologically through ‘false consciousness’ (Rich, 1986). In this way, Rich (1986) contests “the assumption that ‘most women are innately heterosexual’,” arguing that it “stands as a theoretical and political stumbling block for feminism” (p. 50).

Rich’s solution is to unite feminists and lesbians on the basis of ‘woman-identification,’ achieved through her concept of the ‘lesbian continuum,’ on which there is a place for any woman participating in the battle against hetero-patriarchy. In uniting lesbians and feminists in this way, Rich sought a more politically and theoretically potent form of feminism — “lesbian/feminism,” — which involved women “bonding against male tyranny [and] the giving and receiving of practical and political support” (1986, p. 51). Rich’s “lesbian continuum” was, therefore, emblematic of an overarching identificatory link among women, including as it did “a range...of woman-identified experience; not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital experience with another woman” (1986, p. 51).

Rich’s ‘lesbian continuum’ also sought to unshackle lesbianism from its links with masculinity and sexual activity, and in particular, sexual deviance. The redefinition of lesbianism as woman-identification, and as such feminised and somewhat desexualised, did, Stein (1993) argues, function, to some extent, to ally lesbians and feminists in the battle against hetero-patriarchy (Stein, 1993). Moreover, as desexualised feminist allies, lesbians also effectively distanced themselves from gay
men whose culture and politics were viewed to be largely based on sexual orientation rather than on political, economic and social justice concerns rooted in gender, race and class inequities (Whisman, 1993).

Rich was not (and is still not) alone in her political vision (see e.g., Faderman, 1981; Grahn, 1984; Jeffreys, 1994; Kitzinger, 1987; Raymond, 1989), and her notion of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ was both timely and influential. Highlighting, for all women, the constructed, coercive and institutional ‘nature’ of heterosexuality Rich produced a compelling argument and presented, the literally and ideologically marginal, lesbianism as an alternative. However, some feminist and lesbian scholars questioned a number of the assumptions inherent in her account. Notably these criticisms were levelled at her tendency to ultimately essentialise and universalise women, the denial of the specificity of lesbian culture (Nestle, 1987) and her privileging of politics over desire, which functioned to desexualise lesbianism (Ferguson, Zita and Addelson, 1981; Rubin, 1984). Ferguson et al., (1981) were, perhaps, foremost among the early critics taking up this latter point, arguing, that Rich’s redefinition of lesbianism functions to devalue and exclude lesbians for whom “an explicit lesbian identity [is] connected to genital sexuality” (1981, p. 160). As Martindale (1995) observes, in this respect, “Ferguson anticipates the unrest among lesbians that led to the sex wars and other theoretical schisms that have divided feminists and lesbians for the last decade” (p. 79).

The so-called ‘feminist sex wars’ were heralded, to some extent, by the ninth ‘Feminist and Scholar’ conference at Barnard College in New York in 1982. This conference was picketed and leafleted by ‘cultural feminists’ who were offended by the presence of ‘lesbian sex radicals’ at a feminist event (Faderman, 1991, Snitow, Stansell and Thompson, 1983). This precipitated a decade of large-scale debates (primarily in the US but which also impacted significantly on other Western lesbian and feminist communities particularly in England and Canada) that centred on the meaning of female sexuality, lesbianism and feminism, the (dis)connections between them, and the politics of representation. Lesbian sex radical and anthropologist Rubin (1984), who sought to re-inflect lesbianism with the explicitly sexual, was a key vocal figure in these debates. Rubin (1984) was concerned, particularly, with lesbian-feminism’s blurring of the boundaries between heterosexuality and lesbianism and the
concomitant tendency to legitimise and normalise a particular ‘respectable’ form of lesbian sexuality by marginalising its other forms of sexual expression. She thus sought to undermine, what she saw as, the moralising ‘sexual hierarchy’ which accompanied lesbian-feminism and to legitimise other forms of lesbian sexuality (e.g., sadomasochism). Significantly, and contra Rich, she aimed to untie the connection between feminism and lesbian identity and practice, and thus, Martindale (1995) suggests, was pivotal in “rupturing the fragile theoretical unity between heterosexual and lesbian feminists” (p. 84). On a larger scale, the sex wars represent a long-standing dispute over the borders between normalcy and deviance in the sexual realm, with feminists taking up both the regulatory and the regulated functions (Burstyn, 1985; Weeks, 1985).

Both lesbian and heterosexual feminists have levelled criticisms at feminist theorising that explicitly links (or conflates) lesbianism and feminism. In the first instance, and despite its intent, this conflation ultimately manifests as a separatist strategy discouraging heterosexual women from political coalition with lesbians, which in turn, effectively limits the potential strength of feminist political activism (see also Phelan, 1993). In addition, it minimises the importance of lesbian sexual and erotic attraction to other women, and as Clark (1982) succinctly argues, the process of constructing oneself “primarily from sexual and erotic experiences or desires is not the same as constructing a woman-identified lesbian woman” (p. 33). Calhoun (1995) suggests that it also erases lesbian difference and blurs the distinction between lesbian and heterosexual (women’s) sexuality (see also Segal, 1994). Problematically, the lesbian-feminist perspective tends to consign lesbians to sexual invisibility, denies lesbianism its autonomy and sexual radicalism, and paradoxically reiterates gender stereotypes (by rendering sex involving men, straight or gay, the only form of active sexuality). Clark (1982) also takes issue with the way lesbianism is “equated with an anti-male stance” and argues that her “desires and sexual practice are not predicated on a dislike of men” (p. 33). Ultimately, she argues, feminism, risks becoming simply a critique of male behaviour. Moreover, this approach to politics attempts to ‘fix’ the meaning of (and prioritise) lesbian identities, and as such it suffers from many of the limitations outlined in Chapter 2 in relation to identity politics.
Lesbian-feminism, particularly in its explicitly separatist form, was not the only significant version of feminism during this time. However, as Stein (1997) notes this group, albeit fairly small, were well organised, rhetorically polemic and publicly extremely vocal. Accordingly, they often tended to attract media attention and overshadow other forms of feminism (e.g., socialist, liberal and Marxist), particularly in the more public sphere. Accordingly, and despite considerable disagreement within the feminist community and notable differences in conceptualisations of both feminism and lesbianism during this time, the discursive conflation of lesbianism and feminism was effectively disseminated into popular discourse and does, in many respects, endure to date.

In summary, the radical lesbian feminist perspective presented, for example, by Kitzinger (1987) differs notably from work in the liberal humanist tradition by emphasising the fundamentally political and constructed ‘nature’ of lesbianism. While both bodies of work, in general, are committed to changing the marginalised (or at least pathological) status of gay men and lesbians, the liberal perspective places considerable emphasis on individual change and self-actualisation, whereas the radical perspective focuses on changing the ideological assumptions inherent in hegemonic knowledge forms and, in particular, patriarchal heterosexuality. The general feminist emphasis on undermining hegemonic patriarchal authority and effecting wider societal change is a critically important move. However, with respect to sexuality, the radical lesbian feminist perspective, specifically, does conflate lesbianism and feminism to such an extent that they become synonymous. Not only does this tend to minimise distinctive aspects of lesbian experience and discursively link lesbianism with one specific form of politics, but it also marginalises heterosexual women within feminism. The conflation of lesbianism and feminism, here, is differently motivated than in the earlier sexological work. However, both share the assumption that lesbianism has the potential to undermine and damage the existing social order and, as such, subvert hegemonic knowledge forms and the practices they potentiate. In stark contrast, the liberal humanist perspective threatens to lapse into apolitical individualism or, at best, proposes a politics based on assimilation and the denial of difference.
3.4.3 The Military and the 'Minority Group' Construction

The differences between the broadly liberal and radical approaches (as I have outlined them) have their counterparts in contemporary debates around the military exclusionary policies. For example, Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer, demonstrably in the liberal humanist tradition challenges the exclusionary policy and her dismissal from the US military for lesbianism by deliberately emphasising similarities between heterosexuality and homosexuality. She argues: “what I hope to represent is a part of the normality of being homosexual, not of being in leather or shaving my hair, but rather showing how much we are all alike” (Cammermeyer, cited in Egan, 1992, p. 18). In a similar vein, Rank Outsiders (1998) argue that, contrary to MOD claims, allowing homosexuals to serve in the British military would not be accompanied by “militant demands for equal rights” and suggest that, in all probability, very few would come out (p. 3). Both Rank Outsiders and Cammermeyer distance gay men and lesbians from what might be seen as the radical element in contemporary gay and lesbian politics and tend to emphasise, instead, the ways in which gay men and lesbians can (and do) quietly and unobtrusively blend in with military culture. These approaches, however, have not been welcomed by all gay men and lesbians involved in the debate around the military policies (e.g., Lehring, 1996; Tatchell, 1995; Tucker, 1995). Tatchell (1995), a leading activist in the British radical lesbian and gay direct action group Outrage!, argues that gays and lesbians should not seek integration into the military because integration means assimilation, not emancipation. He argues that gay and lesbian members of the military are “heterosexualised homosexuals; they ‘fit in’ with the armed forces because military culture is all about the obliteration of difference and they are happy to comply with a conformist culture” (p. 26).

Military discourse linked as it is to public policy, produces official meanings and understandings that grant legitimacy and recognition. Moreover, because the military is a distinctly governmental organisation it raises the important question of citizenship. Binkin, Eitelberg, Schexnider and Smith (1982) argue that because it is accepted as a societal norm that individuals are obligated to serve their country when necessary, “the military establishment that excludes special groups from equal service imposes on them the overt stigma of civic inferiority” (p. 26). In this sense, the ‘stigma of civic inferiority’ has historically been conferred on the grounds of both
'race' and gender. Accordingly, although military service in Britain is not at the present time a citizenship obligation, restricting participation in the military on the grounds of group membership fundamentally questions a group’s claims for political and civil equality. In this respect, the military's influence in conferring citizenship is acknowledged. Crawford (1995), who is a serving officer in the British Army's Royal Tank Regiment, in arguing for proportional representation of ethnic 'minority groups' in the British Army, observes:

There is one other important strand, however, which is worth exploring at this stage, and that is the potential for integration of ethnic minorities in the Army as a tool for ethnic integration in society as a whole. While we must exercise caution lest the Army becomes a 'laboratory for social experimentation', this is perhaps not as far fetched as it sounds. ... There may also be social imperatives, including aspects of integration in the Army leading to integration in British society as a whole, perhaps with service in the Army assisting in establishing 'citizenship' within the minority population [original emphasis] (Crawford, 1995, p. 26–27).

Crawford provides two examples to support his contention. The first was the awarding of freedom to slave soldiers of the British West Indies in 1807. In the British Army, it became routine practice to give a slave freedom after five years of service. This was 26 years before the abolition of slavery in 1833. Crawford's second example concerns the desegregation and integration of African-Americans into the United States Army, which he characterises as setting a "fine example to the rest of the USA which still lags some way behind" (Crawford, 1995, p. 27).

Some authors have questioned whether the military should be the organisation that determines and defines notions of citizenship and equality (Lehring, 1996; Tatchell, 1995). Stanfield (1993) notes, for example, that although the military's role is ostensibly to defend democracy, it is one of the most fundamentally undemocratic institutions in Western society. Certainly, governmental enthusiasm for defending democracy on the battlefield stands in stark opposition to the limited interest in civil rights at home, and the military has been extremely reluctant to incorporate democratic principles into its own personnel practices. Tatchell (1995) contends that no 'self-respecting gay man or lesbian' should aspire to military service because it necessarily demands conforming with and defending 'homophobic straight society':

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This social demand for conformity to gender roles and expectations denies choice, crushes individuality, and sustains homophobia and misogyny. It is the ultimate reason for our second-class status and the number one obstacle to our emancipation. The military is the incarnation of the gender system and the ultimate defender of that system. Its whole ethos is based on the straight male machismo, which oppresses women and queers. This machismo is a direct result of the gender division of labour, which assigns to men the social task of specialising in domination and violence. The most extreme and brutal expression of this masculine violence and domination is warfare (Tatchell, 1995, p. 33).

Accordingly, Tatchell opposes integration in the military because it does not challenge the problematic assumptions on which the military is based, or effect any institutional transformation (see also Lehring, 1996). In support of his argument, Tatchell recollects, for example, how both the US and British militaries have privately ‘turned a blind eye’ to the issue of homosexuality when manpower requirements have been most critical, but notes that in these cases military service has been terminated when manpower requirements have declined. Moreover, Tatchell (1995) argues that gay and lesbian participation in the armed forces has not meant social justice for gays and lesbians, in either civilian society or in the military. For these reasons rather than fighting for integration in the military, gays and lesbians, Tatchell (1995) argues, have an absolute duty to refuse military service. Refusing military service from his perspective denies legitimacy to a “homophobic government and its homophobic military apparatus” (Tatchell, 1995, p. 51). While I agree, in general, with Tatchell’s (1995) perspective, one of the paradoxical consequences of this approach is that it coheres with the military objective to exclude non-heterosexuals from military service. In this respect, Tatchell’s (1995) aim to deny legitimacy to the military by refusing military service might be more effective, if military manpower requirements were more pressing and/or Britain re-instituted conscription.

It is difficult to know a priori whether or not the inclusion of openly gay men and lesbians in the military would challenge any of the fundamental assumptions on which the military is based. Crawford (1995) argues that increased representation of ethnic minority groups in the Army will “not only go some way to solving manning problems but will also enrich the collective talents of the Army with different cultural experiences” (p. 28). Moreover, the integration of women and ethnic minority groups into the military has heralded an attention to equal opportunities and some
commitment to ending discrimination on these grounds. For example, with respect to sexual and racial harassment, recent Army policy and guidelines acknowledge that “all service personnel, irrespective of their racial origin or gender, have the right to live and work in an environment free from prejudice, humiliation or intimidation” (MOD, 1993, p. 6). However, the integration of gay men and lesbians would appear to require the suppression of (gay and lesbian) ‘cultural differences’ that, with respect to ethnic integration, Crawford (1995) cites as ‘enriching the collective talents of the Army.’ In this respect, Tucker (1995) has recently argued that the US ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, compromise policy’ offers at best ‘conditional civic equality’; it is on the condition that gays and lesbians remain in hiding, and it is withdrawn if they do not. These differences concerning the most effective way to achieve change are not finally resolvable at this historical/discursive juncture. However, although such arguments are most often framed in terms of their mutual exclusivity, as in the above discussion, in principle, there seems no reason, politically, why both approaches (i.e., integration and critique) cannot be successfully employed. At the very least, gay and lesbian integration would require a significant re-thinking on the part of the military with respect to both policy and practice, and in the short term, might represent the most strategically effective challenge to some of the problematic assumptions Tatchell (1995) notes.

Sarbin (1996) argues that divergence between the military and civil society is at its most extreme with respect to ‘minority group’ construction, and I would add, it is the one that most challenges the military position. This is not only the case with homosexuality, but also with regard to most civil rights issues, most noticeably in the case of women and ethnic ‘minorities.’ Rolison and Nakayama (1994), in a review of the US policy, argue that military discourse, in this respect, can be understood as part of a long-standing defensive strategy produced in response to the political mobilisation of disenfranchised groups. In particular they argue that this defensive strategy developed originally in the 1940s as a response to the growing political power of African-Americans and it continues to be invoked to restrict the employment of women and to exclude gay men and lesbians from military service. In each of these cases, Rolison and Nakayama (1994) argue, the military has sought to retain its separation from wider society and resisted being part of what it constructs as the
great social experiment in democracy” (p. 130; see also Deakin, 1995; Moskos, 1994; Spencer, 1992; and, more tangentially, Crawford, 1995).

The British military currently justifies the prohibition of homosexuality by arguing that the exigencies of the battlefield require the military to have and enforce ‘values’ and principles distinct from those of civilian society. This is because, the military argues, operational (i.e., combat) effectiveness would be compromised if it were to allow into its ranks ‘elements’ that would disrupt ‘military cohesion.’ Deakin (1995) suggests, that the military has successfully argued this case to date partly because historically it has been accepted that the military is, in some respects, a separate entity from civilian society with its own distinct needs and requirements. This is evident in the apparent requirement for military personnel to be subjected to both military and civil law and in the military’s exemption from equal opportunities legislation regarding the full employment of women. To some extent, therefore, the debate around homosexuality hinges on how the military is conceptualised and its relationship to civil society.

3.4.4 Conceptualising the Military

A number of authors have argued that traditional Western military communities follow an ‘institutional’ model (e.g., Deakin, 1995; Goffman, 1961; Moskos, 1977). Goffman (1961), for example, characterises the US military (and a number of other “closed communities”) as total institutions, which unlike other social establishments (e.g., universities, and corporate businesses) are characterised by a disconnection and segregation from the wider social sphere:

Their encompassing or total character is symbolised by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forests or moors (Goffman, 1961, p. 15).

Goffman (1961) distinguishes between five broad types of total institutions: those established to care for individuals (e.g., homes for the blind, the aged, etc.); those designed to look after persons who cannot look after themselves and who represent an (unintended) threat to society (e.g., mental hospitals); institutions designed to protect society (e.g., prisons and penitentiaries); those “purportedly established the
better to pursue some work like task and justifying themselves only on these instrumental grounds” (e.g., army barracks, ships, work camps, etc.) (p. 16) and, finally, those designed as retreats or places of religious training (e.g., monasteries, convents, etc.).

According to Goffman, a central feature of total institutions, as opposed to large industrial or educational establishments, is that they entail a breakdown of the barriers between places where people sleep, engage in leisure activities and work. In a total institution, all of these activities frequently take place in a similar location, with the same authority and represent part of an over-arching institutional mandate. Total institutions are also hierarchically organised through a basic separation between the large managed group and the supervisory element. In asylums, this separation divides inmates and staff; in the military, the division can be drawn between commissioned officers and enlisted ‘non-commissioned’ personnel (‘other ranks’). This division is complicated in the military, however, because the ‘managed’ group also contains supervisory personnel (e.g., non-commissioned officers), although the two hierarchies are quite separate. It is possible for non-commissioned officers (usually the more senior) to apply for a commission, and effectively join the officer corps but officers cannot resign their commissions in favour of enlisted status.

Entering a total institution, according to Goffman (1961), also entails a “process by which the self is mortified” (p. 24). This involves a loss of individuality accomplished, for example, through the assignment of numbers, the removal of certain personal possessions, the issuing of uniforms, and uniform haircuts, all of which apply, to an extent, to the military institution. Membership in a total institution for Goffman, therefore, necessitates a removal from the ‘outside’ culture and a relinquishment of certain aspects of individuality, which, in turn, requires a commitment to a more ‘communitarian’ perspective achieved through collective regimentation.

Goffman highlights a number of important and useful characteristics that potentially distinguish life in a total institution from other social organisations. There are, however, two potential problems associated with applying Goffman's analysis to the current British military. First, Goffman is primarily concerned with institutions that, to some extent, entail compulsory membership and although he mentions the voluntary membership of total institutions, it is only peripherally. In 1959, the British
government ended conscription and moved to an all-volunteer force. This meant, among other things, that the military could no longer rely on large numbers of conscripts but instead had to recruit for personnel, in competition with other organisations and employers. Important differences, therefore, exist between institutions that involve compulsory membership and those principally concerned with recruiting and retaining volunteers. Moreover, although some non-voluntary elements apply once recruited into the military, there always remains the option to leave (through premature voluntary release) unlike, for example, institutions that entail some form of incarceration. Second, the extent to which individuals are able to move between the institutional context and the wider culture varies according to the institution. In the all-volunteer military, there is a breakdown of the 'barriers between places where people sleep, work and play' however, members of the military are not prevented from leaving the institution at times when they are not required for duty. The military does, however, impose such restrictions during initial training, although this is not normally for an excessive or sustained period, usually a maximum of five weeks. This marks an important distinction between institutions such as prisons and asylums (Goffman's primary focus) and many contemporary military institutions.

More recently Moskos (1977) has addressed the question of the relationship between military institutions and civil society. Moskos' work is important because, unlike Goffman, Moskos was interested in providing a conceptualisation based solely on military organisations, and more recently, his work has been used as a framework to examine the issue of homosexuality in the British Armed Forces (see Deakin, 1995, discussed below). Moskos (1977) identifies two trends that characterise military organisations: 'institutionalism' and 'occupationalism.' Moskos' institutional model follows Goffman's conceptualisation and emphasises the importance of the separation of the military from civil society. Joining an institutional military entails the relinquishment of certain constitutional rights and privacy expectations in the interest of shared values and goals. In the military, these shared values and goals ostensibly centre on battle and the preparation for battle. Achievement of the shared goal requires trust, loyalty and conformity as these are seen as critical in fostering group cohesion and teamwork which underlie 'operational effectiveness.' Joining a voluntary institutional military, from this perspective, is a vocation or 'calling' based on
traditional military ideals and shared moral values. As in Goffman’s total institution, the individual is very much subordinate to the needs, values and requirements of the institution and individual needs must be subjugated for the good of the institutional endeavour.

In these respects, Moskos is more specific than Goffman (1961) regarding the assumptions underpinning the ‘institutional’ military. Goffman suggests that institutions such as the military primarily justify themselves on instrumental grounds, whereas Moskos argues that they are “legitimated in terms of values and norms” (1977, p. 42). At the time of his writing, Moskos (1977) suggests that the “overarching trend within the contemporary military is the erosion of the institutional format and the ascendancy of the occupational model” (p. 44). Moskos (1977) conceptualises occupationalism as characterising an organisation that is legitimated in terms of the market place. From this perspective, individuals enjoy “some voice in the determining of salary and work conditions” which is counterbalanced by responsibilities to meet contractual obligations (Moskos, 1977, p. 43). According to this model, the military resembles civilian employment. Contractual values and individual career advancement are seen as pre-eminent and once away from work, military personnel are treated in a similar way to members of civilian society, with a private life that is separate from institutional mandates and outside of the scope of institutional authority. The military community, from this perspective, permits individualism, self-interest and self-fulfilment. It is more of a contractual association which members join as a way of achieving individual ends (e.g., monetary reward).

Abrams (1962) argues that since the end of the Second World War the British military has conformed to some civilian practices. In particular, the ending of conscription in 1959 meant that the military had to recruit and retain personnel in direct competition with civilian employers. In addition, since the 1950s many support functions have gradually been contracted out to civilian firms (e.g., catering and office cleaning), which has entailed an accommodation of some civilian management practices (HMSO, 1992; 1995). Other examples include the ultimate de-criminalisation of male homosexuality and the decision, in 1988, to pay women equal salaries to their male counterparts. This was followed in 1992 by the disbanding of the women’s corps in favour of further gender integration. More recently, the British Army published
explicit guidelines for redressing complaints, which can also be seen as reflecting contemporary civilian concerns:

The Army, as a good employer, has an internal system for dealing with complaints. ...Should a complainant seek redress through internal procedures and not be satisfied that his or her complaint has been answered, then the complaint may still be taken to an Industrial Tribunal (Equal Opportunities in the Army CP (A) 202 Feb 96, p. 11).

The availability of Industrial Tribunals to redress complaints, an attention to equal opportunities and certain lexical shifts (e.g., the use of ‘employer’ to describe the military) can be conceptualised as indicative of a move away from an institutional model. In this respect, the military has also recently demonstrated an attention to some civil rights issues.

Deakin (1995) draws heavily on Moskos’ (1977) work in a rare British article examining the issue of homosexuality in the Army in the context of civil-military relations. Notably, Deakin is a civilian academic at The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Deakin (1995) argues that, although unevenly enacted, the British Army has recently sought greater convergence with civilian society and civilian ‘standards’ and ‘values.’ He suggests that this has occurred because liberal values have gradually permeated the military institution. Deakin (1995), much like Goffman and Moskos, also makes a strong case that the British military has historically been conceptualised as an armed service in the institutional tradition (see also Downes, 1988; Sabine, 1977). Deakin (1995) implies, however, that the military has deliberately (and somewhat autonomously) sought increased concordance with civilian standards and practices. This is debatable; far from seeking concordance with civilian standards, change has generally occurred as a response to public policy changes, changes that the military institution has either actively resisted (e.g., the de-criminalisation of homosexuality) or reluctantly conformed to in the interest of service requirements. The most important of these for the British Army has been ‘manpower’ needs, which is evident in the history of both ethnic integration and the integration of women. With respect to ethnic ‘minority groups,’ Crawford (1995) observes:

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22 This paper contains a caveat: “the opinions expressed in this paper are the personal ones of the author and they should not be understood to be those of the Ministry of Defence” (Deakin, 1995, p. 27).
If we accept...that the main driving force for integration has always been a military one, then we really need to identify a military imperative for ethnic integration today. Recent evidence on the recruiting front presents us with the most traditional and obvious of all military imperatives—manpower (Crawford, 1995, p. 27)

Similarly, the integration of women into the military has been influenced by 'manpower' requirements. Feminists who have analysed military institutions, in both Britain and the US, have consistently argued that women have usually been used in military service only when manpower demands have been most pressing (see e.g., Enloe, 1988; Muir, 1992). Smith H. (1990), for example, argues that even in the most extreme circumstances, militaries have conscripted young boys and old men rather than women (see also, Terry, 1988). In a similar vein, Enloe (1988) argues:

Women were used in the first and second world wars only reluctantly. Furthermore, women were recruited into the military force only when recruitment of men from usually marginalised ethnic or racial groups wouldn't satisfy manpower needs. ... Once the war was over women were demobilised as quickly as possible (Enloe, 1988, p. 123).

Likewise, although equal opportunities legislation was enacted in 1976, the military has resisted complying with this legislation. Prior to 1988, all women in all trades were paid less than (equivalent) men and in some employments, notably military recruitment, this persisted until 1993 when it was finally changed as a result of affected women successfully challenging the policy on legal grounds. Moreover, prior to 1990, all pregnant women (irrespective of marital status) were either encouraged to terminate their pregnancies or were dismissed from service. Again, this changed because of a number of successful lawsuits, and not because the military sought to conform to civilian legislation. Accordingly, while there is nothing inherently problematic about the military responding to public policy directives, there is, I think an important qualitative distinction between responding to public policy changes (and changing military requirements) and a motivation on the part of the military to conform to "civilian society's values" (Deakin, 1995, p. 30). At the very least, it suggests a particular concept of the military—as resistant to particular forms of change—and, in turn, may suggest different ways of approaching the issue of homosexuality and the military.
With respect to the issue of homosexuality, Deakin (1995) bases his analysis of the policy excluding homosexuals in a conception of the military as very much an armed service in the traditional institutional sense, and this, for Deakin explicitly involves a rejection of 'liberal values.' In his analysis, Deakin (1995) draws on Moskos' (1977) and Tönnies' (1963, [1887]) discussion of social organisation. Deakin takes from Tönnies’ work his two central concepts: *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. *Gemeinschaft* broadly translates as ‘community,’ whereas *Gesellschaft* is most commonly translated as ‘society’ (see e.g., Nisbet, 1966). Both of these concepts acquire typological importance as ‘ideal types’ of social organisation. These ideal types are broadly based on differences in the degree to which social values and social structures accord primacy to, and reward, individual as opposed to collective goals (see also Weber, 1947). *Gemeinschaft*, for example, emphasises tradition, shared habits and beliefs, and social unity. It is fundamentally a moral community where much is made of, for example, brotherhood (sic), kinship, honour, integrity, cohesion and loyalty (Tönnies, 1963). The prototype of all relationships in *Gemeinschaft* is the family, but this is extended to the relationship between, for example, ‘a master and a disciple’ by association. In this way, *Gemeinschaft*, although emphasising communitarian ideals, does not abandon hierarchical relationships, which is consistent with its conservative emphasis. *Gesellschaft*, conversely, is characterised by a high degree of individualism, and contractualism; its essence is rationality, calculation and isolation. Social relationships, from the *Gesellschaft* perspective, are, therefore, fundamentally individualistic and characterised by competitiveness and egoism, rather than a familial sense of unity. However, this does not mean that there are no positive moral elements in *Gesellschaft*. On the contrary, according to Tönnies (1963), *Gesellschaft* “stands for fairness, reason and enlightenment” (p. 202). However, Lunt (1998) notes, that the prohibition of homosexuality is more prevalent under *Gesellschaft* than *Gemeinschaft* (Lunt, 1998, personal communication).
As characterised by Deakin (1995), Gemeinschaft is analogous with Moskos' (1977) institutionalism and Gesellschaft with occupationalism.\footnote{Tönnies' (1963) concepts of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft are presented as ideal types and they are not as diametrically opposed as this brief overview suggests. For example, Tönnies identified Gesellschaft elements in the traditional family and Gemeinschaft elements in the modern corporation. It would seem to be Deakin's thesis that the social organisation of the British military is primarily located in the concept of Gemeinschaft but incorporates elements of Gesellschaft.} With respect to the exclusionary policy, Deakin (1995) argues that because the British Army conceives itself as a traditional institution based on cohesion, unity, shared morals and goals, any activities that threaten to undermine these 'shared values and goals,' specifically male homosexuality and lesbianism, are discouraged or prohibited. In addition, Deakin appears to be suggesting that the military rejects gay men and lesbians because these identities emerged as part of the civil rights movements and, as such, are perceived as fundamentally individualistic and opposed to the 'communitarian ideals' supposedly characteristic of the Gemeinschaft institutional community. However, as other 'minority groups' are now, to varying degrees, integrated into the military this alone does not explain why the exclusionary policy with respect to homosexuality remains in place. Moreover, Deakin (1995) does not account for the discrepancy between the military prohibition of homosexuality on the grounds of the 'ideal Gemeinschaft institutional community' and its more prevalent proscription in Gesellschaft as noted by Lunt (1998, personal communication). For these reasons, although Deakin's paper represents an important initial analysis, and he usefully builds on Moskos' (1977) work to make an important link between the military and morality, I am not convinced that Tönnies (1963) typologies are altogether helpful. Ultimately, it leaves Deakin (1995) providing this conceptualisation of the military as the primary explanation for the exclusionary policy, without examining or discussing why it should be that homosexuality specifically, is perceived as threatening and undermining these moral 'ideals.' Military unity, cohesion and operational effectiveness, in this respect, are presumed to centre on a hegemonic moral code, of which homosexuals are implicitly deficient.

The ways in which the military and (homo)sexuality are constructed in relation to each other is critical to this thesis. This relationship provides a way of understanding the context in which the participants in this study both live and work, and it potentiates an understanding of the policies and, as such, may also be suggestive of
ways in which the policies can be changed or challenged. In addition, as Deakin (1995) notes, the military justification for the exclusion of gay men and lesbians does rely on particular concepts (e.g., 'cohesion'), that appear to depend on the military community being conceptualised in a specific way. In Study 1 (Chapter 5), I closely examine the two British military documents that outline current military personnel policy with respect to homosexuality. This is in an effort to understand how the military, civilian society and (homo)sexuality are constructed, the (discursive) relationship among them and the assumptions that underpin the policy.

3.4.5 Summary of the 'Minority Group' Construction

From the late 1960s on, during which the 'minority group' construction principally developed (Sarbin and Karols, 1988), a number of different bodies of knowledge around male homosexuality and lesbianism were produced. These I divided into two broad groupings: liberal humanist and radical lesbian feminist. These are by no means the only ways of categorising all of the psychological or feminist work (and politics) during this period, however, in many ways they have been most effectively disseminated into popular discourse. Kitzinger's (1987) work, for example, highlights the salience of both of these broad categories in the ways in which her lesbian participants define and construct their identities (see also, Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1995).

Characterised by an emphasis on minimising the salience and normalcy of sexual identities and a characteristically liberal tolerance of alternative lifestyles, as well as the preservation of the distinction between private and public spheres (all of which are in opposition to the radical lesbian feminist approach), the liberal humanist account has undoubtedly been the most influential. Work in this tradition, like much of the earlier work, gained its legitimacy and authority directly through its institutional sanctioning. Moreover, far from escaping the strictures of science and its supporting rhetoric, in general, this work still sought to discover the objective 'truth' about lesbians (and male homosexuals), although the emphasis shifted from aetiological concerns to identities, lifestyles and development. Recognising the 'truth' (and distinguishing truth from falsity) in individual accounts thus remained a significant part of the expert mandate in the discovery of reliable knowledge (e.g., Bell and Weinberg, 1978; Krema and Rifkin,
1969). This was not always achieved to the satisfaction of the scientific community. Cass (1984), for example, notes the “study of homosexual identity has been characterised by confusion, disarray, and ambiguity” (p. 105). Cass (1984) asserts that “with the literature of the 1980s already showing signs of a new emphasis on consolidation and scientific rigour...it seems time for the study of homosexual identity to move into a more scientific mode” (p. 107). Cass thus argues for more agreement and clarity around the phrase ‘homosexual identity’ and, as such, calls for the fixing of its meaning, which also means the establishment of further norms. I think this is a mistake, and following Butler (1991), consider it to be more theoretically and politically expedient for the meaning of sexualities (and the terms used to define them) to remain permanently contested and unclear. The reasons are outlined in Chapter 2 and further in the final sections of this chapter.

The radical lesbian feminist discourse, originating as much out of political concerns as theoretical work, represented the introduction of ‘new’ voices and their associated knowledges and they produced a very different understanding of lesbianism. In particular, they politicised lesbian identities, emphasised that lesbianism was a choice available to all women and highlighted its subversive potential. The recognition that identities are political constructs was a key insight emerging from this perspective, but, as discussed, the concomitant de-sexualisation of lesbianism and its conflation with feminism is problematic. Nevertheless, its emphasis on social and political (as opposed to individual) change, its severing of the division between the public and the private and its commitment to undermining hegemonic (specifically hetero-patriarchal) power/knowledges were important and significant achievements.

In general, work appearing during this period presents a problem for a military committed to maintaining an exclusionary policy, since it deprived the policies of some institutional (especially, medico-scientific) support and questioned its rationale by rejecting the earlier pathological accounts. It is significant that in the US and the UK during this time, the policies have also been most systematically challenged. In addition, as Sarbin (1996) notes, the military and the theoretical and socio-political changes occurring at this time appear to diverge significantly with respect to the gay and lesbian ‘minority group.’ This, Deakin (1995) argues, is due to a fundamental disjuncture between individualistic liberal values and the traditional (moral)
assumptions on which the institutional military is based. Unlike earlier theory and research, which tended to be reflected in work by military psychologists, within the minority group period such work is generally conspicuous by its absence. Notable exceptions include the two US PERSEREC reports (Sarbin and Karols, 1988; McDaniel, 1989) discussed in Chapter 1. The military has not, however, managed to remain entirely immune to influences emerging from the ‘minority group’ and, in particular, has acquiesced to the decriminalisation of homosexuality and ceased to rely on notions of pathology and incompetence to justify the exclusionary policies. In general, the knowledge produced during this period managed to dislodge a number of elements of the medical construction. However, the essentialism inherent in the earlier medical explanations has not entirely been displaced and gender role non-conformity still underpins some theoretical accounts of male homosexuality and lesbianism (e.g., Bell et al., 1981).

3.5 The (De)Construction

Since the 1980s, but most notably during the 1990s, some approaches to gay and lesbian theory and politics have moved away from understanding gays and lesbians as an oppressed ‘minority group’ with certain shared and essential features towards an understanding of both sexuality and gender as multiple, permeable and indeterminate. This move has its origins, partly, in postmodern/poststructuralist theoretical concerns (discussed in Chapter 2) and can be characterised as a thoroughgoing resistance to, and deconstruction of, identity categories and their normalising regimes (Butler, 1991; Walters, 1996). With specific respect to sexuality, this theoretical turn is usually referred to as ‘queer,’ as in, for example, queer theory, queer politics and queer culture (this is not to imply that all postmodern/poststructuralist theorists define themselves as ‘queer theorists’). At its most fundamental, ‘queer’ denotes the deconstruction and transgression of the categories of gender and sexuality. In terms of its historical and socio-political context, ‘queer’ discourse emerges, most notably, against the backdrop of the AIDS crisis, critiques of identity politics, the earlier ‘sex debates,’ feminism and some elements of lesbian-feminism (notably Rich’s (1986) ‘lesbian continuum’), and from the theoretical perspectives developed by French feminists such as Cixous,
Irigaray and Wittig, as well as from the male precursors of postmodern/post-structural thinking, notably Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan.

The term ‘queer’ has a number of different meanings and uses. For example, it is often currently used defiantly by some gay men, lesbians and bisexuals as a referential term for a new form of ‘acting-up,’ that is, confrontational gay, lesbian and bisexual politics. As Walters (1996) observes, it is also sometimes used more generically to refer to “perverse difference (everything that is not vanilla heterosexuality or vanilla homosexuality)” (p. 835). In addition, queer is also sometimes used and defined as anything that is against, or anti-, normal, and specifically non-heterosexual sexualities (see e.g., Doty, 1993; Walters, 1996). Nguyen (1999) characterises ‘queer’ as: “invoking non-normative sexuality, an antiassimilationist stance, a radically theatrical politics, a mode of critical inquiry, and, for some (and sometimes me), a problematically (so far) white episteme” (p. 3). All of these uses represent a ‘reclamation’ of the term (and its significations) from its historical links with hatred and bigotry, however, as Butler (1993) notes, the extent to which it can “overcome its constitutive history of injury” is currently unclear (p. 223).

Consistent with its postmodern origins, the term queer theory deliberately resists precise definition and it does not refer to a monolithic or unified set of ideas or practices. Within the social sciences, it is most often associated with the work of Sedgwick (1990), Butler (1990) and de Lauretis (1991) (see e.g., Edwards, 1998; Martindale, 1995; Walters, 1996). However, Butler (1994), while not precisely distancing herself from queer theory, comments that she positions herself primarily as a feminist theorist not a queer or lesbian and gay theorist. Likewise, although de Lauretis (1991) is usually credited with first coining the term ‘queer theory,’ she now rejects it as politically problematic (see below). de Lauretis (1991) originally used the term ‘queer’ because she perceived it as a more inclusive “way of thinking the sexual” (p. iv) than the more delimited ‘lesbian and gay’ (including, for example bisexual, transsexual, transvestite, transgender). de Lauretis was concerned, particularly, with precipitating a theoretical shift in understanding constructions of gender and sexuality as separate and dichotomised, towards critically interrogating the intersections between them. In this sense, queer theory represents a theoretical perspective that is committed to expanding and blurring the binaries of gender and sexuality and
resisting and undermining the regulatory function of identity categories, and, in particular heterosexual *versus* homosexual categorisation.

Queer theory thus characterised refers to a set of ideas based around the notion that identities are not fixed, essential or determinate and it discourages the referencing of any individual or group on the basis of identity. Although, arguably ‘queer’ is itself an identity category, it is intended to highlight, and is indeed more suggestive of, the difficulties involved in defining “the population whose interests are at stake in queer politics” (Warner, 1991, p. 16). In this sense, queer theory does not suggest that a ‘queer identity’ is in any way fixed or stable, and indeed it proposes that all notions of identity be challenged, particularly, in varied and non-predictable ways. This is because identities are seen as consisting of numerous elements that are not reducible to a particular set of shared characteristics, and in this sense, ‘queer’ resides in the unstable “gap of disidentification” (see e.g., Nguyen, 1999, p. 3). Queer theory should not, therefore, be seen simply as a different way of referencing gays and lesbians (although this is sometimes how it is used), or even always and only limited to ‘non-heterosexualities.’ Doty (1993) for example, characterises queer theory as questioning “the cultural demarcation between the queer and the straight...by pointing out the queerness of and in straights and straight cultures, as well as that of individuals and groups who have been told they inhabit the boundaries between the binaries of gender and sexuality: transsexuals, bisexuals, transvestites and other binary outlaws” (p. xv–xvi).

Martindale (1995) notes that “Sedgwick is the most celebrated and controversial of all queer theorists, perhaps because she argues...that the binary opposition “homosexual/heterosexual’ is central to every other important binary relation” (p. 88). Sedgwick (1990) although attentive to gender, focuses attention on sexuality as the primary organisational binary in Western culture. She notes that “many of the major nodes of thought and knowledge in twentieth-century Western culture as a whole are structured—indeed, fractured—by a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition, indicatively male, dating from the end of the nineteenth century” (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 1). One of her central concerns, therefore, in the *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) is to deconstruct and undermine the persistence of
the defining and minoritising category 'homosexual,' which continuously creates the closet from which those so defined have to continually 'come out.'

'Queerness,' for Sedgwick, is a theoretical (and political) perspective available to anyone, irrespective of (previous) sexual identities, preferences or activities, and as such it transcends the gay/straight divide. In this respect, queer theory represents an affirmation of the abstract universality of difference(s) accompanied by a thorough resistance to naming them (Seidman, 1995). It has developed in direct response to the essentialising and separatist tendencies of both the 'medical' and 'minority group' discourses, as well as the dualisms (and exclusions) imposed by identity politics. Sedgwick (1993) notes that "one of the things that 'queer' can refer to [is] the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constitutive elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" [original emphasis] (1993, p. 8). 'Queer' for Sedgwick (1990, 1993) is thus a deconstruction of the relationships and the boundaries among sex, gender, sexual practices, desire, and sexual object choice. Indeed, the de-coupling of sexuality and gender, or perhaps, more specifically, the disruption of its chain of signification, is often a central feature in queer theory.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (see especially Section 2.3.5), Butler (1990) also deconstructs the binary oppositions of gender and sexuality, but unlike Sedgwick (and Foucault) she tends to focus more on gender as an important organising principle in the maintenance of hetero-normativity. Butler (1990) argues primarily for the subversion of gendered identities, which she sees, not as necessary or natural categories, but rather as repeated performances. Such subversion has its realisation in, most obviously, cross-dressing, transsexuality, butch-femme and drag, and can be, for Butler, self-consciously repeated, insubordinate, parodic practices that have the potential to dissolve and subvert the (discursively) constructed boundaries between the normative, allocated categories of sex and gender. In a similar vein Case (1989) argues that the butch-femme lesbian couple is "the camp space of irony and wit, free from biological determinism, elitist essentialism, and the heterosexual cleavage of sexual difference" (p. 298; see also Wilton, 1996). In this way, both Case (1989) and Butler (1990, 1991) seek to undermine traditional conceptualisations of such 'performances' as 'bad copies' of originary heterosexuality (or heterosexual roles).
Queer theory can, then, perhaps be characterised as emphasising the variety of genders and sexualities, as contesting and unsettling rigid cultural binaries, especially, but not exclusively, those constructed around and dividing individuals into, for example, straight or gay, male or female, masculine or feminine. It highlights and embraces a multiplicity of forms of sexuality and gender and their pervasive dispersion, and it is thoroughly resistant to normative frameworks and definitive categorisations. Sexualities are not grounded in sex or gender and from a queer perspective no ‘identities’ are exclusive, privileged or essential. As Butler (1993) puts it, subjects (and their subjectivities) are “multiply constituted” (p. 116), always provisional, often precarious and contingent (see Chapter 2). Queer theory also emphasises and celebrates difference and diversity, and, in this respect, it attempts the difficult task of resisting both the separatism inherent in minority group identity politics and the dangers of ‘assimilation’ (i.e., the denial of sexual and socio-cultural specificity) inherent in some of the more liberal approaches. As Weeks (1995) observes, “this is a form of politics that is simultaneously deconstructive (contesting what is arbitrary and restrictive), and reconstructive (asserting the validity of desires and ways of being that have been ignored or denied)” (p. 49). It is for this reason that I have deliberately named this section with parentheses—‘the (de)construction’—to emphasise both its deconstructive and re-constructive functions.

Queer theory’s strengths overcome some of the difficulties and limitations inherent in earlier approaches and hold considerable theoretical and political promise. The challenge it presents to monolithic, dichotomous notions of sexual identity provide, at the very least, as Walters (1996) notes, “a healthy corrective to our vexing inability to see beyond the limitations of the homo/hetero opposition” (p. 832). Sexual desire is, from this perspective, indeterminate and irreducible; irreducible to, for example, biology, the body, inner psychological predilections, gender (or gender non-conformity) or simple social influence. Moreover, it provides an ‘identity’ founded, to a large extent, on exclusions and, as such, potentially encourages political and identificatory alliances by all those who feel (and are) marginalised and disenfranchised by dominant identity categories. It also potentially discourages the tendency that Kaplan (1997) and Rubin (1984) have noted for gay and lesbian movements to pathologise other sexual non-conformists such as transvestites and bisexuals. In these
ways, it parallels debates within feminism to which it is partly indebted (see Chapter 2, and earlier this chapter), over the scope (and privileging) of the category ‘woman’ (or lesbian) in the hierarchy of identities and over the tensions between difference and commonality in relation to the boundaries of feminist inclusivity.

Despite the strengths of queer theory, there are a number of significant difficulties both theoretically and, perhaps more specifically, in the way it has informed queer politics and culture. Queer theory's insistence on diversity, for example, threatens a radical “anything goes” form of tolerant politics (Stein, 1993) that paradoxically resembles liberal individualism (Edwards, 1998). However, unlike the liberal approaches I discussed earlier, queer approaches aim to celebrate, rather than erode, queer lifestyles and their difference (particularly from hetero-normativity). ‘Coming-out queer,’ accordingly, is seen not so much as an individual act of ‘self-fulfilment or as a way of familiarising heterosexuals with the normality of homosexuality, but rather as a defiant and thoroughly unapologetic act of political confrontation. In direct opposition to more liberal approaches, queer, therefore, does not advocate for the normalcy and ordinariness of sexual minorities or for a politics of ‘blending quietly in.’ It is rather highly visible, radical and confrontational (see e.g., Tatchell, 1995; Tucker, 1995). As Smyth (1992) notes:

queer culture and politics herald a lesbian and gay sexuality that is SEXUAL, SEXY and SUBVERSIVE—not only of heterosexual notions of being but of former lesbian and gay orthodoxies ... queer promises a refusal to assimilate into invisibility. It provides a way of asserting desires that shatter gender identities and sexualities [original capitals] (p. 59–60).

However, this doesn’t entirely overcome the difficulty of individualism except in the sense that it does organise around a common identification as somehow ‘different.’ But one of the difficulties, here, as Smyth (1992) notes, is that the queer umbrella is so all-embracing that it paradoxically risks denying heterogeneity in favour of a ‘false queer nationalism.’ Moreover, queer politics potentially encourages political alliances that are so inclusive that it erodes the existing extremely salient material and cultural specificities associated with being allocated (and regulated by) particular identity categories. That is, there is a difference, for example, between claiming ‘queerness’ as a married heterosexual (see e.g., Walters, 1996 regarding Sedgwick) than as, for example, a transvestite or a lesbian. In this respect, Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1994)
argue that “queer theorists have never satisfactorily answered the question, What makes straight heterosexuality queer?” (p. 455). One might respond by emphasising that ‘queer’ is a political choice/conviction that is not dependent upon engaging in particular sexual practices. However, even Butler (1997) argues that “there is a certain comedy that emerges when ‘queer’ becomes so utterly disjoined from sexual practice that every well-meaning heterosexual takes on the term” (p. 124). Walters (1996) raises a related issue, asking why “if it is clearly co-optive and colonizing for the white person to claim blackness if she or he “feels” black (or even feels aligned politically with the struggles against racism), … is it strangely legitimate for a heterosexual to claim queerness because she or he feels a disaffection from traditional definitions of heterosexuality?” (p. 841–842). On the one hand, claiming a queer identity while availing oneself of structurally normative heterosexual privilege does tend towards colonisation; on the other hand, harnessing such alliances can be a politically expedient strategy. Such a strategy does not entail the dilution of difference but rather relies on the potency of identity markers, in infiltrating normative structures. Specifically, achieving a critical mass of ‘queers’ may be pivotal to inciting necessary electoral, judicial and policy change.

A central difficulty is not that queer theory’s attempt to break down rigid categorisations is misguided but rather that it assumes (or at least precipitates a politics that assumes) some form of equivalence for identity categories that is not currently realised in practice. That is, it assumes that queer homosexuality is, in some sense, equivalent with queer heterosexuality (Edwards, 1998; Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1994) and that, likewise, women are in some way, equivalent with men, such that it is now possible to abandon these categories. Although emphasising the discursively constructed (and permeable) ‘nature’ of gendered and sexual categories is essential, such categories cannot be entirely ignored. Clause 28 and the remaining differences in the age of consent (for gay male as opposed to heterosexual sex), for example, are prime, institutionally sanctioned, examples of the lack of equivalence of identity categories. Moreover, identifying as queer, as Stein (1993) observes, does not immunise lesbians or straight women from rape, harassment or poverty, nor does it render the queer heterosexual and the queer gay man or lesbian equally susceptible to ‘gay bashing.’ Equally, Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1994) argue that ‘queer,’ does not
relieve heterosexuality of its status as a compulsory institution for many women, nor
does it protect women from abuse within the context of patriarchal heterosexuality.
For Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1994), “the presentation of lesbianism and
heterosexuality as equivalent betrays the underlying liberalism of queer theory” (p.
456). Moreover, they argue that it deflects attention away from thoroughly theorising
heterosexuality and patriarchy (see also Hennessy, 1995), and is, in this respect,
antithetical to much of radical feminist theory. However, queer theory would question
the notions of patriarchy and heterosexuality, on the grounds that they ‘fix’ and falsely
homogenise gendered and sexual categories and, in so doing, ignores many
problematic power relations.

Queer theory’s disassociation from the specificities of experience is also a necessary
adjunct to the disentanglement of gender and sexuality, and it heralds further
problems. As Walters (1996) observes, “it often (and once again) erases lesbian
specificity and the enormous difference that gender makes, [and] evacuates the
importance of feminism” (p. 843). Walters (1996), in a similar vein to Kitzinger and
Wilkinson (1994), wonders if queer theory’s unspoken ‘Others’ are not so much
heterosexuality or normalcy but feminism, lesbianism or lesbian-feminism. This is a
particularly interesting observation given that of the three most frequently cited
contemporary ‘queer theorists’ in the social sciences (Sedgwick, Butler and de
Lauretis) all are women, two often define themselves as lesbians and two explicitly
position their work within a feminist framework (although queer theory does also owe
a considerable debt to Derrida, Lacan and Foucault). Nevertheless, Walters makes an
important point and it is interesting that queer theory (at least as it appears to have
been translated into queer culture and politics), for all its theoretically posited diversity
seems to be implicitly defined in terms of ‘affluent white male gayness’ (see e.g.,
Dhairyam, 1994; Nguyen, 1999 on the implicit whiteness of queerness; Farwell, 1996;
Jeffreys, 1994; Kinsman, 1996; Walters, 1996 and Zita, 1994; on the erasure of
lesbians and/or the implicit ‘maleness of queerness’). Kinsman (1996) for example,
argues that many lesbians find themselves subsumed under male experience and that
queer becomes coded as male and masculine (see also McIntosh, 1993). Contributing
to the undermining of feminism is also, as Stein (1993) observes, the related issue of
young queer lesbians increasingly identifying with gay men rather than straight women.
(see also Farwell, 1996). However, when gender and sexuality are unhinged from sex, as in queer theory, then such identification is not problematic. Indeed, “some queer theorists would take the stance that shutting down the possibility of identifying with what is construed as ‘the opposite sex,’ not only assumes binary categories but regulates possibilities for identifications” (Marshall, personal communication, 1999).

Part of the difficulty lies in the usage of terms. Watney (1992) suggests, for example, that:

The great convenience of the term ‘queer’ today lies in its gender and race neutrality. This is only to say that in the USA the word ‘gay’ has increasingly come to mean ‘white’ and ‘thirty-something’ and ‘male’ and ‘materialistic’. On the contrary ‘queer’ asserts an identity that celebrates difference within a wider picture of sexual and social diversity (1992, p. 21).

Jeffreys (1994) observes that the term lesbian is missing here and that ‘queer’ appears to take over from ‘gay,’ despite the fact that many lesbians (and transsexuals, transvestites, etc.) have never defined themselves as ‘gay.’ Naming is not a neutral activity and even the term ‘queer’ risks setting up its own regulatory regime and, as Dhairyam’s (1994) and Farwell’s (1996) analyses suggest, it does not unproblematically perform the function of inclusivity for all its aspirations. However, it is doubtful that any term could perform this function and, more importantly, the political utility of such a term is questionable. Moreover, it is not simply the historical legacy of naming that potentiates the ‘maleing’ of queer. It is also the separation of gender and sexuality (which deliberately tries to erode gender as the basis of sexual difference) and the increasing celebration and centrality of sexual pleasure that have accompanied the queer turn in sexual politics.

During the 1990s lesbian sexuality has achieved a heretofore-unprecedented visibility, although it is by no means comparable to the visibility of gay male sexuality. This is not only related to the emergence of queer theory but it is also partly a response to the minimisation and historical invisibility of lesbian sex (not discouraged by some forms of lesbian-feminism during the 1970s and early 80s) and, more indirectly, as part of the more general increased visibility of gay male sexual activity in response to AIDS. Edwards (1998) suggests this has led to a heavy emphasis on the importance of sex itself, and gay men and lesbians increasingly self-defining primarily in sexual terms. In contrast to the historical accounts, however, queer (lesbian) sex, is
now resolutely active, assertive and unrepressed. Lesbians are now often explicitly encouraged to, engage in role-playing, butch-femme, and sadomasochism, to use sex toys, backrooms and pornography, and sometimes to sleep with men (see e.g., Bright, 1986; Califia, 1989; Grace, 1993; Nestle, 1987; Rubin, 1992). As Edwards (1998) rightly notes, for some of these authors, emphasising previously ‘outlawed’ or discouraged forms of lesbian sexual activity represents a way of forming a specifically lesbian as opposed to lesbian-feminist identity (see especially, Califia, 1994; Grace, 1993 and Nestle, 1987). However, while ‘queer’ in this sense has arguably expanded the possibilities of lesbian sexuality (Stein, 1993), or at least created a space within which a discourse about lesbian sex can develop, in many ways it takes (gay) male sexual behaviour as a norm, or an ideal, to which lesbian sexuality should aspire (Jeffreys, 1994; Stein, 1993). Nicholls (1987a, 1987b) for example, (writing as a sex therapist rather than a queer theorist), urges lesbians to become more male in their sexual expression, to place less emphasis on romance and monogamy and more emphasis on what she sees as the primarily gay male activities of having more sex (within and outside of a primary relationship) and especially more anonymous sex. I am not arguing for a return to ‘invisibility’ for lesbian sexuality here or for its redefinition in traditionally ‘feminine’ terms, but like Edwards (1998), I doubt the value of emphasising, and indeed privileging, sexual pleasure as a political strategy in and of itself. In this respect, queer politics and culture (although not queer theory) tends to de-emphasise power relations and the material realities they produce in favour of a more abstract discourse centred on ‘playing with gender, sex and sexuality’ which minimises specific and remaining forms of oppression. Moreover, queer discourse, in general does not appear to acknowledge that endlessly playing with and subverting gender and sexual signifiers are not widely accessible strategies, nor, I suspect, are practices such as drag always experienced as parody and subversion. As Edwards (1998) rightly notes, at the present time in Britain ‘queer’ is centred on the needs and requirements of a minority “namely those who are usually young, often affluent and frequently living in major cities where they [can] adopt a gay (or queer) identity as a way of life” (p. 480–481). The queer cultural turn, then, risks establishing its own regulatory ideals, which while encouraging sexual autonomy also potentially erases, invalidates or inauthenticates other forms of sexual expression.
Following my argument in Chapter 2 regarding postmodern/poststructuralist theories, queer theory (and some of its political and cultural intent) is important (despite its utopian tendencies), and it does provide a critique of (and partial solution to) identity politics and the dichotomous categorisations that continue to sustain regulatory systems of oppression. However, at this particular historical juncture queer politics are best seen, not as a replacement for, or a displacement of, specifically, lesbian, gay, feminist (or other identity based) politics and strategies but as an adjunct strategy expediently employed. For example, contemporary developments in socio-biological and genetic research suggest a pressing imperative to thoroughly blur the boundaries of any perceived forms of sexual or social difference that could be ‘discovered’ or prevented with developing reproductive technologies and genetic screening techniques. However, as Foucault’s analyses suggest, dominant hegemonic categories are also internally disordered by the marginalised categories against which they are defined (see also Dollimore, 1991). This suggests that unless the dominant categories have been sufficiently ‘internally disordered’ (and I do not think this is the case) there remains a theoretical (and political) requirement to retain, in some form, the marginal categories, although their precise meaning should always remain provisional, contested and unclear. Accordingly, I am not arguing here for, as Edwards (1998) puts it, “a return to the political certainties of the 1970s” (p. 481) or for a return to any form of identity essentialism, but rather for the more cautious, reflexive and strategic use of such categories in a fundamentally and self-consciously political form.

3.5.1 The Military and (De)Construction

The influence of postmodern/poststructuralist theoretical approaches (and with respect to sexuality, in particular, queer theory) on the military is currently unclear. As noted in Chapter 1, there is little contemporary work in Britain concerned with directly analysing the British military policy and no work to date that does so from a postmodern or poststructuralist perspective. Moreover, although much postmodern/poststructuralist theoretical work began to emerge in the 1970s, it is only in recent years (primarily during the 1990s) that it has been more widely disseminated.
Accordingly, it is possible that any impact these approaches may have on British military policy have not, as yet, been realised or documented.

In contrast in the US, and due partly to the widely publicised debates around the ‘compromise policy,’ more theoretical work in relation to the military has emerged that draws on poststructuralist concepts (e.g., Butler, 1997; D’Amico, 1996; Lehring, 1996; Rolison and Nakayama, 1994). In this section, I concentrate on Butler’s (1997) text *Excitable Speech* in which she directly (and discursively) analyses the US military policy, and in particular its ‘don’t tell’ component. Butler (1997) notes that the US military policy states that:

Sexual orientation will not be a bar to service unless manifested by homosexual conduct. The military will discharge members who engage in homosexual conduct, which is defined as a homosexual act, a statement that the member is homosexual or bisexual, or a marriage or attempted marriage to someone of the same gender (The Pentagon’s New Policy Guidelines on Homosexuals in the Military, 1993, cited in Butler, 1997, p. 111)

Although, this policy appears to allow homosexual status (or ‘orientation’), it also explicitly prohibits homosexual acts and, importantly, the self-declaration of one’s status as homosexual. Accordingly, this regulation does not prohibit the use of the term ‘homosexual’ but it thoroughly circumscribes its usage. In particular, as Butler (1997) notes “the term ‘homosexual’ ...comes to describe a class of persons who are to remain prohibited from defining themselves; the term is to be attributed always from elsewhere” (p. 105). Butler (1997) further suggests that although this military regulation “is overtly one which seeks to regulate homosexual behaviour, as regulatory, it is also incessantly productive” (p. 110–111). It brings the homosexual subject into ‘being’ through the discourse that simultaneously names it and defines it as an offence against the social. That is, the military actively produces the homosexual subject, who, deprived of self-definition, is ‘named and animated by the state’ (Butler, 1997, p. 122). In this sense, she argues, the military regulation of the term ‘homosexual’ does not function as a simple act of censorship (i.e., the prohibition of speech), but rather it functions to redouble the term it seeks to constrain. In other words, the effort to constrain it culminates in its very proliferation, which, as an unintended consequence, establishes it as the public site of contestation. Butler (1997) is primarily interested in what accounts for “this strange regulation of
homosexual locution, one that seems bound to redouble the term at the site of its prohibition” (p. 105).

Butler (1997) notes that the regulation derives from Clinton’s original proposal that homosexuals should be excluded from military service only if they engage in homosexual conduct and not on the basis of their homosexual status. However, she also notes that subsequent amendments to the policy interpreted a self-declaration of homosexual status to be equivalent to homosexual conduct. In other words, the military regulation takes the declaration ‘I am a homosexual’ to be the very act of the (offensive) homosexual conduct itself. This seems not so much a distinction between status and conduct but rather its conflation. However, it is more than this. It also dissolves the distinction between speech and conduct, such that the act of speaking one’s homosexuality conjures the very act of ‘homosexuality.’ Indeed, Butler (1997) argues that the regulation exercises a performative power that enables the self-ascription ‘I am homosexual’ to be performatively produced.

In building her analysis, Butler (1997) draws on Austin’s distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts, where “the former are speech acts that, in saying do what they say, and do it in the moment of that saying; the latter are speech acts that produce certain effects as their consequence…The illocutionary speech act is itself the deed that it effects; the perlocutionary merely leads to certain effects that are not the same as the speech act itself” (p. 3). However, declaring that one is homosexual within the terms of the military regulation is both illocutionary and perlocutionary because the declaration is seen to both perform ‘homosexuality’ in the moment of its utterance and to have consequences. Moreover, the consequences are not simply realised in the one who makes the self-declaration but rather in those to whom the declaration is made, in those who hear and receive the utterance:

In effect, a desirous intention is attributed to the statement or the statement itself is invested with the contagious power of the magical word, whereby to hear the utterance is to “contract” the sexuality to which it refers. The presumption here is that when and if the term, “homosexual,” is claimed for oneself, it is in the service not only of a statement of desire, but becomes the discursive condition and vehicle of the desire, transferring that desire, arousing that desire. This is a statement construed as a solicitation; a constative taken as an interrogative; a self-ascription taken as an address [original emphasis] (Butler, 1997, p. 113).
Thus, Butler argues, the military takes the self-declaration of homosexuality to be not merely a description but rather a 'performative utterance,' and while ostensibly a reflexive statement (it attributes status only to the individual that utters it), it is construed as solicitation; performing and transmitting what it describes through speech.

Butler (1997) draws on Freud's work, most notably *Totem and Taboo*, in an effort to explain, in particular, why the act of homosexual self-naming should be performative and construed as communicable and contagious. She argues that the military prohibition functions as a taboo in Freud's sense in that it arouses temptation precisely because it is a prohibited desire that persists in an uncontrolled way in the unconscious. It functions contagiously, partly, because if an individual violates the prohibition it tempts others to follow the (associative) example (and, according to Freud, every example encourages imitation) and, partly, because of its unconscious, and accordingly, uncontrolled status. Thus Butler (1997) suggests, "the name 'homosexual' is not merely a sign of desire, but becomes the means by which desire is absorbed into and carried by the sign itself. The sign, in the service of the prohibition, has substituted for the desire it represents, but also has acquired a 'carrier' function that links homosexuality with contagion" (p. 115–116). In a specific sense, therefore, Butler interprets the US military prohibition against the speaking of one's status as homosexual to be construed precisely as the contagious and offensive (and hence prohibited) homosexual conduct. It is in this sense that, while doubting that an absolute distinction between speech and conduct can be drawn, Butler notes that the regulation explicitly "depends on and institutes the collapse of the distinction between speech and conduct" (Butler, 1997, p. 112). Stating that one is homosexual does not therefore, for the military, appear to signify simply an intention to engage in homosexual practices in a referential sense, but is rather "one of the acts of homosexuality ... the discursive happening of the act itself" (Butler, 1997, p. 113).

In earlier sections of this chapter, I have discussed a variety of theoretical and juridical approaches to homosexuality and the extent to which they have positioned sexualities as primarily a matter of status or conduct. This regulation appears to dissolve this distinction, in the sense that a self-declaration of homosexual status is seen as equivalent to performing an act (Butler, 1997). However, Butler (1997) notes
that the US military regulations make clear that a one-time act (if disavowed as a mistake) will be excused, although paradoxically the regulation also explicitly defines ‘a singular homosexual act’ as conduct. However, this is not, she argues, the simple conflation of ‘an act’ and ‘conduct’ but rather the inflation of ‘a homosexual act’ into ‘conduct,’ which she argues:

tacitly and actively imagines the singularity of the event as a series of events, a regular practice, and so imagines a certain force of homosexuality to drive the one-time practitioner into a compulsive or regular repetition. If the act is already conduct, then it has repeated itself before it has any chance to repeat; it is as it were, always already repeating, a figure for a repetition—compulsion with the force to undermine all sorts of social morale (Butler, 1997, p. 111).

Butler’s argument that the military prohibits a self-declaration of homosexuality because it is perceived as contagious, is, however, only part of the explanation for the policy. After all, a number of ‘things’ could be said to be contagious in this sense, but not all of them are explicitly prohibited. It may be, as Deakin (1995) appears to suggest, that underlying the polices is the discourse of immorality: that is, homosexuality is perceived as fundamentally immoral, and therefore, anything that effects its contagious function (e.g., coming-out as homosexual) must also be prohibited in order to preserve a particular set of moral (heterosexual) values. This certainly may be part of the reason; however, Butler (1997) focuses on a different issue. She suggests that the prohibition of a self-declaration of homosexuality is:

concerned to establish a norm by which military subjectification proceeds. In relation to the masculine military subject, this means that the norms governing masculinity will be those that require the denial of homosexuality. For women, the self-denial requires either a return to an apparent heterosexuality or to an asexuality (sometimes linked together within dominant conceptions of female heterosexuality) that suits the military’s notion of unit cohesion [original emphasis] (Butler, 1997, p. 131)

Butler, drawing again on Freud, argues that “according to the social norms that govern the conditions of self-preservation as a man, homosexuality must remain a permanently deflected possibility” and further that “this unacted homosexuality becomes the condition for sociality and the love of mankind in general” [original emphasis] (p. 120). That homosexuality is unacted and permanently deflected is important here since it is this that constitutes the “‘ego-ideal’—the imaginary measure
by which citizenship is psychically regulated” (Butler, 1997, p. 120). But it is not only deflection but rather homosexuality turning back on itself, which, she argues,

is the condition for the fabrication of the ego-ideal in which homosexuality and its prohibition ‘combine’ in the figure of the heterosexual citizen, one whose guilt will be more or less permanent. Indeed Freud will say that homosexual libido is ‘transformed into a sense of guilt’ and citizenship itself—the attachment to and embodiment of the law—will be derived from this guilt (Butler, 1997, p. 121).

The prohibition of homosexuality, thus produces the “masculinist citizen”; if this prohibition is broken—by men speaking their homosexuality—it is brought into explicitness and, hence, it destroys the “homosociality by which the class of men coheres” (Butler, 1997, p. 121). Thus, according to Butler, the repression and denial of homosexual desire simultaneously establishes masculinity and secures homosociality (bonding) between males. The situation is slightly different for lesbians, and she notes that “women cannot speak their homosexuality because that would be to threaten the heterosexual axis along which gender subordination is secured,” which, she suggests, for lesbians in the military often manifests as sexual harassment (Butler, 1997, p. 121). Thus, for men, the self-denial of homosexuality is symbolically conflated with securing masculinity (as distinct from heterosexuality) but for women it is symbolically conflated with a return to the subordinate, passive or asexual position in the gendered heterosexual hierarchy.

Butler (1997) does not really clarify why there should be this difference between gay men and lesbians vis-à-vis the self-denial of homosexuality. However, Sedgwick (1985) argues that in Western patriarchal society there is, for women, an intelligible continuum between ‘homosocial’ and ‘homosexual,’ in the sense, that bonding among women is not as visibly ‘radically disrupted,’ as is the continuum between male homosociality and homosexuality. That is to say, “the adjective ‘homosocial’ as applied to women’s bonds … need not be pointedly dichotomised as against ‘homosexual’; it can intelligibly denominate the entire continuum” (Sedgwick, 1985, p. 3). This, she suggests, is striking because it is in sharp contrast to arrangements among males. Sedgwick’s (1985) argument is persuasive: lesbianism has not (as this chapter suggests) been constructed as disrupting bonding among women (and often quite the contrary); it has, however, often been recognised as disturbing the hetero-patriarchal
social order. Male homosexuality, conversely, appears to be constructed as absolutely antithetical to, and indeed to thoroughly disrupt, male bonding. Butler’s (1997) and Sedgwick’s (1985) accounts, accordingly, suggest that military prohibitions of homosexuality are complex, and appear to pivot on more than the censorship of speech and the simple imposition (and protection) of a particular set of moral values.

There are clear parallels, as Butler (1997) notes, between the US military’s prohibition of a self-declaration of homosexuality and the discursive act of ‘coming out’ as a political act, particularly as it is constructed within queer theory and politics. Notably, queer politics is explicit in encouraging the proliferation of discourses on homosexuality and in achieving widespread publicity. The emphasis in queer on the visual, on the centrality of desire and pleasure, and, most notably perhaps, the emphasis on confrontation and ‘coming out’ all encourage public display. Butler (1997) argues that, in this respect, it is necessary to “take seriously the contention that ‘coming out,’ is intended as a contagious example, designed to initiate a series of similar acts in public discourse” (p. 124). Indeed, she wonders if the US military regulation is a response “precisely to the felicitous perlocutionary consequences of coming out, the way in which the example has spawned a rash of coming outs throughout the public sphere, proliferating itself as if it were a kind of linguistic contagion” (Butler, 1997, p. 124).

Both the US military and queer activists appear to accept that there is a performative force in naming, in that it brings into linguistic being that which it names (Butler, 1997). However, in the military regulation, this translates as ‘saying I am a homosexual is itself a homosexual act.’ Moreover, it is, for Butler, emblematic of the ‘paranoid reduction of homosexual desire to the pathological discourse of disease and contagion.’ For queer activists, conversely, ‘saying I am a homosexual (coming out) is part of the cultural representation and reiteration of homosexuality’ but it does not (and if it does, according to Butler, it makes a mistake) entirely substitute the name for what it names. That is, “the discursive production of homosexuality … is not exactly the same as the desire of which it speaks” and although the “discursive apparatus … constitutes its social reality, it does not constitute it fully” (Butler, 1997, p. 124–125). Butler (1997), thus, argues for retaining the gap between the performative and
the referential such that the referent can never be finally named and, as such, it can
never exhaust or foreclose the possibility of meaning giving.

The current US military policy ostensibly 'allows' non-heterosexual orientation (or
status), but in explicitly regulating against declaring that status and its associated
conduct, the policy seems to be saying that homosexuals can retain their ontological
status, as long as it is unperformed, that is, invisible, inaudible and incommunicable
(corporeally and linguistically). In this sense, the US policy can be read as partly a
political compromise in response to Clinton’s campaign and partly as a response to
the highly visible and confrontational politics encouraged by queer theory and some
other forms of lesbian and gay politics. Fundamentally, it re-iterates the private/public
dichotomy inherent in liberal ideology. The strength of Butler’s (1997) analysis is that
she provides a compelling theoretical account explaining the regulative compulsion to
continue to ‘privatise’ and silence non-heterosexual forms of being and expression.

As noted in Chapter 1, there are differences between the US and British military
policies, and to date, there are no studies comparable to Butler’s examining the British
military policy. Moreover, the British situation is somewhat different to the US, in the
sense that a highly publicised debate comparable to the Clinton campaign has not
occurred in Britain. Nonetheless, British gay and lesbian groups have agitated for
changes to the military policy (e.g., Rank Outsiders) and feminist, queer and gay and
lesbian activists have mobilised to challenge government policies, for example, Clause
28 and the age of consent. In addition, extensive media coverage of HIV/AIDS has
brought issues around sexuality into prominence. Part of my aim in Chapter 5,
through an analysis of the British policy documents, is to examine the extent to which
the changing socio-political context has had an impact on British military policy.

3.6 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter located the thesis in its historical and contemporary context. This
involved an examination of some of the ways in which gay men and lesbians have
been variously constituted in Western societies. In particular, I traced a number of
dominant discursive constructions that have emerged from, for example, State
institutions (e.g., legal, religious) and professional research (e.g., sexology, psychology),
and noted the emergence of various ‘reverse’ discourses developing primarily from political activism (e.g., lesbian-feminist). I also discussed some of the ways in which these bodies of knowledge (and related socio-cultural events) have impacted on military policies and practices. Notably, gay men and lesbians have been variously constructed as, for example: sinful; criminal; pathological; in various ways, political; and, most recently, as indefinably multiplicitous and defiantly subversive. Professional research emerging in the late nineteenth century signified the introduction of medical discourse on homosexuality which, established medical experts as the privileged interpreters and diagnosticians of sexuality, produced an understanding of (homo)sexuals as particular kinds of persons and created a set of institutionally sanctioned ‘norms’ around sexuality. This discourse supplemented, but did not dislodge, the earlier religious and legal discourses, and homosexuality remained both sinful (a discourse that persists to date) and criminal.

The discourse around (homo)sexuality developing within the broad period of the medical construction produced, as its objects, a host of biologically determined and pathological individuals—blighted by some sort of congenital abnormality—which was usually evidenced by gender non-conformity. The physically and psychically ‘masculine lesbian’ and ‘effeminate (male) homosexual’ were the notable discursive products, as indeed were the spurious or pseudo (homo)sexuals who were distinguished from them. Lesbians during this time were specifically isolated as threatening to the social order through their (perceived) appropriation of male roles, their (perceived) links with the women’s movement, and their concomitant potential to subvert the structures along which gender subordination is established.

The late 1960s saw the emergence of an understanding of gay men and lesbians as members of an oppressed ‘minority group.’ Until this time, the responsibility for defining, characterising and cataloguing (homo)sexuals had largely remained within the expert purview of the medical and scientific institutions, although some ‘reverse’ discourses did emerge. With the changes heralded by the ‘minority group’ period, came some opportunity for self-definition, and an opportunity (largely created by gays and lesbians) for gay men and lesbians to organise politically around shared identities and the shared experience of oppression. Nonetheless, psychology remained a significant participant in defining and (de)legitimating forms of sexual expression.
during this period, although there was, for the most part, a significant shift away from notions of pathology and inferiority, coterminous with a move towards the specification of 'positive' gay and lesbian identity development. Gender non-conformity remained a significant element in theoretical accounts, as did some distinction between real and spurious. This period saw the production of the 'well-adjusted' gay or lesbian individual, who was 'normal,' ordinary and similar to heterosexuals. Developmental maturity (and thus normalcy) depended on the gay man or lesbian accepting, privatising and minimising the salience of their sexual 'preferences' and blending in quietly with heterosexual society.

The same historical period also saw the emergence of lesbian-feminism and the production of lesbianism as a political category, a choice, available to all women interested in resisting and undermining heterosexual patriarchy. Heterosexuality was subjected to critique, theorised as a managed and organised institution (rather than as naturally occurring and inevitable), and its regulatory functions were examined. Lesbian-feminist discourse produced the lesbian as fundamentally woman-identified, primarily politically, rather than sexually orientated and avowedly feminist. This perspective conflated lesbianism and feminism and attracted criticism from both heterosexual and lesbian feminists, culminating in a decade of debate over the meaning of both lesbianism and feminism, with many feminists (and lesbians) targeting feminism's regulatory mechanisms and arguing for a re-sexualising of lesbianism. In many ways, feminist discourse during this time produced both the desexualised lesbian and the sexualised 'lesbian sex radical.'

The legacies of the feminist sex wars are evident in contemporary queer theory, which, in a different and less delimited way, (de)constructs taken-for-granted forms of knowledge. Queer discourse, fundamentally, deconstructs identity categories, recognising that all such categories are political and regulatory, including its own. It is for this reason that it resists definition. Blurring and expanding the boundaries of identity categories and rendering visible all non-normative forms of gender and sexuality is, thus, explicitly encouraged in queer politics. This discourse produces the somewhat indefinable 'queer,'—assertive, visible, celebratorily deviant and thoroughly sexualised.
Military policies and practices appear to have reflected each of these constructions until the ‘minority group’ period, although the influence of the civil rights movements have had an impact on the British military with respect to women and ethnic ‘minorities.’ Moreover, homosexuality has been decriminalised in the British military, although the exclusionary policies remain extant. Prior to this time, the military constructed homosexuals as both criminal and, following medical discourse, pathological (mentally incompetent) and thus unsuitable for military service. Notably, in the case of both gay men and lesbians, British and US militaries appear to have relaxed their practice of dismissal at times when ‘manpower’ requirements have been most pressing, notably during the Second World War.

With the emergence of the civil rights movements, the military gradually, and usually reluctantly, refined its personnel policies. This involved the further integration of women and an increased attention to issues of harassment with respect to sexism and racism. For gay men and lesbians, this period also witnessed the military’s retraction of mental illness and incompetence as justifications for homosexual exclusion and the eventual decriminalisation of homosexuality in the military (some twenty-seven years after its decriminalisation in civilian society). When homosexuality was removed from the DSM, the military was deprived of this institutional support. Moreover, homosexuality, to paraphrase Foucault, began once again ‘to speak on its own behalf and demand that its legitimacy be acknowledged.’ Gay men and lesbians were still considered unsuitable for military service, however, this was no longer on the grounds of mental incompetence, but rather on basis of national security (their susceptibility to blackmail) and their perceived potential to undermine unit cohesion and military discipline.

The influence of queer discourse (and deconstructive work more generally) on the British military has not been examined and there is no theoretical work in Britain analysing the British policy within the postmodern/poststructuralist theoretical tradition. Butler (1997) provides an analysis of the current US policy, drawing on both postmodern/poststructuralist and psychoanalytic concepts. She suggests that underpinning the prohibition of homosexual self-definition in the military is the assumption that speaking one’s homosexuality is a performative speech act. Moreover, speaking one’s homosexuality is not only seen as effecting the homosexual act (in an
illocutionary sense), but also as having consequences (in a perlocutionary sense) in that it is construed as contagious. The prohibition of speech (and homosexual acts), therefore, functions to curtail homosexual contagion, which, she suggests, the military sees as necessary for maintaining male homosociality and for securing gender subordination.

In summary, gay men and lesbians have, to follow Foucault, been systematically formed and constituted by a number of discourses. These discourses have usually emerged from, or developed in relation to, the institutional context of professional research, and they have each, in various ways, established a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, instituted a variety of social norms, and defined and regulated the domain of the speakable discourse within which (homo)sexual subjects have been rendered (il)legitimate and (un)intelligible. Foucault argued that discourses are most often constituted over long periods of time and are particularly persistent, dominating the discursive field over centuries, for example, religious and legal and, more recently, medical and scientific discourses. However, contemporary technologies that encourage the rapid dispersal of information (e.g., the internet, etc.) and which are becoming increasingly accessible (particularly in the West), suggest that there is currently the potential for discourses, especially ‘reverse’ discourses, to emerge within shorter time frames. It is, therefore, perhaps not surprising that this historical juncture is marked, to some extent, by the emergence of concepts such as ‘multiplicity’ and ‘plurality,’ as different ‘voices’ enter the public domain. If this heralds a significant epistemic shift (perhaps the most significant since the ‘modern episteme,’ (Foucault, 1970)), such a shift is still likely to be gradual. Moreover, while it may undoubtedly be accompanied by, for example, the “implosion of subjects and objects, culture and nature” and perhaps the dissolution of identity categories, it also establishes its own regulatory regime within the emerging discourses of “technoscience” (Haraway, 1997, p. 43).
CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGICAL AND ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK: REPRESENTATION, REFLEXIVITY AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, I outlined the theoretical framework informing this thesis, discussing, in particular, Foucault's account of discourse and feminist theoretical approaches regarding knowledge, power and the status of subjects. Coterminal with the emergence of these theoretical approaches, which have questioned the epistemological assumptions underpinning traditional work in the social sciences, has been critique of the hypothetico-deductive, or positivist, methodology that has characterised much psychological research since the 1930s (Kitzinger, 1987). Social psychologists writing in the early seventies, during the period dubbed the 'crisis in social psychology' (Armistead, 1974), for example, resisted dominant experimental, individualistic and ahistorical approaches to the study of humans and human behaviour (e.g., Israel and Tajfel, 1972). A number of researchers in particular argued that scientific methodology did not produce reliable ‘true’ knowledge, yielded only an illusion of objectivity, and resolutely failed to account for the meanings and context in which human behaviour occurred (e.g., Buss, 1975; Gergen, 1973; Giorgi, 1970; Harré, 1979; Harré and Secord, 1972; Shotter, 1975, 1984). At the same time, the long and sustained interdisciplinary theoretical critique of the concept of ‘scientific truth,’ and its supporting rhetoric, made its way into (some) psychological theorising (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Bhaskar, 1978; Derrida, 1976; Feyeraband, 1975; Foucault, 1978; Kuhn, 1970). In different ways these critics argue that all claims to knowledge are historically and culturally specific and in particular, internal to the traditions of modernity. This represents an important epistemological shift from understanding knowledge as a (more or less) accurate description of the social world, gleaned through objective unbiased observation and ‘robust’ methodological techniques, to the notion that all knowledge is a social (discursive) production with no necessary correspondence to an independent, stable and external reality.
In the last three decades feminists have also provided a number of important and influential critiques of traditional theorising and its attendant methodologies (e.g., Acker, Barry and Esseveld, 1983; Fee, 1981; Fine, 1985; Harding, 1986; Keller, 1985; Kitzinger, 1987; Scott, 1988; Sherif, 1979; Smith, D. 1974; Squire, 1989; Weisstein, 1968, 1971; Weskott, 1979; Wittig, 1985). In particular, feminists argue that science and its knowledge claims, are not objective, apolitical or value free, but on the contrary represent a particular set of masculine, androcentric values (Smith, D. 1974) which not only (re)produce the ‘male-as-norm’ principle (Griffin, 1986) but which also systematically omit or distort women’s experience and exclude women as legitimate ‘agents of knowledge’ (Harding, 1987, p. 3; see also Oakley, 1972, 1974). For these feminist critics, the scientific endeavour embodies and reproduces patriarchal values, which encourage exclusivity and proprietorship and reproduce inequitable relations of power. Moreover, feminists have also criticised the ways in which participants are often objectified and exploited within research contexts, and how research is often conducted with little attention paid to the impact of such research on participants (Gorelick, 1996; Marecek, 1999).

In this chapter I discuss the methodological implications of these critiques. The questioning of any simple correspondence between ontology and epistemology (Parker, 1990), the imbrication of power and knowledge (and its political implications), the importance of language (in addition to other symbolic material and social practices) in constituting meaning and the undermining of traditional research warrants (e.g., objectivity, reliability, validity, etc.), for example, all suggest a re-conceptualisation of the ways in which research is undertaken and warranted. Minimally, these suggest an attention to issues of power, interpretation and representation, not only as they manifest at all stages in the research process, but also in terms of the potential implications inherent in producing a research account, or body of knowledge. Although not necessarily entailed by a theoretical focus on discourse, the so-dubbed ‘turn to discourse’ (Kroger and Wood, 1998) in social psychology does suggest particular methodologies (and methods) and particular ways of analysing material, for example, some form of textual or discourse analysis. This chapter is divided into two sections: the first deals primarily with relevant methodological issues, the second discusses different approaches to the analysis of
linguistic material and, specifically, discourse analytic approaches. The chapter concludes by outlining the analytic approaches utilised in this thesis.

4.2 Epistemology, Methodology and Method

4.2.1 Rhetoric and Warranting in Research

In much contemporary Western psychology, scientific discourse (and the ‘scientific method’ with all of its supporting constituents, e.g., scientific objectivity, neutrality, validity, reliability, etc.) remains the primary way of warranting research. Adherence to the principles of the ‘scientific method,’ to some extent, guarantees ‘fact claims’ and functions to establish a legitimate and authoritative perspective for the presentation (and agent) of knowledge. However, as I noted in Chapter 2, the concepts underpinning the scientific method are not ‘neutral’ unproblematic concepts either within the context of scientific writing or in relation to the ‘realities’ they purport to (re)present, reflect or reveal (see also Chapter 3). They are rather part of the discursive production of knowledge, socially constructed and functioning, rhetorically, to convince the reader of the validity of the author’s assertions.

The traditional concepts of validity (internal and external), reliability and objectivity, for example, are incompatible with the epistemological perspective taken in this study. Minimally, validity assumes that it is possible to represent, ‘correctly,’ the phenomenon under study. Reliability is conferred by successful replication (by other inquirers) and objectivity demands the elimination of bias. The problem is that these concepts tend to assume, that there is one, and only one accurate way of interpreting or representing particular phenomena, which fails to account for the local, contextual and idiographic meanings inherent in all knowledge production. Moreover, as Guba and Lincoln (1994) point out these concepts do not acknowledge that (discovered) facts are both theory-laden and value-laden. That is theories, values and facts are inseparable; “facts are facts only within some theoretical [and value] framework” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 107). In addition, objectivity elides the ‘interactive nature of the inquirer-inquired into dyad’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) and the ineluctably subjective and interested nature of research.
Warranting research through the valorised procedures of the 'scientific method' is only one of a number of rhetorical devices used in scientific and academic writing (see e.g., Billig, 1990; Harré, 1981; Kitzinger, 1987). Indeed, Kitzinger (1987) argues that all scientific writing is a rhetorical accomplishment, and, in addition to the 'scientific method,' identifies four further dominant strategies evident in social science accounts: 'the 'up the mountain' saga', the 'mythologizing of expertise', 'utility accounting' and 'textual persuasion and literary effects.' All of these, Kitzinger (1987) argues, function to re-instate scientific authority and establish a 'right to speak'. The 'up the mountain' technique (which Kitzinger takes from Rorty, 1980), refers to the presentation of scientific research as progress. Early research on homosexuality and lesbianism, for example, commonly presented itself as an increase in knowledge about sexuality. In much contemporary writing, older, earlier research is positioned as disadvantaged in, for example, its access to resources, to new more sophisticated technologies, to new theoretical insights and methodologies and to new ('enlightened') ways of thinking. Building on the errors of the past research thus progresses; it becomes (ostensibly) more credible, more accurate, and often more properly 'scientific.'

The 'mythologizing of expertise' refers to psychology's insistence on the separation of lay and professional knowledge, in which professional knowledge transcends other knowledges and everyday conceptualisations of the social world (Kitzinger, 1987). This rhetorical strategy involves discrediting popular understandings by claiming that the presented knowledge transcends social context, "moral biases, political ideologies and [the] unconscious fantasies of ordinary social participants" (Kitzinger, 1987, p. 11). Accordingly, dispelling popular myths and misconceptions defines 'good' research. This rhetoric relies on 'distanciation' and it is evident in much psychological research on homosexuality from the early sexologists to date (see Chapter 3).

The third rhetorical strategy Kitzinger (1987) identifies, 'utility accounting,' involves stressing that particular research is valid because of its 'usefulness', that is, its social and practical application. Kitzinger (1987) argues that this rhetorical strategy is used routinely throughout the social sciences literature and is moreover, encouraged through its relationship to funding. To paraphrase Barnes (1979), 'few social scientists are prepared to say that their enquiries have no practical application and few bureaucrats are prepared to fund 'useless' research.' In relation to homosexuality and
lesbianism, numerous practical applications for research have been proposed. As noted in Chapter 3, Dörner (1983), for example justifies his biological work on the grounds that in the future it may be possible to correct abnormal sex hormone levels during sexual brain differentiation and prevent the development of homosexuality.

Other authors have stressed more ‘humanitarian ideals’, for example, they have argued that their research will help reduce discrimination and oppression (Bell, 1975; Henley and Pincus, 1978; LeVay, 1991; Woods and Harbeck, 1991) or help gay men and lesbians ‘cope’ with their sexuality (Coleman, 1982; Gonsiorek, 1982; Herron, Kinter, Sollinger and Trubowitz, 1980).

Kitzinger (1987) also identifies a number of persuasive ‘textual and literary’ techniques in academic accounts, which function to re-instate the superiority of science and its knowledges (see also Billig, 1990). For example, the use of passive sentence construction (i.e., ‘the study reveals’) which obscures the researcher by editing out the individual voice and fosters the “illusion of objectivity” (p. 24) (see also Aldridge, 1993; Squire, 1990; Stanley, 1992). In addition, ‘terminological oversophistication’ (the use of obscure or ‘big words’) (see also Harré, 1981) and the use of visual imagery (e.g., ‘revealing’, ‘discovering’, ‘illuminating’ ‘exposing’), function to enhance scientific credibility and exclusivity. In recent years, Kitzinger (1987) rightly notes that there has been a shift in gay and lesbian research from the rhetoric of ‘distanciation’ to the rhetoric of ‘experiential authority.’ Researchers (and the intended audience) are no longer “detached and objective outsider[s]” but are rather members of the researched group (Kitzinger, 1987, p. 29). Research relying on this rhetorical technique claims its credibility and authority not through ‘objectivity’ but through ‘special insights’ conferred by ‘insider’ status (e.g., Lee, 1977; Porter, 1984). This technique, unlike the others mentioned does not, according to Kitzinger, “rely on or perpetuate the power of social science” (1987, p. 31). (I discuss the implications of ‘insider’ research further in Section 4.2.2.)

In presenting this account of rhetoric, it is not Kitzinger’s (1987) intention to argue against its use in scientific accounts. Conversely, she argues that all scientific writing is necessarily rhetorical, accordingly: “the question is not whether to use rhetoric in scientific writing, but how to use it, in whose interests, and how to recognise and analyse its use” (Kitzinger, 1987, p. 31). Kitzinger (1987) is not the only author to
point out the ineluctably rhetorical ‘nature’ of academic scholarship (see e.g., Billig, 1987; Harré, 1981) and some authors, particularly in the qualitative tradition, have appealed directly to persuasiveness, plausibility, or credibility as ways of ‘validating’ research (see e.g., Mishler, 1986b; Riessman, 1993). Indeed, given the sustained critique of quantification and positivist research criteria and warrants, researchers within the qualitative approach have argued for a variety of different ways of validating analyses outside of traditional concepts, such as the adequacy of sample sizes and statistical significance (see e.g., Lather, 1986). Guba and Lincoln (1994), for example, argue for replacing internal and external validity with ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘authenticity’ respectively (see also Stiles, 1993). However, as Yardley (1997) notes, finding the appropriate reference community to ‘authenticate’ research accounts is not always straightforward given the diversity of approaches even within the qualitative strand. Other authors have replaced the traditional concepts of validity and reliability with notions of comprehensiveness, consistency and methodological rigour to validate their (qualitative) research accounts (Yardley, 1997). The difficulty is that although these are perhaps “desirable qualities in an analysis the rhetorical effect of appeals to a ‘systematic’ method … can be to produce an illusion of almost scientific objectivity” (Yardley, 1997, p. 38).

This difficulty also applies to Miles and Huberman’s (1984) empiricist/inductivist approach, which advocates that there are relatively stable social phenomena (and relationships between them) that can be discovered through the application of careful (objective) methodological procedures, and in particular, through countering methodological ‘biases.’ Thus, Miles and Huberman’s (1984) inductivist perspective assumes there is one ‘accurate’ finding that can be discovered. Grounded theory (e.g., Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967, 1970; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1994) also employs an inductive approach but, unlike Miles and Huberman (1984), grounded theorists seek to generate new theory that emerges from the data, rather than testing hypotheses formed a priori. Nevertheless, the notion of allowing the theory to ‘emerge’ from the data, to some extent, functions to separate out researcher involvement, and the inductive method accompanied by the well-defined, standardised procedures that characterise grounded theory approaches tend to suggest that it is a prescriptive
method for guaranteeing ‘truth’ (Henwood and Pigeon, 1995a; Stanley and Wise, 1993).

A general problem with inductivist approaches is ‘the underdetermination of theory by data,’ whereby different, and often seemingly incompatible, theories are evidentially equivalent; that is, supported by the same set of facts (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Newton-Smith, 1981). Accordingly, Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that “although it may be possible, given a coherent theory, to derive by deduction what facts ought to exist, it is never possible, given a coherent set of facts, to arrive by induction at a single, ineluctable theory” [original emphasis] (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 107). In some of its more recent formulations, grounded theory takes a more explicitly constructivist perspective, attending to both context and the role of the researcher in the creative process of generating new knowledges (see e.g., Charmaz, 1990; Currie, 1988; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1994). Indeed, some authors have called for grounded theory to be integrated with a discursive approach in order to explicitly acknowledge the role of socio-linguistic processes in the construction of meaning (e.g., Henwood and Pigeon, 1995b; see also Henwood, 1993 for an example of research that combines grounded theory with discourse analysis).

Henwood and Pigeon (1995a) note that in recent years (and notably in feminist research) there has been a move towards methodological pluralism, with research questions (and often political aims) explicitly determining the methodological approach. Indeed Ussher (1999) argues explicitly for “intellectual eclecticism and methodological pluralism” as a way of “increasing our understanding of the psychology of women” which she argues, “is surely what feminist psychology is supposed to be about” (Ussher, 1999, p. 46). There are, however, different ways in which the term ‘methodological pluralism’ is used and understood. First, it can refer to the utilisation of different methods within one research study, as in for example, triangulation (e.g., Tolman and Szalacha, 1999). Second, it is used as a way of referring to methodological plurality and diversity within a particular approach (e.g., methodological pluralism within feminist research). Finally, it is used in a more general sense, as referring to widely available (and utilised) methodological resources and methods used in conducting research. Henwood and Pigeon (1995a) primarily discuss feminist methodological pluralism, whereas Ussher (1999) concentrates primarily on
triangulation, although her call for methodological pluralism in feminist research also refers to feminist methodological approaches in general.

One of the problems with a focus on methodological diversity is that it can elide issues of epistemology. For example, Ussher (1999) notes that “the method of analysis chosen by researchers should be the one most appropriate to the research questions at hand” (p. 44). However—and as Ussher (1999) implies—research questions are not formulated independently of epistemology. Tolman and Szalacha’s (1999) research, for example, combines a qualitative narrative analysis with a quantitative statistical analysis to examine female adolescent sexuality, but as Ussher (1999) points out, they tend to sideline issues of epistemology. This leads to certain tensions in their account, for example, between their clear commitment to constructivism and their discussion of ‘bias’ which implies distanciation (Ussher, 1999). Approaches that use a ‘triangulation of methods,’ thus risk reproducing the illusion of ‘scientific objectivity,’ especially if a number of methods are used to support one ‘robust’ or ‘true’ finding, and with the ostensible intention of eliminating subjectivity and demonstrating the ‘reliability’ of the research. The notion of reliability assumes that the object under study is stable over time (Parker, 1997) and accordingly, minimises or denies historical and socio-political specificity. Moreover, there is a tendency for such approaches to (unreflexively) re-instate authorial and scientific authority. Triangulating methods is, however, less problematic if the intention is to demonstrate the different ways in which an issue can be understood (Parker, 1997) (which is partly Tolman and Szalacha’s (1999) intent) and further if it examines the ways in which different methodological approaches relying on different epistemological and theoretical assumptions can produce (often noticeably) different analytic ‘results.’

I am not arguing against methodological pluralism here, but rather for the thorough explication of the epistemological and political assumptions and motivations underpinning research projects. Griffin and Phoenix (1994), for example, also argue against any rigid adherence to a particular methodological approach, however, in addition, they argue for firmly grounding methodological choices in political and theoretical contexts. Tolman and Szalacha (1999), while explicitly and thoroughly theoretically grounding their research and their research goals within a feminist political perspective, do not explicitly connect their methodological choices
(particularly for their quantitative analysis) to their epistemological or political concerns. However, in fairness to Tolman and Szalacha (1999), there is a clear tension here between constructivist epistemology and political change. If all knowledge is a discursive production with no necessary correspondence to an objective ‘reality’, how is it possible to warrant research (and related political) claims and effect, for example, ‘emancipatory’ research? Is it possible to claim, for example, the ‘reality’ of women’s oppression (e.g., of lesbians in the military) and on what grounds can such claims be justified? Moreover, does abandoning traditional warrants deprive research of its ‘legitimate perspective’ and accordingly its political purchase? Some feminists accordingly, retain, to varying degrees, some ‘traditional’ scientific warrants, quite possibly because they are considered to be the most effective for an emancipatory politics (see e.g., Unger, Draper, and Pendergrass, 1986). Although it is not explicitly stated as such, this may be Tolman and Szalacha’s (1999) intent. Feminists who conversely relinquish these traditional warrants (as I have done) have the pressing problem of how to combine epistemological and theoretical concerns regarding the status of knowledge, with research efforts that support effective political intervention.

The different methodologies and different warrants used by researchers to warrant research illustrate: how epistemology underpins methodology; how methodology is implicated in the production of knowledge (Griffin and Phoenix, 1994); and that there is nothing “necessarily radical or progressive” about specific research methodologies and methods (Burman and Parker, 1993, p. 9). Following Kitzinger (1987), I am anxious to avoid utilising a methodological approach (and associated warrants) that functions to re-instate (unreflexively) scientific, expert authority, particularly, if this is at the expense of lay knowledges, in general, and participants accounts, in particular. Moreover, while I am in agreement with Kitzinger (1987) that all work is (unavoidably) a rhetorical accomplishment, it seems doubtful that appealing to the argumentative persuasiveness of a research account alone is sufficient to warrant research analyses. For example, a research account may be highly effective in terms of its arguments, but simultaneously misinterpret, for example, participants’ accounts or be excessively prejudicial or idiosyncratic. Moreover, there are clearly certain requirements demanded by the academic community for assessing the ‘validity’ or
'standard' of research (even for research that does not conform to traditional mandates) and which favour particular rhetorical strategies.

All academic research is produced within the context of institutional power (with all of its trappings of privilege) which re-instates authorial authority. Moreover, tensions between epistemological concerns, research mandates and political aims and investments are not easily resolved. However, there are potentially ways of reducing some of the more problematic authoritarian effects associated with conducting research and that do not (unproblematically) warrant research findings through claims to transcendental, disinterested knowledge and epistemological privilege. In particular, attending to such issues as 'researcher-researched matching,' 'giving voice,' 'empowerment' (and power) and 'reflexivity,' all of which have played an important role in much feminist theorising and methodology, may help to alleviate certain difficulties. In the following sections, these methodological issues, and their related difficulties, are discussed as they relate to the current research project.

4.2.2 Researcher-Researched Matching

As Griffin and Phoenix (1994) observe, feminist research has often stressed the importance and relevance of interviewer-interviewee matching, specifically, the importance of women interviewing other women (see e.g., Oakley, 1981), for its potential to reduce the effects of "gender-based power differentials" in the research context (Griffin and Phoenix, 1994, p. 293). Although Griffin and Phoenix (1994) primarily concentrate on interview research, researcher-researched matching has relevance for all approaches, and in a more general sense, as Bhavnani (1990) observes, the hierarchical loading of particular 'identities' is one of the ways in which power manifests in the context of research. Indeed, Edwards (1996) notes, for example, that some black feminists have doubts about white feminists' ability to understand and represent black women's experiences due to different social positioning on the axis of 'race.' Similarity with research participants is thus often discussed as a way of reducing the effects of power in research and as a way of establishing rapport with participants (Bola, 1996).

The issue of researcher-researched matching is important for this thesis. In important respects, I can also be said to be 'matched' with the participants in this
study, at the very least on the basis of our shared experience of military service, and also in terms of a number of shared identity categories (gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.). However, while I share some general identity categories with many participants, we also differ on a number of important experiential identity dimensions. Notably, during my military service I was an officer whereas only seven participants were also officers and two of these were awarded commissions after service as non-commissioned officers (see Table 3 for participants’ ranks at the time of interviewing and in relation to the military rank hierarchy). This particular ‘identity,’ accordingly, positions me within the military hierarchy in a different structural location from many participants, and it not only suggests different experiences of military service but also potentially establishes a power relation within the research context. The operation of power was further complicated during the interview context by my relationship to the participants. Notably that, irrespective of rank, I knew all of the participants before conducting the interviews through a network of friendships established during my military service. This certainly affected the ways in which the interviews were conducted (and co-constructed (Mishler, 1986a)) and the interviewer-interviewee dynamic and relationship that was established.

Despite some different identity markers, highlighting my broad ‘insider’ status would seem to be an eminently appropriate rhetorical device for warranting this research. However, although Kitzinger (1987) notes that claiming ‘insider’ status has been a dominant rhetorical device in gay and lesbian research and that, unlike some other strategies, it does not reinforce the status of scientific psychology, I am extremely sceptical of employing such a technique as a research warrant. Primarily because it tends to assume that ‘matched’ researchers, in some way, elicit ‘better’ data or produce a more accurate or credible account (Griffin and Phoenix, 1994) than researchers more experientially peripheral to the population in question. However, like Griffin and Phoenix (1994), I agree that it produces different data than might be obtained by unmatched researchers. At the very least, during the interviews undertaken for this study there was, for example, a shared knowledge of military terminology and procedures that I did not require participants to elucidate. However, my prior military experience and my own investments (traditionally, ‘bias’) may indeed have restricted participants’ responses in these respects, eliminating the requirement
for more detailed explanations, forestalling some discussions, while simultaneously potentiating others.

More problematic is that notions of, for example, accuracy and quality emerge from an epistemological perspective that assumes that there is, at some level, an underlying ‘truth’ (or at least a set of ‘better’ responses) that can be obtained through careful attention to particular methodological issues and procedures (Griffin and Phoenix, 1994). Such an assumption is wholly inconsistent with the theoretical and epistemological perspective underpinning this study (see Chapter 2). Like Kitzinger (1987), my focus is on examining the different ways in which participants construct accounts (and, accordingly, different realities), rather than on eliciting (in a traditional sense) ‘valid’ or ‘reliable’ accounts. Interviews are co-constructed accounts (Mishler, 1986a), produced at particular times for particular purposes and (usually) in response to a particular set of questions. This means that not only will different researchers elicit different accounts but that, if I re-interview participants, I will also, most likely, obtain different accounts (Gorelick, 1996). Moreover, such a discrepancy is likely to be amplified for group interviews (also conducted as part of this study) due to changing group dynamics. Accordingly, interview accounts are not (relatively) transparent descriptions of experience reflecting some underlying concrete reality but are rather inherently unstable, provisional and contextually specific. Consequently, although this study focuses on the ways in which participants construct accounts of their lived experience, such accounts are not independent of social and linguistic processes but are rather rendered meaningful through their constitution in language and discourse (Weedon, 1997).

Researcher-researched matching may be desirable for some research efforts and may reduce the problematic effects of some power relations especially when participants express a clear preference for talking to ‘matched’ researchers (see e.g., Phoenix, 1994). However, employing the notion of ‘matching’ as a research warrant is epistemologically problematic. In addition, it implies that researchers cannot or should not undertake research with individuals with whom they are not ‘matched’ in relevant respects. But how is it possible to determine which categories and related experiences are salient and, therefore, require ‘matching’ (single parent? able-bodied? employed? homeless? young?)? Without wanting to deny the colonising tendencies associated
with the history of 'distanciation' (and objectification) in research, this nonetheless heralds a *reductio ad absurdum* (see also Edwards, 1996). This not only suggests that individuals or groups without similar representatives in research communities will be absent and excluded from participation in the production of knowledge (see e.g., Jeffreys, 1996 on feminists theorising prostitution), but it also forecloses the possibility of understanding across experiential identity categories and it re-establishes identity boundaries (and their oppositions), reproducing their regulatory (and marginalising) functions. There is, accordingly, a difference between acknowledging and (reflexively) analysing the different ways in which power operates according to social location, and warranting research on the basis of perceived commonality. Moreover, the significant (and often more problematic) power relationship between researcher and researched is not dissolved by matching on experiential or identity dimensions.

4.2.3 Representing Others: ‘Giving Voice,’ ‘Speaking for’ and Empowerment

In addition to the power relationships established by hierarchical identity categories, for example, ‘race’ and gender, Bhavnani (1990) argues that there are two further ways in which an analysis of power may be understood in the context of social psychological research. These concern, first, the power relationships between researcher and researched; and second, issues arising from the notion of empowerment, or emancipatory research efforts, for example, ‘giving voice.’ In Chapter 2, I discussed how introducing new knowledge forms and previously silent ‘voices’ into the domain of public discourse can be a way of destabilising existing knowledges and provide an opportunity for those denied a ‘voice’ to enter into the struggle over meanings and interpretations. Indeed, Haraway (1991) asserts that writing the narratives of marginal groups is an important and meaningful practice for liberatory politics.

Feminists, in particular, have been concerned explicitly with writing the voices of women into public/historical records in response to theory and practice within the social sciences that has traditionally systematically omitted, distorted or de-valued the experiences of women (e.g., Bohan, 1992; Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1997; Marecek, 1989; Oakley, 1974; Weisstein, 1968). Accordingly, a central concern, particularly of
early feminist work, was to supplement, what were seen as partial and androcentric accounts with research that attended, specifically, to women’s experiences (e.g., Anderson, Armitage, Jack and Wittner, 1990; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986; Chetwynd, 1975; Gilligan, 1982; Oakley, 1981). Validating women’s experiences, giving voice to women and speaking for or on behalf of women, accordingly, became a central concern in feminist research. Theory and research, was thus, seen as having the potential to challenge the partiality of dominant accounts and provide a space for ‘silenced voices’ to enter the public domain, especially when those voices have little or no access to public knowledge production.

There are, however, a number of important issues and difficulties here. First, a research account does not present, in an unmediated way, participants’ voices. Even research that attempts to accord primacy to participants’ accounts, ostensibly allowing those voices to ‘speak directly to the reader' (MacMillan, 1996), has already selected, segmented, interpreted or otherwise reconstructed those accounts within the (academic) text. Moreover, such an approach edits out the researcher and functions, rhetorically, as distanciation—it implies (erroneously) that the researcher is somehow separate from the process of producing and presenting the research account—with researchers acting simply as a conduit relaying participants’ experiences to the reader (see e.g., Rothman, 1996). However, it is not the complete and unedited transcripts that are presented, but rather excerpts, inevitably filtered through researchers’ own interests and organised according to what they perceive to be interesting, informative, relevant or politically expedient.

This raises a second difficulty, associated with the notion of ‘giving voice’ or ‘speaking for’ others. If one of the roles of research can be to present accounts of experience and ‘give voice’ to participants, then how do researchers treat accounts that re-produce dominant and problematic knowledge forms, as in for example, racist or sexist accounts (see e.g., Armistead, 1995)? It is surely not desirable (in any research) to uncritically ‘give voice’ to accounts we perceive to be incommensurable with achieving social justice. But there is a danger here that ‘political integrity’ will override the integrity of the research. Relatedly, how do researchers deal with accounts that do not cohere with, or are antithetical to, the political agenda underpinning the research? For example, I find the military policy excluding gay men
and lesbians from service problematic for a variety of reasons but participants may not. Moreover, the participants in this study may not consider themselves, for example, marginalised or oppressed, and, in any event, have notions in direct opposition to my own in relation to ways of achieving change. Furthermore, in relation to my previous discussion concerning shared experience of military service, it is important to note that my political perspective (and my perception of, and investments in, the military), has shifted substantially since I was a member of (and employed by) the British Army.

Foucault cautions that the meanings that will be made of research can never be fully secured (Foucault, 1983). Indeed, Parker and Burman (1993) suggest that “to introduce closure is to do violence to the variety of possible interpretations that could be given of the text when it comes to life in a discourse analytic reading (and to the variety of possible meanings which were present to those who once wrote or spoke the text)” (p. 157). From this perspective, multiple readings and interpretations are seen as desirable, since they present possibilities for further action (including research) that might otherwise be foreclosed. But for feminists, and other politically motivated researchers, there will be some readings that researchers want to privilege, as well as alternative readings that they want to foreclose or delimit, particularly those that are seen as reproducing oppressive hegemonic knowledge forms (see also, Alldred, 1998; Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1997). Accordingly, while it is undoubtedly impossible (and undesirable) to fully fix meaning and our preferred readings, as Alldred (1998) argues, “we must attempt to ward off ones we believe to be oppressive” (p. 163). In this research, for example, I am concerned that I may either (inadvertently) arm the military with knowledge that can be used to justify further discrimination and/or (re)present the accounts of a group of a currently under researched and ‘silent’ women in ways they themselves would not have intended.

These issues are a problem for feminist research concerned with, for example, reflecting and validating women’s experiences. As Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1997) rightly argue, there are (at least) two problems here. First researchers interpret participants’ experiences within particular theoretical frameworks (e.g., poststructuralist, psychoanalytic, etc.) which transforms rather than reflects and validates participants’ experiences. By way of example, Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1997)
discuss Segal's (1997) use of queer theory in which Segal disrupts binary
categorisations and polarities of sexual difference. This, Kitzinger and Wilkinson
(1997) argue, does not reflect or validate women's experiences because women do
experience themselves within dominant categorisations. Second, women differ in
terms of their political investments. For example, Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1997) note
that “most of the women [feminists] are interviewing are not feminists” (p. 567) and,
as such, their interpretations and understandings are often different. Kitzinger and
Wilkinson (1997) ask:

What does it mean to ‘validate’ the experience of a woman who says she’s
never been sexually harassed? What does it mean to ‘validate’ the experience
of a women who says she believes she has breast cancer because she chose
not to breast feed her child, that her breast cancer is a punishment for past
sins, and that her post mastectomy body is mutilated deformed and ugly?
How are we to address the experience of such women, which does not fit our
(feminist) theoretical frameworks? (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1997, p. 567)

Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1997) argue that there are five different ways in which
feminists have generally dealt with these dilemmas. These are: omitting data perceived
to be politically damaging; describing the data as evidence of ‘false consciousness’;
interpreting the data as essentially feminist even if feminism is explicitly disavowed by
participants; inspecting the data for (perceived) internal contradictions arising from
competing discourses; and disagreeing with or challenging (some) participants
interpretations and taken-for-granted experience (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1997).
Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1997) favour the latter strategy, which, they argue, is rarely
used in social science research because “feminist social scientists apparently feel an
overwhelming obligation to be (as we see it) ‘nice’ to research participants” (p. 572).
I discuss the more specific issues relating to Kitzinger and Wilkinson's (1997) account
in the section below on reflexivity. Of interest here is the way in which none of these
approaches can be said to unproblematically (re)present participants’ voices and their
constructions of their experiences, and they all (inevitably) problematise concepts
such as speaking for or giving voice. Moreover, there is clearly a disjuncture between
giving voice and empowerment here, although these are sometimes implicitly taken to
be synonymous (see e.g., Mishler, 1986a).

It is not simply a researcher's subjective and political interests and investments that
render representing ‘others’ problematic. The third difficulty is that even if it were
possible to simply describe and relatively un-intrusively (re)present the voices of
others, such a representation conflicts with research mandates. Morgan (1998), for
example, criticises qualitative research by arguing that he “has yet to be convinced that
the techniques go beyond those of good investigative journalism” (p. 483). By which I
take him to mean they are simply descriptive accounts, lacking some form of
(technical? scientific?) analysis. While I disagree with Morgan’s (1998) critique of
qualitative research, there is, nonetheless, a requirement for all research to (re)present
its ‘data’ in terms defined, to some extent, by academic psychology (or at least a
relevant strand within it). MacMillan (1996) highlights this point in addition, to the
difficulties of representation:

the act of ‘speaking for’ carries with it the implication that the ‘Other’ cannot
or does not speak adequately for herself. Now I resent that implication! I
should be able to say what I want to say, when I want to say it, perfectly
clearly, without any well meaning discourse analyst jumping in and analysing
things as she wants to see them, and not as they might have been intended

MacMillan’s (1996) point is well taken and research mandates, generally demand some
form of ‘expert’ analytic intervention by the author/researcher that transforms the
‘data’ into a research account that conforms to standards required by the academic (or
academic publishing) community. However, attempting to represent the voices of
others does not necessarily mean, as MacMillan (1996) suggests, that ‘the other cannot
speak adequately.’ There are, for example, often structural impediments associated
with speaking out for some marginal groups and, notably for the lesbians taking part
in this study there is the real and significant risk of loss of employment. Moreover, it
is the structural advantage conferred by presenting research accounts within
institutionally prescribed boundaries that authorises the research text (securing a ‘right
to speak’) and facilitates the entry of the research knowledge into academic/public
discourse. The problem, therefore, centres on both the impossibility of adequately
(re)presenting the voices of others and on the requirement to somehow transform
(under the weight of prescribed analyses) those voices into a research account that is
not deprived of its institutional legitimacy (and, accordingly, its authority) such that it
can enter the academic/public domain and challenge (or support) relevant knowledge
forms.
This brings me to the fourth difficulty associated with notions of empowerment, speaking for and giving voice. As Burman (1996) argues, "in claiming to ‘speak for’ or ‘give voice to,’ not only do we run the risks of being patronizing and colonizing Others’ accounts" but "we also essentialize (and sometimes individualize or romanticize) those accounts by failing to treat them as constructed through both micro- and meta-representational practices" (p. 139). Furthermore, rather than performing a liberatory function, as Burman (1996) notes, "knowledging can constitute an act of epistemic violence or alienation that disempowers or distorts" (p. 140). It is important, as Probyn (1993) remarks, "that some speak and that others are merely spoken" (p. 72). A research account is an authored text and there is, accordingly, a risk of (re)producing participants as ‘objects’ (merely ‘spoken about’) rather than allowing for their recognition and constitution as ‘speaking subjects.’ Is it possible at all, given the way research efforts are institutionally prescribed (through methodological and analytic constraints and injunctions, etc.), to represent participants in a way that does not ‘objectify’ them (see e.g., Armistead, 1995)? Focussing analyses on the accounts individuals co-construct (with researchers and other participants as in, for example, group discussions), rather than on individual actors is helpful here, but this can also be costly, in that it tends to deny the validity of participants’ experiences (or ‘lived realities’), and can effect a form of ontological erasure. Moreover, while researchers may be able to justify this move on epistemological, theoretical or political grounds (see Chapter 2), it is doubtful that participants interpret such an approach as especially validating, liberating or empowering.

Thus, giving voice and speaking for participants are thoroughly problematic concepts, and they do not inevitably entail or facilitate either participant empowerment or political change. Researchers embody institutional and authorial power. Moreover, it is usually the researcher who benefits from the final document, a point which is, perhaps, especially apposite in the case of (single authored) doctoral research. In a specific sense, therefore, the notion of ‘giving voice’ might well be said to operate in reverse; that is, participants are, in actuality, ‘giving their voices’ to researchers, and there is no necessary relationship between giving (or taking) participants’ voices here and the ultimate empowerment of participants. Indeed, to
paraphrase Marks (1993), ‘the notion of democratised research may simply be an illusion claimed through the fantasy of empowerment’ (p. 139).

I am not arguing here against conducting research and as Burman (1996) argues, it is ‘not possible, desirable or responsible to refuse the speaking positions to which we can claim access.’ Moreover, accessing such speaking positions is clearly an effective way of challenging the dominance and partiality of problematic knowledges. However, there is a difference between claiming that introducing different or ‘new’ knowledge (e.g., a different way of understanding the issue of (homo)sexuality and the military) can be a meaningful political practice, and claiming that it is possible to simply and unproblematically ‘give voice to’, ‘speak for’ or ‘empower’ participants, even when trying to be faithful to participants’ intended meanings. Moreover, as Bhavnani (1990) suggests, while listening to silenced voices is often a necessary first step towards empowerment, like ‘insider’ research, it clearly does not redress the power imbalances that are inscribed in the research context, and particularly those between the researcher/author and those researched.

These representational difficulties are not entirely surmountable, but this does not mean it is impossible to undertake research involving ‘others.’ As Harris (1996) argues, with respect to feminists representing young women, “choosing not to represent [them] has not left them uncolonized and free to speak for themselves” (p. 155). The problem, therefore, is how to present research findings that do not claim to be epistemologically privileged or incontestable, in a way that is respectful of the concerns of participants, and that simultaneously fulfils research and political requirements. Harris (1996) suggests that “this means giving up the arrogance of scientific objectivity, the unchallenged ‘truth’ of one’s own perspective, the anonymity of the researcher, and instead acknowledging one’s own ‘place’: background, expectations, reservations, shortcomings and agenda” (original emphasis, p. 154). Harris (1996) is specifically highlighting here the importance of researcher subjectivity in theory and research. Indeed, most contemporary feminist theorising includes a reflexive component which aims to acknowledge and make explicit the often obscured power relationships within the research context and to work with (as opposed to against) the inevitability of subjectivity (e.g., Olesen, 1994).
4.2.4 Subjectivity, Reflexivity and Politics

There are a number of different ways in which the term ‘reflexivity’ is used and understood in the social science literature. Wieder (1974), in the ethnomethodology tradition, uses the term reflexivity to refer to particular features and characteristics of talk, notably talks constitutive function. Doherty (1994) conversely notes that reflexivity is often taken to refer to researchers reflecting on their own role (as researchers) in the production of knowledge. However, this is a broad definition and in practice ‘reflexivity’ in this sense can mean anything from a “ritual incantation of the identities occupied by the author” (Gill, 1998, p. 32) to, reflecting critically upon all aspects of the research process, including exploring, analytically, power imbalances (Bhavnani, 1990) and examining the assumptions underpinning specific projects (Maynard, 1994). Wilkinson (1988), for example, refers to both ‘functional reflexivity,’ which involves critically reflecting on academic psychology and its theoretical assumptions and values, and ‘personal reflexivity,’ which refers more to self-awareness (Ashmore, 1989) and a recognition of how the researcher’s identities, interests and values impact on the research.

Making one’s own involvement and personal investments in a study explicit represents an effort to work with, rather than against, subjectivity. In particular, it encourages problematising one’s own practices and interpretations (Olsen, 1994), including specifying how accounts are analysed and how the conclusions are derived (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, and Tindall, 1994; Griffith and Smith, 1987; Olsen, 1994; Stiles, 1993). Making the research process explicit in this way helps readers to make their own assessment about potentially ‘problematic’ influences that may have affected the analytic process. In this way, some researchers argue, the reader can assess the research for its plausibility, credibility and persuasiveness (Banister et al., 1994; Leininger, 1994; Mishler 1986b; Riessman, 1993). However, there are potential difficulties here. In the first instance, it tends to encourage the notion that the researcher’s involvement is somehow problematic and, that these influences can be reduced by rendering such involvement ‘transparent.’ In this sense, ‘reflexivity’ becomes simply “a rhetorical device for deflecting suspicions of bias” (Yardley, 1997, p. 39) or a confessional discussion of the ways in which interpretative processes ‘interfere’ with the account (Parker and Burman, 1993).
Second, it suggests that authors are capable of providing either a (relatively) objective, or (relatively) complete, account of their own involvement in the research, both of which are unrealistic if not impossible to achieve (Yardley, 1997). That is, the notion of “candid reflexivity” (Yardley, 1997) is epistemologically fatuous and there are no readily identifiable limits regarding just what are to be characterised as ‘subjective’ influences on a research project, and, accordingly, included, analysed or discussed. The danger here is that “wallowing in the researcher’s interpretative assumptions and processes can detract from the importance of the topic and possible political interventions” (Parker and Burman, 1993, p. 168). Reflexivity thus risks becoming an exercise in ‘futile narcissism’ (Burman, 1991), or ‘ethnographic indulgence’ (Lunt, 1997, personal communication) that paradoxically functions to thoroughly privilege the researcher’s account, detaching it from the research and, to some extent, erasing those who have participated in it.

There are clearly many positions along the ‘reflexivity’ spectrum, from simply acknowledging similarities and differences with participants along, for example, experiential or identity lines (without necessarily attending to their significance), to producing a thoroughly self-referential research account. For example, I take ‘reflexivity’ to mean more than simply acknowledging one’s social location and personal commitments, what Woolgar (1988) describes as ‘benign introspection,’ and less than explicating everything that might be classed as one’s subjective involvement in the research process. The concept of ‘reflexivity’ alone does not, therefore, necessarily bestow credibility (or ‘validity’) upon a research project, nor does it unproblematically provide a warrant for the research. Accordingly, while the notion of ‘reflexivity’ is important, it needs to be ‘grounded’ in terms of its relevance and implications for producing particular kinds of knowledge. The practice of reflexivity I am proposing is, fundamentally, a theoretically articulated form of ‘political reflexivity’ in which, following Gill (1995), political values and commitments are analysed and explicaded and researchers are rendered “accountable for [their] interpretations and their social and political consequences” (Henwood and Pigeon, 1995a, p. 12).

But what precisely does ‘political reflexivity’ mean and how does it delimit the scope of the term reflexivity? Clearly, simply stating one’s political affiliations and concerns is insufficient, and not necessarily any more meaningful than simply listing
(ostensibly) shared experiential identities. The kind of political reflexivity I have in mind (ideally) involves consideration of and incorporates four primary elements. First, attendant with locating specific research projects in their political, as well as historical and cultural, contexts should be a reflexive analysis of the political implications associated with particular theoretical and methodological approaches. In Chapter 2, for example, I discussed some of the political implications associated with particular epistemological and theoretical approaches, which was followed (in Chapter 3) with a discussion of some of the political implications I associate with different ways of theorising (homo)sexuality. Indeed, my concern in this chapter was not to discuss the relative 'accuracy' of different theoretical approaches but rather to examine some of their assumptions and their political effects. In important respects, this represents a politically reflexive practice, and while it is by no means (as I noted at the outset of Chapter 3) the only way of representing the history of research on homosexuality, or its relationship to the military, and is, as such, 'epistemologically sceptical' (Gill, 1995, p. 182), it does render political concerns and justifications explicit, and, as such, contestable.

The second related aspect of reflexivity concerns explicating the specific political and personal commitments of the researcher that underpin and inform the project. By this I mean acknowledging and discussing both the political aims (and pretensions) associated with the research and their attendant limitations. This raises a number of questions, for example: What is the purpose of the research? Who is it for and whom does it benefit? Who is the intended audience? I noted in Chapter 1, for example, that one of the overarching aims of this research project is to introduce 'new' knowledge about gender, sexuality and the military into the public domain of academic discourse. This is with two specific intentions in mind. First, to provide a different way of understanding the issue of homosexuality and the military and, second, to potentially challenge the current military exclusionary policy. However, there are two immediate problems here. First, this is a doctoral thesis and, as such, one of its primary functions is to facilitate my obtaining a doctorate and, as such, this research (in this form at least) is very much for my benefit. Second, as a doctoral thesis its entry into the public domain of knowledge is also somewhat limited. Publishing and presenting the work, is accordingly, a necessary political adjunct, however, the public availability (and
accessibility) of published research can also be restricted, depending, for example, on
the publication outlet (see Bower, 1996, 1997; and Bower and Mooney-Somers, 1997,
for details regarding the academic/public presentation (to date) of research based on
this thesis). The potential for this research (in its present form) to enter into the
debate over the meaning of gender and sexuality in the military is, thus, somewhat
restricted, but it does not render these political concerns unimportant. In terms of this
thesis, such concerns both motivated and oriented the research project, thus
providing the basis for its future (perhaps, more public) mobilisation in proposing
socio-political change.

The third element of a reflexive analysis involves attending to participants' own
concerns, expectations and understandings. Minimally, participants often indicated
that outside of the military there is little awareness of some of the ways in which the
exclusionary policy is enforced and, thus, were anxious that the accounts should
become a matter of public record. Accordingly, although participants were aware that
the research was doctoral research, a number of participants asked to read the finished
document and there was a general expectation that it would be published and in a
fairly widely accessible form. The tension that arises here concerns the way in which
research accounts are usually written to appeal to a specific academic audience and, as
such, are not necessarily generally accessible. However, surely the issue of
accountability extends to being accountable to participants? But how can researchers
be held accountable if the intelligibility of the research account depends on the
reader's specialised prior knowledge? Bearing this in mind, I have attempted to
thoroughly explicate, for example, the theoretical, methodological and political
assumptions (and constraints) underpinning this work in such a way that renders it
accessible and comprehensible to participants and readers who do not have, for
example, a background in the social sciences or are unfamiliar with
postmodern/poststructuralist concerns. This is a difficult task, however, and I am not
sure that I have always been successful. Moreover, given the specific constraints and
injunctions of a doctoral thesis this difficulty is not easily resolved. As Skeggs (1994)
argues, "doctoral style does not square with accountability to those outside the
academic establishment" (p. 86). Subsequent publishing of the work (and
notwithstanding publishing difficulties and constraints) in a form that is accessible to a
wider audience may alleviate this difficulty and may, in turn, enhance its political purchase (see e.g., the difference between Burke’s (1993a) doctoral thesis and the book he subsequently published on homosexuality in the British police force (1993b)).

Reflexively attending to participants’ concerns, however, raises a further difficulty and it relates to both the epistemological and theoretical concerns underpinning this study and to the more general issue of representation discussed earlier in this chapter. Bearing in mind the variety of different structural/institutional demands placed on participants and researchers, and differences in, for example, political and academic backgrounds and different investments in the research project, it seems doubtful that researchers can produce an interpretation that wholly coheres with participants’ concerns and perspectives. Moreover, it does not resolve the related issue, which as Alldred (1998) comments, pivots on whether it is “ever acceptable to present a piece of research with a contradiction between its re/presentational claims and our actual [epistemic? theoretical?] confidence in these claims” (Alldred, 1998, p. 164, my comments in parentheses). This difficulty is, perhaps, exacerbated by my poststructuralist focus in this thesis for which, as Gavey (1997) succinctly observes, “there is no essential ‘true’ meaning that resides within [a] text; rather, different meanings are constructed on every reading” (p. 55). The challenge, therefore, is to find some way of establishing that the concerns of participants’ matter and to retain “epistemological scepticism” (Gill, 1995, p. 182). This would seem to mean acknowledging “that although alternative interpretations of circumstances can exist…politically, a strong case can be made for one’s own” (Harris, 1996, p. 155).

This is reminiscent of Kitzinger and Wilkinson’s (1997) call to ‘disagree with participants’ when it is deemed politically expedient. As discussed above, I do think it is necessary to challenge accounts we perceive to be problematic and to indicate our intended and preferred readings. Moreover, I agree with both Harris (1996) and Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1997) in that the researchers’ interpretations need to be ‘grounded’ explicitly in political concerns and values (see also Gill, 1995). This means that rather than, for example, strategically omitting ‘problematic’ data (Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1997), such data is presented and as such open to re-interpretation and critique, while remaining, albeit to a delimited extent, faithful to participants’ intended
meanings. It is, partly, for this reason that I elected to conduct unstructured interviews (see Chapter 6).

This brings me to the fourth component desirable in a reflexive analysis, and it concerns an examination of the ways in which power operates throughout the research process, and specifically, in the research context. Following Bhavnani (1990), I take an analysis of power to mean more than simply acknowledging similarity or difference and pointing out the consequential power differentials inherent during interviews. Power needs to be examined and analysed for the ways in which it operates to reproduce inequities (and when these inequities may be inverted or subverted (Bhavnani, 1990)), and in terms of its more general relationship to the construction of knowledge. Appealing to, for example, shared experiences, identities and perhaps shared political concerns potentially redresses some differential power relationships but it does not per se challenge the authority of the researcher and it does not render the operation of power simple or transparent. Moreover, following Foucault, power does not simply operate as oppression or repression through dominant structural and hierarchical categorisations, it is rather, dynamic and dispersed. As Bhavnani (1990) notes, the operation of power is fundamentally complex and 'messy.' Moreover, she suggests, that it is this very messiness (that manifests, for example, in awkward questions from participants) that is desirable and that provides a starting point for the analysis of power.

Bhavnani's (1990) argument is persuasive, and certainly the research context in this study was characterised more by shifting power dynamics rather than any simple or straightforward power differentials (see also Mathieson, 1999). This was perhaps amplified because the participants and I had, to varying degrees, an existing relationship independent of the research context. In addition, the texts for Study 2 were not only constructed in individual interviews but also through group discussions. This had an important effect on the power dynamics operating in the research context, and, in particular, as Wilkinson (1998) notes, group interviews or discussions tend to reduce the researcher's power and control. Accordingly, although researchers do embody institutional power, and retain authorial authority and privilege, in the research context at least, it is not necessarily the case that researchers are always more powerful than participants despite this being a common assumption (e.g., Mishler,
Willott's (1998) account of her experiences of conducting feminist research with men is a notable example, as is Bola's (1996) account of her anxieties as an Asian researcher interviewing white women. Bola (1996) also highlights the ways in which the operation of power is not simply restricted to general hierarchical identity categories, through her account of the ways in which her skin condition (vitiligo) was used to question her suitability for interviewing. While an analysis of power is a critical element in this thesis, a close examination of the shifting and complex power dynamics in the interactional research context is not a primary focus. This is partly because my research objective is to produce a broad understanding of the many ways in which participants construct their accounts, which is especially important as these accounts represent 'new' knowledges. Thus, a focus on the ways in which discourses and discursive resources produce and regulate gender, sexuality and subjectivities in the military context was prioritised over an analysis of the interview process.

4.2.5 Summary

There is no single or simple way of warranting research that unproblematically ensures or guarantees the persuasiveness (i.e., credibility, validity, standard or general 'worthiness') of a research account. In terms of research warrants, researcher-researched matching, giving voice and notions of empowerment are all problematic. However, a reflexive analysis of the personal and political motivations that provide the foundations for the knowledge produced, to some extent, renders the research process explicit and, thus, accountable and contestable. This does not provide an unproblematic warrant for research, but political and personal investments, rather than confounding the research process, are prioritised, rendered visible and, as Gill (1995) puts it, “placed in a realm where they can be argued about” (p. 182, original emphasis). Such reflexivity is thus avowedly political and it can also function to restrain the extreme apolitical relativism inherent in some poststructuralist and discursive approaches. That is, it is possible to argue for the political utility of particular forms of (provisional and local) knowledge and ways of understanding, which do not claim to be authoritative, self-evident, impartial or epistemologically privileged but which simultaneously do not entail "irredeemable political ambivalence" (Lather, 1991, p. 31).
My aim in appealing to political reflexivity is not to protect the account from criticism (Gill, 1995) or to claim epistemological privilege. Gill (1995) contends that some forms of discursive psychology, in tokenistically attending to reflexivity, actually function to rebut and deflect criticism (e.g., Edwards and Potter, 1992) rather than encourage debate. Indeed, Ahmed (1996) notes that some approaches to discourse explicitly discourage researcher self-reflexivity. In the following sections, I discuss the various ways in which discourse analysis has been used and understood and the ways in which these cohere or conflict with the epistemological and theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2 and with the methodological concerns outlined in this chapter.

4.3 Approaches to Discourse Analysis

There are different ways of understanding the term ‘discourse’ and, concomitantly, a variety of approaches to discursive/textual material, broadly covered by the term ‘discourse analysis’ (see e.g., Antaki, 1988; Burman and Parker, 1993; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1995). Indeed, Burman and Parker (1993) suggest that it is “very difficult to speak of ‘discourse’ or even ‘discourse analysis’ as a single unitary entity, since this would blur together approaches subscribing to specific and different philosophical frameworks” (p. 3). This theoretical and methodological diversity within the discursive approaches arises partly from different understandings of the term ‘discourse.’ Íñiguez (1997), for example, identifies six different ways (that are not all incompatible or mutually exclusive) in which discourse is often conceptualised in the analytic practices of social psychology. These range from a general focus on statements (or sets of statements) produced by speakers through discourses defined by their context of production, for example, ‘advertising discourse’ (e.g., Cook, 1992) to the more Foucauldian conception that discourses consist of sets of statements and constitutive historically developing practices that designate a coherent system of meanings and systematically form the objects of which they speak. The scope of the term discourse and the epistemological framework against which it is defined, accordingly, affects the analytic and methodological approach.
### 4.3.1 Speech Acts, Structure and Function

One identifiable approach to discourse analysis has been directly influenced by speech act theory (e.g., Austin, 1962; Scarle, 1969; Wittgenstein, 1953). This approach views language as a form of social activity and tends to focus on conversational exchanges, often in institutional contexts. Sinclair and Coulard (1975), for example, analyse discourses in the classroom setting paying particular attention to verbal acts. Sinclair and Coulard (1975) are interested in more than sentence structures, assuming rather that there is a ranking of structures within discourse and above the level of the sentence. Their focus is “the level of the function of a particular utterance, in a particular social situation and at a particular place in a sequence, as a specific contribution to a developing discourse” (Sinclair and Coulard, 1975, p. 13). Sinclair and Coulard (1975) classify interactions in terms of exchanges (e.g., eliciting, informing, directing, etc.) which consist of smaller units (termed ‘moves’) which, in turn, consist of speech acts, all of which have different functions (e.g., initiating, responding, nominating, confirming, etc.). In this way, Sinclair and Coulard (1975) provide a way of describing the ways in which conversational dialogue is systematically and functionally organised.

An emphasis on function and discursive organisation is shared by a number of authors writing in the discursive tradition. Brown and Yule (1983), for example, also analyse the ways in which particular conversational interactions are controlled (e.g., topic control) by the use of items within discourse, items such as pauses, hesitations and interruptions. Brown and Yule (1983) are not only interested in conversational exchanges but also written texts, and in particular the ways in which texts are systematically and hierarchically organised according to context and the rules and properties of language (see also Hoey, 1983).

These approaches to the analysis of discourse, while attending to the context of production, are not concerned with social relations and power in terms of their impact on discursive practices. In this way although context is important, these approaches are not attentive to the social, historical and political significance of speech and text production, nor are they concerned with questions of interpretation (Mills, 1997). Language is treated as reflective, a product ‘out there’ awaiting somewhat disinterested
analysis (see also e.g., Brazil, 1975), rather than as productive of realities, as contested and, as Fairclough (1992) argues, as “invested with particular ideologies ... helping to sustain particular relations of power within society” (p. 15). For these reasons, they are not compatible with the epistemological and theoretical approach underpinning this study.

4.3.2 Discourse and Cognitive Theory

A somewhat different approach to discourse analysis is characterised by the work of van Dijk (1983). van Dijk (1983) focuses on the ways in which discourses affect cognitive processes such as comprehension and recall (see also Frederickson, 1986; van Dijk and Kintch, 1983). It is the interface between cognition and discourse that is of interest here and the ways in which discourse analysis is useful for developing cognitive models. Discourse is seen as a product; ‘as part of a more embracing cognitive and social theory about the rules and strategies that underlie the production and understanding of ... discourse’ (van Dijk, 1983, p. 27). Discourse analysis is thus conceived of, primarily, as a methodological tool in the development of wider theory, rather than as a way of theorising the operation of discourse itself. Moreover, although this approach differs from the previous approaches discussed, it also tends to view language as reflective rather than productive (and regulatory) and indeed, as Malson (1998) notes, explicitly positions discourse analysis as a way of revealing underlying cognitive processes. As with the earlier approaches outlined, this approach does not privilege the constitutive function of discourse and it does not engage with issues of power or socio-historical specificity. Accordingly, it is also incompatible with the theoretical and epistemological approach underpinning this study.

Approaches to discourse analysis that are more compatible with my epistemological approach acknowledge that discourses are both functional and constitutive of realities, and they do not eschew the socio-historicity of the production of knowledge or the ways in which power is imbricated in discourse. In particular, approaches such as those concerned with interpretative repertoires (e.g., Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1988), rhetoric (e.g., Billig, 1987, 1991), critical linguistics and social semiotics (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; Hodge and Kress, 1988; Trew, 1979a, 1979b), and work within an explicitly
poststructuralist (often specifically Foucauldian) framework (e.g., Henriques et al., 1984; Hollway, 1989; Malson, 1998; Walkerdine, 1986). These approaches, however, while sharing certain assumptions about language and discourse, also differ in terms of their theoretical reference points and their emphases.

4.3.3 Interpretative Repertoires, Rhetoric and Ideological Dilemmas

Burman and Parker (1993) suggest that it is possible to identify three reference points in contemporary discourse analytic work in psychology. The first involves work following, for example, Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Billig et al., (1988) and is concerned with ‘repertoires’ and/or ‘dilemmas.’ Potter and Wetherell (1987) indicate that their approach emerges from speech-act theory, ethnomethodology and semiotics and it is comprised of three major components: function, construction and variation. The general term ‘function’ is intended to stress both the ways in which people do things, intentionally, with language (e.g., explain, justify, etc.) and the unanticipated and unintended consequences of language use (e.g., ideological effects). By ‘construction’ Potter and Wetherell (1987) mean the ways in which language is used to “construct versions of the social world” (p. 33, original emphasis). There are three aspects of construction that they emphasise in particular. First, accounts are built up from a variety of linguistic resources. Second, these resources are actively and selectively employed. Third, that often much social interaction is experienced only in terms of specific linguistics, therefore, accounts construct realities. Variation, Wetherell and Potter (1988) note “is a consequence of function [and] it can be used as an analytic clue to what function is being performed in a particular stretch of discourse” (p. 171). Indeed, the study of variation is crucial in this form of discourse analysis since it provides a way of reaching some conclusions about the functions discourses might be serving (Wetherell and Potter, 1988). These three interconnected components—function, construction and variation—comprise the analytic unit: the interpretative repertoire (Wetherell and Potter, 1988). Repertoires are thus “building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena” (Wetherell and Potter, 1988, p. 172). This approach, accordingly, differs substantially from approaches interested in discourse as a reflection of, for example,
cognitive processes or other events, in that it takes discourse to be the primary theoretical and analytic unit.

Discourse analysts working in the Potter and Wetherell (1987) tradition and interested in ‘interpretative repertoires,’ tend to look for the ways in which individuals use, for example, grammatical constructions, metaphors, tropes and figures of speech in constructing accounts. In this sense, the focus is very much on how people manage talk, negotiate interactions and (rhetorically) justify their actions. Marshall and Raabe (1993), for example, analyse the different ways in which ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ participants construct accounts of privatisation and nationalisation. They identify two main repertoires, ‘efficiency’ and ‘social justice,’ and subsequently analyse how each of these is used. Neither ‘conservative’ nor ‘liberal’ participants hold consistent attitudes towards either privatisation or nationalism but rather “in order to make sense of, or justify the seeming contradictions, participants dip in and out of available discourses” (Marshall and Raabe, 1993, p. 49).

The approach taken by Billig et al., (1988), while within a similar tradition to the work of Potter and Wetherell (1987), differs in terms of focus and emphasis. Billig et al., (1988) argue that everyday thought takes place through the “dilemmatic aspects of ideology” (p. 1–2) and, accordingly, they focus on analysing dilemmas within discourse. In this respect, they do not restrict dilemmas to individual decision-makers but are rather concerned with how conflicting themes—the dilemmatic aspects of thinking—characterise social beliefs. Following Wetherell, Stiven and Potter (1987), Billig et al., (1988) note that “the analyst, examining the dilemmatic aspects of discourse, must pay especial attention to the nuances of the different strategies which might be employed for the equal and unequal expression of conflicting themes” (p. 22). Much like Potter and Wetherell (1987), Billig et al., (1988) are not simply concerned with explicitly expressed dilemmas but also implicit dilemmas and the ways in which these often “go beyond the overt intentions of the communicator ... [and are] contained within the semantic structure of the discourse itself” (p. 22).

In later work, Billig (1990; 1991) also uses a form of discourse analysis to explicitly examine rhetoric, and in particular the ways in which accounts (talk and texts) are constructed through the use of rhetorical devices:
In persuasive communication, speakers and writers attempt to present their discourse as reasonable by giving justifications for their position and by countering objections with criticisms. In short they produce reasoned arguments and rhetoric involves the production of argumentative discourse, which in a literal sense is justified and reasonable (Billig, 1990, p. 51).

Rhetorical analysis, accordingly, examines the ways in which accounts are justified by the use of particular linguistic devices. Potter, Wetherell and Chitty (1991), for example, analyse the quantification rhetoric used by British cancer charities in a TV documentary on cancer. In particular, they examine the ways in which different groups (to justify a particular account of the relative success of medical research on cancer) present different forms of statistical calculations (e.g., incidence and frequencies of different cancers and the rates of success of various treatments).

4.3.4 Conversational Exchanges, Interaction, and the Constitutive Function of Talk

The second reference point identified by Burman and Parker (1993) pertain to those approaches that focus on conversational exchanges and the ways in which individuals 'make sense'. These approaches draw to some extent on speech-act theory and ethnomethodology (e.g., Moir, 1993; Pomerantz and Fehr, 1997; Widdicombe, 1993). This reference point facilitates a more fine-grained microanalysis, than, for example, Potter and Wetherell (1987), but it shares a similar interest in the ways in which talk (particularly in conversational exchanges) performs specific actions. Widdicombe (1993), for example, examines the ways in which identities are constructed and negotiated in talk, and, in particular, the cultural and linguistic resources individuals draw upon in constructing and authenticating their accounts. Widdicombe (1993) finds, for example, three such resources in participants' autobiographical accounts of change from a 'conventional' to an 'unconventional' appearance. First, she notes that speakers disavow the existence and influence of others. Second that potential others are not named and their similarity to speakers is limited. Third, change is motivated by a true self, which is expressed through appearance. She argues that these three resources are a response to the problem of authenticity, and, in particular, they function to forestall inferences that change is merely about copying others and hence insincere.
Widdicombe’s (1993) approach shares certain similarities with Billig’s work, in that she is concerned with both rhetorical resources (Malson, 1998 for example, explicitly positions Widdicombe’s work within the rhetorical perspective) and dilemmas. Widdicombe (1993) notes, for example, that she finds it “useful to regard the ways things are said as a solution to a problem” (p. 97; see also Moir, 1993). Widdicombe’s (1993) work differs, however, from Billig’s approach, in that her analytic focus tends to be on the more detailed rules of language use. These approaches, accordingly, share some similarities with the approaches I outlined earlier (e.g., Sinclair and Coultaud, 1975; Brown and Yule, 1983), however, they differ in that that they attend more to the constitutive functions of language (see especially, Widdicombe, 1993) and to questions of interpretation (see e.g., Moir, 1993). In these respects, the approaches taken by, for example, Moir (1993) and Widdicombe (1993), although sharing a similar reference point, also differ in emphasis from those approaches that locate themselves explicitly within a conversational analytic perspective (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984; Heritage, 1988). An important distinction here is that Widdicombe (1993), for example, is interested in both discursive content and linguistic rules and practices, whereas conversation analytic approaches tend to explicitly focus on the rules and procedures of language use. For example, Heritage (1988) notes:

Take the following rule: after the production of a first utterance recognizable as a question, a second speaker (the addressee) should produce an utterance that is hearable as an answer to the question. This … is both a rule of conduct and a rule of interpretation (Heritage, 1988, p. 139).

Heritage (1988) characterises conversation analysis as explicitly concerned with “describing the structural organisation of social interaction and its associated reasoning in as many social settings (and in as many languages) as possible” (p. 142). Accordingly, content tends to be elided here, in favour of the structural and procedural organising elements of language in social interactions. Centred as they are on specific (interactional) contexts, there remains a tendency in these approaches to sideline issues of power and wider socio-historical and political specificity (although see Widdicombe, 1995).
4.3.5 Poststructuralism, Critical Linguistics, and the Construction of Object/Subjects

The final reference point Burman and Parker (1993) identify is that of poststructuralism. The notable features of work emerging from this reference point is an explicit concern with epistemology and the ways in which discourses constitute particular forms of knowledge (Malson, 1998). This is usually accompanied by an attention to the regulatory functions of discourses in terms of practices, experience and subjectivities. Walkerdine (1986), for example, draws on Foucault’s concept of discourse to analyse ‘everyday social practices’ in schools and families. She demonstrates how discourses define, for example, ‘childhood’ and the nature of children, ‘good mothering’ and ‘good (sensitive) teaching’ and examines the ways in which these effect their regulatory functions through their establishment as part of a variety of ‘regimes of truth.’ In a similar vein, Lovering (1995) analyses the different ways in which adolescents construct menstruation. She argues that the “constructions of the female and male body as essentially different, always already sexed, and private, regulate the knowledge that children (and adults) have of the body and menstrual cycle” (Lovering, 1995, p. 24).

Hollway’s (1989) work is a well-known example of work in the poststructuralist tradition, and she also draws explicitly on Foucault’s work. Hollway (1989) analyses interviews with heterosexual couples in order to identify different discourses about sexuality and their implications. In this respect, she identifies three primary discourses, the ‘male sexual drive’ discourse, the ‘have/hold’ discourse and the ‘permissive’ discourse. The male sexual drive discourse, which essentially proposes that men are driven by a basic biological necessity to seek out sex, has, she argues, numerous consequences for the way in which male behaviour is understood and justified. For example, Hollway (1989) suggests that “male judges’ tendency to impose lenient sentences on rapists is a result of the dominance of the male sexual drive discourse and their own identification with the position it confers on men” (p. 54). The have/hold discourse, which essentially refers to the (discursive) requirement for individuals to have lasting monogamous relationships, has, she argues, different implications for men and women. In particular, it is applied more stringently to women effecting a ‘double standard.’ The permissive discourse emerging, she argues,
in the 1960s is part of a historical response to the have/hold discourse and it encourages the discursive expression of sexuality in both sexes. She notes, however, that the permissive discourse overlays the male sexual drive discourse rather than challenging or displacing it. That is, it “expressed the same, biologistic assumptions as the male sexual drive discourse: whereas previously women were its objects, in the 1960s they became, in principle, equal subjects” (Hollway, 1989, p. 56).

Walkerdine’s (1986) and Hollway’s (1989) approaches differ from the previous approaches outlined in that they tend to focus, both theoretically and analytically, on discourse at a more global or macro level. In this sense, Hollway (1989), for example, is less concerned with grammatical devices and more with the broader socio-historical and political implications of the identified (dominant) discourses. In addition to basing her theoretical (and analytic) concerns within a Foucauldian framework, Hollway (1989), however, also uses psychoanalytic theory in order to develop an account of subjectivity (see also Malson, 1998), which she uses to explain not only multiplicity and contradiction but also desire and the unconscious.

Hollway (1989) is not unusual in drawing on different theoretical (and analytic) frameworks. Indeed, although in this section I have attempted to differentiate between broadly different forms of discourse analysis, many researchers draw on more than one of these approaches and there is often considerable overlap. Moir (1993), for example, cautiously adopts the concept of linguistic repertoires, in common with, for example, Potter and Wetherell (1987). Widdicombe (1993) conversely, resists using the term repertoires and, although very much in the conversation analytic tradition, her examination of the rhetorical resources used in autobiographical accounts also demonstrates a concern with the production of subjects that is more often associated with poststructuralist approaches (Malson, 1998). Gill (1993) combines Potter and Wetherell’s (1987) general approach with Billig et al.’s, (1988) work on rhetoric and ideological dilemmas to examine how five male disc jockeys account for the lack of female disc jockeys at radio stations. Macnaghten (1993) notes that he uses poststructuralism as his reference point, but it is along with “theoretical aims broadly in sympathy with Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Billig’s (1987, 1990) approach to rhetoric and argumentation” (p. 54). Where Macnaghten (1993) differs from these approaches is in his rejection of, what he sees as, their
primary emphasis on grammar. Accordingly, he prefers to use the poststructuralist concept of ‘discourse,’ rather than ‘repertoire.’ He notes:

Discursive constructions obviously use grammar but what lies central to each construction is not the use of the same grammatical terms but the social relationships encapsulated by these terms, the outlook they engender, and the activities they legitimate (whether these will be achieved or not depending, however, on the process of argumentation) (Macnaghten, 1993, p. 55)

Stenner (1993) also (cautiously) draws on a poststructuralist theoretical framework, which is informed, particularly, by the concept of ‘subject positions’ (see Chapter 2). Stenner (1993) uses an analytic approach he refers to as ‘thematic decomposition’ (see also Woollett, Marshall and Stenner, 1998) to analyse the subject positions set up in the texts of two individual interviews about jealousy with a soon-to-be-married couple, ‘Jim’ and ‘May’. Stenner’s (1993) reading of the two texts is that “May’s jealousy is the negotiated product of a series of storied contestations” (p. 115), with Jim positioning May as jealous and May resisting this positioning. Stenner (1993) highlights how the stories—“which are variously resisted, insisted upon, agreed and ignored”—produced by the two speakers are not about their relationship or their expressed emotions but are rather “constructive of the relationship, productive of contradictory and non-essential identities and generative of emotional experience” (p. 131, original emphasis).

Some authors writing in the ‘critical linguistics’ tradition have used a broadly poststructuralist reference point accompanied by a detailed linguistic analysis (e.g., Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew, 1979; Hodge and Kress, 1988). Fairclough (1992), for example, draws explicitly on Foucault’s concept of discourse to combine an interest in close textual analysis with an attention to wider social and political concerns. In this respect, he takes Kristeva’s notion of ‘intertextuality’ (the ways in which texts are constructed by reference to other texts) and combines it with an attention to power relations. In particular, Fairclough (1992) argues, that “the theory of intertextuality cannot itself account for ... social limitations, so it needs to be combined with a theory of power relations and how they shape (and are shaped by) social structures and practices” (p. 103). Fairclough (1992) analyses, for example, a Sun newspaper article about drug dealing entitled ‘Call up forces in drug battle!’ in relation to an original government document on which the article is based.
Fairclough (1992) attends to the ways in which the article blends the authorial voice of the Sun with those of the report such that it is unclear who is speaking. He also notes the ways in which the Sun changes various words from the original report, substituting, for example, 'pusher' for 'trafficker.' He suggests that in this process the newspaper effects "the ideological work of transmitting the voices of power in a disguised and covert form" (p. 110). Fairclough (1992) is thus able to attend to both the detailed grammatical and stylistic elements in the text and their wider social and political implications. This is the strength of this approach, and it reduces the tendency for poststructuralist approaches (and some approaches that draw on the concept of 'interpretative repertoires') to focus on content rather than specific linguistic structure. However, the close textual analysis critical linguistics demands (much like conversational analytic approaches) also reduces the amount of text that it is possible (or reasonable) to analyse. It tends, therefore, to be most appropriate for specific, well defined and, in some way, delimited research projects, rather than for those with a more exploratory focus or with the aim of examining broader issues.

Malson (1998) argues that "the methodological approach adopted by, for example, Potter and Wetherell (1987), Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) and rhetoric-oriented 'discourse psychologists' is not incompatible with the theoretical framework of poststructuralism" (p. 43). However, and as Malson (1998) acknowledges, while not incompatible, there are also important theoretical differences. Potter, Wetherell, Gill and Edwards (1990), for example, distinguish between their own work, which they refer to as 'discourse analysis' and work they associate with writers such as Parker and Burman (and which would include e.g., Hollway, 1989; Lovering, 1995; Walkerdine, 1986) which they refer to as 'the analysis of discourses.' This is an important although somewhat problematic distinction. Partly because not all authors explicitly state their epistemological, theoretical and methodological reference points (in precisely these terms), and partly because, as noted, some researchers draw on elements from both perspectives (discussed above, see also e.g., Willig, 1998b). One key difference lies in the conceptualisation of the term 'discourse.' As noted in Chapter 2 (and above), there are a number of ways in which 'discourse' is conceptualised and this implicates both theory and methodology. There is a difference, for example, between Potter and Wetherell's (1987) use of the term discourse (which they take from Gilbert and
Mulkay, 1984) "to cover all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds" (p. 7) and Foucault's concept of discourse as historically developing linguistic practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1972). Potter and Wetherell's (1987) definition could facilitate either an analysis of discursive resources—as in identifying wider more global discursive 'repertoires,' or an analysis of discursive practices—in the more specific 'fine grained' grammatical and action-orientated sense (see Potter and Wetherell, 1995). However, in general Foucault's concept of discourse would seem to encourage the former approach with Potter and Wetherell's (1987) definition perhaps potentiating the latter. For these reasons, although, to some extent conceptually distinct, epistemological and theoretical concerns are not easily separated from issues of methodology and method.

4.3.6 Analytic Approach Used in this Study

There were three primary (and related) issues considered in selecting the analytic technique used in this research. First, the epistemological and theoretical background I explicated in Chapter 2 does not restrict analysis to elements within specific texts and interactions but rather enables an exploration of the wider discursive resources that are drawn upon in constructing accounts. In this way, I am using Foucault's definition of discourse which is particularly concerned with elucidating discourses within their specific socio-historical frameworks and attending to their conditions of emergence and the institutions and practices of which they are part (see also Chapter 3). It also facilitates an examination of the ways in which, practices, objects and subjectivities are constituted and regulated by discourse through particular power/knowledge strategies. In this study specifically, the discourses that constitute and regulate gender, sexuality and the military. For me, this suggests both a socially and politically grounded approach to discourse and a more 'global' approach than analyses that focus, for example, on more specific interactional contexts or on the specific stylistic and grammatical elements of texts and talk. For these reasons, following Burman and Parker's (1993) broad categorisation, the theoretical reference point underpinning this study is demonstrably poststructuralism.

Second, research questions are not formulated independently of epistemology. The questions guiding this research were developed (minimally) at the interstices of my
political commitments, my prior military service, and my academic and theoretical
background. Relevant here is the current absence of psychological research regarding
gender, sexuality and the military and what I perceive as an attendant political and
theoretical requirement to introduce into the academic literature a more ‘general’
research account around (homo)sexuality and the military rather than an account that
focuses on more specific isolated elements. Accordingly, these concerns orientated me
towards broad research questions concerning the ways in which gender
(homo)sexuality and the military are (discursively) constituted in both military policy
documents and lesbians’ accounts of military service. This broad focus, accordingly,
also suggests an analytic approach concerned with wider discursive resources and
practices (consistent with a poststructuralist reference point) than a research project
with a more specific and delimited research focus, which might be more appropriate
for examining, for example, the transcript of an investigative interview between the
military police and an individual suspected of (homo)sexuality.

This brings me to the third consideration and it concerns the kinds of texts
available for analysis. Discourse analysts have examined all kinds of texts (e.g.,
newspaper articles, interview transcripts, transcripts of conversational exchanges,
historical documents etc.) and, to some extent (although again it is not independent of
epistemological concerns), this also affects the analytic approach. In this research, the
kinds of texts collected for analysis can be divided, preliminarily, into two different
types: the policy documents and the interview transcripts. The transcript texts can be
further subdivided into individual interviews and group discussions. The first general
difference concerns the amount of material. The two policy documents analysed in
Study 1, for example, are both relatively short texts (comprising 16 single spaced
pages in total), whereas the interviews and group discussions generated considerably
more ‘data’ for the analysis in Study 2. In terms of analyses, this suggests that even
within the epistemological and theoretical framework outlined, different ‘levels’ of
analysis may be appropriate for the different studies, with the policy documents
potentially facilitating a more detailed analysis than is permitted by the transcripts. The
second difference concerns the ways in which these texts were produced for different
purposes, and, are accordingly, quite different stylistically. For example, the policy
documents are directive texts, institutionally authored and edited and prepared in
advance. The transcripts conversely are dialogic exchanges, co-constructed in the research context and produced by identifiable (although anonymous) individuals, who did not have an opportunity to edit the texts. This makes a difference. For example, while issues of power are relevant in both studies, an analysis of power in the research context does not apply to Study 1. Equally, the issues of 'subjectivity' and 'reflexivity' have different analytic (and theoretical) implications in the different studies. Despite these differences, all of the texts are to some extent, rhetorically organised: the policy documents in terms of explaining and justifying the exclusionary policy and the transcripts in terms of the ways in which experiences are described, accounted for and justified.

Differences between the texts suggested slightly different analytic approaches (or different emphases) for the two studies undertaken in this thesis. Accordingly, the specific procedures involved in the two analyses are fully discussed in the method sections preceding the relevant chapters. However, both analyses were guided by the same epistemological, theoretical and analytic framework. In a general sense, this involved the following four steps: First, identifying the different ways in which gender, sexuality and the military are discursively constituted in the texts, which included attending to consistency, variation and contradiction. Second, examining the ways in which particular objects, practices, subject positions and subjectivities are constructed and presented in these texts and how these function. Third, examining the relationships between the objects and practices in these constructions, in terms of how they legitimate the various forms of knowledge produced, effect their regulatory functions and establish (or confound) relations of power. Finally, locating the texts in relation to, their historical antecedents, contemporary discursive resources and their potential (political and theoretical) implications.

4.4 Summary of the Chapter

In the first part of this chapter I discussed some of the difficulties associated with warranting research, representing 'others' and reflexivity. The concepts of researcher-researched matching, 'giving voice' (and related issues) and reflexivity were examined in an effort to assess their implications and potential as research warrants. Researcher-researched matching, while it has significant analytic implications, does not
unproblematically provide a research warrant, nor do notions associated with 'giving voice.' Moreover, appealing to the rhetoric of 'giving voice' or 'speaking for' is problematic as it risks patronising, colonizing or objectifying (the voices of) others. Moreover, neither of these concepts automatically entails participant empowerment nor do they necessarily imply political change. Accordingly, while introducing 'new' knowledges and 'new' voices into the domain of academic/public discourse is important, claiming that research (unproblematically) functions to 'give voice' is fraught with representational and ethical difficulties.

I suggested that the solution to some of these difficulties lies in the notion of reflexivity. However, reflexivity includes a wide range, spanning from simple tokenism to self-referentiality and indulgence. For these reasons, I argued for a form of political reflexivity that: locates research in its historical cultural and political context; involves explicating the specific (and relevant) political and personal commitments of researchers in relation to the research project; and attends to participants' concerns and expectations. Reflexivity, understood in this way, does not supply an unproblematic warrant for research, nor does it provide an epistemological 'guarantee' for the research. However, it should function to render the assumptions underpinning research projects explicit and, as such, accountable and contestable.

In the second part of this chapter, I outlined a number of different approaches to the analysis of textual material, and in particular, discussed some of the ways in which psychologists have undertaken analyses of discourse. These approaches include: a focus on the grammatical and stylistic elements and functions of language; an interest in interactional contexts and conversational exchanges; an examination of discourse as a way of understanding cognitive processes; an analysis of the ways in which individuals use interpretative repertoires in constructing accounts; and, an examination of the ways in which discourses constitute object/subjects, particular forms of knowledge, and effect particular regulatory functions. I located my general analytic focus within this last approach, which draws particularly on Foucault's concept of discourse. The particular benefits of this approach for this study are that: it facilitates the critical examination of discourses in relation to the institutional contexts of production; it explicitly incorporates an analysis of power (and regulation); and, it is concerned particularly with the ways in which discourses and discursive resources

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(and related practices) constitute 'truths,' 'realities' and subjectivities. Specifically, in this research, the truths, realities and subjectivities that are discursively formed and constituted in texts about gender, sexuality and the British military institution. In these respects, this approach is also consonant with many feminist epistemological, theoretical and political concerns.
CHAPTER 5

STUDY 1

ANALYSIS OF THE MILITARY POLICY DOCUMENTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the British military policy documents on homosexuality. The aim of this analysis is to examine the ways in which the texts construct homosexuality, gender and the military institution. In this respect, I am specifically concerned to explicate the ways in which the texts use particular discursive strategies and resources to construct these particular objects in ways that justify the continued exclusion of gay men and lesbians from British military service. In the first part of this chapter, following from Chapter 4, I elaborate the specific methodological considerations and analytic procedures employed in this study. This includes specifying why these two texts were selected for analysis, discussing the scope and stated purpose of the two texts (including differences between them) and outlining the analytic steps employed in the analysis. The analysis is presented in three parts: ‘constructing the military,’ ‘constructing homosexuality’ and ‘constructing gender’. The final section in this chapter presents a theoretically informed discussion of the analysis.

5.2 The Military Policy Documents

The two texts analysed in this study are The Discipline and Standards Paper (DSP) (MOD, 1993) and the Armed Forces Policy and Guidelines on Homosexuality (AFPGH) (MOD, 1994). These documents were selected because, to my knowledge, they are the only currently publicly available documents produced by the MOD dealing explicitly with the issue of homosexuality. Both of these documents were produced for internal distribution, however, both were released to the British press in 1993 and 1994 respectively (see e.g., Almond, 1994; Fairhall, 1994; Muir, 1993), and they have each been discussed in detail in both academic and more general publications (e.g., Deakin, 1995; Hall, 1995; Ussher, 1997).
The two documents are largely consistent, however, they differ in terms of scope and purpose (see Tables 1 and 2 for an outline of each document, as organised by section headings). The DSP is the longer of the two texts (ten single spaced pages) and it focuses on explaining the Army's code of conduct. Notably, this paper is concerned with a number of disciplinary matters (in addition to homosexuality) and its purpose is to "explain the requirement for high standards of personal conduct and respect for the law demanded of those in military service" (covering letter to MOD, 1993). The disciplinary issues covered in the DSP are: alcohol and drug abuse, dishonesty (including fraud and theft), persistent indebtedness, bullying and initiation ceremonies, racial and sexual discrimination and harassment, social misconduct (specifically adultery), single parenthood and homosexuality. Military policy regarding all of these 'issues' is: "that which is illegal or undermines operational efficiency is not tolerated" (covering letter to MOD, 1993).

The AFPGH document (MOD, 1994) has a more limited focus, dealing solely with homosexuality and the ways in which Commanding Officers are to deal with cases of homosexuality that come to their attention. This paper is, accordingly, primarily directive in its intent to provide pragmatic, procedural guidelines specifically related to the policy on homosexuality and its implementation. However, this document also contains a section that is concerned with explaining the reasons for gay and lesbian exclusion. This text is five single spaced pages in length, which includes a one and a half page Annex (Annex A) that provides 'instruction for Medical Officers dealing with cases of homosexuality where no offence has been committed.' This paper is also intended for all the British military services, and accordingly differs from the DSP, which is written specifically for the Army.

5.3 Analytic Procedure

As discussed in Chapter 4, a discourse analytic approach is used in this study to analyse the military texts. The central aim is to understand the various ways in which homosexuality, gender and the military are constituted in these texts as particular kinds of social realities. The analysis involved four primary stages, although particularly in the latter stages, these were not sequential or linear. Rather a cyclical
process was adopted that involved iterative re-ordering and re-classification of the sorted extracts.

The first step in the analysis involved repeatedly reading the texts and making notes in order to gain familiarity with the documents. A copy of each text was then re-read and segments of the documents that explicitly referred to homosexuality, gender or the military were highlighted. In addition, each document was then annotated and highlighted for references to other objects or object/subjects in the texts (for example ‘civilian society,’ ‘single parents,’ etc.). The documents were thus broadly organised according to referential content.

The second stage of analysis involved identifying the different conceptual themes around which the three primary research categories (gender, homosexuality and the military) are constructed. This involved allocating a (preliminary) thematic category to each textual segment. For example, one of the ways the texts construct the military institution is as ‘traditionally moral.’ ‘Traditional morality’ thus represented one of the preliminary thematic categories.

In stage three, having divided the texts into preliminary categories, I examined the documents to establish what relationships are constructed between the three primary objects of interest (gender, homosexuality and the military) and the other objects constructed in the texts and how they function. For example, ‘civilian society’ is repeatedly referred to in the DSP and although it is used in relation to constructions of gender and sexuality, it is primarily invoked to support constructions of the military institution. The construction of the military as ‘traditionally moral,’ for example, is accomplished through a complementary construction of civilian society as embodying trends that threaten the military’s moral and ethical standards (see Section 5.4.1). Accordingly, the ‘other objects’ identified in stage one were additionally and provisionally categorised in terms of their relationships to the more explicit and specific constructions of gender, sexuality or the military. At this stage, the preliminary categories identified in stage two were revised to reflect both the relevance of related objects and the actions the texts perform in relation to the preliminary categories. For example, in relation to the preliminary category ‘traditional morality,’ for example, the texts are concerned not only with constructing the military as the embodiment of traditional morality, but also with protecting and defending these traditional morals.
The preliminary analytic category was thus amended to ‘protecting and defending traditional morality.’ These revised categories, which are intended to capture both textual content and what the texts are primarily doing in relation to this content, provide the analytic organisation for the analysis sections.

The final analytic stage involved specifying how the texts discursively constitute their objects (and object/subjects) through, for example, the construction of particular subject positions and/or binary categorisations. In this stage, more attention was paid to the grammatical and linguistic structure of the extracts and the function of particular terms in relation to the constructed objects. For the section ‘constructing gender,’ for example, I specifically analysed the use of gendered pronouns in each text and their relationship to the objects constructed in the documents. Of interest here, as Macnaghten (1993) notes, are not the grammatical terms per se but “the social relationships captured by these terms, the outlook they engender, and the activities they legitimate” (p. 55). In the case of traditional morality, for example, the binary opposition established between the military’s traditional values and societal trends, was interpreted as functioning rhetorically to establish a separation between the military and society in order to justify the military’s (constructed) requirement for having a distinct set of disciplinary arrangements. A theoretically informed discussion of the analysis is presented in Section 5.7.

5.3.1 Presentation of the Analysis

The analysis is divided into three broad sections: ‘constructing the military,’ ‘constructing homosexuality’ and ‘constructing gender.’ Within these sections, the analysis is organised according to the categories identified in stage two and revised in stage three of the analytic process. The analysis undertaken in stage four is presented within each of these analytic categories where the relevant extracts are cited. In the sections ‘constructing the military’ and ‘constructing homosexuality,’ these categories are presented, where possible, in the order in which they appear in the texts (see also Section 5.3.2). This is in order to retain, as much as possible, the original structural organisation of the texts and convey a sense of how each unfolds and their intended meanings. Since gender is not a primary topic in the texts, and gendered pronouns are dispersed throughout, the section on ‘constructing gender’ is not similarly presented.
It is presented, however, after the sections on the military and homosexuality, both of which, where possible, retain the structural integrity of the original documents. I have presented as much of the original texts as possible so as not to foreclose the possibility of other readings. Complete copies of both texts will be presented at the viva for examination purposes.

The chapter concludes with a general discussion. In this section I draw together the three analytic sections and discuss their relationships to each other. I also return to the theoretical literature and examine how the different discursive constructions identified in the analysis resonate with the broader historical, theoretical and socio-political discourses discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. In this respect, I consider, particularly, how the documents regulate the dialogue around homosexuality and the military. This involves discussing the way in which the texts produce and (de)legitimate particular objects/subjects and forms of knowledge and how, through constructing particular versions of homosexuality, gender and the military, these texts actively produce particular social realities and legitimate particular institutional practices.

5.3.2 Conventions Used in the Presentation of Extracts

It is characteristic of military service writing to number paragraphs and to use section and sub-section headings. For example, the DSP starts with a section headed ‘introduction’ which contains two paragraphs, numbered 1 and 2, and it is followed by a section headed ‘aim,’ which contains one paragraph numbered 3. As the structural organisation of these texts is important for this study, outlines of the DSP and AFPGH respectively are reproduced in Tables 1 and 2 by paragraph number, section and paragraph heading as they appear in each text. The analytic extracts are, for clarity, referenced by the text (e.g., DSP or AFPGH), the paragraph number (e.g., paragraph 6) and the page number (e.g., p. 5). I used this system of referencing in order to indicate the organisational structure and sequential ordering of the extract within each document and so that each extract can be identified easily in Tables 1 and 2. To avoid excessive repetition, and for ease of cross-referencing, all cited extracts are individually numbered (e.g., Extract 1). The primary cited extracts as they relate to the original texts are also indicated in Tables 1 and 2. In order to specify, to some extent,
the scope of the cited extracts, references take one of two forms: where entire paragraphs are cited, they are shown as: ‘(document abbr., paragraph no., p. no.).’ Where selections of paragraphs are cited, they are shown as: ‘(document abbr., selection of paragraph no., p. no.).’

ANALYSIS

5.4 Constructing the Military

The DSP is the text that most explicitly constructs the military institution and is, accordingly, the focus of this section of the analysis. This text is almost entirely organised around the relationship it constructs between two primary objects: the military community and civilian society. This relationship takes the discursive form of a binary opposition, and it functions in this text to construct the military institution, primarily, in terms of its difference from civilian society.

5.4.1 Protecting and Defending Traditional Morality

The first of these constructed points of difference revolves around a subordinate oppositional binary, established in the text, between traditional (military) values and societal trends and it is invoked to construct the military as fundamentally moral:

EXTRACT 1

The British Army has long held a reputation for high standards, high morale and strict discipline that has stood the Service in good stead in both peace and war. The ending of conscription and the advent of the “professional” army, combined with prolonged service overseas, and, latterly, the physical separation from the civilian community due to ever increasing security measures, have tended to isolate the Army from society at large. This relative isolation has, however, meant that the Army has been able to maintain high moral and ethical standards largely unaffected by the changes in the patterns of behaviour in society in general. In more recent times, however, this divergence between the standards expected in the service, and what many take as acceptable within civilian society, has led to an increased questioning and lack of understanding of the reasons for the military’s strict code of conduct (DSP, paragraph 1, p. 1).

This is the opening and introductory paragraph of the DSP and it establishes and effectively delimits the discursive field around which the text is organised. From the outset, the military and civilian communities are distinguished from each other. This distinction is explicitly organised around such terms as ‘moral,’ ‘ethical,’ ‘disciplined,’
and ‘high standards.’ In particular, the military is constructed as embodying high moral and ethical standards, and these are explicitly distinguished from the ‘standards many take as acceptable in civilian society.’ In this extract, the term ‘standards’ is linked to both morality (which implies values) and patterns of behaviour and the military code of conduct.

The above extract constructs civil society as not only embodying ‘standards’ that are different (and lower) than military standards, but more specifically, as threatening to the military. For example, perceived changes in civilian society have resulted in “increased questioning and a lack of understanding of the reasons for the military’s strict code of conduct.” In this respect, the text is discursively defensive; responding to challenges and the threat presented by changes in civilian standards, which are constructed here as precipitated by the dissolution of the military’s institutional boundaries. The ‘separation and isolation’ of the military from civilian society, for example, although presented as an unintended consequence of, for example, the ending of conscription or increased security measures, is positioned as desirable. Specifically, it prevented ‘societal changes in patterns of behaviour’ penetrating the military’s institutional borders, through the insurgence of, for example, conscripts. ‘Isolation and separation’ are thus constructed as providing the military with a means of maintaining, what it constructs as, its ‘high standards’ and its moral exclusivity.

The final sentence in this extract acknowledges that the different standards required by the military have been, in recent times, both challenged and misunderstood. This sentence, accordingly, indicates that the purpose of the paper is to explain, justify and dispel misunderstandings about the ‘military’s strict code of conduct.’ This point is emphasised in the second (and final) paragraph of the introduction:

**EXTRACT 2**

In these circumstances, it becomes yet more important to define and justify the standards which the Army deems it essential to maintain, so that those standards are recognised and understood both inside and outside the Service, and particularly by those seeking to join. The standards of behaviour required apply equally to both the Regular and Territorial Army (DSP, paragraph 2, p. 1).

This extract also re-iterates the division between the military and civil society by invoking the ‘inside/outside’ binary with respect to its intention to educate both
civilian and military personnel about military standards. However, potential recruits are specifically highlighted and the military seems anxious to curtail the enlistment (through self-selection) of those whose (moral and ethical) standards fall short of military requirements.

There is a tension constructed in this text around notions of standards, status and conduct. Ostensibly, the document is concerned with 'standards of behaviour' (Extract 2), however, the text constructs a clear connection (and conflates) 'standards' and their perceived behavioural ramifications. In the following extract, there is a lexical shift from 'morals,' 'standards' and 'standards of behaviour' (Extracts 1 and 2) to 'attitudes' and 'values,' however, no explicit distinction is made between them:

**EXTRACT 3**

Within society the formative influences in promoting positive attitudes towards authority have been in steady decline: religion, education, and the family no longer always provide the framework of behaviour, social structure, and responsibility they have in the past. More liberal attitudes prevail, leading many parts of society to reject or reduce in importance those values which the Armed Forces seek to maintain and regard so highly: sense of duty, loyalty, self-discipline, self-sacrifice, respect and concern for others (DSP, paragraph 5, p. 1).

In this extract, the dichotomy between the military and society is re-iterated. 'Society' is discursively linked to a 'decline in positive attitudes towards authority.' The Armed Forces, conversely, are constructed in relation to notions of 'responsibility' and a 'sense of duty, loyalty, self-discipline, self-sacrifice, respect and concern for others.' These 'values' are positioned as antithetical to 'liberal attitudes.' Moreover, the invocation of 'religion, education and the family' functions to form a discursive link between these 'values' and tradition and morality (see also Extract 4).

The above extract also contains two delimiting terms: 'no longer always provide the framework' and 'many parts of society.' These two delimiters function to restrict the scope of the term 'society.' In this way, the text, while exploiting the rhetorical strength of the constructed oppositional dichotomy (between military and civilian) and which constructs civilian society as somewhat homogenous in its lack of standards and values, also constructs an alternative, morally viable, subject position for those (civilian) readers who do not explicitly identify with the problematic 'parts of society.' At this stage in the organisational structure of the text, the specific sections of society (and specific individual behaviours) that are targeted as problematic have not
been disclosed, accordingly, this 'morally viable' subject position fulfils a relatively inclusive identificatory function, and it delimits the potential alienation of all (civilian) readers. That is, although it risks the estrangement of those who identify as 'liberal,' it includes all readers (military and civilian) who identify with such values as "sense of duty, loyalty, self-discipline, self-sacrifice, and respect and concern for others," which are not necessarily incommensurable with 'liberal attitudes.'

The provision of an alternative subject position is significant, and it points to a further important aspect of the relationship constructed in this text between the military institution and civilian society:

**EXTRACT 4**

The Army cannot remain wholly immune from the changes in the society it serves, and from which it recruits, but neither must it allow itself to follow trends which tend to undermine the traditional values essential to its unique responsibilities and operational role. ... Society expects a high standard of behaviour from those in public positions, including the Army. When those standards are relaxed, the trust and confidence of society risk being lost (DSP, paragraph 7, p. 2).

In this extract, there is explicit acknowledgement of the reciprocal relationship between the military and civilian society, notably in the recognition that the military both serves, recruits from, and requires the trust and confidence of the civil community. The tension between constructing a homogenous image of society as generally failing to uphold 'high standards' and 'values,' and ensuring that the text does not entirely alienate or discredit all parts of society within that construction is evident here. However, at this point in the text the 'values' of interest are also explicitly characterised as 'traditional,' which more explicitly restricts the alternative subject position offered in Extract 3 to those who share with the military a commitment to 'traditional' values. Both 'standards of behaviour' and 'traditional values' are conflated and both are constructed as characterising the military and in direct opposition to 'societal trends.'

### 5.4.2 Arbitrating Social Responsibility

The text constructs a further oppositional binary, subordinate to the primary binary between the military and civilian society, in this case between individuals and social responsibility. The following extract, which follows Extract 3 in the text and which is
also grouped under the heading ‘trends in society,’ is primarily concerned with establishing incommensurability between individual and minority group rights and societal responsibilities:

**EXTRACT 5**

The rights of the individual are enshrined increasingly in legislation which has been enacted to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, creed and gender. Similarly other minority groups have sought to legitimise what they believe to be their rights where these are perceived to be distinguished not by physical characteristics, place of birth, or creed, but by individual behaviour. The rights and freedoms of the individual tend to be promoted over the attitudes of society generally, and where individuals fail in their responsibilities to society there is an increasing propensity to attribute this to some broader social cause or failure of government. The increase in individual freedom now available to the citizen has in many cases led to a decline in both individual and corporate responsibility. This in turn has led to an erosion in respect for the law, with increases, for example, in violent street crime, burglary, and drug misuse. The promotion of individual rights has contributed to an ambivalent attitude towards an individual’s responsibilities to society (DSP, paragraph 6, p. 2).

In the first two sentences of this extract, individual rights are linked to ‘minority groups’ and, in turn, civil rights legislation. In this way, diversity is also rhetorically de-legitimated through its linkage to individual rights. In the third sentence, a rhetorical tension is constructed between ‘individual rights and freedoms’ (and accordingly ‘minority group’ rights) and ‘social responsibility.’ This mutually exclusive discursive relationship (between ‘minority group rights’ and ‘social responsibility’) and the concomitant de-legitimation of these groups, is established irrespective of the distinction drawn between ‘types’ of minority groups in the second sentence. Moreover, as noted in the text, this extract follows directly from Extract 3 (and it is part of the same subsection) which forms a discursive link between ‘minority groups’ and the ‘many parts of society that reject or reduce in importance those values which the Armed Forces seek to maintain and regard so highly: sense of duty, loyalty, self-discipline, self-sacrifice, respect and concern for others.’

In the second sentence, minority groups perceived to be distinguished by shared physical characteristics, place of birth, or creed are separated from those perceived to be distinguished by behaviour. Moreover, although all minority groups are rendered problematic in this discursive construction, this division is hierarchically organised, with groups distinguished by ‘individual behaviour’ rendered less legitimate than groups with shared physical characteristics, birth place or creed. This is achieved.
primarily by the use of the phrase ‘what they believe to be their rights’ with reference to ‘behavioural’ groups.

In the final three sentences of this extract, the ‘individual freedom’ afforded the (civilian) ‘citizen’ is linked to a reduction in individual and corporate responsibility and respect for the law. Three examples of increases in criminal activity are provided to illustrate this point: violent street crime, burglary and drug misuse. The correlative relationship, established in this extract between individual and minority group rights, a decline in social responsibility, and respect for the law, is presented as self-evident and unproblematic: individual and minority group rights and freedoms are incommensurable with social responsibility and they entail lawlessness.

There are two primary oppositional binaries constructed in the above extract. First, between individual rights and freedoms, and corporate and societal responsibility, and second, between criminality and respect for the law. Each side of the two binaries is constructed as mutually reinforcing and the opposite poles as mutually exclusive. That is, individual and minority group rights are connected to increases in criminal behavior and are constructed as conceptually incommensurable with respect for the law and societal responsibility. The way this extract is organised, thus, functions to reinforce the military/civilian oppositional binary established in Extracts 1 and 2, and it functions, rhetorically, to construct the military as the institutional exemplar of lawfulness and social responsibility.

5.4.3 Valorising Cohesion and Homogeneity

The paragraph, headed ‘the service environment,’ (Extract 6 below) opens by drawing an explicit distinction between ‘military service’ and ‘civilian life’ and in this section this distinction is organised, primarily, around the notion of ‘group cohesion’:

EXTRACT 6

The terms and conditions of military service differ markedly from those of civilian life. The service aims to foster group cohesion within a structured chain of command, which is such a decisive factor in battle; but by its very nature, such cohesion can be destroyed quickly where there is a loss of trust or confidence. The majority of the military community comprises young, robust, heterosexual people. ... The effectiveness of the Army depends upon the efficient and contented service of these individuals, who make up the overwhelming majority. To allow any element to
affect adversely the morale, cohesion, and hence the operational efficiency of any unit would be detrimental to its role. (DSP, selection of paragraph 8, p. 2).

One of the paragraphs in the section entitled ‘the operational imperative’ also refers to cohesion and, in particular, forms a discursive connection between cohesion and a further binary opposition between group and self-interest:

**EXTRACT 7**

The operational imperative of the Army stresses the importance of the group over self-interest. Armed conflict is, by its very nature, a group rather than an individual endeavour. A sense of unity, cohesion and loyalty are decisive factors in any armed conflict. Nothing must be allowed to detract from the forging of close bonds, based upon mutual trust and respect between members of the group, and between the group and its leaders, be it a section or brigade. (DSP, paragraph 11, p. 3).

In these two extracts, the concept of ‘cohesion’ and its relevance to the ‘group’ is constructed slightly differently. Extract 6, for example, implies that cohesion is conferred on a group through similarity of status, for example ‘young, robust and heterosexual’ (the extent to which heterosexual and homosexual are constructed as status rather than conduct is discussed below). Extract 7, conversely, connects cohesion to action (specifically, armed conflict) and it is established more through the forging of ‘close bonds’ based, to some extent, on shared ‘values’ (e.g., respect, and loyalty). In both extracts, the maintenance of group cohesion is directly linked to both ‘trust’ and the military’s operational role. In Extract 7, for example, the importance of the ‘group’ is constructed as a product of the operational imperative, and this operational imperative (armed conflict) requires ‘mutual trust’ and a unified, cohesive and loyal group.

In constructing ‘the service environment’ in Extract 6, the text draws, to some extent, on the previously established binary (between individual rights and social responsibility) to distinguish the cohesive military from a diverse, individualistic society. In this sense, there is an implicit distinction drawn between the cohesive military group and the “other minority groups” referred to in Extract 5. The military group is constructed as somewhat homogenous: comprised, primarily, of ‘young, robust, heterosexuals,’ whereas, ‘other minority groups’ are constructed, not within a discourse of cohesion, but rather around a discourse of individual, rights and freedoms. Heterogeneity and individuality are juxtaposed against the effectiveness of
the Army, which depends upon the contented service of those individuals who make up the overwhelming majority, that is the young, robust and heterosexual.

It is difficult to know, precisely what (and who) is being rendered ‘other’ in the construction of the identificatory subject position ‘young, robust and heterosexual’ because the scope of the term robust is unclear. It is unequivocal, however, that those who identify as homosexual are excluded. Moreover, the discursive relationship established in Extract 6 between heterosexuality, cohesion and trust constructs a correlative relationship between self-interest, untrustworthiness and non-heterosexual forms of sexual expression (these aspects of Extract 6 are examined further in Section 5.5.4).

5.4.4 Constructing Essential Difference

In addition to emphasising differences between the military and civilian society on the grounds of morality, social responsibility and the cohesive, unified nature of the military group, the text also explicitly positions the terms of military service as both unique and ‘markedly’ different from those of civilian life (see Extract 6). The terms and conditions that are constructed as distinguishing the military from civilian society are organised primarily around the military’s ‘operational imperative,’ and the related requirement for members of the military to be subjected to both civil and military law:

EXTRACT 8

Society requires those serving in the Armed Forces to place the interests of the nation before self. It is the soldier’s obligation to follow orders in the face of an enemy and to do his (sic) duty despite the risk of death or injury. It is that operational liability, with the possibility of self-sacrifice (accepted by every soldier on enlistment), that marks the Armed Services out as being essentially different from the rest of society. (DSP, selection of paragraph 9, p. 3).

EXTRACT 9

On joining the Army servicemen and women remain subject to criminal law applicable to civilians. They also become subject to military law, which in a number of respects makes certain conduct a criminal offence, where in civilian life it would be lawful. The law thus imposes further obligations and demands on Service personnel (DSP, paragraph 13, p. 3–4).

Both of these extracts emphasise certain distinctions between military and civilian life based on their respective responsibilities.
Among the behaviours presented under the general heading 'standards of conduct,' are the following that are specifically constructed with reference to matters of law:

**EXTRACT 10**

Drunkenness is in certain specific circumstances a military offence... A conviction for drunkenness against an officer or NCO will call into fitness their responsibilities to retain their rank and responsibilities (DSP, selection of paragraph 18, p. 5)

Driving under the influence of alcohol is a serious criminal offence (DSP, selection of paragraph 19, p. 5)

The misuse of controlled drugs is illegal (DSP, selection of paragraph 21, p. 5)

Acts of dishonesty cover a wide spectrum and include behaviour which raises doubts about an individual's character, as well as criminal offences, such as fraud and theft (DSP, selection of paragraph 22, p. 5)

Illegal punishments, unauthorised initiation ceremonies, and physical abuse are unacceptable (DSP, selection of paragraph 24, p. 6)

Racial discrimination will not be tolerated. As an employer, the Army has certain legal responsibilities under the race relations Act 1976, and may be liable for acts of discrimination by service personnel (DSP, paragraph 28, p. 6)

Sexual harassment is unacceptable behaviour. ... Sexual harassment is not a criminal offence in itself, though certain forms of sexual harassment can result in criminal charges: for example, indecent assault (DSP, selection of paragraph 29, p. 6 – 7)

Homosexuality which is illegal under civil law or which has aggravating disciplinary features may also lead to prosecution (DSP, selection of paragraph 30, p. 7)

None of the 'standards of conduct,' presented in Extract 10, represent offences that are demonstrably specific to the military. That is, drunkenness (in 'certain circumstances'), driving under the influence of alcohol, drug misuse, fraud and theft, racial discrimination, certain forms of sexual harassment, and certain (criminal) homosexual behaviours are all offences that apply to both military and civilian personnel. Moreover, given that these 'behaviours' are also civil offences it is not self-evident that military prohibitions are a consequence of the military's operational imperative.

In the list of 'standards of conduct' the text also presents a number of behaviours that are not constructed as constituting specific offences under military or civil law, but are rather 'discouraged,' 'not tolerated,' or, for example, call into question 'an individual's integrity:'
EXTRACT 11

Initiation ceremonies involving assault, humiliation, intimidation or the abuse of alcohol, are not to be tolerated (DSP, paragraph 26, p. 6)

All in authority are expected to set an example and an instance of drunken behaviour, particularly in front of junior ranks, is viewed seriously as a matter calling into question an individual’s integrity. (DSP, selection of paragraph 17, p. 4 – 5)

Alcoholics and heavy drinkers are an operational liability. Individuals who fail to cooperate or respond to rehabilitation are to be considered for discharge. (DSP, paragraph 20, p. 5)

Again, it is not self-evident that the ‘standards of conduct’ referred to in Extract 11 distinguish the military from civil society. That is, ‘drunken behaviour,’ ‘alcohol abuse’ and ‘assault, humiliation and intimidation’ can be constructed as discouraged, not tolerated or indeed illegal in many civilian contexts (assault, for example, represents a criminal offence). In addition, all of these could result in a loss of employment, which is comparable to military discharge. None of the above noted ‘standards of conduct,’ therefore, marks an explicit distinction between the military and civil society, and none of them appear to be specific and unique to the military’s operational imperative.

There are, however, a number of ‘standards of conduct’ that are constructed as more noticeably distinct from civilian arrangements, one of these is indebtedness:

EXTRACT 12

Persistent indebtedness displays a lack of judgement and poor control over one’s personal affairs. It can also lead to an individual becoming a security risk. … Failure to ensure that there are sufficient funds in an account to honour a cheque is one example of the type of mismanagement which will quickly discredit the individual, and may bring the Army into disrepute. Such cases are particularly serious when involving an officer and may culminate in disciplinary action (DSP, selection of paragraph 23, p. 5 – 6)

Indebtedness, is the only disciplinary ‘standard’ constructed in this document that appears to have demonstrably different legal implications in the military as opposed to civilian contexts. However, it is not explicitly constructed in legal terms, although the reference to ‘disciplinary action’ (as opposed to administrative action) means that such occurrences may constitute a military offence. Notably, the way this section is constructed suggests that indebtedness only merits disciplinary action if it is committed by officers. Moreover, indebtedness is not constructed as specifically related to the ‘operational imperative’ but rather as evidence of a lack of judgement.
(which may have operational consequences) and as likely to damage the reputation of the Service. Nonetheless, it is not clear that the operational liability, as constructed in Extract 8, and which 'marks the Armed Services out as being essentially different from the rest of society' is directly and uniquely relevant to issues of personal financial management.

The presentation of military and civil (legal and general employment) arrangements as distinct, while sustainable clearly on certain grounds (e.g., the military offence 'desertion' has no ready analogue in civil criminal law), has debatable relevance for the 'standards of conduct' covered in this document. Moreover, it is not self-evident that any of these 'standards' are specifically and distinctly required by the military's 'operational imperative' as implied by the discursive construction of 'essential difference' effected in Extract 8. The invocation of the 'operational imperative' and the distinction between military and civil law thus function rhetorically, to some extent, to emphasise military and civilian differences that are not entirely sustained within the text.

5.4.5 Regulating Sexual Morality

In the DSP there are four remaining 'standards of conduct' listed, none of which ordinarily constitute military or civilian offences (see Extracts 10 and 18 regarding the legal aspects of homosexuality), but which are constructed as problematic for the military institution and which have different consequences in the military as opposed to civilian employments. These are 'homosexuality,' 'adultery,' 'other sexual relationships' and 'single parents':

**EXTRACT 13**

Homosexual behaviour can cause offence, polarise relationships, induce violence, and as a consequence morale and unit effectiveness suffer. Anyone who admits to, displays the orientation of, or indulges in homosexuality will be required to resign or be discharged (DSP, selection of paragraph 30, p. 7)

**EXTRACT 14**

Adultery. Adultery is likely to prejudice the position of the individual and may bring the Army into disrepute:

a. **Adultery Within the Military Community.** The most serious cases of social misconduct involve adultery within the military community. It is essential that military personnel are not worried about the integrity of their marriages at any time,
but especially when deployed away from their home base. Equally the morale of families is dependent on the knowledge that whilst the unit is deployed away from its peacetime location any extra-marital relationships will be considered unacceptable.

b. Adultery Outside the Military Community. Married or single officers who enter into adulterous affairs outside the military community jeopardise their status as an officer should the circumstances of the affair become public, and if it brings either the officer or the Army into disrepute (DSP, paragraph 32, p. 7).

**EXTRACT 15**

Other Sexual Relationships. The Army is based on a clearly defined hierarchical structure, with distinctions between the different ranks that are well understood and accepted ... Sexual relationships which undermine this well-ordered structure cannot be tolerated ... While marriage between an officer and a non-commissioned rank is not prohibited, such relationships will inevitably cause difficulties as the couple will not be permitted to serve in the same unit, and are therefore to be discouraged (DSP, selection of paragraph 33, p. 8).

**EXTRACT 16**

There are proper and supportive arrangements for those married personnel who become single parents by change of circumstance, for example, by bereavement or divorce. However, those who become single parents through circumstances within their control and who are unable to meet their operational liability will not be retained (DSP, paragraph 34, p. 8).

Each of these ‘standards of conduct’ are organised and underpinned by a common discourse that is concerned, specifically, with the regulation of sexual morality. However, there are significant differences in the ways in which these four ‘standards of conduct,’ and their consequences, are constructed. ‘Adultery,’ and ‘other sexual relationships,’ for example, are not presented as conduct that entails dismissal, and in the case of adultery outside the military community, it is only proscribed if the circumstances of the affair become public and it affects the public image of the Service. Homosexuality and (wilful) single parenthood, conversely, do entail expulsion from the military.

In Extract 14, not all forms of adultery are constructed as having equally prohibited status. In particular, adulterous relationships that involve civilian personnel are only positioned as problematic if they involve officers and if they attract public attention. All forms of adultery within the military community, conversely, are ‘considered unacceptable’ and are positioned as the most ‘serious cases of social misconduct.’ (The section on ‘social misconduct’ in the text includes adultery and other sexual relationships, but not homosexuality or single parents, see Table 1). The rhetorical
force, and accordingly primary accomplishment, of Extract 14, is in its reinforcement of the military civilian dichotomy through the differential and hierarchical construction of adultery within and outside the military community. In Extract 15, the prohibition of other sexual relationships is justified, primarily, by invoking a requirement to maintain the integrity of the hierarchical military rank structure, which is extended to include cross rank marriages. In these two extracts, the specific significance of sexual morality is, to some extent, overshadowed by the regulation of sexual behaviours that threaten either the military rank structure, the military’s public image or the marital and, thus, moral integrity of the military (but not civilian) community.

The way in which ‘adultery’ and ‘other sexual relationships’ are constructed can be usefully contrasted with the ways in which ‘single parents’ and ‘homosexuality’ are constructed (see also Section 5.5.3). In particular, prohibitions on single parents and homosexuality are not explicitly constructed in relation to the military rank structure or the public image of the Service, however, the operational imperative is invoked in both of these examples. In Extract 16, the concept ‘operational liability’ is raised as a key determinant of whether single parents will be retained in service. To that end, those who become single parents through change of circumstance (bereavement or divorce) will be provided with the proper and supportive arrangements that will allow them to fulfil their operational liabilities. Conversely, persons who become single parents through circumstances within their control are denied the ‘proper’ and supportive arrangements and are, accordingly, presented with significant structural impediments to fulfilling their operational liability. Since single parents’ needs and requirements do not differ by (prior) marital status, the ‘operational liability,’ in this section, functions to deflect attention away from the primary consideration, which is sustaining and valorising marital heterosexuality and the traditional family unit.

The distinction between status and conduct is unclear in this extract. While being a single parent is a reference to an individual’s status it is the consequences of conduct (i.e., having a child outside of marriage), that is penalised. It is difficult to imagine another interpretation of the phrase ‘those who become single parents through circumstances within their control.’ Moreover, although not explicitly stated, this
section appears to be targeted primarily, if not exclusively, at women in the Services. (Homosexuality is discussed in Section 5.5).

These sections of the text are thus concerned, primarily, with regulating sexual morality and, in the case of adultery and other sexual relationships, specific (hetero)sexual behaviours. It is these ‘standards of conduct’ that are most noticeably differently constructed in the military, as opposed to civilian, context. Adultery, and relationships that transgress rank boundaries, are both discouraged and impediments are constructed to cross rank marriages (e.g., posting the couple to different units) but they do not result in loss of employment. The two ‘standards of conduct’ which do result in discharge from the military, are homosexuality and (wilful) single parenthood, and there is a clear distinction constructed between military regulations, in these respects, and those extant in most civilian employment contexts.

5.4.6 Summary

The DSP constructs the military as separate, isolated and distinct from the civilian community. This separation is not constructed as simply a matter of physical isolation, but rather revolves around notions of ethics and morality, social responsibility, the law, cohesion and sexuality. In particular, the military is constructed as embodying traditional moral values, as socially responsible and respectful of the law, as homogenous and cohesive, as hierarchical and disciplined and as concerned with the regulation of sexuality. The rhetorical force of these constructions is achieved via the primary oppositional binary established early in this text between the military and civilian society. Accordingly, society, its values, and its recent trends are constructed as diverging from high military standards and as threatening to the military’s moral and ethical foundations. These moral and ethical foundations revolve around a number of subordinate binary oppositions constructed between the military and the civil communities, notably individual (and civil) rights versus social responsibility, criminality versus respect for the law, diversity versus homogeneity, group versus self-interest, marital heterosexuality versus non-marital sexualities. Most of these are constructed, to varying degrees, in relation to the military’s operational imperative and the existence of military law.
The invocation of distinctions between military and civil law function in the text to highlight the military as having a unique set of legal requirements. However, with the possible exception of 'indebtedness' none of the 'standards of conduct' presented as legal matters are easily distinguished from civilian legal arrangements. Moreover, with four notable exceptions, 'standards' that are not explicitly constructed as legal concerns are analogously problematic in many civilian employment contexts (e.g., alcohol abuse). Despite these civilian analogues, there is no acknowledgement of any similarity between any civilian and military employment arrangements in this document. Accordingly, the text constructs and presents a particular set of facts which function to obfuscate the partiality of the account and, specifically, to re-establish the military-civil divide and to re-inscribe the moral and ethical boundaries around the military institution.

The four 'standards of conduct' that are constructed as distinct from civilian standards pertain, specifically, to issues around sexuality and sexual behaviour. It is these 'standards,' in particular, that distinguish military and civilian regulatory arrangements and it is these regulations that the text is primarily concerned to defend. In this respect, the text's appeal to the existence of military law and other 'standards of conduct,' functions to deflect attention away from the underlying intention of the paper, which is to justify, specifically, the legislation and regulation of sexual morality. Moreover, the constructed prohibitions on adultery, single parenthood and homosexuality are all concerned with defending marital heterosexuality, although this is less clear in the section that concerns adultery outside of the military community. However, in this respect there is a reiteration and re-establishment of the military's moral exclusivity and its desire to maintain sexual and moral homogeneity within its institutional borders.

The notion of homogeneity is reinforced by the construction of 'minority groups' and individual rights evident in Extract 5 and the construction of the 'young, robust, heterosexual' military community evident in Extract 6. Moreover, although the text is concerned to regulate a number of forms of non-marital sexuality, the configuration of these rhetorical strategies are directed specifically at homosexuality. For example, the reference to 'minority groups,' that have sought to legitimise what they believe to be their rights, coupled with the explicit reference to 'young robust heterosexuals,'
point to a concern with justifying, specifically, the policy on homosexuality. Accordingly, although the text constructs a number of behaviours as problematic, it is organised in such a way as to suggest that sexual morality, in general, and homosexuality, in particular, are the intended ‘standards’ of interest.

5.5 Constructing Homosexuality

Homosexuality is referenced in both documents and each contains a comparable paragraph that explains the reasons for the exclusionary policy. (These two paragraphs are reproduced in full in Extracts 18 and 19). This section of the analysis opens with the category ‘regulating status and conduct,’ however, where relevant, issues pertaining to the status/conduct distinction are also noted in other analytic sections.

5.5.1 Regulating Status and Conduct

The AFPGH document opens with a statement detailing the aim of the paper and provides definitions of the terms ‘homosexual’ and ‘homosexuality’ as they apply to this document:

**EXTRACT 17**

This document sets out Armed Forces Policy on Homosexuality and provides guidance to Commanding Officers on dealing with cases which come to their notice. For the purposes of this document a homosexual is defined as ‘a person who is sexually attracted to a member of the same sex’, and homosexuality is defined as ‘behaviour characterised by being sexually attracted to members of the same sex’ (AFPGH, paragraph 1, p. 1).

In the above extract, homosexuals and homosexuality are both defined around the concept of ‘sexual attraction,’ but there is a distinction established between status and conduct. Moreover, both terms—homosexual and homosexuality—are defined in ways that capture more than same-sex sexual activity. A ‘homosexual,’ for example, is not constructed as ‘a person who ‘engages in sexual activity with ‘a member of the same sex’ but rather as one who is sexually attracted to a member of the same sex. ‘Homosexuality’ is similarly not constructed as sexual activity with members of the same sex but rather as behaviour characterised by same-sex sexual attraction. At the outset of this document there is, therefore, a clear commitment to regulating and legislating both status and the conduct associated with such status. This is evident in
the penultimate sentence in the following extract, in which both homosexuals and homosexual activity are explicitly prohibited:

**EXTRACT 18**

Homosexuality, whether male or female, is considered incompatible with service in the Armed Forces. This is not only because of the close physical conditions in which personnel often have to live and work, but also because homosexual behaviour can cause offence, polarise relationships, induce ill-discipline, and as a consequence damage morale and unit effectiveness. If individuals admit to being homosexual whilst serving and their commanding officer judges that this admission is well founded they will be required to leave the services. The Armed Forces policy was supported by the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill 1991 who stated in their report that they were not persuaded that the time had come to require the Armed Forces to accept homosexuals or homosexual activity. However, the committee recommended, and MOD accepted, that homosexual activity of a kind that is legal in civilian law should not constitute an offence under service law. (AFPGH, paragraph 3, p. 1)

There is, accordingly, a clear distinction between homosexuals and homosexual activity constructed and reiterated in this document and a commitment to the prohibition of both in the military institution.

In the DSP, unlike the AFPGH, this distinction is not as clearly delimited. In the following extract, which represents the comparable paragraph in the DSP to Extract 18, the document would appear to be constructing only homosexuality (i.e. ‘behaviour characterised by being sexually attracted to members of the same sex’):

**EXTRACT 19**

Homosexuality, male or female, is incompatible with military service because of the close physical conditions in which soldiers often have to live and work. Homosexual behaviour can cause offence, polarise relationships, induce violence, and as a consequence morale and unit effectiveness suffer. Anyone who admits to, displays the orientation of, or indulges in homosexuality will be required to resign or be discharged. Homosexual activity which is illegal under civil law or which has aggravating disciplinary features may also lead to prosecution (DSP, paragraph 30, p. 7)

However, the use of the term ‘admits’ is difficult to interpret in a purely behavioural sense, particularly when it is considered alongside the term ‘indulges.’ For example, there is some redundancy if the text is constructing a distinction between admitting to indulging in homosexual activity and actually indulging in homosexual activity.
Accordingly, although not explicit, the use of the term ‘admits’ in this context tends to capture homosexual status.\textsuperscript{24}

The AFPGH document, in the paragraph entitled ‘applicants to the armed forces,’ fully clarifies the intended scope of the military prohibition, as extending to both persons who are homosexual and homosexual conduct:

\textbf{EXTRACT 20}

The Armed Forces Policy on homosexuality is made clear to all those considering enlistment. If a potential recruit admits to being homosexual he/she will not be enlisted. Even if a potential recruit admits to being homosexual, but states that he/she does not at present nor in the future intend to engage in homosexual activity, he/she will not be enlisted. (AFPGH, paragraph 7, p. 2).

In this extract, the distinction between status and conduct is drawn explicitly. The statement ‘admits to being homosexual’ is, for example, an ontological construction and it is clear that individuals who ‘admit’ this status, irrespective of whether it is accompanied by homosexual activity, will not be enlisted. The phrase ‘admits to being homosexual’ is used in both Extracts 18 and 20 and the specific use of the term ‘admits’ is used consistently in these texts with respect to homosexuality. Thus, ‘being homosexual’ is constructed and organised around the notion of ‘admission,’ that is, as something to be revealed and confessed.

\textbf{5.5.2 Constituting Offence}

In the DSP the paragraph that deals solely with homosexuality (see Extract 19) and which explains the reason for the exclusionary policy states:

\textbf{EXTRACT 21}

Homosexual behaviour can cause offence, polarise relationships, induce violence, and as a consequence morale and unit effectiveness suffer. (DSP, selection of paragraph 30, p. 7)

In this extract, the focus is on the potential for homosexual behaviour to be offensive, disruptive of relationships and, as not simply potentiating, but \textit{inducing} violence. This

\textsuperscript{24} Extracts 18 and 19, represent the two paragraphs, in the respective documents, that are specifically concerned with explaining the reasons for the military’s policy regarding homosexuality. For clarity, and in order to convey their organisation and meaning, these paragraphs are reproduced in full here, but the specific elements of each are examined in more detail in subsequent sections.
section can be compared with the sections (in the same paper) on racial and sexual harassment and bullying and intimidation (see also Extract 10). In these respects the document states:

**EXTRACT 22**

All service personnel, irrespective of their racial origin or gender, have a right to live and work in an environment free from prejudice, humiliation or intimidation...racial discrimination will not be tolerated ... sexual harassment is unacceptable behaviour... Sexual harassment can be persistent unwanted sexual attention which continues after the recipient makes it clear that he or she wants it to stop (DSP, selections of paragraphs 27-29, p.6).

Illegal punishments, unauthorised initiation ceremonies, and physical abuse are unacceptable (DSP, selection of paragraph 24, p.6).

In this extract, there is a clear commitment to dealing with unacceptable behaviour (including physical abuse) that might be occasioned by ‘race’ or gender or that represents bullying or intimidation. However, in Extract 21 there is no concomitant or comparable construction of homosexuality. Indeed, the behaviour of others in response to homosexuality is given as one of the reasons for the exclusionary policy. That is, heterosexual attitudes and responses to homosexuality are constructed as part of the reason for excluding gay men and lesbians from military service. Moreover, there is no suggestion in Extract 21 (irrespective of the exclusionary policy and the implications for the employment of individuals suspected of homosexuality), that the military condemns violence against gay men and lesbians. Violence is constructed as an inevitable, factual consequence of the offensive and polarising ‘nature’ of homosexuality. It is also interesting that although such violence implies a (homosexual) victim, this subject position is suppressed. For example, the use of the term ‘induce,’ not only positions the responsibility for such violence on the homosexual, but also positions homosexuals as the cause of the offence—violence—and as such the offenders.

The AFPGH document, which was produced shortly after the DSP, contains a similar paragraph explaining why homosexuality is unacceptable in the military environment:

**EXTRACT 23**

homosexual behaviour can cause offence, polarise relationships, induce ill-discipline, and as a consequence damage morale and unit effectiveness. If individuals admit to
being homosexual whilst serving and their commanding officer judges that this admission is well founded they will be required to leave the services. (AFPGH, selection of paragraph 3, p. 1)

There is a noticeable lexical shift in this extract when compared with Extract 21. This is the shift from the term ‘violence’ to ‘ill-discipline.’ However, the use of the phrases ‘cause offence’ and ‘polarise relationships’ remains consistent across the two texts. In both extracts the burden of responsibility for inducing the violence or ill-discipline is, on my reading, still firmly located in the (homosexual) ‘offender’ and not the potential perpetrators.

Although, as in Extract 21, this extract also explicitly connects causing offence, polarising relationships and ill-discipline to homosexual behaviour, it is clear that homosexual status is included in this construction. The second sentence in Extract 23, for example, refers to ‘admitting to being homosexual’ rather than ‘admitting to homosexual activity’, which suggests that declared homosexual status is also considered problematic. If, for example, it is only enacted homosexuality that causes offence, polarises relationships and induces violence or ill-discipline, which is ostensibly the reason for gay and lesbian exclusion, then there is no requirement to prohibit those with (unacted) homosexual status. This begs the question: what is it about the way homosexuality is constructed that renders even the declaration of homosexual status problematic?

5.5.3 Producing Unrestrained Homosexual Desire

In the DSP, admitting to, displaying the orientation of, and indulging in homosexuality all result in dismissal:

**EXTRACT 24**

Anyone who admits to, displays the orientation of, or indulges in homosexuality will be required to resign or be discharged (DSP, selection of paragraph 30, p. 7)

Of interest is the use of the term ‘indulges’ because it does not occur at any other point in either text. In particular, it is not used with respect to any other ‘standards of conduct’ constructed in the texts and it differs notably from two of the most closely related ‘standards of conduct’: ‘adultery’ and ‘other sexual relationships.’ With respect to adultery, for example, the text states “those who enter into adulterous affairs” [my
emphasis (Extract 14) which is distinct from those who indulge in homosexuality. Both terms imply wilful and deliberate acts, however, 'indulge,' unlike 'enters,' also conveys a sense of profligacy, of excessive self-indulgence and licentiousness. It constructs homosexuality as characterised by unrestrained pleasure seeking and self-gratification.

This interpretation is supported by another distinction evident in the ways in which homosexuality is constructed in relation to the constructions of ‘adultery’ and ‘other sexual relationships.’ Both adultery and these other sexual relationships are constructed as relationships:

**EXTRACT 25**

extra-martial relationships will be considered unacceptable (DSP, selection of paragraph 32, p. 7).

sexual relationships which undermine this well-ordered structure cannot be tolerated (DSP, selection of paragraph 33, p. 8).

At no point in either of these two texts is the term ‘relationships’ used with reference to homosexuals or homosexuality (see especially Extracts 18 and 19). Taken together, the absence of any construction of homosexuality as a relationship and its positioning as indulgence, produce a version of homosexuality as behaviour wilfully, but somewhat uncontrollably, indulged in by certain individuals who share the status of being 'sexually attracted to members of the same sex.'

5.5.4 *Engendering Distrust and (In)Security*

Related to the construction of homosexuality as indulgent are the issues of trust and confidence. In the section on ‘the service environment’ in the DSP, ‘trust and confidence’ are linked to heterosexuality and, in particular, heterosexual status:

**EXTRACT 26**

The service aims to foster group cohesion within a structured chain of command, which is such a decisive factor in battle; but by its very nature, such cohesion can be destroyed quickly where there is a loss of trust or confidence. The majority of the military community comprises young, robust, heterosexual people (DSP, selection of paragraph 8, p. 2).

This characterisation of the military community as ‘young robust and heterosexual’ is linked to trust, confidence and cohesion. By implication, such trust, confidence and cohesion are damaged and disrupted by the presence of homosexuals. Although not
unequivocal, distrust tends to be constructed as characteristic of homosexual individuals. In other parts of the texts, there are additional indications that this is a version of homosexuality the texts intend to engender. In the following extract, for example, reference is made to the security aspects of homosexuality:

**EXTRACT 27**

*Security Considerations.* Commanding Officers must bear in mind the security aspects of homosexuality and must refer to the appropriate Security Authorities when necessary. (AFPGH, paragraph 13, p. 3).

The security aspects of homosexuality would only appear to be relevant because of the existence of the exclusionary policy. That is, individuals are potentially susceptible to blackmail, for example, because their presence is prohibited in the military environment. This paragraph, however, does not construct security issues as relevant because of the policy, nor does it suggest that homosexuality may not, indeed, be accompanied by security implications. It rather constructs homosexuality as a security problem and it contributes to the construction of homosexuals as untrustworthy individuals. When this is considered in conjunction with the statement “society requires those serving in the Armed Forces to place the interests of the nation before self” (see Extract 8) and the earlier construction of homosexuality as indulgence, it conveys the impression that homosexuals cannot be trusted to place group, societal or national interests before self-interest (see also Extracts 5 and 6).

The particular version of homosexuality these extracts engender is one that precludes homosexuals from associations with trust, cohesion and selflessness. In the DSP, these qualities are not only disassociated from homosexuality but potentially all of the disciplinary matters covered in the document. Indeed, the “values which the Armed Forces seek to maintain and regard so highly: sense of duty, loyalty, self-discipline, self-sacrifice, respect and concern for others” (Extract 3) are effectively denied to all whose behaviour is targeted in the document. However, the difference between homosexuality and most of these other ‘standards of behaviour’ is that, with the exception of single parents, they are concerned with specific behaviours and not an individual’s status. As such, they do not explicitly define and marginalise particular types of persons. Moreover, as evident in Extract 26, sexual status is explicitly highlighted (e.g., ‘young, robust and heterosexual’) in relation to inspiring trust and
confidence and securing group cohesion. This subject position does not, therefore, explicitly marginalise single parents, in the same way as it does homosexuals.

5.5.5 *Inciting Surveillance*

It is difficult to interpret the statements ‘displays the orientation of’ (Extract 24) and “homosexuality is defined as ‘behaviour characterised by being sexually attracted to members of the same sex’ ” (Extract 17). However, both statements are predicated on the notion that there are particular characteristics associated with homosexuality that can be identified. These characteristic behaviours, or forms of display, remain unspecified and there is a reluctance, evident in the AFPGH document, to attempt to define behaviour that might lead to the suspicion that an individual is homosexual:

**EXTRACT 28**

It is not possible in a document of this nature to set out every circumstance which might lead to suspicion that a service man or woman is homosexual. It would be invidious to try to define all behaviour that might lead to suspicion (AFPGH, paragraph 8, p. 2).

The first sentence in this extract, states that it is not possible to set out every circumstance that might lead to suspicion that an individual is homosexual. Bearing in mind that this is the document that explicitly constructs a definitional distinction between ‘homosexuals’ and ‘homosexuality,’ it is clear that ‘homosexuals’ are the focus here. However, the impossibility of setting out such circumstances is not attributed to general difficulties that might be associated with accessing, defining or assessing individual ‘sexual attraction’ but is rather attributed to the limitations of the document. According to this construction then, outside of the limitations of this text it is conceivably possible to set out such circumstances. In the second sentence, there is a shift from homosexual status to behaviour but it is still the ‘suspicion’ that a person might be (inherently) homosexual that is at issue. The use of the term suspicion, in this extract, is reminiscent of the questionable and distrustful ‘nature’ of homosexuality (and homosexuals) discussed in Section 5.5.4. Moreover, when coupled with the specific reference to ‘displaying the orientation’ of homosexuality, the term ‘suspicion’ legitimates a watchfulness for any potential signs of homosexuality. That is, there is a discursive incitement to vigilance and surveillance being constructed here. Such vigilance is not only impelled *vis-à-vis* homosexual behaviour but potentially any
non-hetero-normative forms of expression, including ‘displays,’ that might be construed as a sign that an individual is homosexual.

The constructed requirement for vigilance and surveillance is not only restricted to identifying potential homosexuals, but also extends to the formal investigative procedure. In this case, the underlying requirement for vigilance is ostensibly constructed as necessary in order to identify ‘genuine’ homosexuals:

**EXTRACT 29**

If the Commanding Officer is satisfied on a high standard of proof of an individual’s homosexuality, administrative action to terminate service … is to be initiated (AFPGH, selection of paragraph 15, p. 3)

When … an individual admits to homosexual feelings in the first instance to a medical officer … If the Medical Officer is satisfied that the individual is experiencing homosexual feelings then it would be most unusual not to discuss the matter with the Commanding Officer (AFPGH, selection of paragraph 4, Annex A, p. 5)

If individuals admit to being homosexual whilst serving and their Commanding Officer judges that this admission is well founded they will be required to leave the services. (AFPGH, selection of paragraph 3, p. 1)

In each of these paragraphs, the Commanding Officer and/or the Medical Officer are positioned as required to make a judgement as to the ‘validity’ of an individual’s homosexuality. In many ways, this appears to contradict the earlier statements, in both texts, that constructed ‘admitting to being homosexual’ as resulting in seemingly automatic dismissal. In the above extract, there is, conversely, a requirement to obtain a ‘high standard of proof,’ to ‘satisfy the medical officer’ or to find a basis from which to judge that an ‘admission is well founded.’ This represents a shift in emphasis from the notion of seemingly pervasive ‘suspicion’ (constructed in Extract 28) to the requirement to establish one’s homosexuality once admitted. In each paragraph cited in Extract 29, for example, it is clearly an individual’s status and not their behaviour that is being assessed. It is not clear however, what would constitute ‘proof’ or a ‘well-founded admission’ of an individual’s homosexuality. Expert authority is being constructed here and it is endowed with the power to validate or de-legitimate forms of (homo)sexuality, and perhaps, in particular, to distinguish in some way between ‘genuine’ and feigned (or malingering) homosexualities:
In all cases, due consideration should be given to an individual’s motives. Admissions of homosexuality may be for a variety of reasons. (AFPGH, selection of paragraph 5, Annex A, p. 4-5)

This extract is reminiscent of ‘suspicion.’ However, unlike in Extract 28, in this case, the text is not concerned with the suspicion that an individual is homosexual, but is rather concerned to engender suspicion as to the validity of the (voluntary) admission. There is a tension evident here, between the discursive incitement to identify those who are ‘genuinely’ homosexual and the perceived requirement to identify homosexual malingering. However, it is not only ‘genuine’ and ‘feigned’ homosexuality that are constructed in opposition, but also, potentially, ‘genuine’ and ‘temporary’ (or aberrant) homosexuality. In the following extract, recently enlisted personnel are potentially exempted from the administrative consequences of ‘indulging’ in homosexual activity:

In dealing with cases of suspected homosexuality ... particular caution is necessary in dealing with recently enlisted personnel who have not had time to adjust to the standards of behaviour required by the Services and to communal life in general. In such circumstances cautionary words of advice about behaviour and the need to show more consideration to other members of the community, may be sufficient to remedy the situation. In most circumstances, however, the interests of the individual and the Armed Forces will best be served by formal investigation of the allegations or suspicion. (AFPGH, selection of paragraph 9, p. 2).

Here, the recently enlisted are afforded some latitude, when suspected of homosexuality, due to their unfamiliarity with the service environment and communal living. Homosexuality is clearly constructed as both inconsiderate (which is reminiscent of the lack of ‘concern for others’ noted in Extract 3) and incompatible with ‘communal life’ (which is reminiscent of the individualism constructed in Extract 5). In this extract, it is homosexual behaviour (rather than an individual’s status) that is being afforded leniency. Underpinning this particular discursive configuration is the assumption that these ‘forms’ of homosexuality are youthful or naïve and as such are neither permanent nor entirely ‘genuine.’ However, even in these cases, in the last sentence it is noted that the preferred form of action ‘in most circumstances’ remains the formal investigation by the Service Police (see also Extract 36).
The construction of a hierarchy of homosexuality (as genuine, feigned or naïve) and the construction of voluntary admissions of homosexuality as inherently suspicious or dubiously motivated, function as justification and legitimisation for continuing the military practice of conducting investigations and surveillance. Such investigations, which are concerned to detect homosexuality even in cases of voluntary admission, are functional for the military institution. They provide a way for the military to recover power and control from the individual who confesses and a way of retaining authority over validation or censure.

5.5.6 Producing and Transmitting Dis(ease)

In both documents, reference is made to the close living conditions associated with military service. In the DSP, this reference first appears in the section on ‘the service environment’:

**EXTRACT 32**

The majority of the military community comprises young, robust, heterosexual people. They are required to live in close proximity with others often in single-sex accommodation, to work at times under great stress and physically in close contact with one another. Servicemen and women do not have the right to choose the company with whom they work or share accommodation which often has only limited privacy. Unlike civilians they do not have the opportunity to leave their employment if the conduct of their colleagues causes offence. (DSP, selection of paragraph 8, p. 2).

The close living conditions, constructed as characterising the military environment, are constituted as one of the principal reasons for the military’s ‘standards of conduct.’ However, although this section of the document ostensibly includes all of the ‘standards of behaviour’ subsequently listed as prohibited (see Table 1) none are positioned as problematic because of the ‘close proximity’ or ‘limited privacy’ of the service environment—except homosexuality. Moreover, with the exception of homosexuality, none of these ‘standards of behaviour’ are constructed as causing offence. The DSP explicitly constructs homosexuality as offensive and positions the ‘close physical conditions’ of military service as the primary reason for homosexual exclusion:
EXTRACT 33

Homosexuality, male or female, is incompatible with military service because of the close physical conditions in which soldiers often have to live and work. Homosexual behaviour can cause offence, polarise relationships, induce violence, and as a consequence morale and unit effectiveness suffer. Anyone who admits to, displays the orientation of, or indulges in homosexuality will be required to resign or be discharged. (DSP, selection of paragraph 30, p. 7)

In the above extract, it appears to be primarily homosexual behaviour that is constructed as incompatible with the close physical conditions of military service. Equally, in Extract 32 it is the (offensive) 'conduct of colleagues' in a privacy-limited environment that initially appears to be problematic. The assumption here is that, irrespective of the lack of privacy, homosexuality will be enacted in the presence of heterosexuals. This is reminiscent of the earlier construction of homosexuality as unrestrained, uncontrolled indulgence. Moreover, the statement that heterosexuals are unable to leave their employment if the conduct of others causes offence is suggestive of entrapment. However, the phrases 'physically in close contact with one another' and 'close physical conditions' are primarily evocative of notions of 'contagion.' This is echoed in the section that provides instructions for Medical Officers on homosexuality, in which the concept of contagion is also invoked by the use of the term 'health:'

EXTRACT 34

When ... an individual admits to homosexual feelings in the first instance to a medical officer, the individual should also be warned that, notwithstanding medical confidentiality, the Medical Officer has a duty to report to the Commanding Officer any information ... which might adversely affect the health, security or discipline of the unit (AFPGH, selection of paragraph 4, Annex A, p. 5).

This reference to health is reminiscent of the transmission (through the unit) of disease. It is notable that the term 'health' only appears on one other occasion in the DSP (with respect to alcohol abuse), and it is instructive that, in this case, alcohol abuse is constructed as a matter that affects the health of the individual not the unit.

The notion of contagion, with respect to homosexuality, is not, however, only restricted to physical contact or issues of health, but does, I think, include a number of 'aspects' of homosexuality. In the following extract, for example, it is not only the close physical conditions that are constructed as rendering homosexual activity problematic, but also homosexual status:
EXTRACT 35

Homosexuality, whether male or female, is considered incompatible with service in the Armed Forces. This is not only because of the close physical conditions in which personnel often have to live and work, but also because homosexual behaviour can cause offence, polarise relationships, induce ill-discipline, and as a consequence damage morale and unit effectiveness. If individuals admit to being homosexual whilst serving ... they will be required to leave the services. (AFPGH, paragraph 3, p.1)

In this extract, there is a slight shift in emphasis when compared with Extract 33. In particular, the close physical conditions are separated from the causing of offence, the polarising of relationships and the inducing of ill-discipline. That is, the ‘close physical conditions,’ which characterise military service, are targeted as one reason for homosexual exclusion, and they are constructed here as distinct from the second reason, that is, homosexuality's offensive, polarising and ill-discipline inducing ‘nature.’ In the final sentence in this extract, explicit reference is made to the prohibition against admitting homosexual status (see also Extract 20). Equally, in the first sentence of Extract 32 (heterosexual) status is invoked and it is followed (in the second sentence) by a reference to close physical contact. In Extract 33, the phrases ‘admits to’ and ‘displays the orientation of’ also tend to function to broaden the scope of the term homosexuality to more than simply (offensive) behaviour. Of interest here, therefore, is the relationship constructed between homosexual status, homosexual behaviour and the close physical conditions of military service. Despite marking a distinction at the outset of the AFPGH document (Extract 17), in the body of the texts, homosexual status is not always easily separated from homosexual conduct. That is, being homosexual, irrespective of stated intentions (see Extract 20), is constructed as signifying the intention to act, and specifically, the inability to resist and suppress (homosexual) desire. Contexts with limited privacy would thus appear to signify the increased potential for the enactment of such desire and thus facilitate the physically contagious (homosexual) contact. Thus, homosexual behaviour is constructed as the inevitable consequence of unrestrained homosexual desire always already on the verge of enactment, effecting its seductive and thus, reproductive contagious function. There is some support for this interpretation in the section in the AFPGH document that deals with serving personnel:
EXTRACT 36
If the Commanding Officer feels it would assist his own inquiries or has reason to suspect that a civil criminal offence has been committed, or that any other service personnel were involved, he should ask the Service Police to carry out a formal investigation (AFPGH, paragraph 11, p. 3).

In this extract, Commanding Officers are afforded some discretionary power over whether to involve the Service Police, according to whether they feel it would assist their inquiries. However, if other service personnel are involved Commanding Officers are required to ask the Service Police to undertake a formal investigation. The only other instance in which such action is constructed as required is if there is reason to believe a civil criminal offence has been committed. This can be interpreted as a commitment to delimiting homosexuality’s contagion within the military community in order to maintain its ‘young, robust heterosexual’ homogeneity. The potential for homosexuality to effect both its contagious and offensive functions (and they are constructed separately) is thus not limited to the body boundary in the physical and enacted sense, but is rather ubiquitous—achieved by both displaying its orientation and speaking its name.

5.5.7 Constituting the Medicalised Homosexual Subject

The AFPGH document contains an annex (A) entitled ‘instruction for the guidance of Medical Officers in dealing with cases of homosexuality where no offence has been committed.’ (The text contains no comparable instruction for Medical Officers where an offence has been committed). This Annex opens with the following paragraph:

EXTRACT 37
The role of the Medical Officer in matters relating to homosexuality involves discharging responsibilities to both the individual and the Service. It must be remembered that homosexuality is not in itself a medical condition and that the individual is owed a duty of care such that his or her physical and mental wellbeing must be considered at all times. Intimate examinations are not indicated purely on the grounds of homosexuality (AFPGH, paragraph 1, Annex A, p. 5).

In this paragraph, there is a constructed and fulfilled requirement, noted to remind physicians of three different aspects of relevance with dealing with homosexuality. First, ‘that homosexuality is not in itself a medical condition.’ Second, that the (homosexual) individual is owed a ‘duty of care,’ which includes consideration of their
physical and mental well being. Third, that there is no requirement for ‘intimate examinations’ purely on the grounds of homosexuality. This latter requirement is reiterated, for other health care personnel:

**EXTRACT 38**

Health care personnel without a medical qualification (e.g., nurses or medical assistants) who are presented with an individual admitting homosexuality must refer the case to a Medical Officer as a matter of urgency. They are not to undertake any form of examination. (AFPGH, selection of paragraph 6, Annex A, p. 6).

What is notable about these ‘reminders’ is that they are included at all and it, implies, that, to some extent, the default is to construct homosexuality as a medical problem which includes invasive interventions. There is an allusion to the historical legacy of the medicalised homosexual subject, evident here. In the second sentence in Extract 37, for example, the statement ‘that homosexuality is not in itself a medical condition’ conveys the impression that homosexuality, is indeed, in some circumstances, a medical condition. Moreover, although the text states that homosexuality is not in itself a medical condition, the routine involvement of medical officers in dealing with all instances of homosexuality is noted in this section:

**EXTRACT 39**

A Commanding Officer will normally seek the advice of the Unit Medical Officer when dealing with instances of homosexuality...Additionally, individuals who have admitted to or are suspected of being homosexual may be referred to the Unit Medical Officer (AFPGH, selection of paragraph 2, Annex A, p. 5).

The document states that the role of the Medical Officer, in such cases, is ‘to assess the individual’s physical and mental health’:

**EXTRACT 40**

In the resultant interview the Medical Officer should make clear to the individual that the purpose of the interview is not to obtain evidence of sexual orientation but to assess the individual’s physical and mental wellbeing, including the need for onward referral to specialist services if required. The individual must, however, be warned at an early stage in the consultation that it may be necessary for the Medical Officer to discuss elements of the interview (such as general health and psychological development) with the Commanding Officer. (AFPGH, selection of paragraph 3, Annex A, p. 5).

In this extract, a relationship is constructed between homosexuality and physical and mental health and there is an assumption that cases of homosexuality may require some form of medical intervention, including onward referral. It is difficult to
interpret the intended relevance of general and physical health concerns regarding cases of homosexuality. Unless, as discussed in Section 5.5.6, these general and physical health issues are an oblique reference to matters of sexual health, and, particularly, transmissible diseases. The use of the phrase ‘psychological development,’ however, supplements the reference to mental health and it constructs a requirement to attend to and assess an individual’s psychological maturity, which implies potential psychological immaturity or instability.

5.5.8 Summary

These two texts ostensibly position both homosexuals and homosexuality as incompatible with military service for two primary reasons. First, the close physical conditions that are constructed as characterising military service, and second, perceived heterosexual antipathy towards homosexuals, which is constructed through reference to homosexuality's potential to ‘cause offence, polarise relationships and induce violence or ill-discipline.’ In this construction, the responsibility for causing the offence and polarisation and for ‘inducing’ the violence is located firmly within the homosexual ‘offender’ rather than the perpetrators. This particular discursive formulation, which effectively transforms a potential victim into an offender, is not used with respect to any other disciplinary matter covered in either text (e.g., bullying and intimidation, sexual harassment etc.). Indeed, in all other respects there is a clear commitment to dealing with intimidating or violent behaviour, which, in all other cases, is constructed as unacceptable or intolerable.

The reluctance to deal with homophobic violence constructed in these texts is indicative of the ways in which homosexuals and homosexuality are constructed. In particular, homosexuality is constituted as the embodiment of ‘indulgent’ desire, thoroughly self-interested and fundamentally antithetical to group or communal interests. The specific community, constructed in explicit opposition to homosexuals (and homosexuality), is the cohesive ‘young, robust, heterosexual’ majority that is given as constituting the military community. This cohesive and homogenous community is positioned as undermined by the presence of homosexuals, who are constructed as representing a security risk, and as undermining trust and confidence and thus group cohesion.
The construction of the close physical conditions of military service as a distinct reason for homosexual exclusion is reminiscent of notions of ‘contagion.’ This is achieved, partly, through the reference to the ‘health of the unit’ with respect to homosexuality and as such, there is a literal association formed between homosexuality and the carrying and transmission of disease. In addition, there is an underlying assumption that homosexuals are unable to contain and suppress their homosexuality in the ‘close physical conditions’ and limited privacy contexts that characterise the military. However, the enactment of homosexuality in this sense is not simply constructed as problematic because it is offensive, since the offensive ‘nature’ of homosexuality in the AFPGH document is explicitly separated from the close physical conditions. Thus, homosexuality is prohibited partly because it is considered both seductive and contagious. Moreover, the prohibitions on admitting to being homosexual and displaying a homosexual orientation (in addition to homosexual activity) suggest that these are also constructed as capable of effecting homosexuality’s contagious function.

The requirement to be suspicious and vigilant for any signs that individuals are homosexual is reiterated throughout these documents. However, there is a related requirement constructed to establish ‘genuine,’ as distinct from ‘feigned’ or ‘extraordinary,’ forms of homosexuality, particularly in cases of voluntary admission. This distinction between forms of homosexuality, functions as justification for continuing to subject those suspected of homosexuality, and those who voluntarily confess, to a formal investigation. There is, accordingly, a discursive incitement to constant surveillance, which potentiates the investigative practice. The related involvement of medical officers continues the process of surveillance although, in these cases, it is effected through the constructed requirement to assess the physical and mental health of those suspected of homosexuality. The linking of homosexuality to matters of health and psychological development constructs a relationship between homosexuality and ill health or psychological immaturity.

Although the AFPGH document marks a distinction between ‘being homosexual’ and homosexual behaviour, throughout both documents there is a conflation of status and conduct. In particular, the texts are unable (or reluctant) to sustain the distinction between ‘being sexually attracted’ and the enactment of such attraction. Thus, there is
a constructed necessity to prohibit any expression of homosexuality in order to forestall its anticipated enactment and to dissipate its disruptive power and its perceived potential to proliferate.

5.6 Constructing Gender

Unlike the military environment and homosexuality, gender is not a subject explicitly covered by either of these two policy documents. There is only one section in the AFPGH text that marks an explicit distinction between men and women and it concerns civil criminal offences (related to homosexuality) that can only be committed by men. With this exception, both texts appear to be applicable to both men and women. Indeed, as evident in Extracts 18 and 19, the paragraphs dealing with the reasons for the exclusionary policy both open with a statement to the effect that ‘homosexuality, male or female, is incompatible with military service.’ However, despite both documents being ostensibly written as inclusive of both men and women, the use of gendered pronouns is inconsistent within each text. In particular, masculine gendered pronouns are used alone in certain sections of these documents whereas feminine gendered pronouns never appear without their masculine complement. In these cases, the use of pronouns takes one of four different grammatical forms: ‘his or her’ (Extract 37), ‘he or she’ (Extract 22), ‘he/she’ (Extract 20) and ‘him/her’ (Extract 45 below).

For this section of the analysis, I examined the texts for all occurrences of gendered terms (and comparable gender neutral terms) including the use of particular pronouns. I was particularly interested in where and how these terms are used and their referents. Two particularly dominant patterns were identified. First, masculine gendered pronouns only are used in the section in the DSP on the operational imperative, and second, masculine gendered pronouns tend to be used, although not always consistently, in both documents in discussions related to leadership, command or authority.

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5.6.1 Gendering the Operational Imperative

In the DSP, the first occurrence of gendered terms appears in paragraph 8 on the ‘service environment’ (Extract 32) and the second in paragraph 13 on ‘the law’ (Extract 9). In both of these cases, the phrase “servicemen and women” is used, which denotes the general relevance of each of these matters to both men and women. In between these two paragraphs is the section on the ‘operational imperative’ (paragraphs 9-12). Notably, despite being flanked by two paragraphs that refer explicitly to men and women, this section does not use any comparable gendered terms. Rather, masculine gendered pronouns are used explicitly:

**EXTRACT 41**

Society requires those serving in the Armed Forces to place the interests of the nation before self. It is the soldier’s obligation to follow orders in the face of an enemy and to do his duty despite the risk of death or injury. It is that operational liability, with the possibility of self-sacrifice (accepted by every soldier on enlistment), that marks the Armed Services out as being essentially different from the rest of society. [my emphasis] (DSP, selection of paragraph 9, p. 3).

In this extract, ‘soldiers’ are the referent of the gendered pronoun ‘his.’ This is the only paragraph, in both documents, that explicitly connects the term soldiers to a gendered pronoun and it constructs soldiers as male. Throughout the texts, soldiers are constructed as both male and female, except in this section. It seems, therefore, that it is not simply the ‘maleing’ of soldiers that is being accomplished here, but rather the ‘maleing’ of the operational imperative—armed conflict. Moreover, given that there are ample examples of paired singular pronouns and third person pronouns used throughout the text, it seems unlikely that the generic masculine pronoun is being used to reference a mixed gender group.

Gendered pronouns appear on one other occasion in this section on the operational imperative, and again, they are exclusively masculine:

**EXTRACT 42**

All ranks must have trust and confidence in their comrades, and in their superiors. Without this trust and confidence, sound personal relationships will not withstand the severe pressure imposed by the battlefield...The officer corps, in particular, is required to maintain the highest standards, in order that they may set an example and impose disciplinary measures when necessary. Anything less than total honesty and a high standard of personal behaviour would reflect a lack of integrity and on the part
of the individual, and may lose him the respect and trust of those he commands [my emphasis] (DSP, selection of paragraph 12, p. 3).

In this paragraph, it is officers and ‘those he commands’ that are linked to the masculine pronoun, but again it is within the operational, ‘battlefield’ context. These two extracts (41 and 42) can be compared with the section in the text that deals with ‘standards of conduct’ for officers:

**EXTRACT 43**

If an officer’s conduct calls into question his or her integrity, or brings the Army into disrepute, the trust and respect of those he or she is privileged to command is placed in jeopardy, and the right to hold the Queen’s commission may be forfeited. [my emphasis] (DSP, selection of paragraph 16, p. 4).

Accordingly, as with ‘soldiers,’ it is not precisely the relationship between ‘officers’ and ‘command’ that is being masculinised in Extract 42, since in the above extract both male and female pronouns are used to signify explicitly that the ‘standards of conduct’ apply equally to both sexes. My reading of the section on the ‘operational imperative,’ therefore, is that it effects a particular discursive construction of the military’s primary and, as constructed in this text, most significant function—armed conflict—as fundamentally and exclusively male.

5.6.2 Gendering Leadership, Command and Authority

When reference is made to Commanding Officers or Medical Officers, in both texts, and without exception, third person pronouns or the singular masculine pronoun alone is used (see also Extract 31):

**EXTRACT 44**

In those cases where the Commanding Officer does not wish to take any further action, or wishes to deal with the incident within the unit, he is to seek advice from the next level of command [my emphasis] (DSP, selection of paragraph 36, p. 8).

Any Medical Officer who is in any doubt about the correct course of action should seek further advice from his Command Medical Officer [my emphasis] (AFPGH selection of paragraph 5, Annex A, p. 6)

As with the masculine gendered pronouns used in the section on the operational imperative, this does not appear to be simply grammatical convention. In the following extract, for example, the Commanding Officer is again, constructed through
the use of masculine pronouns, however, in the same paragraph use is also made of ‘him/her’ with reference to homosexual individuals:

**EXTRACT 45**

Depending on the circumstances the Commanding Officer will either conduct an internal inquiry, using *his* own staff, or *he* will seek assistance from the Service police. When conducting an internal inquiry *he* will normally discuss the matter with *his* welfare support staff. …the Commanding Officer should seek the advice of the unit medical officer on the individual concerned and may then … refer *him/her* to the unit Medical Officer. [my emphasis] (AFPGH, selection of paragraph 10, p. 3).

The use of particular pronouns does not read as arbitrary and their use in these documents is suggestive of an underlying pattern in which positions of authority tend to be constructed as male. This does not only apply to command appointments but is also often invoked with respect to leadership and the military rank hierarchy:

**EXTRACT 46**

The mismanagement of personal affairs calls into question whether a leader is suitable to oversee the welfare of *his* subordinates [my emphasis] (DSP, selection of paragraph, 23, p. 5-6)

Such relationships diminish the authority and standing of the superior in the eyes of *his* subordinates resulting in a loss of credibility and trust [my emphasis] (DSP, selection of paragraph 33, p. 8).

There are no comparable sentences that use both masculine and feminine possessive pronouns with respect to the ‘superior/subordinate’ binary reiterated in the above extract. It is also notable that ‘subordinates’ are usually referenced by the terms ‘servicemen and women’ or ‘soldiers’, both of which denote male and female (except in the case of the operational imperative). With the exception of Extract 43, when both singular pronouns are used with respect to officers, positions of authority are always linked to the masculine pronoun ‘he’:

**EXTRACT 47**

The most serious cases [of officer misconduct] are referred to the Army Board who are empowered to award a range of censures … and at the top end calling upon an officer to retire or ordering that *he* be removed from service [my emphasis] (DSP, selection of paragraph 38, p. 9).

This can be compared with the analogous paragraph on soldiers (again, with the exception of the paragraphs covered under the ‘operational imperative’) in which use is made of the third person pronoun ‘their’:

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EXTRACT 48

Soldiers may be warned as to their conduct [my emphasis] (DSP, selection of paragraph 39, p. 9).

The use of gendered pronouns in these texts does not appear to be either random or the generic use of masculine pronouns to refer to both sexes. Indeed, the choice of pronouns would appear to be specific and, in general, there is a discursive connection between constructions of leadership, command and authority and their (possessive) referents—men. The clear (and only) exception to this (Extract 43) ostensibly provides some gender parity and, as such, does not entirely exclude women from associations with command. However, it also functions to highlight the partiality of the remaining gendered constructions. In this respect, it functions tokenistically and it does not provide a convincing counter to the asymmetrical power relationship implicitly constructed in these texts between superior and authoritative males and ‘their’ male and female ‘subordinates.’

5.6.3 Summary

Gender, as a subject, is not a focus in either of these documents. However, the way in which the texts are constructed effectively marginalises women from association with two significant aspects of military service: the ‘operational’ and the ‘authoritative.’ This is effected by the specific use of gendered pronouns, which reproduces a gender hierarchy in the military environment. These constructions of the operational imperative and command and expert appointments as male preserves are not a consequence of gender differentiated policies. As noted in Chapter 1, although women remain excluded from service in the infantry and armoured regiments they are not excluded from other combat arms and, accordingly, are not exempt from the risks of ‘death, injury or self-sacrifice’ constructed here as exclusively male obligations and duties. Moreover, women are not excluded from holding Commanding Officer or Medical Officer appointments.

The gender hierarchy both reiterates male privilege, through the discursive connection between the masculine and the authoritative and reiterates women’s marginal and subordinate military status. The use of the masculine pronoun with respect to the operational imperative has the rhetorical effect of excluding women.
from association with the military's operational role. This effectively excludes women from associations with combat (and its attendant risks) and, renders women discursively marginal to the military's core function—armed conflict. In addition, the only appointments referred to in either text are those of the Commanding Officer and the Medical Officer and they are both constructed as occupied by, and the preserve of, men, despite the absence of gender policy barriers regarding these positions. These appointments are also those that are invested with the power of expert authority, as in, for example, the authority to (in)validate homosexuality.

5.7 Discussion

The DSP constructs an uneasy relationship between the military and civilian society which is used to effect a construction of the military that is, in many respects, consistent with Goffman's (1961) 'total institution' and Moskos' (1977) 'institutional' model of the military. However, Moskos (1977) argues that institutional militaries legitimate themselves in terms of values and norms, whereas Goffman (1961) argues that they primarily justify themselves on instrumental grounds. This text uses the military's instrumental 'operational imperative' to justify a particular set of moral values, which it constructs itself as embodying, and which are constructed as distinct from civilian standards and values. In this sense, the text can be broadly located within a discourse that is concerned to define and defend the traditional institutional military community, as characterised by Goffman (1961) and Moskos (1977).

In constructing this particular version of the institutional military, the text positions many parts of civilian society, as diverse, individualistic, socially irresponsible and lawless, and, as such, threatening to the military's desired standards and morality. Civilian society, thus, functions as a rhetorical device that is used to re-establish and re-inscribe the moral boundaries around the military institution (which are perceived to be threatened and dissipating) and to legitimate the military's divergent regulatory arrangements. The invocation of the military's 'operational imperative' and military law also function to establish a distinction between the military and civil society that is rhetorically deployed to legitimate military disciplinary practices and retain institutional authority and autonomy.
Deakin’s analysis of the British military as primarily conceptualising itself within Tönnies (1963) *Gemeinschaft* tradition is consistent with this analysis. In particular, the rejection of civilian society’s (perceived) ‘liberal attitudes’ and individualism in favour of traditional morality, social cohesion and homogeneity are characteristic of the ideal *Gemeinschaft* institutional community. In addition, the specific prohibition on (unmarried) single parents represents a commitment to sustaining and valorising the traditional family unit, which, as noted in Chapter 3, is prototypical of *Gemeinschaft*.

The text also re-iterates the significance of the military rank hierarchy and, in so doing, constructs a number of relationships between ‘superiors and subordinates’ (most of which are constructed as male) that are reminiscent of Tönnies’ (1963) ‘master-disciple’ relationship.

The DSP, unlike the AFPGH, is ostensibly concerned with the regulation of a number of behaviours in the military context. However, the ‘standards of conduct’ that are constructed as requiring different regulatory provisions from those in civilian society primarily pertain to issues of sexual morality. Moreover, although there are four such ‘standards,’ this text is principally concerned with justifying the policy on homosexuality. Apart from the texts invocation of, for example, ‘minority groups’ and ‘young robust heterosexuals,’ there are lexical similarities between the paragraph that characterises the service environment and which justifies the reasons for the ‘standards of conduct’ (Extracts 6 and 32) and the respective paragraphs that deal with homosexuality (Extracts 18 and 19). Most notably, it is the references to the ‘close physical conditions’ of military service and the ‘causing of offence’ that is consistent across these sections, and which are not used with respect to any other ‘standard of conduct’ in the text.

Deakin (1995) argues that the military excludes gay men and lesbians from military service because they are perceived as a minority group and as such are associated with liberal attitudes and the civil rights movements. These, in turn, are constructed as fundamentally individualistic, and thus, utterly antithetical to the moral and communitarian ideals that are presented as characterising the *Gemeinschaft* institutional community around which, Deakin (1995) argues, the British military constructs itself. Deakin’s (1995) arguments are, to some extent, persuasive and there is clearly a connection established between minority groups and individual rights and a
concomitant disjuncture, in this respect, between individualistic civilian society and
the military community. However, this alone does not entirely explain the prohibitions
on homosexuality since the rights of other ‘minority groups’ are attended to in the
document. Moreover, although there are clear prohibitions on a number of sexual
behaviours in the document, there are differences in the ways in which these are
constituted, suggesting that the prohibition on homosexuality arises from more than
simply a concern to regulate sexual (im)morality.

Both texts analysed for this study justify the exclusionary policy by recourse to the
close physical conditions of military service and heterosexual antipathy towards
homosexuals. In particular, homosexuality is constructed as offending heterosexual
sensibilities, polarising heterosexual relationships and inducing heterosexuals to
violence. The ‘offence,’ in this discursive configuration, is not the violence but the
homosexuality and it is constructed as interfering with discipline such that ‘morale and
unit effectiveness suffer.’ Lehring (1996) succinctly summarises the military’s use of
this argument:

The military has spent the better part of the last century officially constructing
lesbians and gay men in ways that make others fear and loathe them. …Now
there exist no tenable justifications for exclusion related to the performance
of gays and lesbians themselves, the military now uses the vestiges of
homophobia and bigotry among straights – homophobia the military itself
has nurtured and fostered for decades – as an explanation for keeping
lesbians and gay men out of the service (Lehring, 1996, p. 286).

In these texts, heterosexual attitudes are explicitly invoked to justify the policy.
However, although these attitudes are presented as self-evident, factual descriptions of
heterosexual attitudes to homosexuality, the texts also produce the very heterosexism
that is invoked to justify the policy. Moreover, there is a concomitant construction of
homosexuals and homosexuality that provokes not only heterosexism, but also
homophobia. That is, at no point in either of these documents is homosexuality
constructed in a way that counters ‘homophobia or bigotry.’ On the contrary, the
texts construct both homosexuals and homosexuality as offensive, indulgent and
somewhat unhealthy. In addition, the homosexual individual is constituted as
suspicious, untrustworthy, self-interested, disruptive and, to some extent, as unable to
control or suppress homosexual desire. Thus, the texts constitute homosexuality as
capable of, for example, ‘polarising relationships,’ while simultaneously constructing
and inciting that very polarisation. In this sense, the texts invoke heterosexual animosity and hostility towards homosexuals as a justification for exclusion while simultaneously constituting the homosexual subject as a legitimate target of ‘fear and loathing.’ It is this institutionally sanctioned heterosexism and homophobia that primarily regulates military discourse around homosexuality. For example, violence directed at homosexuals is positioned differently to racist and sexist violence in that in these instances there is an explicit commitment to punishing the perpetrators. In the case of heterosexist or homophobic violence, however, there is no comparable commitment to penalising the perpetrators and homosexuals are constructed as the ‘offenders.’

The notion of contagion, effected by the linking of homosexual exclusion to the ‘close physical conditions,’ is also suggestive of homophobia. One way of interpreting this link between close physical proximity and the exclusionary policy is that homosexuality is, in a literal sense, being associated with the transmission of disease. This is implied through the connection established in the AFPGH document between homosexuality and the ‘health of the unit.’ The discursive linking of homosexuality to the health of others thus forms an association between homosexuality and the transmission of contagious disease and it renders any contact with those perceived to be homosexual potentially dangerous. If it is a concern about sexual contact, specifically, that underpins this construction, it carries with it an assumption that homosexual desire is not only unrestrained in those who are homosexual, but also that homosexuality is ascribed the seductive power to entice heterosexuals into (homo)sexual activity, such that it affects the health of the unit.

A related way of interpreting the link formed between the close physical conditions and homosexuality concerns not the transmission of (unspecified) diseases, but rather the transmission of homosexuality itself. Moreover, this is not confined to occasions of seduction as noted above, but rather all expressions of homosexuality, including displays and admissions. Butler’s (1997) analysis of the US compromise policy, discussed in Chapter 3, is relevant here. However, there are differences in the ways in which contagion manifests in these texts and the US policy documents. According to Butler (1997), the US policy, in allowing homosexual status but prohibiting a self-declaration of such status, invests the statement ‘I am homosexual’ with contagious
power in an illocutionary sense. That is, the declaration is constructed as equivalent to
the homosexual conduct. In these texts, no comparable distinction is made in terms of
the regulation between declared and undeclared homosexual status and both result in
dismissal. In this respect, there is no comparable viable subject position offered to
'undeclared' homosexuals. Moreover, the prohibition on 'displaying the orientation of
homosexuality,' is underpinned by the supposition that it may be possible to detect
concealed, that is undeclared and unacted, homosexuality.

The association between homosexuality and contagion is invoked, in these texts,
not through the regulatory distinction between declared and undeclared
homosexuality which transforms the declarative statement into a speech act, but
rather through the linking of close physical conditions with the prohibitions on
admission, display and conduct. Admitting to being homosexual, and displaying a
homosexual orientation, are constructed as signifying the intention to act, if not
precisely acts of homosexuality themselves. These are, through their linkage to 'close
physical contact,' symbolically constructed as the anticipated enactment and thus
potential transmission of homosexuality. That is, it is homosexuality's perceived
inability to contain itself—to take effect in the one before whom it is admitted,
displayed or enacted—that invests it with the power of reproduction and
transmission, and it is this that the texts construct as necessary to pre-empt and
impede. In short, any possible manifestation of homosexuality (which includes all
aspects of status and conduct) is prohibited in order to obstruct and forestall its
potential proliferation. This construction of homosexuality as contagious depends, to
an extent, on a concomitant construction of heterosexuality as fragile and vulnerable.
In the texts, there are a number of references to such vulnerability, for example, the
references to the precarious nature of group cohesion evident in Extracts 6 and 7.

Although it is difficult to establish the salience of gender in relation to
homosexuality since no distinction is made in these documents between lesbians and
gay men, there is an indication that gender is relevant to group cohesion. Notably, in
the DSP, the section that deals with the operational imperative discursively
marginalises women, which effectively reinstates the links between men, masculinity
and armed conflict. In turn, unity and cohesion are positioned as essential for
supremacy in battle. The final sentence in Extract 7, which is one of the paragraphs
concerned with the operational imperative, states that: “nothing must be allowed to
detract from the forging of close bonds, based upon mutual trust and respect between
members of the group”. Bearing in mind that this section is constructed in a way that
excludes women, and that homosexuality is in all cases prohibited, ‘the forging of
close bonds,’ and as such unity and cohesion refers specifically to male heterosexual
bonding. These texts reiterate a disruption between male homosociality and
homosexuality (Sedgwick, 1985), such that while bonding among males is encouraged
for the purposes of operational effectiveness, it is simultaneously constructed as easily
destroyed by homosexuality.

The construction of homosexuality as offensive is evident in both texts and while
this incites heterosexism, homosexuality’s offensive ‘nature’ alone does not potentiate
homophobia. Homophobia, in particular, is effected through the documents investing
homosexuality with considerable disruptive and subversive potential. Thus, it is
homosexuality’s perceived offensiveness, coupled with its potential to proliferate and
‘polarise relationships,’ thus disrupting cohesion and homosociality, that suggests that
both heterosexism and homophobia underpin, regulate and are a discursive product
of the texts.

These texts are complicated in terms of their relationship to historically constituted
discourses around homosexuality (see Chapter 3). Sarbin (1996) argues that underlying
current US military policy is a religious construction of homosexuality as sinful or
immoral and that the medical construction no longer influences military policy. Some
elements of the texts can be interpreted as located within religious discourse, for
example, the use of the term ‘indulgence’ and the re-production and re-iteration of
traditional morality. These texts can also be read as incorporating elements of legal
and juridical discourse through the invocation of ‘suspicion,’ for example, and the
constructed requirement to undertake investigations (preferably by the service police)
to obtain ‘evidence’ or ‘proof’ of an individual’s homosexuality. Contrary to Sarbin
(1996), however, a reliance on medical discourse is also evident, although
homosexuality is not precisely constructed as an illness. However, the extensive use of
medical officers in cases of homosexuality and the discursive linking of homosexuality
to matters of physical and psychological health engender a version of homosexuality
that is, in some respects, medicalised. Even the uncoupling of homosexuality from its
construction as a ‘medical condition,’ which might be construed as a progressive move, is qualified: “homosexuality is not in itself a medical condition” (Extract 37). However, there is no explicit reference to biological essentialism (potentially, the opposite is evident in Extract 5), which was characteristic of early medical discourse, but there is a concomitant construction of homosexual individuals as particular types of persons and a hierarchy of homosexualities is established. Relatedly, there is a reference to ‘psychological development’ that is evocative of professional psychological research conducted in the 1980s (e.g., stage theories) during the period that witnessed the emergence of the ‘minority group’ discourse. Such work was not commensurable with lesbian and gay civil rights, in that underdeveloped homosexual identity was equated with a politicised stance. It is this unhealthy or immature homosexual identity that is being reiterated in the texts. In particular, these texts locate themselves in explicit opposition to, and in conflict with, ‘minority group’ discourse and much of the discursive effort in the texts is expended on marginalising and discrediting this particular discursive construction (see also Sarbin, 1996).

Part of the difficulty in precisely locating these texts in relation to their discursive antecedents resides in the use of ambiguous statements, which are difficult to interpret directly. For example, the precise meaning of the phrases ‘behaviour characterised by being sexually attracted to members of the same sex’ and ‘displays the orientation of homosexuality’ is unclear. Displaying the orientation of homosexuality, for example, could be a reference to attempted seduction, or gender role non-conformity, that is, effeminacy in men or masculinity in women. This lack of clarity suggests that either homosexuality is indefinable, or that the meaning of such phrases is taken to be self-evident. The function of this ambiguity, however, is that it expands the interpretative scope of the regulations. That is, any behavior associated with gender or sexuality that is considered to be non-normative, can, within the scope of these texts, can be interpreted as grounds for suspicion of homosexuality. In this sense, the ambiguity is functional for the military and it engenders suspicion and legitimates surveillance.

There is a further potential ambiguity in the texts embedded in the distinction between status and conduct. The texts make this distinction explicit on a number of occasions, for example, in the statement that the Armed Forces are not yet required to “accept homosexuals or homosexuality” evident in Extract 18 (see also Extract 20).
However, there are also a number of occasions on which homosexual status is not constructed as legitimate. For example, in the section in the DSP that deals with ‘minority groups,’ ‘race, colour, creed and gender’ as ‘minority group’ categories are privileged over those ‘perceived to be based on individual behaviour.’ This is not an explicit reference to homosexuals but through their exclusion from the ‘race, colour, creed and gender’ configuration, homosexuals are included in the ‘behavioural’ category. In addition, in construing homosexuality as ‘indulgence,’ homosexual status is de-legitimated. As noted, there is also a concomitant requirement to identify those who are ‘genuinely’ homosexual. The distinction between status and conduct established in the AFPGH thus functions to ensure that all forms of suspected homosexuality are investigated and prohibited, including unacted status, while simultaneously denying homosexuality any legitimate or viable status.

While it is difficult to disentangle and locate these texts precisely within specific historical discourses, they are not incommensurable with, or resistant to, religious, legal or medical discourses and elements of each are contained within the texts. Thus, these texts continue to draw on and reiterate elements of these discourses although their conditions of emergence have disappeared. In particular, elements of the medical construction and a number of assumptions derived from the knowledge produced by professional research, primarily throughout the first seven decades of this century, are evident. For example, the commitment to identifying ‘genuine’ forms of homosexuality has its discursive origins in the early sexological work and, as discussed in Chapter 3, it was incorporated into military research and practice in the Second World War years, through the use of, for example, the ‘gag-reflex’ test. The methods used to identify ‘genuine’ homosexuals are not stated in these documents, however, the references to ‘intimate examinations’ and investigations conducted by the police would appear to serve a similar function. In cases of suspected but denied homosexuality, the purpose of the investigations is to compile ‘proof.’ However, when individuals ‘admit’ or confess their homosexuality, the investigations function to confirm and/or (in)validate. The term ‘admission’ with respect to homosexuality, is not incompatible with confessional concepts inherent in religious, legal or medical discourses (particularly, psychoanalytic) and the investigative process hinges upon expert (especially medical) verification of homosexuality (see also Foucault, 1978).
The operation of power, in these texts, is both visible and concealed. The apparent operation of power is evident in the way in which the texts impose the exclusionary policy (and its related practices), which is a sovereign imposition unilaterally prohibiting homosexuals from service in the military. However, these texts are also discursively organised around the presentation of particular (constructed) ‘facts,’ which produce a ‘regime of truth’ about homosexuality (Foucault, 1978, 1979a). These are constructed as disinterested descriptions or reflections of immutable aspects of social reality and are presented as self-evident and incontestable. In this way, the operation of power and the re-iteration of power relations are partially concealed. In particular, power does not only operate through the imposition of the regulation but through the concomitant and irreconcilable constitution of military social reality and the homosexual subject. Moreover, the texts actively produce and constitute their objects and object/subjects in specific ways, which potentiate particular institutional practices (and individual subjectivities) and which transmit power in a disguised and covert form. In particular, the texts delineate the domain of the intelligible and legitimate, effecting a closure of signification in which homosexuality is denied any viable or coherent subject position. Homosexuality and the homosexual subject are, in this institutionally sanctioned body of knowledge, de-authorised, and this de-authorisation, and accordingly the power relation, extends beyond the boundaries of the military institution (see especially Extracts 5 and 6). That is, the texts (re)produce a number of social norms about homosexuality, for example, that it causes offence, polarises relationships and induces violence, which although constructed as relevant only to the military institution, are not, in these texts, contained within, or limited to, the military context.

The constructed incitement to vigilance, suspicion and surveillance, coupled with the reiteration of social norms around homosexuality, thus, produce and transmit power in a disciplinary form (Foucault, 1995). Such power is dispersed, minimally, because everybody is rendered visible to public scrutiny and are thus potentially within the scope of the field of surveillance, and also because homosexuality is invested with considerable disruptive power. This power to disrupt, to disorder heterosexuality by rendering it fragile and vulnerable, is also one of the texts’ discursive products. However, while everybody is potentially within the scope of the field of visibility, the
operation of disciplinary power in these texts takes effect specifically in the homosexual individual. That is, to paraphrase Foucault (1995), it is subjects who know they are rendered visible—that violate the norms formed and constituted in the texts—who are constrained by the disciplinary power/knowledge strategies embedded in the discourse (the subjective effects of disciplinary power are examined in Study 2). Accordingly, although there is a clear attempt to suppress any expression of homosexuality in the texts, which is their sovereign aspiration, the regulatory mechanisms do not function in a purely sovereign form.

The texts transmit institutional and expert (heterosexual) authority through the power to define, legitimate or invalidate forms of sexual expression. This definitional power manifests through the constitution of homosexuality as fundamentally abnormal and dangerous and it is this constitution that is used to legitimate particular institutional practices. As Butler notes:

It is crucial to consider that the military does not merely confront the homosexual as a problem to be regulated and contained, but it actively produces this figure of the homosexual (Butler, 1997, p. 122).

Moreover, it is the way in which the figure of the homosexual is produced, which not only renders homosexuality deeply suspicious, but which also potentiates a radical disruption of social relations between heterosexuals and homosexuals. In this way, heterosexuality maintains its hegemonic form through the constitution and institution of regulatory norms, which renders all other expressions of sexuality illegitimate and radically ‘other.’
CHAPTER 6

STUDY 2

ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANT'S ACCOUNTS OF MILITARY SERVICE

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the accounts of women who primarily identify as lesbian who are serving or have served in the British Army, paying particular attention to the ways in which they construct their sexuality, gender and the military institution. The study is based on interviews with 26 lesbian or bisexual women who are currently serving, or have recently served, in the British Army. Participants were recruited initially through contacts made during my military service. Additional participants were obtained using a snowball sampling technique, wherein the women solicited other likely research candidates through their own social network. Recruitment was difficult because of the exclusionary policy and potential participants were concerned about compromising their employment status (or those of their partners) in the military and issues of confidentiality (see also Section 6.3). For these reasons women who did not know me personally declined to take part in the study. This difficulty with recruiting limited the size of the sample, although the criteria for participation were relatively broad. Participants could be currently serving in any of the three British military services, or have done so in the preceding five years and, ideally, they should have had a minimum of three years service at the time of the interview (see Table 4 for participant demographic information). In addition, I intended to recruit participants who specifically self-defined as lesbian, although during the interviews it became clear that for some participants defining and labelling their sexuality was complicated (see Section 6.8.2). Accordingly, although primarily self-defining as lesbian, some participants also self-defined as bisexual.

I attempted to obtain a diverse group of participants, particularly in terms of ethnicity, age, type of military service (i.e., Navy, Army or Air Force), military rank, and length of service. Unfortunately, I was unable to recruit participants from varied
ethnic backgrounds or from the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. This was partly a consequence of my recruitment method and partly a reflection of the ethnic distribution of those in British military service. Accordingly, all participants were white and served in the Army. The women were between 24 and 39 years of age, with a mean age of 31.3 years and a standard deviation of 3.79. They were of lower or middle class backgrounds and from various parts of the British Isles, including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, although most participants were English or Scottish. Participants’ ranks ranged from Lance Corporal to Major and their lengths of service ranged from 3 to 20 years, with a mean of 10.8 years and a standard deviation of 4.88. At the time of interviewing, 17 women were serving and 9 had left the Army within the last 5 years.

6.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Participants in this study were assured absolute confidentiality. The anonymity of participants was preserved through the use of pseudonyms. Details revealed during the interviews that could potentially lead to the identification of participants or other individuals were changed or omitted as appropriate. Participants’ demographic details (see Table 4) have been reduced to the minimum required to contextualise participants’ accounts and the study. These details include age, rank, length of service, and year of discharge. As the interviews were conducted over a three-year period and the dates of each interview are omitted, it is not possible to identify participants from these details.

All participants were given an information sheet outlining the study and assuring participants of confidentiality and anonymity (Appendix 2). All participants, particularly those still serving, were concerned about the security of the final transcripts. Although identificatory information was omitted, the texts represent unfolding biographical narratives that could potentially lead to identification. I agreed, therefore, that unless otherwise arranged, copies of the transcripts would not leave my possession. Participants did agree to the presentation of complete transcripts at the viva for examination purposes. Complete transcripts (from participants who gave their consent) were supplied to supervisors where appropriate. All participants agreed to
the publication of selected extracts, providing biographical and identificatory details were omitted. 25

6.3 The Interview Process

The location of the interviews was decided by participants. My university office, my home, or participants' homes were suggested. No participant elected to come to the university, and all interviews were conducted at either my home or theirs, as per their request and at their convenience. All interviews were conducted between 1994 and 1996. Prior to commencing interviewing and in consultation with some of the earlier potential participants, it was suggested that some women would be more likely to agree (or would prefer) to be interviewed in groups rather than individually. Accordingly, although I primarily sought to conduct individual interviews, participants who were reluctant to take part in the study individually were asked to participate in a group interview/discussion. Ultimately, 10 women agreed to individual interviews and 16 elected to participate in group discussions. Three such discussions were conducted, with 3 women taking part in the first, 4 in the second and 9 in the third (Table 4).

A list of interview questions was generated to serve as prompts and to focus the interviews in a way that would elicit accounts of military service (Appendix 3). The interviews were, however, unstructured and the list of questions functioned as an informal guide rather than as a rigid schedule. Some interviews adhered more closely to the list of prepared questions than others, with the group interviews departing most noticeably from the list. An unstructured, informal approach to the interviews was considered to be the most appropriate for this study. This was partly because it encourages dialogue between the researcher and participants, which reduces some of the power differentials in research situations, and partly because it encourages participants to raise their own concerns, on their own terms. In addition, this style can help to ensure that researchers do not foreclose topics prematurely or concentrate solely on topics they consider relevant. Moreover, all participants were known to me prior to the interviews and a more structured, formal approach would have disconcerted participants and felt somewhat contrived. For these reasons, I responded

25 UCL/UCLH Ethics Committee approval was obtained for this research.
to participants' questions, and contributed where it was appropriate or supportive to do so.

The interviews were all audio-taped, lasting an average of one and a half hours and were concluded upon participants' request. In a number of cases, participants ended the interviews when the 90-minute tape ran out. This meant that some interviews ended abruptly, and although sometimes further discussions ensued after the tape ended, these were not recorded. Two women had to leave before the interviews were concluded, but both indicated that they would like to finish the interviews. Follow-up interviews were conducted in these cases at participants' convenience (see Table 4). In both cases, these interviews were conducted within a week of the first interview. All the interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim. The transcription notation used is shown in Appendix 4. Where possible, I follow standard grammatical conventions in order to enhance readability and clarity, rather than highlighting speech features such as intonation or length of pauses (see also Malson, 1998).

6.4 Analytic Procedure

A thematic discourse analytic approach is used in this study to analyse the interview transcripts and to examine the ways in which participants construct their experiences of military service in relation to sexuality, gender and the military institution. Following Woollett, Marshall and Stenner (1998), I use the term ‘themes’ to refer to coherent patterns in the content and structure of these accounts (both within and across transcripts) within which participants utilise elements of a number of socio-historical discourses. The central focus is on producing an understanding of the various ways in which women who primarily identify as lesbian construct and discursively negotiate their experiences of military service in relation to their sexuality and gender. Although there are similarities between this approach and the analytic approach employed in Study 1, in the present study identifying broad conceptual and organisational themes around which participants structured their narratives was considered more appropriate than a more detailed focus on the specificities of language usage. Not only are these analytic texts considerably larger than those analysed in Study 1, but more importantly, the objective in this study is to produce a broad understanding of these women’s varied (and largely, to date, undocumented)
accounts of their experiences. Specifically, the aim is to explicate the particular discourses and discursive practices that constitute and regulate the gendered and sexed experiences and subjectivities of women serving in the British military.

As in Study 1, the steps involved in this analysis were not sequential or linear, but were rather part of a cyclical process that involved iterative re-ordering and re-classification of the sorted extracts. Initially the transcripts were repeatedly re-read in order to gain familiarity with the transcripts. Prominent themes and concepts were noted, as were elements in the texts that resonated with the theoretical and historical literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 and the analysis undertaken in Study 1. A list of relevant themes and concepts was prepared from these initial notes and extracts were preliminarily sorted into categories.

Following initial categorisation, the extracts pertaining to each theme were examined in greater detail and allocated a broader conceptual category. For example, the themes ‘realising lesbianism,’ ‘productive regulation: facilitating a lesbian sub-culture,’ and ‘(in)tolerable lesbians: gender differences and the policing of female sexuality’ generated in earlier readings of the transcripts were all organised around a broader organisational and conceptual theme of lesbian possibility and simultaneous impossibility in the military context. These themes were thus interpreted as pertaining to the broader organisational category: ‘(Im)Possible Lesbians.’ Five organisational categories were generated with this analytic procedure and these structure the thematic analysis that follows.

**ANALYSIS**

6.5 (Im)Possible Lesbians

6.5.1 Realising Lesbianism

Most of the women in this study re-constructed their early experiences of the Army as an opportunity to meet other lesbians and/or as their first chance to have a lesbian relationship:

**Marie:** I’d never come across anybody who was gay before I joined the Army. I suppose that’s when I said my sister talked about it and I thought well, I think it was
still kind of in the back of my mind, I didn't really think about it properly, and then when I joined the Army, of course, it was opened up. Most of the friends I came in contact with were gay, we lived in the block with all the girls that were gay and then when I made friends, my friends who had been in the Army for a while were gay.

**Judy:** The first woman that I had any sort of relationship with was only when I joined up. I suddenly thought: “Wow, I sort of feel something for her.” And then, you know, it all sort of went from there. And then it was like being a kiddie in a sweet shop [laughs].

**Anita:** It was tremendous as far as lesbianism goes. Oh it was tremendous. I was like a kid in a sweet shop. It didn’t take me long to get into the swing of it. But it, mostly there it was rife. There were about 300 women there … lots of women and a lot more played at it than those who were serious about it. By that time, I was very serious. I was gay and that was it.

**Chris:** When I had relationships with people at school it was always things like “we’re not lesbians or anything, we just love each other, we’re not lesbians it’s like you know” and it was er a long time, it was probably not until I joined the Army that I really accepted it.

**Kathy:** Anyway I got in tow with this crowd, there were about 250 women there then. It was great and like most of those at that time were gay. The minority were the heterosexuals.

**Emma:** But a lot of us probably wouldn’t be gay if we weren’t in the Army, if we hadn’t joined the Army. If I’d stayed at home I don’t think I would have been gay.

**Linda:** No I wouldn’t have been where I lived, I was allowed to make my choice I saw women and it’s so easy to kind of join the Army see all these women and all these lesbians and get involved in it=

**Emma:** =Yes … I really don’t think I would have been gay if I’d stayed at home.

Each of these participants constructs the Army as a context that provides the opportunity to meet lesbians and realise (in both senses) lesbianism. Moreover, it is not constructed in terms of prohibition or concealment, but rather as the ‘opening up’ of lesbian possibilities (Marie) as ‘rife’ and ‘tremendous’ (Anita) and as presenting the possibility for accepting and labelling early lesbian experiences (Chris). Indeed, several participants report that being or becoming lesbian was more viable in this context than it would have been had they not joined the Army (Emma, and Linda).

Paradoxically, despite its prohibition, lesbianism is constructed as almost endlessly possible. The use of the phrase ‘like a kid in a sweet shop’ (Anita and Judy), for example, constructs the Army as presenting an abundance of viable lesbian experiences and relationships. Anita re-constructs these early memories of the Army as comprising not only those women who were ‘serious’ about lesbianism but also
those who ‘played’ at it. In so doing, she effects a paradoxical construction of pervasive lesbian activity in a context officially characterised by its prohibition. Kathy reinforces this construction when she reports that heterosexual women were the minority. Although all of these participants are re-constructing accounts of their early experiences, Kathy explicitly delimits the temporal scope of her account by emphasising that her descriptions refer to “that time,” which suggests that her current experience may be constructed differently.

The way in which these women re-construct their early experiences of the Army, (with respect to women) stands in stark opposition to the policy documents’ construction of the military community as primarily comprised of “young, robust heterosexuals.” However, what is interesting about these competing constructions is not their relative ‘accuracy’, but rather how they function rhetorically to legitimate a particular form of knowledge. In the case of the policy documents, the rhetorical investment is in ‘othering’ homosexuality; in these accounts, it is in ‘othering’/minoritising heterosexuality. In so doing, they position the Army’s restrictive environment as paradoxically facilitative in terms of developing a lesbian community.

6.5.2 Productive Regulation: Facilitating a Lesbian Sub-Culture

Some participants connected their accounts of pervasive lesbianism in the Army directly to the exclusionary policy and its enforcement:

**Anita:** The Army is a, an institution all on its own and although though there are SIB [Special Investigations Bureau of the Military Police] investigations and lesbianism is taboo in the army, it was such a big family, they made it like that. You know, they made us group together and because we, we were forced to do that. We ended up making friends with people that we ordinarily wouldn’t have - our paths would never have crossed but we were forced into little groups and we socialised in the same places it made us strong, it did. And nothing they could do could ever change that, you know? They made it that way. You know they made the issue worse by making it an issue.

**Chris:** When I was investigated it was called erm the gay underworld. The SIB Major said erm I hear there’s like a gay movement a gay underworld.

**JB:** Do you think that was right?

**Chris:** Yeah I do but erm yes I do because I think with people being so pressurised and erm abused that they generally stick together more and because they know they can’t trust people who aren’t gay. So they stick to themselves, they stick together.
JB: So, so the ban on gays in the Army didn’t stop you socialising then?
Nicky: No, certainly not. no, it probably helped if anything. You’ve just got to be really careful how you do it, that’s all....
JB: But how did you know, if it’s so discreet? How did you, how did you ever know?
Nicky: Word of mouth. I mean, you know people who know people, who know people. These things always get back. It’s like a, I don’t know, a little underground channel, so to speak. You know, a little group of, of people inside a bigger group and most gay people knew other gay people and that’s how everybody got to know where the places where to go if you wanted to meet people, where it was safe to go, where it wasn’t safe to go, where you had to, to all intents and purposes pretend you were very, very straight.

Natasha: this is where the military is kind of, it’s that self perpetuating thing, what I do now, even as a civilian is that I, I make sure that I, my social life is mostly gay people, so … so it almost becomes ghettoised because then you don’t have to deal with that constant decision about whether you tell someone or whether you don’t or how you deal with it. …and I think that’s exactly how women cope in the military and this is why they form a sub-culture, because it’s the one chance they get to just relax and not have to pretend about their lives.

In these accounts, the regulation is constructed as productive, as facilitating the formation and maintenance of a lesbian sub-culture (‘an underground channel’) that might not otherwise exist in the absence of the exclusionary policy. Anita, for example, marks the Army institution as being different—‘an institution all on its own’—and she links this to the prohibition against lesbianism. Specifically, she constructs this prohibition as being directly responsible for lesbian solidarity in terms of being ‘forced’ to group together and forge (sometimes unlikely) alliances on the basis of shared sexuality. Moreover, it is precisely the existence of the policy, which is constructed as precipitating the sub-culture and amplifying the existence of lesbians, that in a paradoxical sense allows them ‘to see all the lesbians and get involved with it’ (Linda, Section 6.5.1). As Natasha says, the vigilance necessitated by having to conceal one’s sexuality exhorts women to lead fairly ‘ghettoised’ lives and this segregation is actually perpetuated by the exclusionary policy. Chris also raises the issue of not being able to trust heterosexuals in the context of the investigations and constructs a polarisation of relations between heterosexuals and homosexuals that emerges as a direct result of the policy, simultaneously facilitating the development of a ‘gay underworld.’ Marie re-iterates this construction in her account of historical changes in attitudes towards lesbians in the Army:

Marie: Yes so the fellers, the guys all know who is who, in fact it was tolerated more when I first joined the Army, more open than it is today, well I think it’s changing again today but I don’t mix with them anymore. First of all in the seventies it was
more open, very much more open actually to the point where the girls were dancing
together at Naafi discos, and the men used to say if the girls were going to get
investigated they would pretend that they were their boyfriends ... So that was in the
mid seventies, then by the early eighties it had all changed

**JB**: What happened? How did that manifest itself?
**Marie**: Erm there was no, I don't know, suddenly there was no, like you weren't
allowed to dance together anymore, it wasn't quite, nobody said you weren't allowed
to dance together, but you weren't. It wasn't tolerated anymore. Actually I think it
was because there was a great big investigation at the unit where I was and there
were women kicked out of the Army so it was like so everybody then sort of went
underground, before that it was just open, the men knew the women who were
together because it was quite a close community, 'cos obviously we all worked
together we all mixed together in the Naafi.

Originally, Marie constructs a mutually supportive relationship between lesbians and
(heterosexual) men in the Army, during the seventies, in which the men are positioned
as reliable protectors of lesbians in the event of investigations. She adds that this
changed in the eighties and accounts for it in terms of 'a big investigation’ which
forced lesbians underground. Notably, both here and in Natasha’s account it is not
lesbianism *per se* that is constructed as problematic or as damaging relationships
between heterosexual men and lesbians, but rather the necessity for lesbians to
conceal their lives. Marie also constructs the enforcement of the regulation, that is the
investigation, as precipitating the formation of an underground lesbian sub-culture
and as polarising previously open and supportive relationships between heterosexual
men and lesbians. Thus, the women construct the Army environment as being
characterised by an abundance of lesbians, despite the official sanctions established to
preclude their presence. In fact, the enforcement of prohibitions against lesbianism is
construed as potentiating the proliferation of a cohesive, resistant and viable
underground lesbian sub-culture. This possibility is juxtaposed against the relative
intolerance of gay men in the Army.

### 6.5.3 (In)Tolerable Lesbians: Gender Differences and the Policing of Female
Sexuality

In most of these interviews, participants constructed a distinction between lesbians
and gay men in terms of both their relative presence in the military and in terms of the
enforcement of the regulation. In the following extract, for example, Chris continues
her reply to being asked about whether she had ‘come out’ to many people in the
Army by responding: ‘only gay people.’ When I asked her if that included gay men she said that she did not know any in the Army. Nicky provided a similar account:

Chris: I don’t know any. I don’t know any gay blokes in the Army so it was only gay women.

JB: *When you’re talking about gay, you’re talking about women are you?*
Nicky: Really, just women. If there were any gay men about, they kept it very, very quiet.

Marie echoed this response by asserting that there are no gay men in the Army, and she explains this in terms of differences in the military’s relative (in)tolerance for gay men and lesbians:

Marie: There wasn’t any. I knew of one after he left, I didn’t know he was gay, but the men are not allowed to, it was allowed for the women for it to be unspoken, tolerated, but it was never tolerated for the men to be gay…. Like we had girl friends on camp, he could never have had a boyfriend on camp… It’s very different for men, the men don't hate, they can handle two women together better than two blokes don’t you think?=

JB: =Mmm=
Marie: =It’s true, they’d get beaten up, yeah.

Marie constructs lesbianism here as being tolerated in the Army much more than male homosexuality. Interestingly, despite the prohibition, she frames this in terms of it being *allowed* for women as long as it is unspoken. Indeed, she positions military service for gay men as being much more precarious than it is for lesbians. Towards the end of this extract, she forms a connection between ‘the men,’ who are implicitly heterosexual, and their inability to accept male homosexuality such that it results in violence. Kathy and Natasha also distinguish between levels of (in)tolerance for lesbians and gay men:

Kathy: I think gay women in the Army are more acceptable than gay men, but then look at the Guards. This SIB guy was chatting about it and he said “we found out this guy the other week who turned out to be homosexual.” So I said “well how did you find him out” apparently they’d put a watch on him or something and he was actually doing cabaret acts down the Black Cap [*laughs*]
Sarah: Is that a gay establishment perchance? [*laughs*]
Kathy: So this guy was a drag queen down the Black Cap on various nights of the week, you know he was having a great time. Anyway, this guy was saying that lots of guys in the Guards get married to hide their homosexuality. Anyway, I think it’s more acceptable for women in the Army, and in society generally, than it is for men. Um, without a doubt. As much as it’s awful for women in the Army. I mean how many times do you hear comments about your friends and stuff, you know insinuations about gay women next to them, or in the squadron or whatever else, and nothing’s ever done about it because they just say “well she’s only a dyke.” ‘Cos
they are so used to it. Like they've got it on you if they want to use it, but they accept it. But if it was a guy they'd say “fucking sort him out he's a raving shirt lifter.” Do you know what I mean? It is different.

Natasha: You know why is it such a problem for, why are gay men such a problem for men? I don't think that lesbians are such a problem for women, myself personally. You know, I don't really get it. And you know, I don't see why masculinity has to be defined in terms of heterosexuality either. Yeah, so I don't know, but I do think there is a difference. You know, lesbians are noticeable in a way, you know, it's like they are known. And I think that you know, it's almost understood, it's almost taken for granted.

JB: Right, as part of the Army culture?
Natasha: Yeah, absolutely. But I don't think, I don't think there's anything taken for granted about gay men in that culture.

In the first sentence of her account, Kathy constructs lesbianism as more acceptable in the Army than male homosexuality, but then forms a connection between male homosexuality and the Guards regiments. The implication is that despite being less ‘acceptable’ than lesbianism there are a significant number of gay men in the Guards, a contention she supports by re-counting a conversation with a member of the SIB. Later she broadens the scope of the disapproval of gay men in the military context to ‘society’ and forms a link between Army attitudes and those prevalent in society. Towards the end of this extract, she constructs lesbianism as being both tolerated (‘nothing’s ever done about it’) and trivialised (‘well she’s only a dyke’). Lesbianism thus construed is devoid of (cultural and sexual) significance and, by extension, of power. Both Kathy and Natasha also attribute the acceptance (and dismissal) of lesbianism to familiarity (‘they are so used to it,’ ‘it’s almost taken for granted’). Kathy simultaneously alludes to a power dynamic in observing that this knowledge can also be used against lesbians. Ultimately, like Marie, she implies that gay men are likely to be victims of homophobic violence in the military. Similarly, Natasha positions heterosexual males’ anxiety about gay men in terms of a (perceived) violation of the terrain of masculinity.

In the third group discussion, the distinction between lesbians and gay men in the Army was raised in the context of discussions about the policy, and particularly, government regulation:

Carol: What I'm saying is that Mr Soames [Member of Parliament] turns up and says “well it's all against the tradition of the Army and we don't want gay people in the Army blah blah blah”=
Janet: =They don't think about girls in the Army when they talk about that, they're talking about men=  
Carol: =That's right.  
Janet: Which is right?  
Mary: Homosexuality is all they word it as, and to me that's men....  
Louise: The men do not give a shit about women in the Army and you're right, you're absolutely right, when they talk about gays they're talking about men with men in the Army.

In the above discussion, the scope of the regulation of homosexuality is constructed as limited, almost exclusively, to men. Indeed, Mary distances herself from the term ‘homosexuality’ because she interprets that as signifying men. Initially the discussion centres on the scope of the policy regarding homosexuality in the Army and the fact that lesbians are not even considered in policy discussions (‘they don’t even think about girls’) although it is not entirely clear who ‘they’ are. The ‘invisibility’ of lesbians appears to be limited to policy discussions, however, Louise at the end of the above extract potentially broadens this discussion and continues it below:

JB: Do you mean men don't care about lesbians or=  
Louise: =No, no they don't on the whole it probably turns them on.  
Mary: It turns them on it's a sexual fantasy for them.  
Janet: The only time they get difficult is when they want to shag you.  
Heather: Yeah they do  
Janet: They get nasty and pissed off about that  
Louise: Yeah I've been in that position.  
Janet: But they don't want gay men in the Army.

Natasha: You know, I think they're really homophobic really, I think they way they deal with lesbianism is by objectifying it, by making it a male fantasy and by, by kind of sidelining women as any kind of threat on any level when they can. And, but gay men are altogether another question. You know, I think they're scared of that. And I think it's because they mostly can't control their own sexuality, you know, like it's almost tempting.

In the above extracts, the scope of the discussion is broadened to men and it is implicit that this means heterosexual men in the Army. Heterosexual men are constructed as tolerating (and sexualising) lesbianism and becoming ‘difficult’ only when lesbians sexually reject them. The scope of ‘difficulty’ is not precisely specified, although Janet suggests that ‘they get nasty.’ However, as these statements occur in the context of a discussion of the policy, there is an implicit allusion to the danger of blackmail. There is, accordingly, a further power relationship constructed here, which positions lesbians as vulnerable if they reject male sexual advances. Accordingly, lesbianism is constructed as relatively unthreatening and as tolerated, but it is a
precarious tolerance—contingent here upon their acquiescence—which can easily be withdrawn. Conversely, gay men are constructed as targets of fear and temptation for heterosexual men (Natasha).

Therefore, according to these accounts, the regulatory mechanisms used to enforce the exclusionary policy are differentially constructed for lesbians compared to gay men. Although the decisive, officially sanctioned indictment centres on being reported, investigated and ultimately dismissed for both men and women, the trajectory of regulation is configured very differently. In the case of men, the punitive measures are likely to culminate in physical violence. In the case of women, the retribution pivots on potential retaliation if they don't consent to sex or are otherwise deemed problematic.

In the above accounts, participants construct lesbianism as provisionally tolerable in the military. However, in the following accounts there is a concomitant construction of lesbianism as intolerable and, indeed, as the disproportionate focus of investigations:

**Anita:** Of course men do it too, but that used to be another grating factor—that it went on with men—but if SIB wanted to make some sort of thing of it, why didn’t they come in and make a big unit investigation and search the men’s rooms?

**JB:** Did they not?

**Anita:** No. It was specifically aimed at women, you know. But I know it went on with men. It went on a lot. A lot more than most people know because=

**JB:** =What, gay men?

**Anita:** Yeah. Because a friend of mine works up in, in London and that, they dealt with that, discharges, promotions, things like that and there was a lot of men. But that’s what happened. They squashed it completely. No information got out, they got to it, they discharged them. There was no high profile about it at all. For the men it was all done on information received. All done on information received. Whereas with women, they'd just go in and, and wreck the whole joint, you know, the whole block where the women were, not specific people, the whole lot. Everybody that they thought was a lesbian and they left out those that they knew weren’t which wasn’t always the case, you know what I mean, but there you go. They did block raids for straights too, but they were very few and far between, and again they always checked the girls blocks.

**Natasha:** It's very interesting, you never ever hear something equivalent to a witch hunt for gay men, ever. It's not even spoken about, like it's not a possibility that, that they would need to even check the accommodations for gay men. You know, it's like it's outside of their sphere of comprehension that there could even be gay men in the military. You know this big butch boy's club, you know

**Nicky:** I think it's on an individual basis [gay men]. I think in general, I think, well, yeah, and I think they do it by informants. I think that they respond to specific
instances. You know, like if they're - if they've got a special -- they'll watch, like they used to watch night-clubs and stuff for girls as well actually, for everybody. And I think that although that web will spread, I think that, um, that it's more contained. It feels like it's more contained. You don't hear about it. You know, everybody male, female, straight, gay, whatever, knows about the witch hunts. It's massive and its tentacles are everywhere, whereas it just doesn't happen like that with men.

These participants construct the investigations as targeting women much more than men. Somewhat contrary to Marie's and Chris' accounts, Anita considers male homosexuality to be relatively prevalent in the Army, although she positions it as more concealed and relatively unknown. Similarly, Natasha considers it to be outside the hyper masculinised ('big butch boy's club') military 'sphere of comprehension.' Notably, they construct military practice with respect to male homosexuality as responsive to 'information received', whereas investigations into lesbianism are positioned as routine and unprompted. Such investigations are also framed as relatively dispersed. That is, although lesbians are deliberately targeted, Anita also suggests that mistakes are made. Thus, the regulatory scope of the exclusionary policy is constructed as differently enacted for lesbians as compared to gay men. At the end of this extract, she notes that heterosexuality is also regulated, however, this is achieved by checking the women's (rather than the men's) accommodation. Nicky also asserts that the regulatory 'tentacles' are much more pervasive in the case of female sexuality. Likewise, in the following extracts, Natasha, Kathy and Andrea construct the regulation of both male and female sexuality in the military as effected, to a large extent, through the surveillance and policing of female sexuality, and in all of the following accounts lesbianism is positioned as not being tolerated:

**Natasha:** I think all women feel the brunt of it, whereas that would never happen with men. I mean, I think in all my time in the Army they never, to my knowledge, ever checked the men's accommodation blocks, you know, and, and I don't know why that is. I don't know why that is. I mean part of it may be that they just still don't know how to deal with women in the military. That they somehow target women. It's like as if they make it known that they have checks of the women's blocks, then that will stop everybody including, or perhaps especially, the lesbians.

**JB:** Something was mentioned earlier about block raids.

**Kathy:** Oh yeah, block checks, or witch hunts and they really are witch hunts. The only the rooms that are checked are those of women who are supposedly known to be gay. They often don't go in anybody else room ... it really affected you as a person because if you were having a relationship, seeing somebody, you couldn't relax at night because there was going to be a block raid. The guard commanders would take it upon themselves to come round and check the block without the authority of anybody else, just because it was known that the women had block raids.
They would only do the women's blocks, not the men's. It's all right for the girls to be in the guys block shaggin', yeah, and they would turn a blind eye, but it wasn't all right for the women to be in the women's block, together you know?

**Andrea:** That's right, they don't check the guys blocks — that's why the straight girls go and sleep there.

These participants also argue that it is only women's accommodations that are randomly checked and Kathy, in particular, constructs 'witch hunts' as not only unwarranted but also unauthorised. Kathy accounts for this in terms of 'norms,' specifically that they occur because it is generally acknowledge that the women's accommodation blocks are regularly checked. Kathy also notes that the constant threat of such raids was difficult to deal with ('it really affected you as a person') and that it potentially damages lesbian relationships. A sense of injustice is constructed here and it centres on her distinction between tolerating ('turning a blind eye to') heterosexual violations of accommodation block boundaries and the intolerance of lesbianism. This construction is particularly interesting, given the regulation prohibiting lesbian relationships. It points to a tension in a number of these accounts between the constructed abundance, tolerance and almost ordinariness of lesbianism in the Army (and thus, its possibility) and its zealous regulation, which potentially renders it unrealisable. Part of the dilemma being reiterated in many of these accounts seems to be embedded in this productive contradiction.

6.6 Discipline and Punish: Constructing Military (In)Justice

6.6.1 (*De*)Criminalising the Policy

The enforcement of the exclusionary policy, which was positioned in these accounts as primarily exemplified by the investigative process, was structured around and constructed within a discourse of criminality. This was despite the acknowledgement by participants that lesbianism, although prohibited in the Army, is not (and never has been) a civil criminal offence or contrary to military law:

**Carol:** Yeah but if you look at Queen's Regulations and you look at the Army Act the only offences that are being committed are like buggery and homosexuality and it doesn't cover lesbianism, that has to be an administrative discharge.

**Marie:** You sign a piece of paper that says homosexuality is not tolerated within the Army male or fem, lesbian, lesbianism it includes lesbianism now it just used to say
homosexuals, and now it specifically mentions lesbianism, er and you can get discharged etc. etc. and you have to sign the piece of paper.

**JB:** What to say that you—

**Marie:** =That you understand this, which also says that you're not, but it does warn you that once you've signed this at a later stage, if you do practice homosexuality then you can be discharged from the Army, because it's not an offence in civil life but it is in the Army, you get an administrative discharge.

**Chris:** I think it's worse in the Army because it is supposedly against military law, which it isn't, it's a conduct thing, it's disgraceful conduct they charge it under isn't it? Which makes it sound even worse, 'cos it's not like you've you know, given away MOD secrets or State secrets or anything.

These participants, while acknowledging that lesbianism is an administrative rather than a legal matter, all raise the issue of the law. Natasha likens the investigations to criminal investigative procedures and Marie and Chris, in particular, invoke legal terminology in discussing the status of lesbians in the Army. Marie, for example, states that although lesbianism is not an 'offence' in civil life, it *is* in the Army, and Chris notes that although it is not against military law, 'it is charged under disgraceful conduct' and she contrasts it with issues of national security. There is, therefore, no clear distinction drawn in these two extracts between the regulatory administrative provisions and offences that are contrary to military law. That these two participants, to some extent, blur these juridical and regulatory boundaries through recourse to legal or juridical terminology is, however, consonant with the ways in which participants construct their experiences of investigations (i.e., the enforcement of the administrative policy). For most participants, re-counting these experiences was organised around four central events that they report as comprising the investigative process. These were: 'the cause of the investigation,' 'the searches,' 'the investigative interviews,' and 'the outcome or consequences.' All of these were underpinned by a common theme that centred on the *unjust* enactment and enforcement of military justice.

6.6.2 *(Un)Warranted Investigations*

Investigations were invariably constructed as unsolicited and unwarranted, precipitated most often by malicious informants or by participants being implicated in an existing investigation. In the following extracts, participants discuss being drawn into investigations, directly or indirectly, and the 'web' of potential culpability is
framed as being so ubiquitous as to position lesbians as imminent targets of investigations, irrespective of actual circumstances:

**Marie:** So that was when I first joined and then when I was going out with my first girlfriend they did another investigation, because two girls who got upset about something decided that they would put a list of names in to the erm SIB and everybody but everybody’s name was on there, so they got everybody in there one by one.

**Kathy:** Anyway we got a couple of videos out one night, to watch in the communal sitting room, you know for the guys and the girls, and er we were sat watching *Nine and a Half Weeks* just four of us like and the Provost Sergeant, he apparently, was watching us through the window. Now all four of us who were sat there were all single, we weren’t seeing anybody, just sat there watching the film. The next thing the door bursts open and there was the Provost Sergeant stood there, with another Sgt and two of the guard. “Right,” he said, “you’ve been watching pornographic material in here and you’ve been kissing” [laughs]. “Sorry? Are you talking to me here?” I was sat on the chair by myself like you know. So anyway he takes the video out and he says “you know it’s illegal to watch pornographic material”=

**Andrea:** =Nine and a Half Weeks isn’t pornographic=

**Kathy:** =“in a public place within the Army.” So it’s within the Army but it’s a public place, that was the first thing. Anyway to cut a long story short, we were marched in to the OC, he said “right ladies blah blah blah erm you’re here because you’ve been accused of lesbianism.” “Sorry?” “The other night we were told we were getting done because we were watching pornographic material, and this morning you’re saying we’re being done because we’re lesbians.” He said “that’s the way it is.” I said “sorry sir it’s a load of crap, I haven’t done anything except watch a film”. He said, “Pte [] if it comes to light that you’re a lesbian you’ll be kicked out of the Army.”

**Anita:** Now this investigation was caused because a driver who picked up the mail for the unit from the post office, right, and he … knew of two girls that were lesbians and he wanted to get them. And then of course this one letter addressed to one of those girls was in that pile, right? Now, the annoying thing is that he opened that letter. Now, that itself is against the law. But that was all passed over. And he gave the information over to SIB and she was watched, you know what I mean? But I think when it all sort of came to a head he had fancied one of the girls, and of course it affected his manhood a great deal, you know.

Anita and Kathy construct their informants as being taken seriously by the military authorities to the extent that, regardless of the ways in which informants obtained their information, accusations of lesbianism take precedence over other illegal or intrusive acts. Kathy, for example, reports that the guard (whose primary responsibility is the physical security of the unit) was watching them through the window, and in her account it is almost taken-for-granted that such surveillance is unquestioningly accepted in the military context in enforcing the exclusionary policy.

Anita reports that her investigation was precipitated by unlawful behaviour on the part
of the informant. Lesbianism is thus being constructed within the hierarchy of military regulation as being more serious than unlawful behaviour, providing such unlawful behaviour occurs in the service of excising lesbians from military service.

Although participants report that informants are both male and female in these accounts, the immanence of sexual power relations is exemplified by Anita's description of male resentment based on lack of sexual access to a particular lesbian. The construction effected here is of male sexual entitlement that stands in opposition to the viability of lesbianism. In other words, lesbianism signifies a deterrence of sexual access to women and is therefore deemed problematic for men. Natasha recounts an experience that she interprets in a similar way:

Natasha: Basically it was because I wouldn't have a relationship with this guy who was married, I might add. But who was living away for most of the week, and travelling at weekends and the long and short of it is that I, I refused to have an affair with him through the week. I suppose basically I rejected him and he spied on my house where I was living out-- he spied on my house for a while and then - and he noted down the car registration numbers of people that came to visit me, nice eh? And, then he reported me for being a lesbian because a lot of the people visiting me were women....So I was living in my own home, like this is based on nothing that had happened, there was nothing to kind of incite this, except me saying to him, “no I don't want to have an affair with you.” ... sheer fucking maliciousness. And again, the point is they're given that, you know, that power to do that to you. And I got, that's when I got fed up you know, I thought, you know, and I was innocent of that particular charge, you know, but guilty of another one at the same time.

In each of these accounts, irrespective of the events that are positioned as precipitating the investigations (i.e., the questionable motives of the informants), the military authorities are not positioned as protecting women from, for example, unjust accusations and interrogations. And the allegations and subsequent investigations are always constructed as unwarranted, although the women have all been apprised of the exclusionary policy upon their entry into the Army. In all cases here, a police investigation is initiated and it is the informant who possesses and exercises power, and it is the informant that is always already—in advance—protected by institutional authority. Moreover, participants do not report that informants are involved in the investigative process, their reasons for informing remain unquestioned.
6.6.3 Amassing the ‘Evidence’

The women in this study constructed the investigative procedure itself, and, in particular, the room searches in which the SIB attempt to acquire evidence of lesbianism, as degrading and humiliating:

Judy: They explained who they were and that they intended to search my room, I mean there was no “do you object to it?” or anything, it was just “we’re searching it” and that was it really, so I mean the search took place, they were after, they were through everything, ...  erm, it was degrading, this was all my personal belongings in my room, so we’re talking about people I don’t know going through all of my like underwear drawers, ... my diary, photos off the wall of my family, asking who my sisters were, “who are they?” They didn’t believe me. They took all my photos of my family, erm letters off like my gran off my mum and dad, friends, sisters, everything, dirty laundry out on the floor, everything out of the wardrobe, checked the lining of every single item that was hanging up, shoes, everything that could have concealed something was disturbed. ... Erm when they’d searched of course everything, letters, pictures, diary’s everything went in their evidence bags.

Kathy: Anyway to cut a long story short, we all got our rooms searched by the SIB, which was a horrific experience. I felt like my whole life was just wrecked. I mean the worst part, apart from them going through your personal stuff, yeah and they read your letters, I don’t know little things, like my Filofax, I use to write little poems and that sort of stuff, a budding poet, just little things. There were two guys and a girl, she was a bitch, and she was reading it out and they were laughing. ... Then they go through your dirty laundry and that sort of stuff, which is humiliating you know, they wreck your room they throw everything about the place.

Anita: So they came into my room and they took specimen this, specimen that, and they put them in plastic, clear plastic bags, with tags on them. And it was so blatantly obvious what they were up to. Now at the end of the corridor where I, I came out of the room, there was piles of the stuff they had taken from the girls, you know.

In the above extracts, participants discussed having their rooms searched in the terms and context of a criminal investigation. They refer, for example, to ‘evidence’ bags that were used to collect their personal effects, constructed as potentially incriminating evidence. As part of the framing of the investigations in criminal lexicon, Judy reports that the search was done without her consent, an issue also raised by Nicky:

Nicky: Oh, they searched my room again, big time. And, I actually made them write in my statement that I thought it was an invasion of privacy. And ‘cos I thought it was. But I, instead of just saying it, I said, right, I want that written down on that piece of paper that I’m going to have to sign saying I think it is an invasion of my privacy that you have come in and wrecked my room basically.
Nicky, although unable to prevent the search of her room from taking place, does resist in this extract by insisting they include her objections to the search on the interview record.

In each of the above extracts, although constructing their accounts through recourse to criminal discourse, participants do not position themselves as guilty of an offence, and they systematically resist occupying the subject position of offender. Indeed, they tend to formulate these accounts in terms of being offended against, thus occupying the victim subject position within legal discourse. They discuss, for example, the ways in which they felt degraded and humiliated, their rooms being destroyed and the search as an infringement of their right to privacy. Some participants explicitly reported that the SIB staff conducted the investigations unlawfully, thus reassigning the ‘offender’ subject position to those conferred with the authority to enforce the policy:

**Kathy:** Well she was a Corporal right? And she’ll admit the SIB questioned her er intensely. The Warrant Officer was up there for hours and hours and hours, it was horrendous. Illegal I would say but there you go! And er the Corporal will admit that the SIB twisted her statement and said “oh we know you’re a Corporal and we understand she’s a Warrant Officer, and that she forced herself on you”. ‘Cos they were after her, not the junior rank, you know.

**Judy:** There was never any sort of caution or anything like that. And I think that was pretty much it really. I didn’t sign anything and the things that belonged to me, diary, correspondence, photos you know things like that they were just away, away with it, you know, like it was their right, and that was it ... They searched her [partner] room whilst she wasn’t present, now you’re not telling me that is legal. There’s no way. I mean things that you know now you wouldn’t put up with it.

**Chris:** I’m sure he didn’t tell me about all the PACE [Police and Criminal Evidence Act] regulations, which they’re supposed to. They can’t interview you unless you’re under caution sort of thing. You don’t understand it and they don’t explain why and they don’t say that you don’t really have to do this. I felt like I was under arrest but I wasn’t. It was all done voluntary and I signed the form so they could search my room because if I hadn’t then they would say “well it’s casting shadows on you and er if you don’t let us do it then obviously you are,” and that’s how I felt. I felt obliged to let them when I could have just turned round and said “no.” I could have said “unless you arrest me I am not letting you do anything, and I want a solicitor” which I wish I’d done I wish I’d really wiped the floor.

Both Judy and Chris in the above extracts are concerned with comparing the conduct of these investigations with practices associated with criminal law, for example, the legal requirement to be cautioned prior to interview. However, Chris, unlike other participants, also states that although she felt like she was under arrest, everything was
done voluntarily. However, she qualifies this by saying that she felt obliged to comply because her failure to do so would position her as guilty. Chris and Judy position themselves as powerless in re-counting these experiences; both of them suggest that they would behave (or wish they had behaved) differently, and resisted and challenged the investigative process. Irrespective of the policy positioning lesbianism as an administrative matter rather than a criminal offence, participants construct their experiences of these procedures within a legal and juridical discourse in which they experience the disproportionate effects of power. In particular, it is the enactment of the sovereign imposition—prohibiting lesbians from military service—that is being constructed in these accounts and it is framed, precisely, in terms of a coercive power relation; a relation in which resistance is, to some extent, suppressed.

The distinction between ‘power’ and ‘force’ is complicated in these accounts. Foucault (1988b) argues that power relations always entail resistance: “there is no power without potential refusal or revolt” (p. 84). Whereas force relations (e.g., being chained and beaten) he argued, are not relations of power because they cannot be resisted. Within the context of this distinction, these participants primarily constructed their accounts of their experiences in terms of power relations. However, there were a number of references that implied the simultaneous operation of force or, at least, a blurring of the distinction between them:

Marie: I mix with, Army, ex-Army it’s our own sub-culture, network, which on the whole was OK until they suddenly had investigations and everything was thrown up in the air and everybody was upset and scared, it was like Nazi’s coming in through the door.

Judy: After that they took me from the block [accommodation] so you’re talking about people that I lived with day in and day out, marched me out I mean were not talking just let me walk out myself, I had one of them either side of me, and er the SSgt leading the way, and the female, the Cpl actually had you know like hold of my elbow, as if you’re going to make a run for it I mean really. So we went out into the square where you’ve got all the other accommodation blocks everyone gawping out of the windows, standing about looking. Marched off to the admin. quarters.... I mean it was pretty obvious that I was going somewhere that I really didn’t want to go.

Marie constructs a particularly strong account of her subjective experiences of investigations in likening them to Nazi practices, which implicitly invokes a sense of force without the possibility of resistance. More explicitly, Judy discusses being taken by the military police from the accommodation block after they had searched her
room to be interviewed in the administration building. She reports that they held her by the arm and took her against her will. That is, power is constructed in Judy’s extract as coercive—a relation in which she is physically subjugated—and which does not operate (unlike disciplinary power) in an automatic or anonymous form (see Chapter 2). Although, not perhaps precisely a force relation (in that there is the possibility of temporarily breaking free), it is difficult to know at what point the operation of this power differential ceases to be a relationship in which resistance is possible, and becomes an irresistible force relation.

Judy also re-counts this experience in terms of an acute awareness of her visibility—everyone looking at her while she was physically escorted across the Parade Square by the military police. (It is notable that the Royal Military Police wear red uniform hats which renders them distinct from all other arms and services in the Army and instantly recognisable). The most salient aspect of this experience for Judy is thus her knowledge that she is rendered eminently, and unnecessarily, visible—the police deliberately making the process highly circumspect in the contrivance of an arrest scenario.

6.6.4 Extracting Confessions

After their rooms were searched, participants reported being taken to an interview room to be questioned:

Kathy: And then you get dragged up to an interview that lasts normally about three/four hours depending how they take it. So you can say spend the best part of ten hours, and that’s only for starters. They sit there at like an interview table, and you have somebody in with you and you’re shitting yourself you’ve been in the Army about two minutes, and you’re thinking oh god here we go “are you a lesbian?” And of course you’re going to say “yes!” [sarcastically]. Do you know what I mean? “Ah yes now you come to mention it I was meaning to tell you, but I hadn’t quite got round to it” [laughs]. So you sit there you see—hey, if you had a lie detector attached to you, it would go mad. My first interview went on for about three hours and it was a nightmare, it was really hard…. when they say “are you a lesbian” and you have to say “no” and then they start being really personal. One of the hardest parts was, they had a letter they had found, it was from my sister, and er it said love you lots, miss Julie [pseudonym], and er this guy really caught on to this … So he says “who is this Julie?” I said “well it’s my sister” “Oh it’s your sister is it, do you shag your sister?” he said. I said. “No it’s my sister.”

JB: The interview, how did, how did it make you feel?
Nicky: It made me feel annoyed more than anything else I think. Annoyed that they could come in, go through my personal belongings, collecting anything they wished,
no matter what it was, accuse me of sleeping with people on pictures and whatever, not knowing who any of these people were, but accusing me anyway. The whole interview was based on guilt and I had to prove my innocence if I was, not that I was possibly innocent. It was very much, I was on the defensive the entire time. And they tried very hard to browbeat me. It was my first posting, I was quite still quite young erm I was probably 20 then. And, and they were all, well, they were senior ranks, in fact I was interviewed by senior rank female, I shall never forget her. She was particularly, particularly obnoxious and, oh yeah, vicious is the only way I could describe her.

**Judy:** So it was just a constant on and on and on, “why don’t you admit,” you know “like you are gay or a lesbian or you’re having a homosexual relationship.” “I’m not I’m not.” The Sgt did the questions and erm I think the more I denied it the more insistent he was, and then we started to I mean we did all the letters and cards and meetings and phone calls, and whatever, you know there was just no way I was admitting it. Erm “have you been to one another’s houses, families and things?” “Oh yeah and so have a lot of my other friends,” you know things like that, erm I think, I’m not sure but I’m almost sure that he threatened to get in touch with my family, you know, I’m pretty sure...In the second interview ‘cos they had the chance to look at all the mail they’d lifted and my diary, and of course we had to go through a few names in the diary, ... and the pictures of my sisters, that was disgusting, I mean this is my family, you know. I mean it was like if it was any woman “were you having a thing with them” you know.

The material collected in the search of their accommodation is framed as ‘evidence’ and utilised as a means of coercing participants into confessing to being lesbian.

Strategies for resistance are reported as including lying, denying ‘guilt’ or by their self-positioning as young, inexperienced and of a lower rank. Participants report that one of the most problematic aspects of this process is that there are no limits to what can be asked or levelled against them. For example, Kathy and Judy construe as particularly ‘difficult’ the accusation that they were sleeping with their sisters.

One of the most commonly reported aspects of these interrogations was questions related to sexual activity. All participants who discussed being investigated raised this issue:

**Chris:** Then she’d be put into a room and I’d be dragged in. I was asked all sorts of sexual questions as well and how often I’d met her before and how often we’d been seeing each other and had I slept with her, what sort of things did we do, and the people investigating weren’t SIB.

**JB:** They weren’t?

**Chris:** No because they wanted to keep it in house.

**Anita:** They went on about sexual positions. “If I said sixty-ninety with a woman, would you know what I was talking about?” “We know you’re a lesbian, so you might just as well come clean with us.” “We’ve got evidence that you, you were at a party ... and there was an orgy” and all this other crap. And I said, “I wasn’t there, I wasn’t at this party,” ... He said “we have somebody involved in this investigation
who has said that she saw you with one of these other women in bed kissing.” I said well, it’s not likely ... ‘cos I don’t sleep with my friends and I certainly don’t kiss them ... And then this guy said, um, “so what do you do in bed?” ... He said “do you,” er, what was it? “Do you use fingers or fists?” And, and of course this was new to me – this concept of being very close to the bone.

According to these accounts, accusations of lesbianism confers investigators with the authority to pose sexually explicit questions, even if such investigators are not SIB, as in Chris’ account, and as such are not trained in such interrogative procedures. These questions include the invocation of lesbian orgiastic activity and a general invasive dissection and interrogation of lesbian sexuality. These accounts thus construct the investigative interview as concerned with eliciting intimate details of (ascribed) lesbian sexual activity, with a particular reliance on the trope of the hyper-sexualised lesbian. Thus, they interpret these aspects of the interviews in terms of a lurid fascination with particularising lesbian sexuality. Notably, participants reported lesbians being subjected to such inquisitions even if they admitted to being lesbian. In the following extracts participants discuss having read the transcripts of interviews conducted by the SIB (with other women):

Nicky: They then went into the most incredible detail at the interview about what they actually got up to. No nook was left sort of unlooked at really. What they did physically, well, from the simple tongue down the throat to clitoral stimulation... I mean they asked everything, you know, did you insert your fingers, or fists and things like this?

JB : Right?
Nicky: yeah. I mean, they just.. they go into the most personal details. They really do.

JB: And this is because she’d admitted it.
Nicky: It was because she had admitted that she was gay. Their excuse being that they had to prove it because she might have been trying to get out of the army quickly.

Natasha: Well, with this girl, [who had voluntarily admitted to being a lesbian] what happened was they agreed that they would interview her first before they launched an investigation. ... and they sent a transcript of the interview back and I was really stunned. I have to tell you. I mean they asked the most intimate kind of details about her sex life with her girlfriend. I mean I was reading the transcripts ‘cos they sent it to us at [ ], with a recommendation that, or with a conclusion or something that they wouldn’t investigate it further. “And here’s the transcript for your records.” Well, I’d have to say it is probably the most intrusive, ... it made me feel kind of a bit sick you know, that she had to, this was the price she had to pay, this kind of, I don’t know, exposure, exposing herself you know to all of us. Oh, it was really, it was gross. They’re intensely personal. I don’t know, you know, it’s like they have to get you to admit that you have done something sexual with another woman which she did. I mean, she admitted it. But it’s interesting because they write it up in such a way that it looks like they’re your words. ... They used to write them manuscript and what
they used to do, they used to ask them questions, they used to say, well, did you do such and such. And then when they wrote it up, you know, there isn't anybody I know that was ever interviewed that would have said things like that. But when it's written up, you know, in this kind of first person way. And it comes out, that sounds like a violation actually -- you know, to have words put in their mouths, which is what's happening.

Natasha raises the issue of linguistic proprietorship here and her account illustrates the way in which power (and violence) resides in ownership of the discursive domain. In particular, it is not the misappropriation of others’ words here but rather the way in which Natasha perceives lesbians are constituted as speaking subjects—without speaking.

These participants construct their accounts in terms of lesbians being the sexualised objects of military police scrutiny, and although they experience this in terms of degradation and violation they actively resist positioning themselves as the occupants of an entirely passive subject position. In particular, all of them resisted ‘confessing’ (although see Judy’s extract at the end of this Section) and a number of women reported being uncooperative and defiant. The following accounts are typical of the ways in which such ‘defiance’ manifested in these discussions:

**Judy:** Then we got back to, “well Sally’s [pseudonym] admitted that you have a sexual relationship,” and it’s like we have to go through “do you kiss?” “No I don’t kiss my friends” [laughs] “Do you sleep together?” I must admit I irritated him ‘cos I was playing dumb, and I was like “sleep together?” “No, if we visit one another there’s, you know, my parents can stretch to more than one bed,” you know being a bit cheeky and things like that, erm, “do you” erm, what was it, “do you indulge in mutual masturbation?” [laughs] Of course I did play a blinder then ‘cos I was, “what does that mean?” [laughs]. Anyway, I was adamant that I didn’t know what it meant, and I kept saying, “well what does it mean?” and of course he was horrified that I had the cheek to ask the question, and I think he did try his best to explain it to me and I was going “certainly not!” [laughs]. And then it was “and do you indulge in oral sex?” And of course I was like “what, with another woman!” you know, “I don’t think so!” But they concentrated on that for a while, and they were really, all about the sexual aspect, erm and er, like I said in the first interview, I just kept denying and denying.

**Nicky:** They then went through my room with a fine tooth comb and picked up everything they thought was even remotely dodgy, including letters and cards from my sisters and stuff like this and pictures of my family, and, which they subsequently accused me of, you know, “was I sleeping with my sisters” and things. But they weren’t quite as subtle as that, and said “oh, was I sleeping with this woman on the picture.” I said, “well, I have done.” And they looked all sort of impressed and
pleased with themselves, and then I said "well, yeah, but then again I always used to sleep with my sister as a child cause we didn’t have enough beds” which didn’t impress them at all. They said, I was being extremely cheeky, I said I was just being honest but it went down like a lead balloon anyway. And they interviewed me for a few hours and I, of course, denied everything.

Anita: And I just sat there and laughed, and he said what are you laughing about that’s so bloody funny? Have I hit the nail on the head? And I said, no, I said, “I’m just trying to think what your sex is like with your wife if you can come in here and imagine for a moment that I would know what that was all about.” You know, I said, “because I don’t I’m not a lesbian” I said, “it’s as simple as that.” And I said, and I really do feel it’s about time somebody stopped this interview, I said, because for me, I’m a new Staff Sergeant, new in the unit, this is going to get around like wildfire. …So I said, I suggest somebody stop this interview right now and let me get on with my job cause that’s all I’m here to do, or words to that effect. And they all went out and came back and said, right, um, thanks very much for your co-operation. The next day I got a letter of apology.

In these accounts, participants position themselves as obstructing the investigative process and shifting the focus of attention to the investigators. They thus construct themselves as reclaiming some control over the deployment of power in these accounts and they resist positioning themselves as helpless victims. The power struggles are subtle in Judy’s and Nicky’s accounts and their resistance and ability to reclaim power is transient. Anita, however, reports that she was able to stop the interview and elicit a letter of apology from the SIB. She also reports taking advantage of the fact that she was a Staff Sergeant when her interview was conducted, whereas Judy and Nicky were both junior non commissioned officers. These women thus construct the experiences in terms of differential access to power on the basis of their ranks (and thus age and experience). Moreover, the difference between Nicky’s and Judy’s ranks and those of their investigators is greater than in Anita’s account and thus their possibilities for resistance are experienced as more limited.

These investigative interviews, which are accounted for in terms of the operation of power, are also constructed as potentiating resistance. Moreover, it is precisely the operation and deployment of power that enables (and delimits) the possibilities of resistance. For these women, it is expressed in the form of verbal defiance which functions to redirect the disciplinary gaze, but it could also be expressed as silence (i.e., refusing to speak). However, these experiences of the investigative process are framed within the context of criminal discourse in which participants are positioned as the ‘accused,’ and within which they (privately) acknowledge culpability. It is this
discursive formulation that determines the resistance strategies that are available and as Chris reported (Section 6.6.3), there is a recognition that failure to comply can be interpreted as an admission of guilt.

In these extracts, the accommodation searches are positioned as a way of amassing evidence of lesbianism, although participants report that the 'spoils' of these searches are used in the interviews as a way for the military police to denigrate them, with the aim of eliciting a confession. Indeed, it is difficult to know precisely what personal effects would constitute unequivocal 'evidence' of lesbianism. In fact, participants emphasised the futility of such searches in this regard:

Natasha: It's difficult to prove any of these things. You know, what are they going to find when they investigate? A photograph of what? You with your arm around someone? Well, we all take photographs like that of all kinds of people, it doesn't mean they're having relationships with them. You know, we've all got those things. I mean they tried to make something of all those things.

JB: Circumstantial evidence

Natasha: Right, well, how do you prove it? You've got to get a confession.

Indeed, none of the women who reported being involved in investigations were found to be lesbian on the basis of 'evidence' obtained in the searches although a number of participants also discussed being repeatedly investigated, for example, Anita five times, Marie three times and Chris, Nicky, Kathy, Theresa and Andrea twice. None of the above investigations proved fruitful for the military police and only one participant in this study was actually dismissed for being a lesbian—Judy. This investigation was her first and after two prolonged interviews with the SIB, she admitted she was a lesbian. This, she reported, was primarily because her partner had already admitted to having a relationship with her and despite repeatedly denying it, ultimately she felt she had no choice but to confess:

Judy: So again it was constantly all the time, Sally's admitted everything, we know all about the sexual side of it, that you know blah de blah erm and it was just well I don't know, it was just, and I think they were making it worse because OK you sort of know the truth and you know what's happening and there is no way out of this one when they've already got one half of you to admit it, you're buggered, you really are, especially when she's one of them [military police], she had no reason to lie... Right so in the end it was like I said "you are finished, what we've got from her is enough to finish you, you will go down with her, and you may as well admit it." I'm not even sure, I had to sign a statement you know, I can't remember I don't know whether I've blanked it out or whatever, and it was like "you had a promising career"—had, and he was like "it's gone" and in the end I did, I admitted it. I didn't keep admitting it I admitted it and that was it, and it was just to shut them up and
that was it I suppose. I don’t know, would I have got away with it if I hadn’t admitted it? I don’t think so.

Judy re-constructs her experience of this process in terms of the investigators saying that had already elicited a confession from her partner, who also happened to be military police. While her partner’s confession ostensibly thoroughly implicated her, the military police are positioned as persisting in their attempts to elicit a confession. Judy thus conveys a sense of entrapment here, but it is partly effected through her own acknowledgement of her culpability. Her statement “you sort of know the truth” represents both an acknowledgement of liability and a simultaneous delimiting of the acknowledgement, through the use of the qualifier ‘sort of.’ She states that in the end she complied “just to shut them up,” conveying an acknowledgement that further resistance would not be effective. She re-constructs her assessment of the situation as accurate, noting that she does not think she would have been exonerated, whether she had admitted it or not. As noted, Judy’s account is exceptional in this study since she was the only participant who (in the face of what she perceived to be compelling evidence) finally admitted to being a lesbian and who was subsequently dismissed. In all of the other accounts, military police efforts to ‘prove’ lesbianism are thwarted.

6.6.5  Extending the Web: Marking the ‘Guilty’

Participants also discussed being asked to name other lesbians during their interviews with the military police — that is, to become informants. In these extracts, participants construct the military police as attempting to extend the investigative web in an effort to implicate other women who might be lesbian. The opportunity for malicious informing is thus constituted by the SIB investigators in these extracts and an investigation is initiated, not on the basis of individual (or ‘offensive’) conduct and not simply as a response to specific allegations, but rather on the basis of being ascribed (potential) lesbian status:

Judy: They did give me the chance that perhaps it would be better for me if erm I was prepared to name names. So I’m sorry but you know my career was finished there was no way I was having anyone else’s on my conscience. And I said “no I keep myself to myself I don’t know anyone else’s business.” But they definitely gave me the opportunity because perhaps that would go better for me. They’re twisted.

Anita: And then he came back in, went on about other people then. They’d gone off me... “what about this person, what about that person?” I said, “they’re friends of
mine, I don't know if they're gay". “Don't you ask?” I said, “no, we don't discuss it. That's your job to find out these things, not for me to sit here and tell you some lies,” do you know what I mean, I said, “because that's what it would be, I'd be guessing.” And he went, “come on, tell us.” And they went on for about two hours about people and then eventually, he got up, he said “well you can go,” and he let me out of this electronic door, you know? And he looked at me, he said, “well I know where you are.”

Both Anita and Judy report that they resisted police pressure to name others and Anita indirectly points to the difficulties of ascribing lesbian status (i.e., ‘I'd be guessing’). At the end of her extract, she reports that although they found no ‘evidence’ to support the allegations that she was a lesbian, the investigator threatens her with future investigation. Nicky reports a similar experience:

Nicky: They found absolutely nothing. So they couldn't back up all their evidence, or hearsay evidence that they had. So, at the end of a very, very long interview, they said, “right, we can't catch you this time, but we will next time.”

Irrespective of ‘guilt’ or ‘innocence,’ being investigated for lesbianism is constructed as tantamount to culpability, and although clearly it is difficult to establish such culpability, it renders them permanently visible and always potentially within the disciplinary/investigative gaze. In these extracts, therefore, the investigators are constructed as extending the investigative web, not only in the sense that they encourage and facilitate the naming of others, but also in a temporal sense. That is, the accounts convey the idea that women once they have been accused of lesbianism are always within the scope of the investigative field of surveillance. Accordingly, although constituted within juridical discourse and despite the absence of evidence (or a confession), participants do not report that the military regulatory apparatus at the culmination of the investigative process vindicates them.

Kathy constructs a similar account, although she reports that she was required to sign a written warning (in accordance with the Army General and Administrative Instructions) following her investigative interview:

Kathy: oh yeah. I signed an AGAI’s warning after that interview.
JB: After the second interview?
Kathy: No the first one. I was made to sign it. The OC, they found nothing on any of us, she called us in and just, well the way I see it is they have to justify the whole investigation, but she didn’t tell me it was an AGAI’s warning, so she called me in right and she was gay, and she betrayed me, as far as I’m concerned, ‘cos she called us in and said “can you sign this piece of paper.” I said “what is it?”, she said “a written warning, it won’t affect your career, its just to say that maybe you’ve been a
little bit out of order’ blah blah blah.” I said “Yeah OK I'll sign it.” It was only after I signed it I found out what it meant.

The warning states that an individual has been suspected of homosexuality, although insufficient evidence was obtained to apply for an administrative dismissal (AFPGH, 1994). The warning is retained on an individual’s personal record held at the MOD and it is used if an individual is suspected of homosexuality again. In this account Kathy is thus positioning herself as literally marked as a potential lesbian and thus permanently vulnerable. However, there are two other notable aspects of Kathy’s account. First, she positions herself as unjustly handled in this process, partly because they did not find any evidence and partly because she feels duped into signing the warning when she did not understand its meaning. Second, she positions this as particularly problematic (e.g., as betrayal) because the person responsible for issuing the warning was also a lesbian. Thus, she highlights the ways in which power is dispersed in a self-disciplinary form through figures of authority who are perceived to be members of the regulated category. Anita and Nicky construct similar accounts:

Anita: So, I remember one night, I was in bed and a knock came at the door in the mess and it was another Sergeant saying the RSM wants us all down in the bar. “What's it for?” “Well, we're going to do a raid on the block.” And I say, “for what?” And she said to catch a certain girl, you see. And I thought my god, the girl, the Sergeant that I'm faced with at 12:00 at night waking me up is gay, right. The RSM is gay. They had two officers, one of which was gay. You know? And they weren't just gay, they were active gays, you know what I mean?

Nicky: It had to be one of the gay girls [who told the SIB]. It could only have been one of those … they knew days, they knew dates, they knew rooms, they knew who was in the rooms, they knew, so they thought, what happened in the rooms. I mean in absolute detail.

In these extracts, participants construct members of the regulated group as implicated in the administration and distribution of justice suggesting that the disciplinary web of lesbian (self)surveillance is thoroughly dispersed throughout the military community.

6.6.6 Constructing Injustice

Throughout these accounts participants construct their experiences of the investigative process and its related regulations within the context of legal/criminal discourse. However, they actively resist being positioned in this discourse as either offenders or criminals. This is partly because although they acknowledge their
lesbianism, they construct the policy as fundamentally unjust and, therefore, deflect the subjective consequences associated with ‘guilt.’ In constructing the policy as unjust, participants draw on a number of different discourses, and often rhetorically invoke the policies and practices of other militaries, as illustrative examples of British military inequity. In the following extract from the third group discussion, for example, participants discuss and negotiate the British military policy in relation to the US ‘compromise’ policy:

Janet: Why don’t you have it like in America where they don’t ask you and you don’t tell them, so you can be in the Army and be gay
Louise: Well that’s it, that’s what I think should happen yeah
Carol: I agree with that but I also think that’s a massive cop out=
Louise: =That happens now anyway=
Carol: =massive cop out. But what you’re asking is unreal, it’s not reality
Louise: It is because you’ve got to go with the majority, and the majority of people are not gay
Carol: Yeah but this is what’s wrong
Mary: Yeah we’re entitled to our civil rights as well
Carol: Can I just say something else OK It’s the same as having to employ 3% of disabled people if you don’t you’re punished because it’s against the law. Do you see what I’m saying here?

Two resistant discourses around sexuality are invoked here: The first by Janet (and Louise) when she calls for a move towards the US system which she positions as allowing privatised/undisclosed sexualities. The second by Mary and Carol when they refer to an entitlement to civil rights (Mary) and legislative civil rights requirements (Carol). Indeed Carol, while agreeing with Janet’s suggestion about the US system, also positions this policy (and particularly Louise’s assertion to appeal to the majority) as problematic, suggesting instead that legislative change is essential irrespective of minority/majority status. Thus, it is the difference between civil and military regulations (and praxis)—a difference the military is anxious to retain (see Study 1)—that is produced and reiterated in these accounts, which potentiates a resistant discourse in which military policy is constructed as unlawful and contrary to civil rights (Carol). Chris constructs a similar account:

Chris: You see even people we know say “oh no blah blah look at the Army people sign on the dotted line, therefore they shouldn’t have children” [referring to the pregnancy rulings]. Well to me the army was illegal in everything it did and for twenty years it was ignored, and it thought itself above the law, and if you had your normal everyday person spending twenty years thinking they were beyond reproach and above the law and, erm, we have nothing left of our society.
Chris refers to the recent court rulings in which the military was found to be acting unlawfully with respect to their policies regarding pregnancy (which required all pregnant women to leave the service). Moreover, in so doing she undermines the argument that women knew they could not be pregnant and remain in military service ('they signed on the dotted line') and, therefore, should not have expected to do so. Accordingly, she implies that although gay men and lesbians also know that their presence is prohibited in the military this policy may be equally unlawful.

Other participants also discussed the injustice of the British military policy. In these accounts, it is constructed in relation to the military operational imperative and self-sacrifice:

**Kathy:** They ask you to put your life on the line sometimes you know, I've never been there yet but people I know have in the Gulf and what have you, you know, a tour in Ireland and stuff. And then the next day they say to you, "we've done a search of your room and were going to kick you out." So, we're good enough to stand there and have bullets put in us, but they can't say "we don't care if you're homosexual, it doesn't matter to us." Oh you know, it's sad, it is really sad.

**Louise:** In the Second World War they did not know who was gay and who was straight, they just got signed up.

**Mary:** How come it works in other countries?

**Louise:** =In the Second World War gays got signed up, people did not know that they were gay that they were fighting with. You know, we won the Second World War along with gays.

Kathy highlights a distinction between military operational requirements, which can include (gay) self-sacrifice for the good of the military endeavour, and the (unjust) expulsion of gay men and lesbians. It is, in particular, the way in which being gay or lesbian is prioritised such that it subsumes all other aspects of an individual's history (including the perceived minimisation and lack of recognition of personal sacrifice) that is being constructed as unjust here. Louise echoes Kathy’s argument by reference to gay men fighting in the Second World War. Mary also refers to a further disjuncture, in this case by questioning how other countries are able to accommodate gay men and lesbians in their militaries. Sarah also compared the practices of other countries:

**Sarah:** Apparently, this Major, who was attached to the Gurkhas, was rogering all the Gurkhas. Now it's allowed apparently, isn't it, in the Gurkhas buggery is allowed...

**JB:** He wasn't a Gurkha himself?

**Sarah:** No he was English attached to the Gurkhas.
JB: What happened to him?
Sarah: Oh he got booted out, went to civvy nick, got a load of divorce papers from his wife, you know.
Kathy: Yeah, but if it's legal in the Gurkhas and they're part of the British Army=
Sarah: =Well it's an accepted thing in Kathmandu, isn't it?

Sarah draws a distinction between the British Army and the Gurkha regiments (also part of the British Army) in terms of the differential policies on homosexuality, ultimately attributing it to differences in cross-cultural social norms.

Other participants discussed the unjustifiable consequences of the policy. In Judy's case, the difficulties in explaining to her civilian employers how she could be exemplary at her job and simultaneously dismissed under the administrative category 'services no longer required':

Judy: After like losing my job with the Army, you know, well getting discharged as 'services no longer required' which I think is disgusting how can you be 'services no longer required' when you have an exemplary reference, exemplary conduct, good at your job would have climbed the ranks quickly, I mean I was a Lance Corporal already. OK my trade was a good one but I was good at my job, erm it just didn't fit and I mean it was really hard to explain like to my next employers what services no longer required meant.

Kathy: That Warrant officer had done nothing ... twenty years service, and then, she'd never been charged you know, nothing, and then one moment's indiscretion, you know? And she lost everything, the whole lot. It just makes you wonder what kind of people we work for, it really does. I felt sorry for her as well 'cos she was in a relationship at the time and it all came out, you know, why she was getting out and stuff. She lost absolutely everything, her partner, the house, you know? There's no need for it is there?

Natasha: But the thing that really irks me about this is that, you know, in any other environment, if someone stalks you and decides you're a lesbian, there's nowhere to go with that for them. You know, it's just sour grapes and, while it might look bad in your work in your civvy job, it's not a job's worth. You know, it's not an investigation, there's no where to go with it. And it's the fact that you're not allowed to be there that makes these bloody people, gives these people the power to destroy you ... In this environment, you can go to the authorities and you can say, I think such and such is a lesbian and the whole weight of this institution comes down on you.

In these accounts participants construct the accusative trigger as occurring at a moment's notice, unleashing 'the whole weight of the institution' (Natasha), thereby rendering lesbians permanently vulnerable. The military institutional apparatus is construed in these extracts as perpetually poised to exercise power.
The discursive tensions evident in these accounts effect a construction of the military policy as fundamentally unjust in both its existence and enforcement. It is these tensions that potentiate the simultaneous occupation of both the offender and victim subject positions within the discourses produced by participants. Although there is an acknowledgement of culpability, there is also active resistance to being positioned as criminal by virtue of being lesbian and, accordingly, participants in general occupy a defiant subject position in which they constitute themselves as justifiably resistant subjects in a system of military (in)justice.

6.7 (In)Visibility and the Disciplinary Gaze

In Discipline and Punish (1995), Foucault argues that disciplinary power operates through power/knowledge strategies that place individuals within a ‘field of surveillance,’ rendering them visible to public scrutiny (see Chapter 2). In these accounts, participants constructed themselves as being both visible and constrained by such external observation.

6.7.1 Power/Knowledge and Fields of Visibility

Many of these participants reported an awareness of their lesbianism on the part of others. This knowledge was not positioned as the result of specific disclosures, but was rather expressed in terms of a general feeling that other people thought they knew, albeit in the form of unconfirmed suspicions. In the following excerpts, participants indicate that they know that they are always within the field of visibility, even though it is not discussed or made explicit:

**Marie:** Well you don’t talk to the men about it [laughs] you have your own community and it’s all unspoken, with the guys that you work with it’s unspoken. They really think that they know you’re a lesbian but as long as nobody is rocking the boat and nothing is said, then they don’t say anything. That’s if you’re lucky enough not to come up against somebody who really hates homosexuals, lesbians, etc. and who has got it in for you, then you can get away with it.

**JB:** Right, so you think they know?

**Marie:** Oh yes, they know, a lot of them know.

**Anita:** And [ ] name was mentioned ‘cos they knew they were together, they knew it. But they chose not to do anything about it because they’d never had the their, their boat rocked, which to all intents and purposes is bad ‘cos they used it to their advantage, it was ammunition always for them waiting, just waiting for something to happen. ... Do you know what I mean? We were always going to be lesbian first
always, when it came to it we always had to try and draw a happy medium, not to upset the boat.

**Kathy:** In my job, in the back of my mind I know I can’t be as good at the job as I could be if I was heterosexual, because they’ve always got that on you, they’ll always have that on you, you know, I always think they’re going to get me, they’re going to put me on a list and then kick me out. They all know that I’m gay, no sorry, they all think they know. So it’s always in the back of your mind so you always hold back that little bit all the time, and it’s wrong=

In these extracts, participants construct themselves as being within the disciplinary field of surveillance, which constitutes them as self-disciplining individuals. They allude to the ever-present possibility of exposure and their responsibility to avoid precipitating it, for example, by not ‘rocking the boat’ (Marie, Anita) or ‘being careful’ (Natasha). Even in maintaining ‘a happy medium’ their lesbianism always overshadows their other attributes (Anita). Kathy discusses ‘holding back’ and not being able to reach her vocational potential compared to heterosexuals. Thus, they construct their experiences as disempowering, always constrained by the knowledge others have of their sexuality. Notably, in Kathy’s and Marie’s accounts, this knowledge is unverified (i.e., others ‘think they know’).

In the following extract, the visibility is constructed as being more immediate, but nonetheless still symbolic:

**Nicky:** So I had to go down, yet again, to where I was interviewed to pick up a huge big envelope, well a big jiffy bag, full of my stuff with big letters saying the Corporal [name omitted] Case written on it...I was thoroughly embarrassed, you know. I was mortified. I walked back with this enveloped obviously with my name sort of next to my body so people couldn’t see it.

Although Nicky’s case is not treated as a manifest spectacle (see Judy’s extract at the end of Section 6.6.3), having to return with an envelope containing (ostensibly incriminating) evidence effects a signification of visibility that functions in a (self)disciplinary form. In particular, it is through her awareness of being potentially rendered visible (by the marked envelope) that disciplinary power operates here.

These extracts acutely illustrate the simultaneous operation of both sovereign and disciplinary power. The existence of the regulation functions in a sovereign form by disempowering the objects/subjects of the regulatory provisions, but its operation is also thoroughly dispersed in a disciplinary form. Indeed, the imposition of the sovereign regulation effectively produces the power relationship here, but it operates
panoptically by constituting self-disciplining individuals. That is, it is those that are “subjected to the field of visibility, and who know(s) it” (Foucault, 1995, p. 202) that are both constrained and self-constrain in this power/knowledge formulation.

For some participants, leaving the military was constructed as a way of escaping the disciplinary field of surveillance:

**JB:** But none of you are thinking of leaving are you?

**Kathy & Sarah:** Yeah

**Sarah:** Yeah definitely.

**Kathy:** Yeah I’m only going to do another year and a half, then I’m getting out.

**Sarah:** If I wasn’t so close to my pension I’d be gone tomorrow.

**Kathy:** If I get a transfer, I might stay a bit longer, but I’m not making it a career. I want to be myself, and be able to express myself. I’m just biding my time before I can get out, you know? I’ve had enough, and they’ve had enough from me. It’s all right if you can deal with it, I can’t deal with it. I’m sick of living a lie, worrying what they all think about me. I joined up at 21, and I was out, you know, I wanted the whole world to know I was openly gay. When I joined, as much as you think it’s OK, that you can cope, you don’t expect the oppression, you know.

**Anita:** Everybody who’s gay in the Army feels it, everybody, you know, it has a sort of knock on effect, you know. And then it all seems— every, after every investigation, it all seems to quieten down you know, and people try and sort of pick up the pieces and some women who are teetering over the cliff whether gay or not, this is the time when they’ve made a command decision about their life, don’t want to have to go through this. And who can blame them, you know? It is one of those things where it’s survival of the fittest, really, cause it’s not easy to be gay anywhere, full stop. But in the Army when all this is going on, it’s, it’s incredibly difficult. And unless you’re really, really gay, you either get out— a lot of people got out along the way. Why should they have to put up with it, and why should they?

In stating that she can no longer contend with leading a duplicitous existence and the apprehension about others’ opinions, a paradoxical construction is formed. That is, Kathy re-constructs joining the Army in terms of wanting the ‘world to know she was openly gay,’ while simultaneously acknowledging the prohibition. At the same time, she constructs the military as an exemplar of panoptic power and leaving as a way of escaping the disciplinary gaze. Anita likewise reiterates the perpetual (perceptible) presence of a disciplinary gaze for ‘everybody who is gay’ in the military and, again, leaving is framed as the ultimate viable option to circumvent the scrutiny.

Some participants who had left the Army by the time they were interviewed were less optimistic about civilian society. In the following extract, Chris (like Sarah, Kathy, and Anita) constructs the Army institution as the context in which the field of
surveillance for lesbians is particularly problematic, however, she does not limit this field of visibility to the military institution:

Chris: I'm happy with who I am and being gay, but I can't be everything that I want to be, I can't be as big a person as I want to be because so much is hidden. It's still an Army thing though, but I thought I'd grow out of that, I think once you get used to being yourself wherever you go but it's like I was in a pub in Aldershot once and the girl behind the bar said you must leave the premises quickly we've heard there's going to be gay bashing tonight. Which affects you. I feel it's an awful way to have to live your life. Same with being black or whatever, or being a woman in an Arab country and not covered up properly and thinking you're going to get raped or something. There's always that violation, that horrible undercurrent where you think people are staring at you, disapproving of who you are, and I try not to do that to other people. Which is another reason why I left the Army.

In the penultimate sentence, Chris constructs herself as both visible and continually judged by the disciplinary gaze (e.g., disapproval), positioning this as one of the reasons she left the Army. Moreover, she does not limit this to lesbianism, but rather to societal norms that function to render some individuals (and some behaviours) conspicuous, 'other' and vulnerable. She positions herself, in particular, as always aware of being scrutinised and measured—subjected to normalisation procedures—and constructs this as a 'violation.' Interestingly, her experience of visibility is framed here in terms of it preventing her from being 'everything she wants to be,' functioning as a form of self-discipline. In particular, concealing her sexuality—which is constructed here as an essential and fundamental part of who she is—is positioned as pivotal to avoiding or delimiting the scope of the field of visibility. Notably, this field of visibility is constructed as extensive and not limited to the military context.

In the following extracts, Marie and Kelly speculate about some of the differences and similarities between the military and civilian life in terms of concealing lesbianism:

Marie: Although they don't lose their jobs, because it's not illegal in civilian life is it? But so saying that if they knew they were gay they could get rid of them for some other reason. I'm sure they don't hide it 'cos they're shy [laughs]. But you know sometimes I see people hiding it and I think why the hell should you because you're not probably going to lose your job through it. But then, then a lot of these people are ex Army and they've been conditioned to hide it and they've been conditioned to think it's wrong and that they'll lose their job over it, and it's best to keep quiet about it. But then they are doing themselves a disservice, again because they're hiding their life and not fully living their life. But then who am I to say, you know, "stand up," you know. 'Cos there could be a chance that they might lose their job, or it might make it hard for them at work because there's a lot of prejudice out there, which I haven't come into contact with yet because I haven't worked out there for twenty years, in civvy life.
Kelly: I'd like to see change certainly, am I prepared to stand up and fight for it? No. Yes, I'd like to see it, to answer one of the two questions. And, am I prepared to do it? Well, I felt I couldn't in the Army, rightly or wrongly and it's difficult but less so from where I am now, and I think I'd probably have to make a decision, do I stay in the kind of conservative organisation I'm in now and do it and risk, I think I would lose my job but it's my perception, but I had 16 years of indoctrination in the Army which makes it difficult and I'd have to, I think I'd have to make a decision what to do. And I'm heartened by the fact that somebody that I know who was out within [company name] won't come out within [company name].

JB: Right, mmm

Kelly: Because he feels the atmosphere here is just so different, more oppressive. Yeah. And I'm heartened that it's just not me being a coward. But would I like to, yes, absolutely. On an individual basis, I don't think people I've met at [company name] would have a problem, if I said I'm gay.

Marie and Kelly, like Chris, construct the disciplinary gaze as extending beyond the confines of the military institution, noting that although lesbianism is not illegal in civilian life it can be a (possibly covert) reason for dismissals. They both bring the discussion back to the Army and the ways in which the military regulatory context constitutes lesbianism as something that is reprehensible and that must be hidden. Notably, they construct a particularly strong account of disciplinary power here, in that the regulated military context constitutes subjectivity and self-disciplining (silent) individuals.

Importantly the disciplinary gaze extends to regulating the domain of speakable discourse. In particular, being in the Army and living with the constant threat of investigation and dismissal, was positioned as amplifying issues around disclosure and particularly if participants had not disclosed to their families:

Natasha: Oh, I could have lived with the idea. It was just they couldn't live with it. And the constant threat of, of being, being unceremoniously dismissed. You know, you have those outside of the Army to think about, like your parents who you might not have told and you know.

Chris: The hardest thing is not being able to tell anybody. I think I eventually broke down and told one of my sisters I'd been investigated but I still didn't tell her, even though I told her I'd been investigated, I don't think I mentioned disgraceful conduct but I might have done, I said "I'm being investigated because they think I'm having an affair with another woman," I might have said something like that I burst into tears I still didn't tell her I was gay.

Judy: Out openly out as a lesbian? Well I'm still confined in a way because I went from the Army, and being, well they made me feel ashamed, they made me feel, they made me feel dirty, they made me feel, they almost made me feel that what I felt for Sally was unnatural and like all like the physical stuff between us was wrong and I
mean OK it didn't last long but I think for the first couple of months afterwards, oh it was really, it was really bad it was really bad, and they have a lot to answer for, and yeah they did make me feel like it was wrong and that it should be kept quiet and it should never be mentioned and that and I suppose that's what freaked me out, how am I going to tell my parents, my dad, oh my god.

In Judy's extract, she discusses how she still feels that she cannot 'come out' because of her experiences of investigations in the military. Moreover, Judy was dismissed for being a lesbian and she reports that one of the important considerations precipitated by her dismissal was how to tell her parents. Judy constructs a particularly poignant account of the subjective impact of the military regulations and their associated practices in this extract, and particularly of the ways in which she was constituted as unable to speak and mention her lesbianism. In all of the above extracts, participants accounts illustrate how the disciplinary gaze and, as such, the closet for lesbians unlike for some other stigmatised groups, extends to the family group. In Judy’s account, for example, she is unable to count on support from her family and there is no necessary refuge or escape from the disciplinary gaze at home.

6.7.2 Signifiers of Lesbianism

A number of participants constructed their accounts of the military context in terms of visibility, although in the following accounts it is their failure to conform to social ‘norms’ that is explicitly constructed as rendering them visible and liable to suspicion of lesbianism:

Nicky: To the majority of people I am unmarried, inverted commas heterosexual, because I’m over 30, I’m a senior rank, I’m not married, never have been married. Oh, they’re: “something possibly dodgy about her.” Well, okay, they’re right. But, how dare they think that, what’s it got to do with them?

Marie: Well it’s quite easy to work out, especially as you’re getting older and there’s no mention of a boyfriend, you’re not married, you live on your own you know. I mean there’s all these things going on like dinners and things that you have to attend, and of course if you always attend on your own, nobody says anything you see because they don’t say “oh are you not bringing your boyfriend” etc., that they just don’t say anything.

Both Nicky and Marie construct themselves as considered lesbian primarily because they are not (or have never been) married. Nicky’s use of ‘inverted commas heterosexual’ also serves to emphasise the de-legitimated status of (even) heterosexuals in the absence of marriage. Both construct others as drawing direct
connections between their marital status (or lack of a boyfriend), their ages and their lesbianism. The violated norm that renders them visible is having reached their 30's and having never been married. Marital status is thus constructed as a conspicuous sign of (possible) failure to conform to societal norms. Notably, silences also serve as indicators of others' awareness of their lesbianism, enacted through their exclusion from heterosexual discourse. It is this exclusion that is interpreted as a signifier of knowledge (of lesbian status). Later in her interview, Nicky suggests that markers such as age and marital status are more salient indicators of lesbianism than is conforming to gender norms:

Nicky: No matter if I swirled around in ruddy Laura Ashley or not, there would always be a seed of doubt because of my age, because of my rank, because of my years in and because I've never been married.

Here she constructs compliance with norms of femininity (invoked through the reference to Laura Ashley clothes) as secondary to these other markers of lesbianism. For other participants, failure to conform to gender norms was more explicitly invoked as signifying lesbianism. In the following extract, Sarah discusses how she responded when one of the men in the Sergeants' Mess accused of her of being gay:

Sarah: Oh, I gave him a lovely line. It was a true story actually, and he was really apologetic after that but er he knows now, or at least he thinks he knows now, like everybody thinks they know. It's amazing you can see them all ticking. It's amazing. Even in the mess, I don't wear a skirt. I wear smart trousers and you can see them all looking, and automatically because you're wearing trousers you can see their minds ticking over. It's incredible, you really can see their minds ticking over. I hate it me, I really do hate the mess.

For Sarah, the violated social norms are related to gender and, in particular, to codes of dress. She construes her wearing of trousers as a sign for others that she is a lesbian, making her highly noticeable. However, although she states that she 'hates' being rendered visible in this way—the object of (ab)normalising scrutiny—she also resists conforming to the expected dress requirements. Below, Kathy also constructs wearing skirts as a salient form of compliance with prescriptive gender norms. In contrast to Sarah, however, she deploys this as a deliberate strategy to divert attention away from her lesbianism:

Kathy: So I do in my work sometimes conform, put skirts on and that, and er if I go to a function, and I'm hosting the CO or the RSM, I'll put a skirt on too 'cos I feel they think that's how I should look. And it's all wrong, but I do it because, for an
easy life. That's the bottom line, and I think because they all think I'm a raving dyke anyway, if I put a skirt on, and do all the business, they'll think fucking hell what a waste. I think yeah but it takes a bit of pressure off you too, they think oh that's different.

In the same group discussion, Kathy again forms a link between the trappings of gender norms and lesbianism. In this account, this connection is formed when she discusses her interview with the Military Police during her investigation:

Kathy: [The SIB investigator said] “Oh, I've heard about this, I know what you lesbians are like.” I said: “I told you I'm not a lesbian.” And he kept on and on and on: “Oh, we found boxer shorts in your drawer, you must be a dyke.” “Sorry?” “You wear after shave,” he said to me, “why do you wear after shave?” I said, “because I've got a skin complaint.” Anyway, they went away and I think checked my medical docs, and when they came back they said, “OK, so it seems you've got a skin complaint.”

At the outset of this extract, she re-counts this experience in terms of the SIB investigator saying that he knew ‘what lesbians were like’. Later in the extract, this is constructed in terms of ‘evidence’ found during the search of her room, marking her as a lesbian (principally, clothes and after-shave, both associated with men). It is thus the violation of gender codes that is constructed as signifying lesbianism.

6.7.3 Deflecting the Disciplinary Gaze

In addition to discussing denotations of potential lesbianism, such as, marital status, age and violating gender norms, a number of participants also described strategies used to avoid or deflect suspicions of lesbianism. In the following extracts, for example, Marie and Natasha construct feminism as an indicator of lesbianism and the disavowal of feminism as a way of deflecting attention and suspicion:

Marie: I'm a closet feminist [laughs], I'm not allowed to talk about things like that in the Army 'cos with already having a label on me it would just confirm their suspicions if I spoke up about women's rights ... But no, actually in my situation I'm not a feminist because there is no way I can, I fight my corner but I'm not an outspoken feminist because I don't believe I'm allowed to be an outspoken feminist in the Army.... If you start standing up for yourself and drawing attention to yourself, they just say “oh she's just a feminist, or a lesbian,” and they do use the word feminist, you can't er if I said in work I was a feminist they would immediately say “she's gay,” they would, so therefore that's why I say I'm not a feminist. I shy away from saying I'm a feminist because it's immediately associated with being gay and god forbid that you bring that attention to yourself.

JB: Would you have defined yourself as a feminist or did you in the military?
Natasha: No.
JB: No?
Natasha: Not in the military. I do now for sure. Well, I wouldn't have said that I was a feminist in the military because it would have categorised me as a potential lesbian actually ... And I think that, I think that there are ways of being a feminist in the military without ever saying it. I think the minute you say it, well, from the minute you say it, you're, you're going to get problems.

For both Marie and Natasha, the two 'closets' of feminism and lesbianism are coterminous. They conflate feminism and lesbianism here, asserting that they are reluctant to self-identify as feminists in the Army because it would draw attention to their lesbianism. Disavowing feminism, or avoiding the feminist label, is thus constructed as a way of avoiding the disciplinary gaze that would categorise them. Being less visible is thus an important strategy here, but it is costly and disempowering in that even 'standing up for yourself' is constructed as placing one within the disciplinary field of visibility. However, Natasha asserts that it is possible to enact feminism 'without ever saying it' (although precisely how remains unspecified).

Marie and Natasha were not the only participants to conflate feminism and lesbianism; Anne also made this connection, albeit more indirectly:

Anne: I suppose I don't define myself as a feminist because people automatically look at you and think: 'oh, god she's not one of those women from the seventies and eighties and burnt their bra and bloody protested this that and the other', a lot of lesbian, er, er butch women in pin striped suits do you know what I'm saying? So I don't want to be associated with that because I'm not like that.
JB: Why especially don't you want to be associated with that?
Anne: It's got a bad stigma if you say you're a feminist. Also if you say while you're in the Army that you're a feminist you're at even more of a disadvantage.

Anne does not specify the ways in which claiming a feminist label would disadvantage her in the Army, however, she is resistant to being positioned as a 'protestor' or as 'butch.' Stacey constructs 'speaking out' as rendering one visible and potentially vulnerable, and therefore positions herself as responding to problematic (that is, sexist) comments strategically and subtly. Importantly, she also makes an unsolicited reference to gay and lesbian marches, implicitly linking my question about feminism to lesbian and gay civil rights/politics.

In addition to avoiding the feminist label, participants used other strategies to deflect the disciplinary gaze. Anita, for example, discusses using the word 'lesbian' subversively to deflect suspicions of lesbianism:
Anita: When people would ask me if I was gay, I would vehemently deny it, “no I’m not a lesbian.” I mean I wasn’t afraid to use the word lesbian even if they were. So simply, that’s the mentality of some people in the forces. If you use the word lesbian and only lesbian, somebody who’s not a lesbian would use that word, you know? And the SIB were famous for it. You know? They’d say, you know, “you’re gay.” And I’d say “I’m not lesbian.” And you could see. They’d be say, “Oh maybe, maybe she isn’t.” you know. Just by the use of the word.

The most common way in which participants constructed avoiding suspicion in the Army was to have, or invent, boyfriends. In the following extract, Nicky discusses her first posting in the Army and states that she occasionally went out with men. When I ask her why, she responds with the following:

Nicky: Just for image sake, I think. And to keep the prying eyes away. You know I was, I was young, I was a private, lots of, lots of men about, it was expected of me to have lots of boyfriends. I couldn’t cope with having lots of boyfriends, so occasionally I went out with a guy for a little while to stop any rumours while seeing women.

Nicky explicitly constructs having a relationship with a man as a way of keeping suspicion at bay. The disciplinary field is constructed here in terms of expectations associated with her age and the availability of men in the Army context. Moreover, she conforms to these (perceived) expectations precisely to deflect the surveillance—‘prying eyes’ and ‘rumours’ that might have rendered her visible as a lesbian.

In the following extract, Alison re-counts deflecting attention by taking a male friend (who knows she is gay) to military events and functions:

Alison: I’ve got a bloke who is a friend of mine who is a copper and he knows I’m gay and he will pretend at functions that he is going out with me. He’ll dance with me and he’ll act as if he’s my other half and he thinks it’s a game, he loves it, he thinks it’s just fun.
Mary: But you used to have a guy as well [to Louise] who used to take you to functions
Louise: Yeah, I did
JB: How do you feel about having to do that?
Louise: Awful, well it’s all a part of it now, but it can be stressful as well. I’ve got a summer ball coming up and I’ve got to think about what bloke can I invite because I cannot turn up without somebody on my arm.
Alison: It also stops you being harassed by blokes, you know what it’s like when you’re single, you get harassed.

For Alison, taking a friend to military social events serves two functions: it both deflects suspicion that she might be a lesbian and it prevents her from being harassed as a single woman. Louise also indicates that the absence of such an ally is stressful
and highlights the requirement to attend functions with the appropriate partner (‘I cannot turn up without somebody’). Importantly, she also indicates that getting accustomed to this way of living is productive of one’s subjectivity (‘it’s all part of it now’), a subjectivity defined to some extent by concealment.

In the following extracts participants re-count how they construct plausible narratives at work to deflect suspicion:

Chris: No but I lied about boyfriends. When I was with an infantry regiment I lied and said, this was when I was abroad, that I had a boyfriend in London who worked for a bank and because I’d worked in a bank I could name you know, most people don’t come out with something like such and such a Banking Corporation, which made things more feasible. So I made up somebody.

JB: Do you find you have to lie?
Marie: I don’t lie.
JB: What now or ever?
Marie: Oh, I’ve lied before, but not very much. You see, I haven’t been confronted that much that I’ve had to lie. I have a couple of times and you make up boyfriends or you make up a different life but not on a long term basis, just for the moment or you make up something vague, you know you’ve got a boyfriend that lives somewhere else and you see him at the week end or things like that but on the whole it’s just you don’t have to speak about it.

Louise: I lie like mad at work [in the Army] at the moment—the reason why I haven’t got a boyfriend is because I was in a six year relationship we split up and I just can’t be bothered with men at the moment and I’m still telling that story
Mary: You’re still telling that story?
[laughter]
Louise: I am and everyone believes me.
Carol: She’s still telling the same story.
Louise: And when they go on about gays in the Army and everything else I have to sit there and be quiet.

Louise fabricates a story to account for her being single and, like Nicky, she conveys the impression that there is an implicit requirement in the Army to be in (or to plausibly and actively account for why one is not in) a visible heterosexual relationship. Being in such a relationship is thus constructed as rendering one normal and deflecting the scrutinising gaze. Louise also paradoxically declares that although ‘everyone believes her’, she cannot contribute when people talk about gays in the Army. Thus, while asserting that everyone believes her story, she also self-sanctions and avoids scrutiny by keeping quiet. It is her self-awareness of her lesbianism that operates in a disciplinary form here; although she maintains the necessity for her
silence, it is her self-knowledge—that she is always already rendered potentially visible—that functions in a self-regulatory form to silence her.

Anne and Natasha continue this disciplinary theme of self-surveillance in discussing in greater detail being precluded from talking (in the military context) when the subject of lesbianism arises:

**Anne:** You get the odd day when remarks come in about sexuality too because it's a big thing for men isn't it being a lesbian or gay. I have a lot of men working with me and you start off in a conversation talking about sex as people do when you're in a big conversation sex always comes into it somewhere, and they go into “oh I'd like to see two gay women together blah de blah” and then I feel oppressed straight away because I know I cannot get involved in this conversation, or I should not get involved in this conversation, or shall I say something, I'm going to look stupid anyway 'cos they know what I am, they're not stupid.

**Natasha:** There's plenty of conversations that come up when you talk, you know, we used to read the papers in the mess, for example. And the boys used to read out 'Dear Deidre' the problem page in the Sun for a laugh, and if lesbians ever came up... you suddenly felt like you were the centre of attention, you know, like all eyes were on you. I'm sure they weren't, but you felt like they were ... It's a really bad thing. It's sitting there and hearing it spoken about in that context and feeling like every move you make from that moment will betray you, even though you know it won't. And even if they don't suspect and they're not even looking for it, it's not a test. But the minute that word is said ... The tiniest things like, I don't know, it's every little thing. It's the tiniest things all of a sudden become really, really significant, magnified, kind of like, like you're under a microscope ... You feel like you are but you know, maybe you are, maybe you aren't, but you feel like you are. You feel self conscious ... You don't know whether you should be silent because that will make it obvious or agree because that will make it obvious, so. And you end up just sitting there. And that's actually probably more noticeable than, than saying something.

In these two extracts participants discuss knowing (or feeling) that they are visible when the subject of lesbianism is raised in the Army. Anne constructs this in terms of others knowing that she is a lesbian and therefore whatever she does (or does not do) potentially draws attention to her. Natasha’s account is more self-reflexive in that she does not suggest that others know, but rather that it is precisely her own knowledge of her lesbianism that renders her (self-consciously) visible. Both participants construct their accounts in terms of difficulties associated with negotiating the discursive domain, and for both of them it centres on the most effective way to deflect attention. Again, like Louise, ultimately they both resort to keeping quiet while simultaneously acknowledging that silence can also potentially render them more visible.
Foucault (1978) argues that “there is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses” (p. 27). The silences that characterise the military context for lesbians are not disinterested silences and they render these women both more visible and more invisible. In this way, foreclosure of access to the discursive domain does not effect a closure of signification but rather it potentially redoubles the signification. Accordingly, although silence in some contexts can function to deflect the disciplinary gaze, in these accounts their self-acknowledgement of their (potentially visible) silences enters them into relations of power and ‘subjects them to (self) governance’ (Foucault, 1988b, p. 83). It is power that is thoroughly individualised; it is their self-acknowledgement of being characterised/labelled as lesbian (and thus abnormal) that ensures the exercise of power here. Natasha’s account, thus, acutely illustrates the significance of being the subject(ed) in a field of (unverifiable but omnipresent) visibility within the ‘political anatomy of relations of disciplinary power’ (Foucault, 1995, p. 208).

6.8 Constructing Viable Lesbianism

6.8.1 Negotiating Lesbianism and the True Self

Despite most of the women in this study reporting that they are frequently dishonest about being lesbian, especially in their interviews with the military police, the majority of participants described the requirement to continually lie (or keep quiet) as one of the most troubling aspects of military service. One of the most common ways in which they constructed dealing with this was by compartmentalisation. That is, they refer to having to sever, where possible, the connections between the military and their (lesbian) lives:

**Chris**: That’s what’s wrong with it, it’s so restrictive that erm you can’t lead a normal life you have to lead a double life and with leading a double life it’s unnatural, to have to sort of [inaudible] on your life, yeah … So it’s very awful, and because when you’re in the Army and things are so secret you start to live a life where you are unable to share that part of your life it does it becomes completely secret and isolated like two separate lives. You become more and more isolated from people, it’s like I don’t really have any of my Army friends left … all the people I’d like joined up at Sandhurst with, I don’t really have contact with because I can’t let them into my life.
Natasha: I think I coped with it by, you throw yourself into your job and you throw yourself into your social life and the two never meet. Actually the two never meet. And you spend a lot of time, months of kind of investment in keeping the two things apart. It's really critical that those things never overlap.

JB: Do you find it difficult to cope?  
Nicky: Well you live in two worlds really. Yeah, definitely.

Marie: Well I guess sometimes I get angry about it and then other times I think just as long as they carry on like this then I can cope with it. But you're only living half your life because you can't really get involved in the social events etc., you can't really talk about what you did at the weekend or your personal life, unless you tell lies, you either tell lies or you keep quiet, and I prefer to keep quiet.

These participants thus discuss segmenting their lives in order to cope with the competing pressures of being lesbian and serving in the Army. This duplicitous existence is positioned variously as 'unnatural,' 'isolating' and as precluding the living of 'half of your life.' At the same time, the necessity for maintaining bifurcated lives is framed as 'critical.' As Marie states, while this prevarication may be an imperative and a (more or less) effective coping strategy to deflect suspicion, it also has consequences for their social relationships. Stacey and Natasha express similar conflicts below:

Stacey: Yeah. Oh, yeah, I hate lying to people. I really hate lying to people. But sometimes because, of I don't know what I get into, my actions or whatever, it causes me to lie and that my activities on the weekend, I can't -- I can't say I've been to a gay club, I've been to a club with some friends and their boyfriends, you know. And there's nothing worse living a lie. I mean, to lie to people who you work with is one thing, but to lie to your friends because on this course now, I've got a couple of good friends, you know, and we live through thick and thin, you know, we cry together when we get bad results and we laugh together. But, it's so awful to have to lie to them. I'd love to tell them the truth. But, it would put them in such a predicament wouldn't it? What they don't know doesn't hurt them.

Natasha: And you know what the problem was, it wasn't that you didn't want to be friends with them. You know, there was some really, really nice guys in my mess, especially, well, a lot of them actually. It was the fact that you couldn't, you know, 'cos to make friends with people there's a certain level of honesty and you know, that you need I think, you know ... and they take it for granted that they can talk about everything they've done ever, with anybody and everybody, you know, all the people they've had for dinner, and everything their kids are doing or their wives are doing, you know, they can talk about everything they do if they want to. And you can't. You can't even begin to honestly join that conversation at all, it's kind of like, so it's better actually not to get too close to them in fact...You know, it's, it's, there's nothing you can say that isn't going to put you on the spot.... So, I stopped eating with them....I used to say I was working late, and I did, I used to stay in the office until really late and work.... and then after everybody left the dining room, ... I did this even if I wasn't working late, I used to go down and microwave it and sneak it back to my room.... I don't think I had a dinner in the mess after probably the first 6 months, more than once, twice a month.
In both Stacey’s and Natasha’s accounts forming and maintaining social relationships with (heterosexual) others in the military is positioned as difficult. In particular, it is that these relationships are predicated on lies that they construct as most troublesome. These two participants describe dealing with this dilemma differently. Stacey positions herself as forming important relationships in the military and coping with having to lie about it because she feels telling the truth would place them in a ‘predicament.’ Natasha, conversely, while lamenting the loss of potential friendships, reports that she deliberately avoids interacting in order to avoid continually lying and to prevent discovery. Indeed, Natasha discusses lying about working late in order to avoid the social context of dining in the Officer’s Mess.

In both accounts, lying in the context of work is constructed as less problematic than lying to (potential or existing) friends. Indeed, in all of the above accounts difficulties with lying *per se* are not positioned as the main problem (see also Section 6.6.4). Rather, it is the ways in which their relationships become impoverished as a result of the deceit that is targeted as the larger issue. Specifically, these relationships are constructed as being diminished not because of deception in and of itself, because the women position themselves as unable to be true to themselves, which undermines the integrity of their ‘real’ selves.

The distinction between ‘levels of truth’ is significant here and it pivots, not on the dichotomy between truth and duplicity in general, but rather on being dishonest about *who* they are:

**Kathy:** I just don’t like lying about myself, I don’t like hiding it. I like to think I’m a bit more subtle now, than when I first joined the Army erm but it’s difficult, when they say “are you a lesbian” and you have to say “no.”

**Natasha:** What is so horrible about who I am that the military feels they have to legislate my, my life you know and my desire, and my parents are potentially so ashamed of it that my father never even mentions it and my mother doesn’t ever want it made explicit, you know.

**Janet:** People have to have the courage of their convictions and if you feel that strongly about it then you should get out of the Army.

**Mary:** I agree with you, you’ve got to be true to yourself.

**Janet:** If it’s going to make that much difference on your life, I mean some people don’t mind lying, it comes quite easy but if people don’t like lying and it causes such big thing then you’ve got to look at it, your quality of life do you know what I mean.
and it's never going to be easy it never will be easy but if it makes that much of a
difference on your life then you know jack it in.

Louise: And that's why [ ] jacked it in because she couldn't stand lying, you know
she wanted to be honest about herself.

Regulating much of these accounts is the discourse of the individuated self. This
discourse, relying on liberal ideology, installs the 'autonomous, self-directed, self-
governing individual' as the ideal (Wetherell and White, 1992, p. 6). 'Being true to
yourself' is the quintessential requirement within this discourse of individualism.
Accordingly, it is the disjuncture between presenting a dishonest public image (which
they feel is unrepresentative of who they 'really' are) and being true to their interior,
'natural' selves that is at issue for these participants. The self is interpolated here as the
vulnerable target of the damaging effects of perpetual falsehood. It is, in particular,
the insidious way in which lying insinuates itself into their sense of inner self that
abnegates their subjectivities. Their social relationships are likewise framed as
impaired or limited because the military environment inhibits their ability to reveal
their 'true self.' Consequently, it's impossible for anybody to really get to know them,
which renders both their social and interior lives fragmented. For instance, a major
difficulty for Kathy centres on her feeling that she is being disingenuous by being in
the Army, in that the Army forces her to compromise who she is:

Kathy: If I wasn't in the Army I'd tell everybody, so that's the bit that's subdued,
that I hate. And I really despise myself because I can't stand up and say I'm gay, and
I'm proud, and I love my girlfriend, and I'm going to do this and that, and this is my
life.

In attributing part of the difficulty to her own individual failing, Kathy redirects the
culpability (from the exclusionary policy) to herself. In 'despising' herself for being in
a context where she cannot speak out, she explains her predicament in terms of the
discourse of the self-governing sovereign individual.

Despite the multiplicity of competing constructions of lesbianism negotiated both
within and across interviews, the predominant construction of lesbianism stands in
discursive opposition to the ways in which these women experience military regulation
and practice (i.e., as abnormal or deviant). Consistent with the idealised subject
position of the real, individuated self, lesbianism was frequently conceptualised in
these accounts as essential, fundamental and innately determined:
Chris: Gay is part of the way I’m made up, part of my character, it would be like changing my character, I can’t do that ‘cos its genetic something in there, emotional and genetic…. I think it can be hereditary.

JB: Why do you think it is then that you are gay and you like women—
Sandra: I think it is, well every person’s got male and female hormones, and I think it’s your hormones out balance one or the other, so my hormones may be dominantly male which is a possibility, I don’t know [laughs] that’s what my theory is [laughs] but I’m not a doctor [laughs]. That’s what I think it is ‘cos everyone’s got male and female hormones in them, but I think it’s which ever dominates inside you to a degree, like OK I’m a woman erm most of my hormones are obviously female hormones but I think I’ve got more, sort of maleish hormones than a heterosexual woman.

Susan: I think you’re born like it.
JB: Do you?
Susan: Yeah I do. I think it’s in your genes
Carol: I think it’s a mixture, I do.
Louise: I think you are born with it. I strongly think I was born gay.

These participants draw on the discourse of biological essentialism to explain their lesbianism, invoking genes and hormones as key biological determinants. In so doing, they re-construct experiencing their lesbianism as an essential and innate part of who they are. In conceiving of their sexuality in terms of physical derivatives, they work against the possibility that sexuality could be arbitrary or volitional in any way. Essentialising lesbianism both individualises and legitimates sexual expression, rendering it both ontologically immutable and determinate. Essentialist accounts, unlike accounts based on the notion of ‘choice,’ deny the possibility of change. The deployment of such constructions is particularly apposite within the military economy of sexuality, wherein both status and conduct is legislated. In relying on essentialist accounts, these women are able to normalise their sexual identities and practices, thereby exonerating themselves of charges of misconduct.

These accounts are consistent with the women’s accounts of the injustice of the military policy. That is, the policy is framed as unjust because it penalises them, not simply for their behaviour, but for whom they are. For example, in the following extracts, Judy and Kathy explicitly invoke a tension between military regulation and their constructions of lesbianism:

Judy: I suppose I was far enough along to know that yeah I really was a lesbian and this was for real, and that it wasn’t wrong, it wasn’t wrong it was only their warped sick little minds you know. And they were getting paid for doing this, that was even worse.
Kathy: That’s why a lot of women get out because they feel they can’t express themselves. ... because who cares if you’re gay, and who cares if you’re you. You’re only a human being like everybody else. The important thing is when you start to lose yourself, within a system, and it twists you and changes you, then it’s time to leave it. Because you should never change yourself, as far as I’m concerned, for other people.

Judy and Kathy point to an ontological and judicial tension between their lesbianism, which is ‘real,’ ‘only human’ and not ‘wrong,’ and the institutionally sanctioned investigative mechanisms that are deployed precisely to forbid their existence in the military context. It is this oppositional tension that renders it possible for participants to simultaneously occupy both offender and victim subject positions in these narratives and which partly potentiates the production of a discourse around military injustice. Irrespective of the ways in which these participants defined and accounted for their lesbianism, the most prevalent conceptual theme underpinning most accounts was the de-politicisation of lesbianism.

6.8.2  (De)politicising Lesbianism

In the many of the interviews, I asked participants if their lesbianism had any political meaning for them. Most commonly, these women did not construct their lesbianism as political:

JB: Does your lesbianism have any political meaning?
Chris: No my lesbianism is just me, at the end of the day if you’re not happy being you, you’re just unhappy, so you’ve just got to be who you are and I think you’re born to be a lesbian.

Marie: I have never had a conversation with any of the girls in the Army that was political, politically orientated about their lesbianism, they just get on with it, and enjoy life and being with the other girls and our community, without politics involved perhaps it’s a cop out, perhaps we should be getting - we’re not allowed to be political again, we can’t be political otherwise we wouldn’t be in the Army, we’d be showing our true colours wouldn’t we, but we’re not involved with that at all, not at all, we’ve just got our own ideas and views ... My lesbianism is about how I feel towards women not about politics, if we were really anti patriarchy then I guess we’re in the wrong place, because we work with men all the time in their world.

The discourse of individualism is again pervasive in these accounts and it curtails the possibility of adopting politicised explanations. Marie reports a general depoliticised stance and states that the Army proscribes a political orientation (which is consistent
with the military being an ostensibly apolitical institution); although she also acknowledges that this might be a pretext for her evasion of politics.

In producing a depoliticised, individualised subject position, a normalised subjectivity is effected which resists the deviancy discourse that characterises the military exclusionary policy documents. Accordingly, while sexuality was discursively constituted in multiple ways, in almost all of these accounts considerable discursive effort was expended on ‘normalising’ lesbianism and emphasising its similarity to heterosexuality:

Marie: It’s just normal, having a close relationship with another person, doing the same normal things going out for a drive, drinking, eating, sharing the same views or whatever, just having a normal relationship it really is. It’s just not abnormal to me and I don’t know why people think it is, and go to such great lengths to cast it out … trying to make you think that it’s not normal … it’s no different no different at all.

Marie constructs an account of lesbianism that conflicts with military policy and practice in this extract, by rendering lesbianism fundamentally normal and explicitly minimising its difference from heterosexuality. In the following extract, Kathy constructs a different account, although also arguing for the opportunity to live a normal and de-politicised life as a lesbian:

Kathy: Yeah, you become, I don’t know, bitter and twisted=
Sarah: =Yep!=
Kathy: =about the whole thing. … It’s not that we want to stand on a soap box and shout to the world, I’m gay this is me, … but the Army does that to women. They get out because they’re scared of being kicked out, and they want a life, they want to be able to go home to their girlfriends. Just a normal life but they won’t let you have it.

For Kathy (and Sarah), the Army is culpable in producing ‘bitter and twisted’ lesbian subjectivities here. Moreover, it is the restriction of access to ‘normal lives’ that constitutes these damaged subjectivities and normalcy does not entail political activism.

A defining feature of many of these accounts is the way in which participants position their lesbianism, relationships and sexual behaviour as intensely personal and private. Indeed, many of them explicitly argue that they do not want to be ‘out.’ This privatisation discourse is exemplified by such phraseology as ‘it’s my business’ and ‘it’s quite personal.’
Susan: Yeah, but the question was would you come out if you were still in the Army and it was legal.
Alison: Oh, in the Army
Carol: If the Army turned around and said we welcome gay people
Mary: I'd still be the same the way I am now, just getting on with it
Louise: Erm I think I wouldn't be open too open about it, I wouldn't flaunt it
Janet: I can understand that
Susan: I wouldn't even tell anybody
JB: So you're saying you wouldn't come out?
Susan: That's right, it's my business
Mary: It's a very personal thing

Kelly: ‘Cos it's nobody else's business who you're sleeping with and it's, it's difficult when you're working together as well. You don't want people to know that you're sleeping with someone. I think it's quite personal.

In these accounts, the private nature of sexuality functions to remove lesbianism from public scrutiny, rendering it individualised and personalised. The dichotomy between public and private selves is re-iterated in these accounts and the idealised subject position of sovereign individual is afforded by this privatisation discourse. This discursive stance is so prevailing that even in contexts conducive to being open about their lesbianism, some participants argue that they would continue to keep it hidden. Lesbianism is constituted this way precisely as an attempt to become less visible; it is a way of both minimising and de-politicising sexuality.

This distinction between privatised and politicised identities was acknowledged in these accounts. For instance, Beth argues for a distinction between 'gay' identity and sexual behaviour on this very basis:

Beth: I'm not gay, I share a bed with a man or a woman, it doesn't make me gay or straight or heterosexual or bisexual=
Emma: =You just do what you want to do=
Beth: =Yes yes, I do what I desire, and who I want to be with, it doesn't make me gay. Gayness is an issue of standing on a box because they are strong women, they are honest within themselves and are proud to stand on a box and be happy to state that they desire one woman, and desire to live in a society, and say I wish to be married to this woman and I wish to bring my children up in their social life the same as equally as a man. That's gayness, my perception of it in a society, but that doesn't make me gay.

In this account, 'gayness' is constructed as fundamentally political. It is not framed as a matter of status or 'being' but rather as inextricably linked to activism and Beth draws an explicit distinction between this activism and sexual activity. That is, for Beth, stating that one is gay is a political act and it is separate from individual
behaviours. Thus whilst acknowledging that lesbianism can be political she distances herself from this construction by disavowing the label 'gay'.

Similarly, Chris also privatises lesbian sexuality and rejects lesbian (and other forms of political) activism:

**Chris:** Yeah, I get offended by, I don't know, if people want to do things in their own homes sort of thing, but when you go down the street and see women screaming and shouting or dressed up like blokes or - again it's violence, to me it's like national front stuff, they're ramming it down peoples throats, it's the same as the national front ramming down their views, to me that's just as upsetting, probably as well because I've never been allowed to be out, out.

Chris constructs 'visible' lesbians and lesbian politics as problematic here, likening (some?) lesbian activism to 'violence' and the national front. Such political activism is constructed as coercive ('ramming down their views'), but she accounts for her response to this in terms of never being allowed to be 'out.'

A resistance to politicised discourses was also evident in participants' choices of self-descriptive labels. In particular, most participants (although see Beth above) preferred 'gay' to other labels such as 'lesbian' or 'dyke' because they perceive these latter designations to be: injurious; inadequate descriptors; imposed by (implicitly heterosexual) experts; and associated with gender-role non-conformity, which was negatively appraised.

**Sandra:** No, I just call it gay, I don't like dyke and lesbian.

**JB:** Why?

**Sandra:** I don't know just, I think it's always the way people, people, society have always said it haven't they, the way they say it, "she's a dyke" you know really like it's got a bit of horribleness about it. People never say "oh she's a lesbian" you know really nicely and like it didn't matter but they always say it like it really mattered. But gay's a nice word anyway isn't it? Lesbian's not so bad, dyke really winds me up. I think it's an insulting way to describe it.

**Anne:** I always find that word lesbian doesn't ring true in my head it just doesn't, definitely not. I don't know what, it's not a medical term it's a term that the experts have called you and it's not really true is it. It's a name that people who think they're expert in it have made up, and gay is a word that people like us have made up, so I can relate to that.... lesbian is a word that is, I feel oppressed by it 'cos I feel this is not what I would call myself.

**JB:** So what sort of image does the word lesbian conjure up in your head?

**Louise:** Diesel dyke.

**Mary:** No no I wouldn't think that. [Inaudible].

**Susan:** It depicts to me someone wearing a man's pinstripe suit.

**Mary:** No that would be dyke wouldn't it?
Susan: No, it’s very harsh, you know what I mean...
Janet: Lesbian conjures up a horrible image...
Carol: What horrible image?
Janet: Big butch hairy dyke, it does.

The rejection of the term lesbian and dyke appear to centre on renouncing images and signifiers that render lesbianism both visible and visibly different. These constructions are consistent with the normalising discourse of lesbianism, and they actively distance themselves from words that potentially emphasise lesbian difference from the ‘norm.’ However, the adoption of the term gay, which they position as being coined by the gay and lesbian community, also points to a particular kind of politicisation. In other words, this form of address denotes an identification with and allegiance to the gay and lesbian community and a resistance to designations imposed by heterosexual society. There is some dispute, however, in relation to who is an appropriate representative of the lesbian community and what constitutes political expediency. In the following account, for instance, Carol’s construction of different ‘levels’ of lesbianism marks a distinction between acceptable and unacceptable ways of being lesbian. She also suggests that conformity in appearance is a preferable (and more efficacious) way to achieve political change. In contrast, Mary draws attention to the notion that different vested interests are served by each construction:

Carol: There are different levels of being gay and being lesbian and being a dyke. Do you know what I mean?
[Some group agreement.]
Susan: Different levels?
Carol: Yeah there are different levels. It’s like you could be a lesbian and you can be gay but you can be feminine but when you see someone who is like 24 stone and as fucking butch as hell you say “oh she’s a fucking dyke” and she’s doing us no favours. Like the girl, she wasn’t 24 stone but the girl that was RAF and she had her head shaved and she went for this thing [suing the MOD for unfair dismissal for lesbianism] but she was a dyke, she looked really butch and was doing us no favours.
Louise: Yeah and she didn’t do anyone any favours.
Mary: Yeah but they want to be like that, they probably think lipstick lesbians aren’t doing them any favours either.

Thus, not all participants unequivocally disassociated politics and lesbianism. In the following extract, for example, Natasha, while arguing that her lesbianism is not about politics also acknowledges that much of her account represents a political construction:

JB: So how do you feel about feminists sort of arguing that lesbianism is kind of a political statement?
Although resisting constructing lesbianism as a political statement, Natasha also argues that her views are not devoid of the political. That is, she asserts that much of what she has said is political and that lesbianism can have political consequences. There is a tension in this account between her subjective experiences of lesbianism (as being about desire and feeling) and what she positions as her (recent) understanding of lesbianism as potentially politically salient. However, she does not position politics as a reason for her lesbianism; it is rather that she is acknowledging (retrospectively) its potential political implications.

These participants clearly reject the notion that lesbianism is in any way ‘unnatural,’ constructing it primarily as a perfectly normal and natural part of sexuality and akin to heterosexuality. There is a resistance to adopting terms that have historically associated lesbianism with gender role dysfunction or constituted lesbianism as ‘unnatural’ (all of which are perceived to render them visible and ‘other’). This is consistent with the ways in which they experience the military environment as exacting contesting requirements to be both traditionally feminine and operationally effective (which the military constructs as necessitating masculinity).

6.9 (Im)Possible Women

The themes around which these women organised accounts of their lesbianism were consonant with their constructions of gender in the military context. That is, they construct being women in the military as simultaneously possible and impossible, primarily because they construe the military environment as (unjustly) stratified by
gender, and they position themselves as the (gendered) objects of a disciplinary male gaze.

6.9.1 Gendering Military Injustice

Most of the women constructed the military environment as particularly hostile to women. Participants accounted for this in a number of different ways. In the following extracts, for example, participants discuss the fact that they are continually subjected to situations in which women's presence is unexpected. The expectation that men (should and do) occupy most of the military appointments is amplified in the case of positions of authority:

Anne: Oh god, erm everyday I go into work and I do my job and there isn’t a day that goes by that I do not feel oppressed about something or there’s not a day that goes by that a remark has not been made about women in the Army. … there isn’t a day that goes by that I do not feel oppressed about my gender, I pick up the phone and I’ve got a colonel on the other end saying ‘oh erm oh’ and just totally not expecting a women in charge answering the phone and he’s got a problem, and he’ll go ‘erm erm well erm who is your boss?’ you know and I’ll go [appointment omitted] usually a man, always a man actually, … there’s never been a woman, … or it’s the ops officer who’s a captain and it’s always a man. … Every time I pick up the phone and it’s a man I know he was expecting another man on the line.

Nicky: Yeah. Certainly, all positions of power are held by men.

JB: Ah, right. Does it, and does it make a difference for men having women around them? I mean, do you think…?

Nicky: Men are still quite surprised to find women in any position of authority. Now we’ve had women in the army for years and years and years and there are still men who’ve never served with women and are shocked to find women floating around. I mean where have they been? Where have they been for the last 30, 40 years?

Gender is located centrally in these accounts of injustice. Not only is the military positioned as oppressive (Anne) in this respect, but it is also constructed as regressive: ‘where have they been?’ (Nicky). In these accounts, women are generally outside of scope of intelligibility within the military apparatus:

Judy: And it was like I think yeah, a lot of it was unfair, you know promotion and er being limited to things you could do. I think it was slightly different when you were an officer, I think you had better scope to do things, only a little, but different. What they portrayed as girly things, you’re a woman so you’ll be good at that. They never thought that you might be a really good car mechanic or something.

Natasha: In a lot of the jobs that I had, I had to do postings and women would come to me and say I want to go to so and so and you know, you’d look at this unit and you’d say whew, there’s been about one woman there in the last hundred years.
Well, but you know, but it's not a posting that women go to you know, so you phone records and you'd say, look, I've got a girl here who's, who's say for example a clerk, and they've got a clerk post in Brunei, actually, she'd like to go. And they'd say, oh well, no, that's, that's clerk male. And say, well why? Why can't she go? She's a clerk, she's as qualified as, she's got all the right stuff. Why can't she go? Well, it's designated, Well, it shouldn't be, and I'd write a letter and like propose that that particular post would be changed to both sexes.

Gender roles are positioned as pervasively limiting with respect to the possible range of job opportunities, although Judy notes that the situation is somewhat ameliorated in the case of officers and Natasha was able to propose changes by virtue of her appointment as an officer. Combating these regimes of inequity is constructed as pivoting on exceeding the standards of performance exacted of men:

Nicky: We always had to try a lot harder to get to the same level as the men. For years we had to fight just to, just to get the same promotions, you know. To be better, you had to be better. A guy could do the same job as you, but you had to be better to get the same recognition that he would have got simply because you are a woman. ... I don't think it's any more equal than it's ever been to be perfectly honest. We still have to be better than them, always. We still have to do a better job to get the same recognition. There still is a stigma about being single beyond a certain rank, where it's okay for a guy. If a guy is single and over 30, he's a good old boy, plays the field, doesn't want to settle down. I'm over 30, well, I've got to be a dyke.

Notably, Nicky produces a 'double indemnity' account in the case of higher ranking single women. These women are subjected to greater scrutiny (and potential accusations of lesbianism) than their male counterparts within the hegemonic discourse of heterosexuality. In this way, the subject position of the (especially successful) military woman is always circumscribed by both the discourse of (mandatory) gender stratification and the discourse of compulsory heterosexuality.

Chris provides an account of the literal enactment of gender stratification, reporting her experiences as the only female in an all-male officer's mess in terms of being physically segregated:

Chris: Yes! My first six months oh god it was like er, I was just so unwanted. I'd been there about two weeks they gave me the shittiest room in the mess. They said it was because I was a woman and they didn't want me on the same floor as the male subalterns they said there would be problems. They had rooms double the size of mine and it was awful there was no proper carpet, my bathroom had no carpet it was freezing in fact, and it was right down by the back of the kitchens. Honestly it would have been the old servants quarters originally, and they had all lovely rooms some of them en-suite. Oh all the time it was you know, the Adjutant even used to write on a piece of paper “fucking do as I tell you, you dizzy tart.” ... I remember I kept this slip of paper, and he used to throw cups at me and say “make me a cup of tea” he used to call me “darling.”
She formulates an account of denigration and subjugation, in which her primary (or sole) role is conceived of in terms of servitude ('making cups of tea'). Anita similarly relates her experiences of the lack of respect accorded to female soldiers:

Anita: = there was a circular came out from headquarters, I was at [ ] at the time, and it said they wanted women volunteers to go to the Falklands and it was done in such a manner that although I wanted to go because of the experience of it, I refused to go because reading between the lines they wanted women there to cheer up the men. ... And, and this is how it was. It was as simple as that. And I refused to go on that premise. There was no way. I'd go there on my own merits as being in the army not a bloody skivvy to cheer up the men. Yeah. And I spent two tours in [ ] and, you were the 2IC of every brick that went out, you know, a brick consisting of six soldiers and one WRAC because—and the squad hated that, they hated it. Until they got to know you as a person ... but as a soldier if you like, they had no respect for you at all. And yet if the OC of the brick went down, was shot or injured or what, then you were in control. But the radio network call for women was “Coffeepot,” you know, and I refused to fucking answer the radio when they said “Coffeepot,” ... Can you imagine how that made you feel?

Anita constructs women as outside of the definitional scope of the term ‘soldier’ and through invocation of the epithet ‘coffeepot’ again stresses the subservient positioning of military women. Moreover, the subsidiary role of women (in consoling or trivialised functions, for example) is also emphasised in Natasha extract below:

Natasha: You know, being one woman in an all-male mess is a problem because ... they always invite you to, to entertain visiting Generals ... Always, ‘cos you're the only girl and you know, they want to spice the night up. ...Oh they're all just so busy, you know, full of their old war stories... It makes you feel like, you're there for their entertainment. ...They don't want somebody who's going to compete war stories with them, they want somebody to impress. I was just bored and I think it was obvious, you know. Yeah, so I stopped being invited to those. Bonus, I say...And women do tend to be a little bit, if, if they allow themselves to be, you can become decorative, you know, and not terribly functional...and not taken seriously at all. And the point is, that once they start to take you seriously, you risk being called a dyke.

Rather than being positioned as active equal agents in military (social) activities, women are constructed here as surrogate courtesans, their utility centring on being decorative and entertaining. Notably, adopting an active posture alongside their colleagues can invite accusations of lesbianism. Again, the discursive management of appropriate (heterosexualised) femininity delimits the subjectivity of female military personnel.
6.9.2  *The Disciplining Male Gaze: Competence and Compliance*

According to these participants, women's subjectivities are regulated by contending constructions of occupational competence and compliance to gender norms. The prevailing discourses of gender stratification and (glorified) masculinity in the military simultaneously exhort the women to display traditionally feminine characteristics and to perform (proficiently) traditionally male occupations:

**Nicky:** I think men see themselves as macho, they've got to be macho. Well hard, that sort of thing. Well, quite a lot of men aren't, of course, but they've got to give this impression that they are, 'cos, you know, being a soldier is a, is a masculine kind of thing. But being a woman and a soldier, well, you know, that's a bit of a contradiction as far as men see us.

**Anita:** Because they always wanted us to have this feminine element, do you know what I mean, it's always got to be present when there's men running the show, you know ... They've got to have that, and obviously it's not because it makes us comfortable. It's not practical but we have to wear it, that's the uniform. Whereas the Americans have it right, don't they? ... they will put a female in a uniform that is practical to the job at hand. Not because it makes her look like a woman, they're not interested. And you look at all your armies throughout the world are like that, with the exception of the British Army who are still wearing skirts in situations that are not practical. ... Men's attitudes, put men together and that's a, an enormous amount to get over ... Then by the same token they don't allow you to be overly feminine, the rules were always never wear red lipstick, you're not allowed to wear dangly earrings, you're not allowed to wear your hair down, you're not allowed to—but women made those rules.

**Andrea:** Oh, yeah. Still got to be feminine, no matter what happens. Whether you're climbing over an assault course or whether you're typing something, you've still got to be a woman. Yeah, you've still got to do these manly things, with your lipstick on.

In these extracts, participants discuss the requirement to conform to gender role expectations, often irrespective of occupational practicalities and exigencies. Again, the British regulations in this respect are framed as outmoded in comparison to those of other Armies. Andrea constructs an incongruity between performing (traditionally) 'manly' activities with the expectation to be perpetually feminine. In Nicky's account, being a woman and being a soldier are explicitly juxtaposed as contradictory roles, within a 'macho' military climate. The required 'standard' of femininity is constructed as imposed by men in Anita's extract, but women are also positioned here as restricting and delimiting the 'excessive' femininity required (an implicit reference to the WRAC).

In the following account, femininity takes precedence over competence:
Nicky: they promote lots of women because they’re pretty or whatever, have the best figure or they got big boobs. When you get further up, it still helps if you’re attractive, but you should have to go on merit because of the way you perform your job. It still is happening, you know, men still like to have an attractive person floating about, much rather than a, you know, a bull dyke or a quasi-modo look alike, you know, it’s true. The men like decorative women floating around, looking good. It makes them feel good. And generally speaking, if you do your job well as well, that’s a bonus.

Job performance is secondary to inhabiting (a particularly circumscribed) feminine role here. The form of femininity constructed here hinges specifically on attractiveness and its decorative function and it is juxtaposed against its (ostensible) obverse, which is typified by a characteristically unappealing (‘quasi-mode look alike’) image of a masculinised lesbian (‘bull dyke’).

In the following extracts Kathy, Andrea and Natasha explicitly link the requirement to be feminine to the male gaze, and here its imposition is framed as unrealistic and inconsistently applied:

Natasha: Well, I think I’ve said it really. I think that masculinity is the only ideal for men and I think it’s tolerated in women when it’s functional for them. And I think it’s, I think it’s despised at other times because it’s threatening. You know, when it’s helpful, they love it. When it threatens them, they hate it...I think it’s encouraged in men and I think it’s encouraged and discouraged in women. And femininity is not allowed in either, in an operational context, but it’s absolutely required for women in, in social contexts.

Kathy: You know they can’t expect you to do the same and still look like a woman. I mean what does a woman look like anyway? You know, what should we look like? Is it their idea of what we should look like? I think it is. So we shouldn’t act and do what they want us to, but we do, we do! ... It’s not right but you know it’s a man’s, in the Army femininity is seen through a man’s eyes. It’s how a man wants to see a woman, like a page three model, yeah. He expects every woman to be like that, and yet when, they aren’t like that and you’re at work they expect you to be like men. So where do you draw the line ... and how do you act? If you just get on with it you have to put up with a load of stick.

Andrea: Yeah, Yeah you’re right about that — women should look like women, it doesn’t matter what you’re doing, they expect you to look a certain way all the time, otherwise you get labelled a dyke, mostly they like you to look pretty=

In these accounts, negotiating occupational requirements and gender norms is positioned as extremely precarious. The women report that they are expected to perform like men when it is occupationally functional and to look (and act) like women when (male) social requirements so dictate. Kathy constructs women (including herself) as conforming to these requirements even though she is adamant that women should resist. The blurring of gender roles and sexuality is again re-
iterated by Andrea; if women do not conform to the requirements of femininity they are labelled as lesbian, and in these accounts being ascribed the lesbian label potentially precipitates investigation. Thus, the difficulty they report concerns convincingly occupying circumscribed and conflicting masculine and feminine gender roles (i.e., ‘femininity is seen through a man’s eyes’). Accordingly, because gender role violations are explicitly associated with lesbianism in the military context, they are anxious to forestall accusations of gender role non-conformity, and relatedly reject accounts of lesbianism that they associate with gender role violation.

In contrast, some participants’ discursive investments focused on denigrating prescriptive feminine norms:

Nicky: I think people have different perceptions of this because there are those who like to retain their femininity by trying to be all pathetic and girly girly and flashing their eyelids and wearing stiletto heels and getting everything they want because their officer fancies them. So there are those one’s OK and there are people like me who work really hard to gain respect from them, do you know what I mean, and then they will see you as feminine or as a woman anyway.

Anne: There are those who flash it around ‘cos it’s in them you know, “I want him to fancy me so I can get what I want”, and there’s people like me who’ve always had to work their backside off and prove themselves, ‘cos I’m not into that you know wearing high heeled shoes and flashing eyelids and going ‘oh sir, are you all right would you like a cup of coffee’, I’m the kind of person who’ll do my job and then I’m there in my skirt or whatever and it’s only after they’ll see me as a woman, do you know, ‘cos if I’m working so hard they think oh god and that’s a woman there as well and she knows what she’s talking about.

Both Nicky and Anne formulate a specific dimension of femininity that is associated with a reliance on one’s femininity to achieve desired (and implicitly undeserved) goals. They firmly locate themselves in opposition to this construction of the coy (‘flashing their eyelids’) and ultra feminine (‘girly girly’) woman. In fact, these participants wish to render their assiduous efforts in the workplace much more prominent than their femaleness and femininity. Respect is constructed here as being achieved in spite of (rather than because of) being a woman.

The problematic of existing as both a woman and a lesbian in the masculinised military context is re-iterated throughout these accounts. Whilst concerns about gender were often raised by participants, issues around sexuality primarily regulated these dialogues. Nevertheless, gender is thoroughly implicated in their accounts of their experiences, partly through its discursive connection to (all) sexuality and partly
because men in the military context, according to these women, continue to subjugate and demean women.
CHAPTER 7

GENERAL DISCUSSION

7.1 Discussion

This chapter provides a general discussion that brings together both analytic studies undertaken in this thesis. Rather than reiterating my analyses of participants’ transcripts in Chapter 6 and in an effort to resist closing these analyses to alternative interpretations, I elected to focus primarily in this chapter on the differences between the two sets of analytic texts in terms of their rhetorical achievements and political implications.

The accounts analysed in Study 2 can be read as the reiteration and negotiation of a series of productive contradictions explicating participants’ constructions of their experiences of military service. First, they construct an account of the military context that renders lesbianism both possible (through its abundance) and simultaneously impossible though its zealous regulation. This theme of simultaneous possibility and impossibility is also re-iterated in their accounts of being women in a context that exhorts exacting compliance to gender roles (in some contexts) but which is often positioned as discursively incommensurable with occupational competence. Second, they construct an account of the military exclusionary policy as unjustly enforced and actively resist positioning themselves as meriting the investigative procedure, while simultaneously acknowledging their awareness of the prohibition. Third, they experience themselves as rendered both conspicuous and invisible within the disciplinary gaze, positioning themselves as resisting its disciplinary scope.

These apparent contradictions arise because participants’ accounts are underpinned by competing wider cultural discourses around sexuality, which are in direct conflict with military regulatory discourses. Thus, these analytic texts (both Studies 1 and 2) can be read as representing a power struggle for the control of the military discursive domain and as such the power to constitute military social reality. The metaphorical ‘battle ground’ here is not the operational imperative as asserted by the military policy documents (see Study 1), but rather the meaning and signification of non-conforming
sexualities. In particular, the military has a discursive investment in the reiteration and reproduction of discourses that function to render homosexualities different and other. In response, participants' discursive incitement is to render lesbianism normative such that viable identities can be constituted in the military context.

These participants primarily constructed their accounts of their lesbianism (as viable and normal) by recourse to liberal humanist discourses and related discourses organised around lesbian and gay civil rights. Liberal humanist discourses emphasise the freedom of the autonomous individual and an individual's right to privacy, justice and equality (see Chapter 3). Most notably, they construct lesbianism as fundamentally natural, deriving from inner pre-dispositions and as normal as heterosexuality. An emphasis on privatising sexuality is also evident, as is the discursive incitement to depoliticise sexuality. A number of participants also resist self-labelling and categorisation, especially when such labelling is imposed by others and thus perceived to be 'inaccurate.' Relatedly, most disavow the labels 'lesbian' and 'dyke,' since they associate these with stigmatisation, injury or gender non-conformity. This resistance to labelling and categorisation has a reference point in contemporary queer theory, in addition to liberal discourses. However, while many of these women resist being 'fixed' by particular labels, their accounts are in oppositional tension with the political intents associated with 'queer.' In particular, their rejection of rigid categorisations is not underpinned by a confrontational celebration of difference, accompanied by "a refusal to assimilate into invisibility" (Smyth, 1992, p. 60), but rather by the desire for normalcy and (viable) invisibility. Accordingly, for most of these participants, reclaiming terms from their "constitutive history of injury" (Butler, 1993, p. 223) is problematic. The accounts constructed here indicate both a resistance to self-referential labelling with terminology perceived to have a negative or injurious valence and a reticence to adopt terms that render them visibly different, non-conformist or politicised. As Butler (1997) argues, "being called a name is one of the conditions by which the subject is constituted in language" and in being called a name "one is also paradoxically given a certain possibility for social existence" (p. 2). Much of the discursive effort in these accounts is expended on constructing a thoroughly 'normal' social (and linguistic) existence, characterised by a resistance to 'othering' and sexual
marginalisation. To effect this normalisation, participants rely on civil rights discourses, which are underpinned by liberal ideologies.

The important question is, to paraphrase Wetherell (1995), why do these participants position and recognise themselves within liberal humanist discourses? There are three possible and related answers. First, it has been suggested that liberal humanist discourses, which are underpinned by concepts related to the individuated sovereign self, are the most dominant and pervasive discourses available in contemporary Western society (e.g. Kitzinger, 1987; see also Chapter 3). Indeed, in her work on lesbian identities Kitzinger (1987) reported that the majority of her participants constructed their accounts of lesbianism around liberal humanist ideology. Minogue (1967) also argues that liberal humanist discourses are so dominant, pervasive and taken-for-granted in Western society that their partiality and ideological underpinnings are frequently unexamined.

Second, the incitement to normalise lesbianism, normalisation being a key component of liberal humanist discourses, is exhorted by the military context for these participants. This is partly because in the military environment non-heterosexualities are even more stigmatised than in civilian society. Accordingly, as Goffman (1963) argues:

The more a stigmatised individual deviates from the norm, the more wonderfully he (sic) may have to express possession of the standard subjective self if he is to convince others that he possesses it, and the more they may demand that he provide them with a model of what an ordinary person is supposed to feel about himself (p. 141).

Thus, in the military environment, in which ‘young, robust and heterosexual’ (Study 1) is the prescribed and enforced ‘norm,’ there is an accentuated discursive incitement to legitimate non-normative sexualities (and their related subjectivities) via recourse to normalising strategies.

Relatedly, and this brings me to my third point, this research suggests that participants’ investment in these discourses is in their specific potential to resist the (more dominant) discourses (around non-conforming sexualities) that pervade the military context. Bearing in mind the potential dominance of liberal discourses, it would seem paradoxical to refer to these participants’ utilisation of them as ‘reverse’
or resistant discourses. However, in the local and provisional context of the military, these accounts function precisely in a resistant and reverse form. The potential for liberal humanist discourses to resist here resides not in the usual sense, as emerging from a general subordinate or marginal discursive status, but rather in their contextually and temporally specific deployment: that is, in the local and specific context of the military institution. An institution that, while part of wider society, has considerable discursive investment in maintaining itself as an isolated, autonomous and thus localised environment (see Study 1). Thus, given that power and the power/knowledge strategies embedded in discourses are dispersed throughout all relations in contemporary society (potentiated and functioning in different ways according to local discursive contexts), liberal humanist discourses, while in many ways devoid of political purchase (see below), are functioning here in a resistant and politicised form.

These participants construct accounts of lesbianism that undermine much of the discursive effort expended in the policy documents (and in their accounts of their experiences of the enforcement of the policy) on rendering homosexuality ‘other.’ In these respects, although participants disassociate lesbianism and politics, their accounts are not depoliticised but are rather constructed in ways that challenge military policy and practice. Indeed, they construct precisely the accounts that the military positions as most threatening to its institutional structure and autonomy: that is, accounts based in the liberal concepts of justice and equity and thus individual (and ‘minority group’) civil rights (see Study 1). It is partly through the deployment of this discourse that participants, while constructing their accounts of the investigative process with reference to legal discourse, are able to simultaneously occupy the ‘(potentially guilty) offender’ and the ‘(innocent) victim’ subject positions. Moreover, it is perhaps precisely because the military institution is symbolically constructed as a paternal ‘force of order,’ and thus associated with law, authority, justice and protection (see e.g., MacCannell and MacCannell, 1993) that these women report acutely experiencing its perceived injustices.

In privatising and normalising sexuality, participants resist military accounts that construct homosexuality as unrestrained, indulgent and hyper-sexualised, a construction evident in both Study 1 and in this study in the ways in which
participants construct their accounts of the investigative interviews. Equally, in constructing accounts of lesbian similarity (to heterosexuality) and normalcy they also contest the military's construction of homosexuality as 'offensive' and damaging to social relationships. Indeed, they often position the regulation as productive in this sense and as precipitating polarisation rather than preventing it. This discursive strategy thus precipitates a construction that holds the policy responsible for the proliferation of lesbianism in the Army. In a similar vein, the disjuncture between the regulation of lesbianism and its perceived abundance in the military is attributed to the existence (and enactment) of the regulation. That is, paradoxically, in prohibiting lesbianism, the regulations and the ways in which they are (visibly) enforced rather than curtailing lesbianism are constructed as rendering it visible and thus realisable.

The texts analysed in both of these studies can be interpreted as rhetorical accomplishments that centre on the production of non-heterosexual forms of self-expression. Language is the instrument of power and, in this sense, the production of the DSP can be interpreted as a tacit acknowledgement on the part of the military that the imposition of sovereign mechanisms alone (i.e., the policy and its enforcement) has failed to effect the requisite compliance. Accordingly, although the DSP is concerned to reiterate and justify the policy, its primary effect is to retain control of (and re-produce) a particular form of knowledge about male and female homosexuality that will ensure the operation of disciplinary power (see Study 1). Indeed, it is precisely the operation of dispersed, disciplinary power that is constructed as difficult to negotiate in participants' accounts, and paradoxically in this context (given the sovereign regulation), it is the most difficult for these subjects to negotiate and resist. Thus, despite participants producing an understanding of lesbianism that potentiates the formation of resistant and viable lesbian subjectivities, the discursive forms of knowing that pervade this environment also interpellate these subjects often effecting a fragmentation of subjectivity. Paradoxically, the discursive effort expended on rendering lesbianism 'normal' does not simultaneously render it more 'speakable' or subjectively 'bearable' and the interpellation of subjects by competing military and cultural narratives potentially effects a truncation of attempts to construct viable lesbian selves. For example, whilst Marie argues that lesbianism is absolutely normal, she also refers to being 'ashamed of it.' Thus, historically constituted discourses, re-
iterated here through military and cultural narratives, converge on (and constitute) fragmented (lesbian) subjects.

Part of the problem is embedded in what I have interpreted as participants' adherence to the discourses of liberal humanism. These discourses, while functional in undermining elements of the policy, for example, in effecting a production of the lesbian subject that does not disrupt military cohesion and homogeneity ('young robust and, to some extent, heterosexualised?'), are also disempowering. In particular, although poststructuralism embraces fragmentation and contradiction, participants construct these as an abnegation of the 'true' self. Thus, the production of thoroughly individualised and privatised accounts—founded fundamentally on the concept of the true essential self—ensures and re-iterates the “procedures of individualization by power” (Foucault, 1978, p. 59). Power both acts upon, and takes its effect in, the sovereign individual. The individualism inherent in liberal humanism, and upon which these accounts depend, accordingly, rather than 'freeing' subjects from the inequitable exercise of power, ultimately actively recruits them in its application and (self)enforcement. Privatised and normalised sexualities ultimately demand private and individual solutions, deflecting attention away from social and political change and taking effect in the individual.

In Study 1, I interpreted the military's re-iteration and re-production of particular forms of knowledge about homosexuality as legitimating the imposition of the regulation, and as productive of particular power relations in the military context. Moreover, the analysis undertaken in Study 2, suggests that these power relations operate, primarily, in a disciplinary form. That is, although power is exercised by rendering lesbians visible through, for example, the ritualistic apparatus of restraint and “meticulous observation of detail,” it is the (self)knowledge that one is rendered visible and thus within the disciplinary gaze that “makes it possible to perfect the exercise of power” (Foucault, 1995, p. 206). However, while Foucault's contention that power operates through the power/knowledge strategies embedded in discourses is not disputed here, it is difficult to understand the operation of power in these accounts as functioning in an entirely disciplinary form. Certainly, disciplinary power is thoroughly implicated in the constitution of subjects and subjectivity, but the connection between power and threat (or force and violence) in the military context
cannot be easily explained solely in terms of the disciplinary gaze. It is rather, as MacCannell and MacCannell (1993) argue, that the operation of power still depends, to some extent, on force or threat, and in this context it is constructed as enacted (to follow MacCannell and MacCannell’s distinction) through “administrative violence: zealous and sadistic execution of office in such a way that it destroys the life chances and sometimes the lives of those who come into contact with the organisation” (p. 213). Moreover, it is this force or threat that is outside of the disciplinary gaze, evident in these accounts when one participant discussed the difficulties of getting another job following dismissal under the administrative provisions ‘services no longer required.’ Thus, while Foucault’s account of disciplinary power is essential, power cannot be entirely uncoupled from force, threat and violence (legitimated by the existence of the policy) and on which it continues to depend (MacCannell and MacCannell, 1993).

7.2 Implications of the Thesis

This thesis has a number of implications for both research and for effecting institutional/political change. In particular, the analyses presented demonstrate the utility of a discourse analytic approach in elucidating the ways in which material practices are effected, instantiated and understood through an examination of discourse. In this respect, discourse analysis does not deny participants’ ‘lived realities,’ and does not preclude political action (for a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 3). Language, or more specifically discourses, constitutes social realities and thus provides the conditions in which social objects, subjects and social practices (and the relations between them) are rendered possible and intelligible. A focus on discourse then does not deny social reality but rather examines the discursive conditions that constitute it. Military discourses around homosexuality constitute and sustain the policy and its regulation, and wider cultural discourses are appropriated to resist military constructions and the policy. Thus, discourse analysis represents an important shift in focus, from the bifurcation of psychological selves and representation, to the ways in which realities are produced in discourse and thus constitute social subjects in the discursive nexus of competing and constantly changing cultural meanings. Thus, once discourses are understood as constituting the ‘real,’ discourse analysis, as Wetherell (1995) suggests, can have significant political impact and potentiate political action.
Discourse analysis, in itself, is not a political tool, and discourses can be read, analysed and used in many different ways. The analyses presented in Studies 1 and 2 represent only one of many possible readings of the ways in which the policy documents and participants' transcripts construct and deploy knowledge about sexuality, gender and military service. (I have, in both studies, cited as much of the original texts as possible in order that they are not foreclosed to alternate readings). In this respect, discourse analyses are not disinterested and, like the texts they analyse, they also produce and constitute their objects and objects/subjects in particular ways. This, however, is not a limitation but a potential strength. In particular, with respect to this study, the introduction of knowledge into the academic and thus public domain can contribute to the proliferation of discourses (assenting and dissenting) around gender and sexuality in the military that renders military policy and practice visible and therefore contestable. Thus, in this research, discourse analysis has highlighted some of the ways in which discursive resources are mobilised in constituting non-conforming sexualities as (in)tolerable in the military environment. Moreover, discourse analysis, as employed in this research, emphasises and examines not only the constitutive function of discourse and language but also the relationship between discourse and power. It is these two elements of the methodological approach employed here, that potentiate a feminist interrogation of "institutional power, disadvantage and transformation" (Fine and Addelston, 1996, p. 85). Thus, when coupled with feminist theory discourse analysis can be galvanised for emancipatory change and, in the case of this research, suggest ways in which military discourses and their associated policies and practices might be challenged. There are two remaining questions, therefore, with respect to the analyses undertaken in this research and they both concern its (political) implications: why should the policy be challenged and how should such a challenge proceed?

The exclusionary policy, which is sustained by a number of discourses around homosexuality, constructs an institutionally sanctioned version of social reality and legitimates a number of regulatory practices that function to reproduce and legitimate heterosexism and homophobia, thus thoroughly polarising hetero/homosexual relationships (see Chapter 5). Moreover, the discourses that underpin the policy legitimate a number of officially sanctioned practices (referred to in both sets of texts,
for example, the investigations), the experiences of which are constructed around discourses of criminality and the (ab)use of power to humiliate, degrade and violate. The ways in which these practices are constructed is, I think, sufficient reason to question the policy. However, the policy also potentiates a discourse in which all women in the military are rendered vulnerable and disempowered. In particular, women are silenced in this context through the discursive linking of feminism and lesbianism, which renders it difficult for women to ‘speak out’ without being categorised and thus potentially investigated. In addition, the policy reproduces and legitimates a discourse that can be interpreted as conferring on men the power to demand sexual compliance from women through the threat of an investigation. In addition, through the discursive linkage of lesbianism and masculinity, the existence of the policy demands visible conformity to (circumscribed) feminine gender roles that can be at the expense of women’s occupational competence. That is, the discursive linking of occupational competence with masculinity, in the masculinised context of the military, renders being feminine and competent discursively incommensurable. In these ways, while ostensibly directed at lesbians (and gay men), the policy secures and sustains a number of forms of gender subordination and marginalisation. Removal of the policy alone would not unsettle all of these gendered and sexualised discourses and would not prevent women’s competence from being associated with masculinity and therefore lesbianism. However, it would eliminate the grounds from which to accuse women of lesbianism, thus potentially eradicating some forms of sexual coercion and facilitating the potential formulation of different ways of being/doing woman in the military context that do not demand the rigid adherence to gender roles which the policy would appear to instantiate.

In Chapter 3, I discussed the argument proposed by some gay and lesbian activists (in Britain notably Tatchell, 1995) that gay men and lesbians should not aspire to military service (and indeed have a duty to refuse it) because it means assimilation (not emancipation), and it demands conforming to and defending the gender system and ‘homophobic straight society.’ The analyses undertaken in this research support Tatchell’s (1995) contention concerning assimilation and these analyses also suggest that there is a pressing requirement to re-conceptualise and challenge the discursive underpinnings of the military institution. Not least because there are men and women
(gay and straight) existing in, and interpellated by, the discourses available within the military context. Moreover, since the military is a distinctly public, governmental institution and despite its (implicitly unsuccessful) attempts to police its discursive boundaries, it is one of the ways in which meaning is relayed through culture. As such, its re-iteration and re-production of discourses that render gay men and lesbians feared and despised legitimates a discourse that incites and condones homophobic violence, a violence that cannot be contained within the military’s institutional boundaries.

The analysis conducted in Study 1 suggests that boycotting the military by gay men and lesbians will not effect institutional change. Indeed, if such boycotting is framed within the political polemics of radical or queer discourses (thoroughly politicised and celebrating endless sexual and gender plurality), it is likely to provide the homogenous military institution with the discursive resources it needs to justify continuing its systematic regime of oppression. Taken together, these analyses suggest that employing elements of liberal discourse (as these participants do) may be provisionally the most effective challenge to the policy and its enforcement. However, this requires considerable political compromise. As Tatchell (1995) suggests, it is fundamentally a political strategy in which the ‘oppressed’ seek cultural acceptance by conforming to, and in the terms defined by, the dominant order. Difference is thus erased (and privatised) in favour of similarity and homogeneity. Accordingly, privatising and normalising sexuality does not challenge the hegemonic discourses that constitute non-heterosexual identities as ‘other’ but rather perpetuates a discourse in which ‘difference’ is concealed, marginalised and ultimately eradicated. In short, liberal humanism does not unsettle the fundamental question as to why, in Western culture, there is a resistance to, and intolerance of, difference. Moreover, the reproduction of liberal discourses risks re-establishing cultural homogeneity as a discursive ideal.

In the contemporary military context utilising elements of liberal discourse may be the only effective way to initiate policy change. Moreover, for the reasons discussed above, at this historical juncture effecting policy change, rather than aiming to effect fundamental shifts in military discourses of gender and sexuality, is likely the most politically expedient strategy. Moreover, given that gay men and lesbians in the military are prevented from ‘speaking out’ and rendering public their discourses
around gender sexuality and military service, this task falls to political activists and the 'specific intellectual' (Foucault, 1980). However, while introducing these accounts into the public domain is essential, such accounts must be presented in their inter-textual, socio-political and historical contexts, and should accordingly resist reproducing and reiterating problematic forms of knowing that can support rather than challenge dominant ideologies. The employment of liberal discourses (and the political coalitions and alliances they potentiate, for example, with Rank Outsiders) must be theorised and enacted in a local, temporally delimited and provisional form. That is, for the purposes of overturning the policy and thus rendering the appropriation of different forms of knowing and being in the military possible. This would potentiate the emergence and development of different discourses in and around the military institution and undermine some of the problematic power differentials effected by the existence of the current policy (e.g., the threat of investigation and thus the legitimised regulation of female sexuality).

What I am proposing, therefore, is the provisional and strategic use of liberal discourses targeted specifically towards abolishing the policy. That is, given that the military would appear to have considerable rhetorical investment in 'othering' homosexuality, it seems likely that rendering non-conforming sexualities 'normal' is the first step in changing the policy. At the very least, gay and lesbian integration would require a significant re-thinking on the part of the military with respect to both policy and practice, and in the short term, potentially represents the most strategically effective challenge to some of the problematic assumptions embedded in military discourses. That is, homosexuality (in this context) needs to be severed initially from repudiation before it will be possible to fight for the celebration of difference. However, while I think this is necessary at this historical juncture, it remains critically important to continue to dismantle and deconstruct all forms of knowing in the wider cultural context that demand the erasure of difference as a pre-condition for 'civic equality' and thus, cultural intelligibility. That is, as Butler (1990) argues, it is essential that the meanings of gendered and sexual categories are never taken-for-granted or foreclosed and that political strategies are continually re-evaluated as social and discursive contexts change.
7.3 Limitations of the Thesis and Directions for Future Research

There are a number of limitations in this thesis and a number of questions raised by this research that future work could address. First, because this research is the first of its kind in Britain, the research objectives were broad and included analyses of both the military documents and participants' accounts. With respect to the women's accounts, my intention was to produce an initial understanding of the range of different ways in which participants locate themselves and their experiences, however, this was at the expense of attending to the more specific discursive elements in their transcripts. In particular, I did not address contradictions or linguistic nuances within or across participants' accounts, or examine the different ways in which meaning is constructed and negotiated according to research context. For example, the detailed differences in the ways in which meaning is negotiated, argued over and thus co-constructed in group discussions as distinct from individual interviews (see e.g., Wilkinson, 1998). These omissions could be usefully addressed by future research. Such a focus would facilitate closer examination of the struggles (individual and collective) involved in constructing meaning and making sense of experience within different interactional contexts.

Second and relatedly, I have not incorporated a self-reflexive analysis of the interview process or an analysis of power with respect to the research context. Accordingly, the power dynamics between researcher and interviewee, my own biography, experience and investments in this research, and the importance of these in the production of knowledge have not been thoroughly examined. This is an important omission, particularly in a feminist thesis (see e.g., Bhavnani, 1990; Griffin and Phoenix, 1994). However, in this thesis the volume and density of material, the absence of existing work, and my research objectives (to introduce 'new' accounts) necessitated prioritisation and a focus on the broader discourses and discursive resources, rather than an analysis of the interactional interview context.

Third, the research conducted in Study 2 is not intended to be generalisable, objective or definitive (see also Chapter 2). It is based on a relatively small sample of women who primarily identified as lesbian and I have not analysed, for example, bisexual accounts (although some women in this study discussed defining as bisexual),
the accounts produced by straight women or those of gay or straight men in the military or examined how other identity categories (e.g., class and ethnicity) are imbricated in the discourses that pervade the military context and how these are negotiated, and interpellate and constitute military subjects. In order to understand in more detail the discursive resources available in the military context, and to fully interrogate the ways in which subjects and multiple subjectivities are constituted, future research could be extended to include analyses of such accounts. In addition, further analyses of military or government documents should be undertaken, for example, the gender policies or military recruiting literature. Accordingly, while the documents in this study have been analysed, to some extent, within their inter-textual social context, the analysis of other relevant texts is a necessary extension of this work and would contribute significantly to understanding (and to disrupting the assumptions inherent in) the military. As discussed in the previous sections, generating research and further discussion around the military institution and its practices is likely to be one of the most effective ways of achieving institutional change. Moreover, while the focus of this thesis is the exclusionary policy and its related practices at this specific historical and cultural juncture, the analyses suggest that rescinding the policy would not effect immediate institutional change. In particular, the legacies of such policies are likely to continue to interpellate the military and its ‘subjects’ until the assumptions that potentiated the policy are fundamentally disrupted and dislodged. Accordingly, the analyses will remain important in terms of understanding the military context, even in the absence of formal regulation.

Finally, although I consider analysing discourses to be critical in understanding and ultimately challenging material practices, a focus on language can overshadow an analysis of the impact of particular practices. Accordingly, while it is discourses that potentiate these practices and produce their effects, future research should expand on the research reported in this thesis and examine the powerful and very real effects such discursive practices produce. I’m thinking here especially of the investigative process and its consequences. As evident in the analysis undertaken in Study 2, these consequences often involve considerable distress and, as Shilts (1993) has argued, can result in suicide (see Chapter 1). Participants in this study reported similar consequences:
Susan: What if you have a relationship in the Army and your partner dies, who do you tell then?

Louise: Actually this happened [name omitted] died ...she [referring to partner] was absolutely devastated this girl, ... and it was awful and they actually sent her out to Bosnia straight away, this girl had a loaded weapon everything else. Eventually she went to the Padre and he actually got her back to England because he thought that she was going to take her life. ...she has tried to take her life more than once. She’s been in the hospital for trying to take her life.

Susan: Why do you think she’s doing this though? I think the problem is she can’t talk to anybody.

Louise: Yeah she can’t talk to anyone.

Susan: She’s not allowed.

Accordingly, exposing military practices, thereby rendering them visible and open to public scrutiny is an important adjunct to the research undertaken in this thesis. The military (despite its ‘unique role’) must not be permitted to maintain its separation and isolation under the rhetoric of the ‘operational imperative’ which functions primarily to sustain its desired autonomy and (im)moral exclusivity and which sustains a discourse founded and enacted in injurious prejudice and oppression.
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### TABLE 1

**OUTLINE OF THE DISCIPLINE AND STANDARDS PAPER (DSP)**

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TABLE 2

OUTLINE OF THE ARMED FORCES POLICY AND GUIDELINES ON HOMOSEXUALITY PAPER (AFPGH)

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TABLE 3

THE MILITARY RANK STRUCTURE AND PARTICIPANT RANKS

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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¹ All ranks are shown in order of seniority from lower to higher.
² Participants' ranks are as at time of interview or are last held rank prior to discharge.
### TABLE 4

**PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Length of Service (years)</th>
<th>Year of Discharge (if applicable)</th>
<th>Interview Type/no.</th>
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</table>
APPENDIX 1

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

2IC       Second in Command
AGAI      Army General and Administrative Instructions
CO        Commanding Officer
DoD       Department of Defense (US)
MOD       Ministry of Defence
NAAFI     Navy, Army and Air Force Institute (Forces Social Club)
OC        Officer Commanding
PACE      Police and Criminal Evidence Act
PERSREC   Personnel Security Research and Education Centre (US).
QR’s      Queen Regulations
RMP       Royal Military Police
RSM       Regimental Sargeant Major (WO1 rank)
SIB       Special Investigations Branch of the Royal Military Police
SOA       Sexual Offences Act
WRAC      Women’s Royal Army Corps
APPENDIX 2

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

I am a mature student from University College London researching for my PhD. My research concerns lesbian’s perceptions of their service in the British armed forces, and in particular their thoughts and feelings about their experiences. I am interested in the positive and negative aspects of military service for lesbians and how it affects their identity.

Part of the motivation for this research stems from my own service in the British Army between 1983 and 1990. To my knowledge, no similar project has been undertaken with women in the military before. The value of the project is therefore, to draw attention to a previously neglected area of research at a time when most Western militaries are increasing their numbers of serving women.

I will not put any pressure on you to answer any of my questions and you are free to limit what you say to things that you are happy to discuss. I would like to tape and then transcribe the interviews but they will be completely anonymous. I will give all participants a false name and all tapes will be wiped clean after transcription. Unless prior permission is obtained, I will be the only person to hear the tapes and complete transcripts will not leave my possession. Selected extracts from the transcripts may also be published and will be used in the thesis, and as such will be publicly available in the library. However, any details that may lead to your identification will be changed or omitted and no record of your real identity will be stored either on computer or in written form.

I anticipate that the interviews will take between 60 and 90 minutes, although this can be reduced if you prefer. I am happy to interview you on a one-to-one basis, but I could do the same interview with a small group of two or three people if you would feel more comfortable.

If you would like more information please feel free to ring me anytime on [number supplied]. Please do not feel under any pressure to be interviewed. You do not have to take part in this study if you do not want to. If you decide to take part you may withdraw at any time, without having to give a reason and your identity will remain absolutely confidential.

I would be very grateful for any help you can give me

Jo Bower
APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW PROMPTS

Joining the Army
Why did you join the Army?

Labelling
What words do you use to describe your sexuality?
Why do you use this/these words and not others?
Do you use other words, for example, dyke, gay, bisexual, homosexual etc.? Why/why not?
When you hear/use the word lesbian what image does it conjure up for you? (dyke, gay etc.)

Early Experiences/Relationships
Tell me about when you first thought or felt you might be a lesbian (gay etc.) (How did you feel about it?)
What did you do about it (e.g., gay clubs, counselling etc.)?
Tell me about your first relationships?
Was it before joining the Army?
At what point did you say to yourself ‘I’m a lesbian’? (or gay etc.)
Did you have male partners (sleep/have sex with men) before this? (feelings about it?)
Why do you think you went out with men?

Defining Lesbianism
How would you define a lesbian?
Why do you define yourself as a lesbian?
Do you have any theories about why you are a lesbian?
Do you think women choose to be lesbians? (why/why not?)
Do you think you can change your sexuality? (would you? why/why not?)

Lesbianism and the Army
What’s it like being a lesbian in the Army?
Do/did you have to change and adapt your behaviour in the Army?
How do you cope with the policy prohibiting lesbianism?
Do you (or have you ever had to) lie about your sexuality? (feelings about it?)
Have you ever been investigated? (how did it start? what happened? how did you feel?)
How do you feel about the policy?
Do you enjoy the Army?

Lesbian Identity and Disclosure
How important a part of your identity is your lesbianism?
Do many people know that you’re a lesbian (colleagues/family etc.)?
If you had the choice would you choose to be out most/all of the time? (why or why not?)
If the policy changed would you come out in the military?
When you have ‘come out’ how has that been? (negative, positive, feelings about it?)

**Gender and the Army**
What’s it like being a woman in the Army?
How important a part of your identity is being a woman?
To what extent do you see the Army as equal for women?
How do you feel about competing with men in the Army?
How do you feel about the ‘masculine’ aspects of military service? (e.g. weapons combat etc.)
How do you think ideas about femininity and masculinity affect you in the Army?
Did you know (many) other lesbians (and gay men) in the Army?

**Politics, Feminism and Lesbianism**
Would you define yourself as a feminist? (why/why not?)
Some feminists have argued that lesbianism is a political statement, how do you feel about that? Does your lesbianism have any political meaning?
Do you think the image of lesbians generally has changed/or is changing? In what way?
Has it changed how you feel about your lesbianism?
How do you feel about the image of lesbianism today?
Are you a member or do you feel part of a particular group of lesbians?
On the whole how happy/comfortable do you feel about your sexuality?
APPENDIX 4

TRANSCRIPT NOTATION

*Italic Text* indicates interviewer it is preceded by *JB*

Regular Text indicates participant it is preceded by participant’s pseudonym in **bold** text

[text] indicates clarificatory information and comments, that are not part of the transcript (e.g., [partner], [inaudible] etc.).

[...] indicates that some identificatory text has been omitted (e.g. names, places etc.).

… indicates that part of the extract has been omitted

= indicates overlap or interruption

Some sounds are transcribed phonetically, for example, ‘hmm,’ and ‘uhhuh.’

Grammatical punctuation has been added, where necessary, to assist readability.