Construction Work: Masculinity in the Workplace

PhD Thesis

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'Fortuna's wheel had turned on humanity, crushing its collarbone, smashing its skull, twisting its torso, puncturing its pelvis, sorrowing its soul. Having once been so high, humanity fell so low. What had once been dedicated to the soul was now dedicated to the sale. Merchants and charlatans gained control of Europe, calling their insidious gospel 'The Enlightenment.' The day of the locust was at hand, but from the ashes of humanity there arose no phoenix. The Humble and pious peasant Piers Plowman, went to town to sell his children to the lords of the New Order for purposes that we may call questionable at best. The Gyro had widened; The Great Chain of Being had snapped like so many paper clips strung together by some drooling idiot; death; destruction, anarchy, progress, ambition and self-improvement were to be Piers' new fate. And a vicious fate it was to be: now he was faced with the perversion of having to GO TO WORK.' *A Confederacy of Dunces*, John Kennedy Toole, 1980: 25-6.

'Let us suppose that nature has bestowed on the human race such a profuse *abundance* of all *external* conveniences, that, without any uncertainty in the event, without any care or industry on our part, every individual finds himself fully provided with whatever his most voracious appetites can want, or luxurious imagination wish or desire… No laborious occupation required; no tillage, no navigation. Music, poetry, and contemplation form his sole business: conversation, mirth and friendship his sole amusement.'
David Hume, *Enquiries*, 1894: 183. Oxford.

Abstract

The decline of manufacturing and the increase in service sector jobs has led to an increase in 'feminised' service work and an attendant and notable decline in 'traditional' masculine labour. This shift has meant that there are now fewer work spaces in which 'traditional' working-class masculinities are valued, constructed and expressed. It has also been argued that due to this shift work is no longer the central source of identity and that other factors such as consumption now take precedence. As a result of the deference and 'emotion work' required of employees in many service sector jobs it is hypothesized that work in such areas challenges the construction and maintenance of masculine identities, and hence for men working in these sectors. This research draws on an ethnographic study and series of interviews undertaken in supermarkets where attention was focused on examining the occupational identities of men employed in this sector. It looks at the ways in which male supermarket employees construct and negotiate their masculine identities and examines how this process affects the workplace and interaction between male and female colleagues.

Furthermore, this research rejects the 'end of work' thesis and argues that work is still central to the formation of British masculine identities. Work tends to be an important reference point in the construction of masculinities and this research argues that this is also true where identity is constructed in opposition to work and as a rejection of the work role. This research maps this process of identity formation and boundary construction, and also captures the shifting relationship between masculinities, the work role and other roles in the private realm. It is in part an attempt to acknowledge the 'everyday' and at the same time to see men as more than just workers or economic actors. The research concludes that despite the changes in work and the increased flexibility possible in masculine roles; that 'traditional' forms of masculinity are performed and rewarded in this particular service sector. This process, while often unsubtle, is accomplished with relative ease and reinforced during interaction with management and female co-workers.

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Introduction and Context

This thesis began with an interest in masculinities and the extent to which men in contemporary society were facing new challenges in constructing 'appropriate' identities. There has also been a great deal of popular and academic discussion of the so-called 'crisis' in masculinity. These discussions have often relied both on an overly coherent account of historical masculinities as well as assumptions about the fundamental nature of gender. In the literature, masculinity has frequently been studied in dramatic, deviant or heroic situations leading to a focus on hyper-masculinities. In contrast, this research set out to study men in more 'normal' settings. In finding an empirical site in which to study this issue, it became clear that paid work and, especially the change in employment opportunities witnessed over the last thirty to forty years, provided a context of change for the roles which men play. Retail employment, and in particular supermarket work, in many respects, symbolises a number of fundamental trends within the evolution of work: it is a service industry and often seen as a feminised work sector. These shifts in work have often been associated with the so-called 'crisis' in masculinity.

Supermarkets cross the boundaries between the public and the private, business life and personal life. In some cases, they are at once businesses (often multi-national ones) and also meeting places, sources of friendship and often places where family members work together and even where couples meet. Supermarkets are an interface between work and life in a way that many other retail outlets are not. They are in some ways microcosms (although artificial) of social life.

This research began as a result of casual observations made whilst shopping in local supermarkets. From the public areas of supermarkets there seemed to be a striking gendered division of labour at work. The produce department (fresh fruit and vegetables) seemed to be dominated by men. The delicatessen and fish counters seemed to be staffed either by women or young men[1]. Where they were present,

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[1] Late teens to early twenties.

fishmongers and butchers were always older men[2]. The local supermarket in Dover was also very close to ex-mining towns[3] and it seemed that there were significant differences between the work cultures of the mines and that of the supermarket[4]. It also seemed worthwhile to further explore the reasons for the apparently marked division of labour. Despite many men working in supermarkets, they are often seen as 'feminised' work spaces. This supposed feminisation is in part because of the common domestic division of labour whereby the responsibility for grocery shopping most often falls to women. However, it is also due to perceptions about the nature of supermarket work and those who do it. It seemed that the shift in the employment available for working-class men caused by the decline in manual labour and the increase in service work created the potential for a clash between their expectations about work and 'appropriate' masculinities and the demands of service work (Nayak and Kehily 1996, Nixon 1999, McDowell 2003). Service work is taken here to mean workers at a lower level than 'knowledge workers', for example hospitality jobs, fitness and beauty jobs, tourism and catering and specialist retail.

The main aim of this research was to gain an understanding of how working-class men construct and negotiate their roles in service work, given the clash between their expectations about work and 'appropriate' masculinities and the demands of service work. Furthermore, many writers have argued that there has been an 'end of work,' in that the once central importance of work for the construction of identities has now given way to other factors such as consumption and lifestyle. In setting out on this research it seemed that workers who no longer placed great emphasis on their work as a source of identity would also invest little time in the construction of 'appropriate' roles.

The hypothesis which this research sought to explore was that working-class men would experience service work as a threat to their construction of 'appropriate' masculinities.

Questions within this hypothesis are:

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[2] These observations were informal and unstructured, and are therefore anecdotal. They provided the impetus for this research, but do not constitute a methodologically sound study.
[3] Snowdon, Aylesham, Deal, Bettshanger, Adisham and Elvington.

- If work is no longer 'manly' enough, how are masculinities constructed and maintained?

- How does organisational setting affect the construction of masculine identities? For example, how does the way people are recruited, managed, jobs advertised and defined within an organisation and society at large, affect the way jobs are perceived?

- How do men's attempts to masculinise work affect them, their colleagues and processes of recruitment and management?

These questions will be situated within the debates about masculinities, and service work and the 'end of work' literature. This thesis will argue that work is still of great importance to men and in particular that service work provides satisfaction beyond extrinsic benefits.

Chapter Map

Chapter 1 reviews the sociological meaning of work and its evolution in post-industrial societies. It explores the relationship between gender and work and shows that gender and class are intricately linked. Chapter 1 goes on to explore the changing nature of work in Britain, it also focuses on the challenges that new forms of work pose to the construction of masculinities. Finally this chapter outlines the theoretical tools of 'hegemonic' masculinities (Connell 1987, 1995), bodily and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) and gendered performance (Butler 1990, Charlesworth 2000) which are utilised throughout the thesis. The chapter concludes by arguing that the literature supports the hypothesis that service work will present problems of identity construction for working-class men.

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[4] Based on conversations with many ex-miners.

Chapter 2 examines the rise of service work in greater detail and considers the supermarket as a specific and modern mode of shopping. It then goes on to unpick the role of social stigma in the relationship between work and masculinities. Chapter 2 then looks in detail at the gendered nature of service work and the deference and emotional work involved in such roles. It also examines Korczynski's argument that service work is undertaken in 'customer-focused bureaucracies (2002: 2). This theory is combined with Acker's (1990) assertion that organisations are not gender neutral and the negotiation between the competing logics of organisations, customers and workers are examined. It is argued that this process is not an equal one and that the gendering of service work occurs through this negotiation. Chapter 2 concludes by asserting that contrary to the 'end of work' literature; work is still an important element of the construction of a masculine identity, regardless of whether this is achieved through the acceptance or the rejection of one's work identity.

Chapter 3 discusses the way that the research questions were operationalised and the way that the theoretical assumptions of this research were refined in the light of data and reflection. This chapter also considers the benefits and ethical considerations of covert study. It concludes by demonstrating how the observational data informed the interview stage and leads to the report and analysis chapters.

Chapter 4 reports the covert ethnographic observation at *Densmores*. In this chapter key themes are identified such as the importance of physicality in 'men's' work, the use of symbolic boundaries and the resistance of customer service and the confinement of checkout work.

Chapter 5 is comprised of two sections and it explores the themes which arose from the ethnographic observation stage in greater detail. The first section examines the reasons male interviewees gave for entering and remaining in service work. It shows how gendered social and personal attitudes to masculinities and work shape the way that male workers understand their entrance and continued presence in service work. By looking at the way that men discuss the importance of their work, it also shows that work is still fundamental in the construction of masculinities in Britain. The second half of Chapter 5 draws on interviews conducted with Human Resource managers and explores the role of gender and recruitment in shaping the gendering of

work roles. This section focuses on the 'gender logic' behind recruitment (Hossfield 1990). It shows how the gender 'appropriateness' of a job is an important consideration in the recruitment process.

Chapter 6 examines in detail the way that men discuss the content of their work and use a variety of discourses to masculinise it. It argues that the initial hypothesis, that the shift in the type of work available for working-class men would cause problems in the construction and maintenance of socially viable masculinities, was misplaced. It shows that while a great deal of tacit effort was put into the construction and maintenance of symbolic boundaries, the masculinities of male supermarket workers were generally protected through the complicity of male and female colleagues and managers. Through an examination of the identity management strategies employed by male workers, Chapter 6 shows that gendered and classed understandings of work and the worker, particularly with reference to manual and non-manual work, still has the power to shape action and understanding.

Chapter 7 draws together the preceding six chapters and offers an evaluation of the research and some conclusions.

Chapter 1
Work and Gender

Introduction

This research draws upon a wide range of literature including that concerning gender (specifically masculinities), work and employment, the 'end of work,' emotional labour, classed identities, 'dirty work,' and stigma. The first two chapters will review the most relevant elements of this literature and draw them together in order to inform the following empirical chapters. Chapters 3 and 4 are written in the person in order to more faithfully report and discuss the ethnographic observation stage.

What is work?

Any definition of work must be inclusive due to the variety of different historical and social meanings attached to it (Moorhouse 1987). Work is distinct from employment, which only occurs where a contract is in place between employer and employee (Kent 2009). 'Work' can potentially involve almost any task including hunting and gathering, manual labour (such as construction) or the management of a financial empire. Work in everyday terms is usually taken un-problematically to mean paid work. However, this definition tends to exclude voluntary work and most importantly unpaid domestic work (Crompton and Sanderson 1990). Any definition of work is also rendered problematic by the ever evolving nature of societies, the global economy and the fact that almost any service which can be informal or unpaid work, however personal, can also be a job or a paid service (Hochschild 2003). The following quote usefully illustrates the problems of defining work.

'What counts as work, therefore, and what we take as skilled or difficult or dirty work, is inherently unstable and ambiguous. It depends on the social relations within which it is undertaken but it may also be a contested concept within those same relations. Work is more than employment but less than all forms of social activity; indeed, employment is a form of work but not all work is employment' (Grint 2005: 29).

In order to avoid an unnecessarily prescriptive definition of work, it is perhaps best to focus on acts that are productive, and acts involved in 'making a living' (Watson 2003). 'Making a living' is of course a highly subjective term and in developed societies is often taken to mean production and acquisition way beyond basic needs. For Braverman (1974: 46) human work is distinct from that of animals because it is 'conscious and purposive' as opposed to instinctual. However, as evidenced by discussions of the relative value of differing forms of work the meaning of work beyond this is contested. One very important attribute of work is that it involves the construction or modification of social and natural environments. In *Capital* Marx (1930) referred to man as '*homo faber*' (man the maker) and saw production as fundamental to human nature. However, this definition has been called into question due to the change in the nature of work in 'developed' societies.

One element which unifies many writers who have considered work is the belief that work is a process through which the social world is structured and re/produced (Marx 1930, Offe 1985 and Nixon 1999). Similarly, the gendered division of labour is a constant issue. According to Cockburn (1985: 32) discrimination and inequalities at work based on gender pre-date capitalism and also exist outside of it. With this in mind, the way that work is structured along lines of gender has importance which extends beyond the workplace.

The Social Importance of Work

'Americans have always been committed to the moral maxim that the work defines the person. We carry around in our heads a rough tally that tells us what

kinds of jobs are worthy of respect and what kinds are to be disdained, a pyramid organised by the income the job carries, the sort of credentials it takes to secure that particular position, the qualities of an occupation's incumbents – and we use this system of stratification (ruthlessly at times) to boost the status of some and humiliate others' (Newman 1999: 86).

The significance and social meaning attached to work has varied over time, and has been dependent on geographical location and also on social, religious and political factors. Although it is only relatively recently that paid work has come to dominate, work which is primarily aimed at subsistence has always been a central human occupation. Due to this complex history it is difficult to draw simple or definitive conclusions about the meaning of work. Work has been considered a punishment, a sign of low social position, a source of salvation and more recently a route to self-actualisation and social enfranchisement (Rose 1990, Watson 2003, Grint 2005, Korczynski *et al* 2006). Despite their fluidity, what these various social meanings have in common is that work is continually seen as a signifier of moral value as the opening quote and the quote above indicate (Bauman 1998, Newman 1999, Lamont 2000, Sayer 2005). As will be discussed in detail below, work (especially paid work) has also always played a central role in the formation of masculinities and the structuring of gender relations (Connell 1987).

Work and Gender

The discussion of work and gender is central to the theoretical debates in social science raised by feminist movements and theories (Reinharz 1992, Hartstock 1997). Both academic and popular understandings of work are highly gendered and are shaped to some extent by essentialist assumptions. This focus is a result of the symbiotic development of ideas of work and gender. Enlightenment thinking and pioneering scientific works were undertaken for the good of 'mankind', and while this term was applied in the generic sense, the advances and ideas that resulted did not

benefit the sexes equally[5]. Similarly, the industrial revolution could be said to have advanced the interests of only a narrow, elite section of British society. Ideas about gender, work and the social world have led to different understandings of the public and private spheres and the roles associated with 'masculinity' and 'femininity.' Both Western philosophy and social science, (in particular the 'founding fathers'), have been criticised in the past for ignoring issues of diversity, such as gender, ethnicity and sexuality (hooks 1984, Harding 1991). The very fact that sociology has 'founding fathers' and was built on the study of male actors in 'the sphere where history is made', led to a neglect to varying extents of the invisible 'other'[6] (Letherby 2003: 21). This focus was very much shaped through the separation of work from the home through the movement of workers from the land to wage labour in cities (Evans 2003b). Feminists and following them, post-modernist theorists, have argued at least since the 1970s that 'knowledge, reason and science are contingent and reflect mainly male interests (Haraway 1988, Harding 1991). Science and reason have also been criticised for their assumed 'coherence' and 'objectivity' (Letherby 2003: 20). The study of the social world (itself a form of work) has shaped and been shaped by a historical focus on the public sphere, a focus which has often led to a neglect of the role of the private sphere (such as unpaid and 'female' roles). As will be shown below, this perspective has led to a study of work which has tended to focus on practicalities of work such as increased productivity and efficiency (Seear 1962). Echoing Marx, Harding (1993: 204) argues that the activities of dominant groups structure social reality and set limits on how individuals understand themselves (Harding 1993). By extension, ideas about gender have been strongly influenced by elite/male ideologies about work. The study of work in the past has focused on 'production' and this has led to an emphasis on industry, manufacturing and the labour process (Pahl 1988, Gallie 1989). However, this focus has been strongly challenged by writers focusing on women's work and lives (Cavendish 1982, Pateman 1988, Cockburn 1983, 1991, Crompton and Sanderson 1990, Crompton 1996, McDowell 1996). This blindness to issues of gender, and issues peripheral to the public sphere, is not peculiar to the study of work. The notion that men were also the

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[5] Pateman (1988) notes that when politicians and social theorists discuss the 'citizen' or 'the rights of man' it is literally a man they are assuming and not a woman.

[6] Women, non-whites and non-heterosexuals.

bearers of gender scarcely existed at all before feminism's challenge to male power (Brittan 1989).

Gender Segregation

The differentiation of workers by gender is a central feature of work (Game and Pringle 1983, Pringle 1989), and is present in all societies (Blackburn *et al* 2002) such that it may even be *the* central feature of work (Tolich and Briar 1999). There are three main forms of specific gender segregation of work. First, there is industrial segregation, which occurs when one gender outnumbers the other in a sector, such as women outnumbering men in service work or men predominating in construction. Secondly, there is hierarchical segregation which is a situation wherein one gender (usually males), is unequally distributed in higher organisational positions (Tijdens 1993). Finally, there is job-functional segregation which is where men and women perform different tasks within an occupation, often leading to male roles being paid more and accorded higher social status (Anker 2001). These forms of segregation are often theoretically subsumed into vertical and horizontal segregation.

Vertical segregation is a situation in which one gender tends to dominate senior (powerful and well paid) roles, whereas horizontal segregation occurs where tasks are divided by gender at a similar organisational level. Countries with low-levels of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) tend to have a lower degree of gender segregation (Blackburn *et al* 2002: 513). However, in all affluent developed nations the levels of segregation are at least moderately high (*ibid*). Service work is characterised by high-levels of vertical and horizontal segregation.

There are two main types of theoretical explanations of gender segregation, 1); those which invoke human capital (marketable qualifications and work experience) and rational choice and; 2) those derived from sociological and/or feminist theories of patriarchy mentioned above. Human capital and rational choice theories are both derived from neo-classical economics. These explanations focus on the different choices men and women make. Human capital theory explains segregation on the

basis that people with better qualifications and marketable skills are more productive than those without (Blackburn *et al* 2002).

It is therefore economically rational for companies to employ these people in better jobs and higher positions (England 1982). This theory would explain men's predominance in higher positions due to their having greater human capital than women (who tend to have less due to their greater likelihood of taking up domestic responsibilities). This explanation of course neglects social attitudes, the gendering of work roles, discrimination, and also assumes that domestic responsibilities such as parenting do not lead to an increase in human capital. Such explanations also neglect the fact that women's pay disadvantage is not confined to mothers or even married/co-habiting women (Blau and Khan 1992).

Rational choice theory asserts that people will consistently act in ways which best serve their interests. This theory applies a circular logic, explaining vertical gender segregation at work through drawing on the fact that men tend to receive higher wages than women. Therefore when a (heterosexual) couple choose how to manage domestic and child rearing responsibilities the 'rational' choice is usually to prioritise the man's career. This is circular logic because even if men's generally higher pay had not originated due to a systematic bias in favour of men, continuing to prioritise men's careers becomes a contributing factor to their higher wages. The failure to equalise the burden of the domestic role perpetuates the wage inequalities which the rational 'choice' seeks to negotiate and exploit. Economic theories also tend to focus only on income inequalities and to neglect the role of prestige and social status. Such theories would have little to say of two identically paid roles with vastly different social status.

While economic theories of gender differences at work do have some explanatory validity, especially in looking at how inequality functions and is perpetuated, social and cultural factors tend to be better at explaining the 'why'. Sociological and feminist patriarchal theories tend to examine structural and cultural factors which create differences in life chances, as well as the way employers treat people according to gender (Crompton 1997: 9). Theories of patriarchy argue that women have been

systematically disadvantaged in work and in society in general (Pateman 1988, Cockburn 1991).

While distinctions based on gender are historically ubiquitous in work, changes in work and wider society have meant that over the past thirty to forty years there has been a weakening in the gendering of job roles. Changes in the type of work available in the United Kingdom (and 'western' society more generally) have also meant that the distinction between 'men's work' and 'women's work' has become less clear. The following section will examine these qualitative and quantitative shifts in the character of work in Britain.

Changes in Work

In the past thirty to forty years there have been significant changes both in the nature of work and in the characteristics of workers. Indeed:

'At the start of 1971, the employment rate for men was 92.1 per cent and for women it was 56.4 per cent, a difference of 35.7 percentage points. After 1971, the difference narrowed to reach 15.8 percentage points by 1987. The difference remained stable until 1991, but then has continued to narrow at a much slower pace' (Kent 2009: 6).

There is still a greater proportion of working-age men in employment than women: in 2005 the employment rate for men was 79 per cent compared with 70 per cent for women in the UK. Men are far more likely than women to be self-employed, with nearly three quarters of the 3.6 million self-employed people in 2005 (when this research began) being male (Labour Force Survey 2005: 28).

The type of work self-employed men and women choose to do are also different. Thirty percent of men who were self-employed worked in the construction industry, whereas around twenty-five percent of self-employed women worked in the 'other services' industry such as in the community, social and personal services. The

principal change in employment to which this refers is the shift in the type of work available (particularly to those from working-class backgrounds).

Fig. 1. Percentage of all in employment: by sex and occupation, 2005, UK, source Labour Force Survey, (2005: 11).
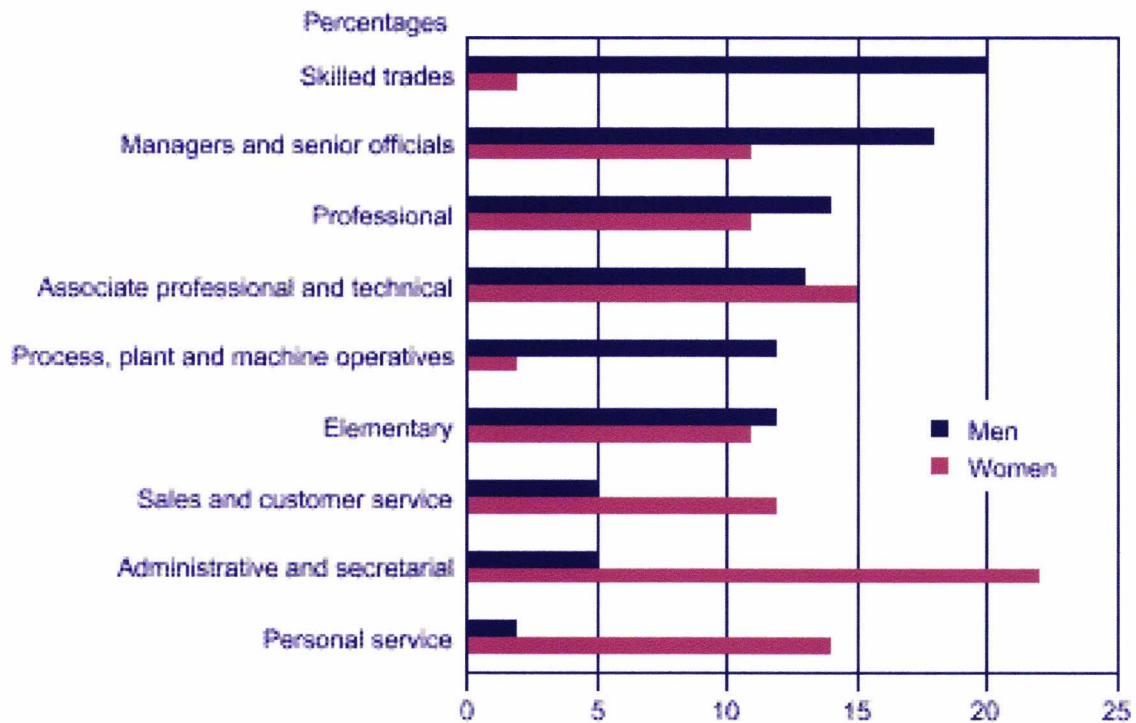
In June 1985, 28 per cent of jobs held by men were in manufacturing. By June 2005 this had fallen to 17 per cent (Labour Force Survey 2005: 65). This shift took place at the same time as a substantial rise in services sector jobs for both men and women (Kent 2009).

Horizontal segregation has also remained, with over a fifth (22 per cent) of women in employment doing administrative or secretarial work compared to 5 per cent of men. Similarly, women are far more likely than men to be employed in the personal services, sales and customer services. Men are ten times more likely than women to be employed in skilled trades and are also more likely to be managers and senior officials (Labour Force Survey, 2005: 65).

A considerable body of literature argues that there has been a 'feminisation' of work in western societies in the past twenty five years, which has been accompanied by a

general' feminisation' of culture (Douglas 1977, Jenson *et al* 1988). 'Feminisation' can refer to an increase or domination of a job, or sector, by women. It can also refer to a change in the skills required or associated with a job or form of work. The latter definition will be applied here.

The 'feminisation' of work has been linked to a decline in industrial and manufacturing jobs and a rise in service and office-based jobs (McDowell 1997, 2003). Traditionally these jobs have been bastions of 'traditional' working-class masculinities (*ibid*), and this trend has meant that men previously employed in this work are increasingly moving into potentially 'feminised' work roles and spaces. Some popular commentators have even asserted that this has led to a 'feminisation' of masculinities, (particularly in terms of appearance). What the figures outlined above show, is that while there has been a 'feminisation' of work both in terms of the numbers of women working and the type of work available, work roles are still strongly segregated along lines of gender.

The Evolution of the Sociology of Work

Taylor (2002 1.1[7].) argues that dominant contemporary accounts of service work (those following the cultural 'turn') tend to reject the significance of 'traditional' industrial sociological analysis of the interplay between economic, gendered and cultural relations. In order to avoid doing this and to make full sense of the debates about work and the significance of the findings of this research it is important to assess them in the context of the wider study of work and industry. The following section gives an overview of the development of social science perspectives on work and argues that the way in which the study of work has been undertaken led to a focus on 'male' work and the privileging of certain forms of work over others. However, this is not to argue that 'traditional' studies of work have nothing to contribute to the analysis of masculinities in service work.

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[7] This reference is from on online journal which has no page numbers.

The sociology of work and industry is a fascinating but vexed area of study. This is due in part to the complex organisational, technical and social factors which collide in the study of work and industry, but also the way that this area of study has evolved. Industrial sociology, in a formal sense did not exist before the Second World War and it was only after this period that it began to emerge as a distinctive area of study (Seear 1962). During the last thirty or forty years the study of work was based on a more or less uncontested assumption of the importance of work in the formation of gender and class identities. An interest in changes in production and work and their relationship to society can be traced back to the emergence of social science (sociology in particular) as a distinct discipline (Fox 1971, Brown 1992, Grint 2005, Korczynski *et al* 2006). Early sociologists sought to understand the changes in societies across Europe, as driven by industrial and democratic revolutions (Giddens 1971: vii). Technological and social change occurred rapidly, and the works of the 'Founding Fathers' of sociology are primarily an exploration of these processes. In the work of Marx (1930) we find an analysis of the capitalist mode of production and a recognition of the nature of wage labour (Larrain 1979, Nichols 1980). Durkheim (1964) focused on the way that rapid urbanisation affected social cohesion, as well as the importance of the division of labour (Giddens 1971). Max Weber looked at the nature of bureaucracy and his work on rationality has proved particularly useful in the 'analysis of changes in the workplace and the wider industrial society which they form a part of' (Strangleman 2005: 2.1). This body of work, while still influential today, was almost entirely based on theoretical and secondary analysis[8] and it took some time before this was supplemented with detailed empirical study (Brown 1992: 3).

Burns (1962) argues that sociologists (before 1962) had altruistic and idealistic motives for their study of and intervention in work and industry. However, Burns also points out that these motives may have involved sociologists accepting 'more or less uncritically the aim of making industrial and business undertakings more efficient as instruments of the material progress of society' or 'less troublesome as instruments of private profit making' (Burns 1962: 188). Burns argues that this second kind of study usually accepted the 'existence, values, and purposes of industry and individual

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[8] Less so in the case of Durkheim.

undertakings at their face value' (*ibid*). The majority of this research was directed at efficiency and production and worker motivation, indeed Jacoby (1988: 78) found that 20% of psychologists were involved in such work by 1945. In addition, one of the great driving forces behind the study and modification of work has been war of one kind or another (including the Cold War).

The other major driving force behind the study of work and the development of sociology as a discipline has been the gradual expansion of higher education (Brown 1992). However, Seear (1962: 175-6) argues that the study of industry by sociology was hampered by the low status of the emerging social sciences. Furthermore, she argues that there was a mismatch between the practical focus of most managers and industrialists and prevailing academic cultures. Those who were initially involved in research into work practices were accountants and engineers who had a very different orientation to the socially focused academics who followed them (Seear 1962).

The subsequent development of Industrial Sociology was more closely aligned to the 'Establishment' than other areas of the discipline. However, the practical orientations of the study of work were not entirely bound up with capitalism. The practical exigencies of boosting production during times of war were complemented in later years by the ideological drive of the cold war and the capitalist profit motive. Productivity thus had an ideological function as well as a practical one.

It should also be remembered that all areas of research (including physical and biological science) were/are imbued with assumptions about essential human nature (Gunew 1990, Harding 1991, 1993, Martin 1991, Evans 2003). It was also widely assumed that workers' attitudes to their work were structured by innate human nature. This focus on innate human characteristics existed before the sociology of work (for example in the work of Marx) and is present even in contemporary debates on women in work (Hakim 2005). The belief that workers would only be interested in wages also stemmed from an elitist assumption that the working-class were intellectually lacking and that the control and management of work was the preserve of the middle and upper classes. This argument over whether the main source of motivation for work was entirely extrinsic (i.e. concerning money), or whether social satisfaction

was important (Grint 2005) is one of the key 'fault lines' between perspectives on work.

Braverman and the Labour Process

A key point in the development of the sociology of work was Harry Braverman's *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (1974), sub-titled *'The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century'*. Braverman (1974) employed Marx's views of the labour process under capitalism which had largely been neglected until that point. Braverman rejected the simplistic reading of Marx which saw the mode of production as technologically determined and emphasised the ways in which it was continually being worked out and developed (Brown 1992: 183). Braverman especially drew attention to the effects of Taylor's 'scientific management[9]' which he saw as degrading work and de-skilling workers.

'…there is no question that when the work to be done is at all complicated a good organization with a poor plant will give better results than at the best plant with a poor organization.' (Taylor 1903: 62).

Taylor (1903) believed that due to their lack of knowledge about processes, managers were often at the mercy of skilled and semi-skilled workers. He also argued that workers tended to restrict output, for fear of being underpaid or laid off. Finally, he believed that the existing payment system lacked incentives for individuals to intensify their labour (Brown 1992: 177). For Taylor, the practices which restricted productivity (which he called natural soldiering') were inevitable because they were a result of underlying human laziness (Grint 2005: 178).

Braverman's work resonated with contemporary concerns about changes in work at the time (late 1970s-1980s), in the United States and other developed societies. 'Labour process' thinking provided a powerful explanatory framework (Brown 1992),

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[9] 'Scientific Management' was the name given to a set of supposedly scientific techniques developed by Frederick Taylor which were applied to the increase of production and managerial control. Taylor's work offered a set of ideas which explained worker motivation and behaviour but according to Brown (1992: 185) 'were ideological in that they provided a justification for certain courses of action by management'.

and soon became the orthodoxy for left leaning non-conservative sociologists/academics (Grint 2005). The popularity of Braverman's work can perhaps be traced to his focus on conflict as opposed to consensus, it also challenged the assumption of the mutual interests of owners/managers and workers. Braverman's work also problematised the assumption that higher production was the object of the analysis and management of work change (Brown 1992). This focus on 'labour process' led to a heroisation of certain masculinities and certain forms of work (which was perhaps in part inspired by the gender and Marxist leanings of many writers in this area).

The significance of Braverman and discussions over the degradation of work is that it prefigures the 'end of work' debate in some ways. Both debates focus on shifts in work which reduce the intrinsic value and meaning of work. There are also further similarities in that there is perhaps as great a dearth in empirical evidence for the prevalence of Taylorism, as for the 'end of work' thesis (Bradley *et al* 2000). Concern over the loss of skilled work and *meaningful* work roles has been a consistent theme in the study of work. The rise of service work created concerns because it is not conceptualised as productive, especially by workers dealing with the intangible nature of the service encounter (Korczynski 2002).

The popularity of 'labour process' thinking led this theory to dominate the majority of debate in the sociology of work. A number of writers in the 1980s and 1990s began to draw attention to the effect of this shift (Strangleman 2005) and the narrowing theoretical and empirical focus of research in this area (Salaman 1986).

Pahl (1988) and Gallie (1989) argued that certain forms of work (such as non-manual and service work) were being neglected. Epstein (1990) also argued that the focus by labour process theorists on class and exploitation led to a neglect of the experience of work and an overemphasis on inflexible macro theory. Much of this research saw gender as subsumed by economic exploitation and therefore placed less emphasis on issues of gender inequality and the role of gender in the organisation of work. The lack of focus on community and occupational culture was a break from the rich tradition of such studies in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s (Strangleman 2005).

The Affluent Worker: Consumption and Work

While the sociology of work was focused on labour process, the sociology of class was contributing to understandings of work identity and meaning. The 'Affluent Worker' study was an attempt to test the embourgeoisement thesis through the study of factory workers (Lockwood 1966 Goldthorpe *et al* 1968). The embourgeoisement thesis suggests that when the working-class acquired middle-class levels of income, they adopted middle-class social and political habits (Lockwood 1966). The concept of 'orientation to work' was developed as a result of this research when the authors were unable to find significant differences in overall satisfaction according to the respondents' jobs (Grint 2005: 25).

Three types of 'orientation to work' were put forward: the privatised worker who had an instrumental attitude to work, seeing it as a means to an end (an end which was external to work) (Goldthorpe *et al* 1968: 38). These workers saw the employment relationship as one which satisfied financial needs as opposed to a source of self-realisation or social relationships (*ibid*). The two other ideal types were the bureaucratic worker, who was middle-class and saw their role as a service to their organisation and the solidaristic worker, who also saw work in moralistic terms but tended to focus on family and community, and draw a clear distinction between workers and management or 'them' and 'us' (*ibid*). However, the study revealed that none of these ideal types was accurate. The workers instead saw their employment relationship as a continually negotiated exchange of boring arduous work for relatively high pay. This new type was named the 'privatised' worker and the embourgeoisement thesis was rejected.

The experience of work is socially constructed and people carry their preconceptions and understandings of the world into their work role (Forseth 2005). People's expectations of their work are also shaped by previous experiences of work, for example workers with more domestic responsibilities are more likely to place importance on extrinsic and financial rewards from a job. However, this idea can be reversed to suggest that when work fails to meet (personal and social) expectations, a shift of priorities can be used as a coping strategy. That so called 'privatised' workers chose rising living standards over more 'interesting' work is not surprising. It seems

entirely logical that those with limited employment options, working in historically insecure jobs would take the most highly paid work available.

It is important to note that there is a distinction between satisfaction and meaning gained *at* work as opposed to *through* work (Grint 2005: 28-9). What research on work and gender suggests is that while 'breadwinner[10]' status remains important, men need work which provides more than just money. This is evidenced by the numerous studies that show how both men and women tend to position the male as the breadwinner, regardless of his income or employment status (Potuchek 1997, Pahl, 1989, Brannen and Moss 1991, Ashwin and Lyktina 2004, Charles and James 2005). Studies of job satisfaction carried out by sociologists of work almost always ignore the importance of gender 'appropriate' work. The 'privatised' workers studied by Lockwood (1966) and Goldthorpe *et al* (1968) may not have enjoyed their work, however, it allowed them to enact 'appropriate' masculinities through manual labour, endurance, productivity and high wages sufficient to support a family. It seems unlikely that many of those men would have worked for the same pay on the make-up counter in their local supermarket.

The End of Work?

The period following the affluent worker studies gave way to a decline in the use of class as a key concept in sociology and in society in general (Aronowitz and DiFazio 1994, Rifkin 1996, Pakulski and Waters 1996). This focus on the decline of class as an explanatory concept was clearly connected to the decline of manual labour and the rise of service work. This shift in work eroded the working-class/middle-class, blue collar/white collar, manual/non-manual dichotomies. However, Crompton (1996) argues that a belief in the 'death' of class stems from the fragmentation of approaches to studying class as opposed to an objective decline. The debate about the decline of work and class as sources of identity and meaning took place largely in the context of neo-liberalism stemming from the political climate of the 1980s. This era was one in which the Reagan and Thatcher governments consciously attacked trade unions and

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[10] Breadwinner is usually taken to mean one whose earnings support dependents. However, with increasing number of women working and the tendency of male/female couples to consider the male the breadwinner regardless of who is the highest earner, this term has become less simple to define.

large scale industry in an attempt to create 'flexible' service economies. This drive combined with the working practices of lean production, led to a muting of class politics and collective action (Bradley *et al* 2000). These changes in the nature of work also prompted some to argue that knowledge rather than labour or capital, was the most important resource in developed economies (Bell 1974).

Catherine Casey's (1995) work links the 'end of work' thesis with the 'death of class' through the decline of occupational identities (Bradley et al 2000: 134). Casey argues that a worker could join a company as a chemist and progress to management or marketing (Casey 1995: 118-9). For Casey, flexible working practices have led to roles becoming interchangeable and the removal of strong identifications with specific occupational identities. These processes erode the old division of labour and promote an emphasis on the individual rather than the classed self (Casey 1995: 135-6). While Casey (1995) still sees work as an important part of life she, like Rose (1990), sees it as a tool for the realisation of the self, (i.e. something which entrepreneurial individuals can utilise in the construction of their self identity) rather than something which in itself is constitutive of identity. Bauman (1998) supports this analysis of work although all these writers see this realisation of the self as open largely to the managerial elites for who inter-company mobility is often essential (Hughes 2005).

Concomitant with the decline in manual work and the rise of the service industry there has been extensive discussion concerning the decline of the significance of work and the relative increase in the importance of consumption (Gorz 1982, 1985, Sayers 1988, Casey 1995, Du Gay 1996, Bauman 1998, Bradley et al 2000, Beck 2000, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, Ransome 2005, Strangleman 2007). This belief is based both on the rise of consumption as an important source of identity, and also the general shift from largely manual productive employment to knowledge production and information-based industries[11] (Bradley *et al* 2000). Bauman (1998) also argues that there has been a loss of stability and 'jobs for life'. Bauman sees this as leading to a reduction in loyalty and emotional ties to work and the workplace. Nevertheless, this idea can be questioned empirically as a study of a selection of O.E.C.D.[12]

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[11] Of course this shift in paid work is also related to the feminisation thesis.

[12] Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Develoment (O.E.C.D).

countries in 1997 found that average job tenure in the past thirty years had changed little.

In addition to the changes in the type of work done in Britain, Bauman (1998) argues that there has been a shift in the primary role of the working-class from that of producers to consumers (1998:2). In *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* he argues that prior to the late 1970s/early 1980s work was the main organising principle of life. In an often quoted section he argues that work was

'the main orientation point, in reference to which all the other pursuits could be planned and ordered' (Bauman 1998: 17).

Bauman argues that the shift to service work and the absence of stable work mean that the working-class must construct their identities around other aspects of life notably consumption.

Problems with the 'End of Work' Literature

Many commentators on the 'end of work' debate make significant assumptions about the nature and subjective experience of working-class jobs and lives. As Bradley *et al* put it:

'Academic commentators often undervalue less glamorous types of job, unable to believe that people can get satisfaction from work which is routinised and less intrinsically varied and interesting' (Bradley *et al* 2000: 136).

There seems to be an assumption about what can constitute satisfying or fulfilling work running through recent discussions of newer forms of work and the modern shaping of the self. This is particularly the case in discussions of service work which either serve to lionize the 'golden age' of manual work or discussions of 'self actualisation' which often reflect managerial discourses. Similarly, there seems to be an air of cultural elitism when Bauman talks about the way that identity is constructed with whatever is 'currently being sold in the shops' (1998: 29). While not explicit,

this echoes discussions of the vulgarity of working-class taste and their supposed inability to think independently (Bourdieu 1984, Skeggs 1997, 2001). It could also be seen to indicate a belief that working-class culture is formed through an uncritical, deterministic relationship with marketing and advertising. This research is based on the premise that while consumption has grown in importance for the construction of social identities, work is still the most important resource for men in Britain.

What the literature on work tells us is that work has been central to sociological understandings of identity (particularly for men). While understandings of work have changed throughout history it has always been a signifier of moral worth and status. Work and gender are inextricably linked and the way that work is understood and organised is highly gendered. While the nature of work as an organising principle has changed due to the decline of manual work, gender is still highly relevant. Despite the rise of consumption as an element of identity, work is still a vital part of the construction and maintenance of an 'appropriate' masculinity for most men. The following section will unpick the way that gender/masculinities (and class) are constructed and how this is affected by changes in work in particular through industrial and post-industrial history.

The Construction of Masculinities: Connell and 'Hegemonic' Masculinity

'Since men are born into male bodies, but not the successful accomplishment of culturally appropriate versions of masculinity, becoming a man is a complex process of learning and doing within shifting sets of social constraints.' (Holland *et al* 1993: 2)

'It [Hegemonic Masculinity] embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required that all men position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832).

The following section will discuss Connell's theory of 'hegemonic' masculinity which is the dominant theory of masculinity and an important theoretical element in this research. Despite the criticisms made of this theory, it remains a very useful analytical tool for understanding what is an extremely fluid and complex issue.

What is considered masculine (and feminine[13]) has varied along geographical, cultural and historical lines. Connell's theory of 'hegemonic masculinities' was a response to the theoretical weaknesses of the sex role theory dominant in the 50s, 60s and 70s. Examples of the weaknesses of sex role theory were its failure to reconcile structure and agency and its over-reliance on biological determinism (Demetriou 2001). In rejecting this determinism Connell argues that,

> Gender exists precisely to the extent that biology does *not* determine the social. It marks one of those points of transition where historical processes supersede biological evolution as a form of change. Gender is a scandal, an outrage, from the point of view of essentialism (Connell 2000: 27).

Indeed one of the greatest contributions of Connell's theory (2000:10) is the recognition of the importance of struggles between men, within masculinity, as well as between men and women (Bird 1996: 120, Connell 1989, 2000). Some researchers have argued that in the past there has been an over emphasis on differences between masculinities and femininities which has obscured the struggles played out within masculinity (Connell 2000, Nayak and Kehily 1996, Chen 1999). While this gap is in the process of being addressed within the literature, it is still important to recognise conflict and diversity within 'masculinity'. Without taking this process into consideration there is a risk of seeing 'men' and 'women' as necessarily coherent and competing groups. This way of thinking runs the risk of ignoring 'complicit'[14] masculinities (Connell 2000) and femininities.

'Hegemonic' masculinities recognises the interrelation between subordinate (working-class or non-white) and marginalised masculinities (non-heterosexual,

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[13] I understand that masculinities and femininities are inseparable but here my main concern is the construction of masculinities.

[14] Those who reinforce and support 'hegemonic' masculinities without enacting them.

disabled or those unable to perform hegemonic masculinities). Crucially, if 'hegemonic' is taken in its Gramscian sense as proposed by Connell, an important theoretical insight of the theory is that domination of ideas about gender is established both through coercion *and* consent (Connell 1987). This process can be linked to the complicity involved in maintaining gendered hierarchies (West and Zimmerman 1989) in general and the role of appropriate 'acting' by subordinates to save the 'face' of others (Goffman 1959, 1977). Conceptualising masculinities hierarchically, creates the possibility of stepping outside of hegemony, (analytically at least) and looking at how this construction is achieved and maintained. This theoretical framework also helps to resist a mono-causal explanation of gender relations. Similarly, it is important to note that one geographically, culturally and historically distinct moment will also contain a multiplicity of masculine identities, that is to say, that masculine identities co-exist.

Hegemony

Gramsci's (1971) notion of 'ideological hegemony' has been deployed by a number of theorists interested in gender (and class) (Komter 1989, Connell 1989, 2000, Pyke 1996, Chen 1999). Gramsci (1971) was interested not only in how power was attained, but also how dominant groups maintained their position without the persistent use of force. Hegemony refers to the process whereby the views of a dominant group are universalised to the point where they take on the form of 'common-sense.' This process co-opts subordinate groups in the consent to and perpetuation of their own oppression (Gramsci 1971: 325-6). In other words, it is a theory of power relations which explains domination beyond reference to naked violence and coercion and allows for the idea that some groups may gain relative advantage through their own oppression, by virtue of their position in relation to other less advantaged groups. A good example of this in the context of work would be the historically relatively privileged status of large sections of white male working-class workers, when compared with women and some ethnic minorities (Cockburn 1991, Cockburn and Omrod 1993, Fine *et al* 1997, Lupton 2000). Chen (1991) is critical of the generic use of the term hegemonic in many studies of masculinities arguing that it

is often used simply to refer to non-specific relations of subordination and domination as opposed to the process of coercion and consent outlined by Gramsci (1971: 586).

The notion of hegemony is useful in analysing masculinities and class because it recognises that both the oppressor and the oppressed submit to the dominant view of the world (Gramsci 1971: 80). However, there is often a focus either on constructions of 'hegemonic masculinities' (Connell 1989, 2000) or on the subordination and resistance of subordinate male groups (Chen 1999). Chen (1999: 597-8) studied Chinese American men's masculinities and argues that there is a gap in the current scholarship on the way subordinate groups, particularly minority ethnic men, contribute not only to their own oppression but to that of women. A great deal of literature on the identity strategies of men working in non-traditional occupations contributes to filling this gap, although usually without explicitly referring to hegemony (Henson 1996, Henson and Rogers 2001, Cross and Bagilhole 2002, Lupton 2006). What this literature suggests is that the strategies deployed by men to construct and maintain 'appropriate' masculine identities, often have negative consequences for female colleagues. This is not only because 'maleness' is often privileged through 'fast tracking' and the 'glass escalator' (Lupton 2006), but also in the sense that the discourses used in this process simultaneously draw on and reinforce a gendered hierarchy.

Due to its theoretical flexibility and insight Connell's theory has become popular[15] in both academic discussion and research, to the point where he has published both a revision and a re-analysis of the theory (Connell 2000, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). It is worth remembering when considering critiques of 'hegemonic' masculinity that they often apply to popular uses of the concept as well as academic ones (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The theory of 'hegemonic' masculinity has been criticised for assuming a one-way, top-down effect between dominant and subordinate masculinities and also causing the celebration of deviant and hyper-masculinities. This research responds to some of these criticisms by focusing on a subordinate group. Another criticism of 'hegemonic' masculinity is that an ethnicity bias can occur when power is theorised solely in terms of gender to the exclusion of

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[15] In 2005 Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 830) found 200 papers with the words 'hegemonic masculinity' in their title.

class and ethnicity (hooks 1984). While the notions of subordinate masculinities and the complicity involved in domination go some way to resolving this criticism, (such as Chen's (1999) example of minority ethnic men given above) there are still gaps in the literature on the interaction of masculinities and ethnicities. Finally, the theory has also been attacked for its criticism of dominant/'traditional' and socially valuable forms of masculinity; although considering the source of many of these attacks they could also be considered compliments.

Wetherell and Edley (1999) have also argued that the theory of 'hegemonic masculinity' is not sophisticated enough to deal with the fluid nature of the subject. They argue that men can shift through the multiple meanings available within notions of 'masculinity'. For Wetherell and Edley (1999), this means that men can strategically position themselves 'within' 'hegemonic' notions of masculinity and that 'masculinity' does not constitute certain types of men but a series of discursive positions. Whilst there is little which is immovably within masculinity, this emphasis on the ability of men to shift positions and to choose also has problems. As with other post-modern theories of gender and identity it neglects the fact that there are certain elements of 'hegemonic' masculinity which are generally inflexible, such as sexuality. Secondly, the notion of choice often applied to the question of gendered identity can neglect the very real 'costs' of not 'doing' one's gender appropriately (Butler 1990). These 'costs' vary according to context, in particular between different social classes, sexualities, cultural and ethnic groups. Gender is performed under a level of coercion, as Butler puts it:

> 'Gender is a "corporeal style", an act or sequence of acts, a "strategy" which has cultural survival as its end, since those who do not 'do' their gender correctly are punished by society' (Butler 1990: 66).

While Butler (1990) is cognisant of the general costs of not performing an appropriate gender, her work perhaps lacks recognition of how strongly this compulsion acts upon heterosexual (particularly working-class) men[16]. The choices open to individuals are

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[16] This is not to ignore or discount the effects of a hetero-normative gender regime on non-conformists, or to suggest that one form of oppression is worse than the other. However the focus of this research is primarily on white, working-class men and the notion of 'subverting' or differently performing gender

limited and mediated through class, race, culture and then through discourse as a combination of all of these. As Connell and Messerschmidt put it:

'Recognising the non-discursive and unreflective dimensions of gender gives us some sense of the limits of discursive flexibility. . . .'

'One is not free to adopt any gender position in interaction simply as a discursive or reflexive move. The possibilities are constrained massively by embodiment, by institutional histories, by economic forces and by personal and family relationships. The cost of making certain discursive choices can be extremely high – as shown by the rate of suicide among people involved in transsexual moves' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 843).

Despite the criticisms levelled at 'hegemonic' masculinity, it is still a very useful way of theorising a complex and mutable element of social life (masculinities/gender). The theory of 'hegemonic' masculinities is particularly good for understanding the dialectic relationship between gender, power and social relations. The way Connell's theory has been applied has led to an overly coherent notion of 'hegemonic' masculinities. There has also been an excessively one-way understanding of influence between dominant and subordinate forms. This, it could be argued comes from the lack of recognition placed on the ability, however limited, of individual men to strategically shift their position with regard to dominant forms of masculinity (Wetherell and Edley 1999). This research responds to some of the criticisms of the theory of 'hegemonic' masculinity by focussing on subordinate groups and (when studying masculinities) avoiding the celebration of hyper-masculinity. This research also resists the tendency to focus only on men's experiences and thoughts (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) by including the thoughts and opinions of the female colleagues of the men interviewed. This research also minimises the disembodiment of men and masculinities by focussing on discourses surrounding the body (discussed further below) and the way that they and other elements of masculinities are reified through complicit discourses with other men and women (Goffman 1959, 1977, West and Zimmerman 1989).

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is a solution which presumes the middle-class notion of choice and the idea of a relatively freely constructed self.

Class and Masculinity

Whilst it has not been the main focus of this research social class has also been vital in building an understanding of gender and work identity. The changes in the meaning of work and the shift from manual to non-manual work, has been very much a change in working-class work. The men who were observed and interviewed for this research were largely working-class.[17] Due to the tendency within supermarkets for in-house promotion and training, many of the supermarket managers were also often of working-class origins[18]. The distinction between working-class and middle-class work has usually been achieved rather narrowly through a differentiation of manual and non-manual, productive and non-productive (Willis 1977, Hollway 1996, Strangleman 2004: 73). This distinction has become more complex due to the decline of manual work and the increase in service work.

Class is particularly relevant to this research because many of the discourses used by men to describe work, are not only gendered but also classed. An example of this would be the rejection of sedentary, non-manual work and what was seen as the confining and atrophying effects of office work (Nixon 1999). These rejections also contained a recognition of gendered organisational hierarchies and wider social perceptions of work (Acker 1990, Henson 1996).

The prestige and recognition afforded to masculine traits in paid work (and in general), often position 'male' interests and attributes above those of women (Cockburn 1983, Cavendish 1982, Adkins 1995, Williams 2006). This means that the process of managing a 'masculine' identity is one which affects and is affected, to some degree, by all groups. Varying attributes such as mental and physical capacities, emotional and intellectual abilities, technical, manual and interpersonal skills are all understood differentially depending on who is deploying or 'doing' them and when and where this occurs (Cockburn 1991, Cockburn and Omrod 1993, Skeggs 1997, 2001). Similarly, different investments are made in these attributes depending on the group or individual's positioning regarding the prevailing local hegemony, such as the investment of young working-class women studied by Skeggs, in visible forms of

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[17] This assessment is based on organisational position, work history, embodiment and speech patterns.

femininity (Skeggs 1997, 2001). So from this point of view a working-class man's dismissal of education and his preference for 'productive' manual work is rendered intelligible (Willis 1977, Jordan 1995, Connell 2000, Nixon 2006).

Training Men and Workers

For Connell (1989: 191) the institutional structure of schooling is central to the production of masculine subjectivities. There are strong links between the process of gender construction and preparation for work and Hølter (1997) suggests that this is due to the dominance of industrial capitalism. Not only is school important in the construction and negotiation of masculinities, but in the role it plays preparing people for the workplace (Foucault 1977). Jordan and Cowan (2001) argue that the cultural script with which young boys begin primary school with is a 'warrior narrative'. The 'warrior' masculinity is,

'…the male who attacks and defeats other males characterised as baddies, the male who turns the natural products of the earth into weapons to carry out these purposes' (Jordan and Cowan 2001: 114).

This narrative they argue is a conception of masculinity which precedes the Enlightenment idea of the rational citizen (Jordan and Cowan 2001). 'Warrior narratives' have a lot in common with the Enlightenment attitude to technology, progress and nature, in that it is about production, domination and the transformation of natural resources for profit. This is a good example of how as Hølter (1997) argues, modern masculinities are inextricably linked with industrial capitalism and therefore with work. For this reason, as argued above, the two are often constituted simultaneously.

Jordan and Cowan argue that schooling becomes a conflict between the 'warrior narrative,' and the middle-class concept of rational, bureaucratic masculinity (Jordan and Cowan 2001: 112). This process creates opportunity for resistance and

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[18] Although this process shows signs of giving way to graduate schemes.

acceptance of the school rules, whether covert or overt. This process is crucial in the formation of masculinities. The restriction or ostracism of 'warrior narratives' by school rules and by (often female) teachers, can lead to the school environment being identified as feminine (Jordan and Cowan 2001: 112). As Willis and many others have pointed out, this can lead to a concept of masculinity which is based on resistance and antagonism towards the demands of school and later on the authority of the workplace (Bowles and Gintis 1976: 131, Willis 1977, Connell 1995)[19].

This rejection of 'feminised' authority and deference can be extended to the attitudes of working-class men to the requirements of service work. The relative positioning of classed masculinities regarding education and feminine authorities is linked in an important way to the development of ideas about work and manhood. A rejection of school as feminine is often associated with a preference for manual work and the conceptualisation of non-manual work as being feminine and 'non-work.' These distinctions were drawn on by the men in this research in order to define their work as 'manly'.

In *Learning to Labour* Willis (1977) describes what Hollway (1996) sees as a fundamental clash between manual and mental labour and the ways in which relationships between managers and workers revolve around a contest of masculinity. Willis (1977) gives the example of a foundry worker who distinguishes himself from a manager who could not do the physical job that he does. Through this process an ideology of superior knowledge can be cultivated by workers in subordinate positions and this allows bonding with other workers in similar situations and resistance to workplace subordination as well as threats to masculine identity (Hollway 1996, Willis 1977).

As with the drawing of class distinctions through reference to occupation more generally, the distinction of classed masculinities is a blurred and complicated one.

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[19] The role of schools in this process of gendering work is important as it illustrates the dialectic relationship between underlying ideas of gender and the institutions which reproduce/reinforce them. The division of labour and gendering of work roles means that women are more prevalent in 'caring' roles such as primary school teaching, assumptions about masculinities and men's desire for career advancement are complimented by the 'glass escalator.' This process in turn has an effect on the socialisation of the next generation of young men and women.

This is partly due to the loss of the manual/non-manual divide as a meaningful way of distinguishing middle and working-class jobs. Hollway (1996: 27) argues that gender is organised hierarchically like class and that relations among men in the hierarchy are not about power in itself, but about power through which masculinities can be rehearsed and reproduced in relation to one another. The process described by Hollway can of course be linked to the way different groups of men appeal to different values and attributes as signifiers of masculine ideals based on class, such as the relative importance of strength and physicality. This research aims to look at what happens to the gendering of work when these opportunities are diminished.

Cultures of Class and Masculinities

This section will draw together the work of Butler (1990), Bourdieu (1984) and Connell (1995, 2000). Whilst they differ in their approach, they have connected arguments about the social intersection of gender and class hierarchies. According to Connell's theory of 'hegemonic' masculinities, prevailing understandings about which traits are desirable, condition the thoughts and actions of individuals. Connell sees this occurring in a similar way to Butler (1990) who believes that individuals make investments in the gender order more generally and in what they see as valuable social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984, Skeggs 1997, 2001). The privileging of physicality in working-class culture has taken a number of forms which are relevant to the study of service work. As discussed above, Skeggs (1997, 2001) has argued that the potential sources of social and cultural capital available to the working-classes are limited and that there is often a mis-recognition of working-class cultural forms.

One of the most conspicuous elements of male working-class social capital is the investment[20] in physical 'toughness' or 'hardness,' which is usually expressed in the form of enduring hardship or other tests of mettle such as arduous work, sport or fighting. This investment is often seen in the value attributed to the capacity for self-defence (often through physical violence) or at least the appearance of such a capacity (Anderson 1999, Lamont 2000, Charlesworth 2000, Bourgois 2003, Nixon 2006). It

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[20] Usually by men, but not exclusively see Halberstam (1998).

can take a variety of forms, including reputation, but most commonly it is expressed through particular types of bodily capital such as muscular physiques, ways of walking, clothing, hair, jewellery and tattoos[21]. This bodily capital is also associated with a certain oppositional masculine disposition which often leads to a marking of those compelled to display it.

'This is a form of unspoken knowledge of place that exists in manners of comportment that always mark those from 'the wrong side of the tracks', the 'rough part of town' and all other euphemisms for people whose bodies betray their origins in poor communities in low status' (Charlesworth 2000: 21).

This importance of bodily styles resonates with the investments (in dress and appearance) made by the working-class women studied by Skeggs (1997) which had exchange value only within working-class locales. In other words while in certain areas such dispositions may be valuable, even essential (Anderson 1999), they are thrown into sharp contrast in many other social arenas such as the middle-class world of education or the 'feminised' world of service work (McDowell 2003).

Under such conditions, to maintain a socially 'appropriate' masculinity, one must display the ability to 'front-up' (Nixon 2006: 12), to correctly comport oneself (Canada 1995, Anderson 1999, Charlesworth 2000). In many instances, the appropriate physical style or bearing is seen as a form of protection. To be perceived in a certain way will forestall trouble in the form of potential challenges or attacks:

'…walking through town alone, it may be necessary to walk in a certain way, a way that exudes strength and a capacity for violence' (Charlesworth 2000: 21).

It is way of moving through space which reflects an understanding of the nature of life in the local area and the possible forms of self-expression and prestige, Charlesworth continues:

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[21] A similar but more valued/accepted process of embodied masculinity can also be seen among many middle-class men.

'...so too one comes to know how to comport oneself in urban space so as to efface the threat of actual physical harm. Yet this method of comportment is also a way of entering into a relationship with the world; in itself it is an experience of the place that emerges from the place's meanings' (Charlesworth 2000: 21).

What Charlesworth is arguing is that the experiences which lead to these expressions of masculinities also create a fundamentally different understanding of the world. Customer service rather than being an annoyance or inconvenience thus becomes a fundamental challenge to the self.

Since masculinities are constructed with the resources 'at hand' (Messerschmidt 1993), there is an argument to be made that the construction of such 'oppositional' or 'protest' masculinities takes place where little else seems to be possible (Willis 1977, Connell 2000, Charlesworth 2000). However, the most important point to hold onto is that the adoption of locally valued bodily styles comes at a cost. While such bodies may be read locally as displaying the socially-valued forms of capital aspired to (strength, hardness, attractiveness), they are also read by wider normative social standards. Such standards do not recognise the social circumstances which shape local social codes and forms of bodily capital. As Skeggs puts it, in many situations where the dominant social codes are imposed on working-class people, a situation occurs where:

'...*appearance became the signifier of conduct;* to look was to be. Appearance became the means by which women were categorised, known, and placed by others. Appearance operated as the mechanism for authorisation, legitimation and de-legitimation' (emphasis in the original, Skeggs 2001: 297-8).

Reay (2001) argues that class stratification is now implicit but still actively recognised. For example a worker on a checkout is by some definitions a white collar service worker, however, their social class is implicit in speech, consumption and interaction (Bourdieu 1984). The appearance of hardness and a confrontational disposition tend to be at odds with the requirements of most service jobs and this can serve to exclude young men from work (McDowell 2003). This is due, not only to the

need for docile and approachable workers, but also due to the need for workers in 'front-line' service work who can 'embody' the company (Leidner 1991a). If customers are too intimidated or scared by a service worker to approach them, the employer is unlikely to achieve the retail 'holy grail' of returning customers. As with many aspects of 'hegemonic' masculinities there is an irony in the fact that investments made in one aspect ('bodily capital') can often *restrict* the attainment of other elements (social and economic capital through work). There is research which suggests that ideas about service work affect unemployed men's likelihood of accepting service roles, particularly those from a manual working-class background (Lindsay and McQuaid 2004, Moskos 2004, Nixon 2006).

The Body and Work

The enactment of 'appropriate' masculinities is intimately bound up with notions of bodily performance. As the type of work available has changed, so has the meanings attached to bodily representations of masculinity. Paradoxically, the reduction of the body's importance, in purely instrumental terms in service work, has given way to an increase in its *symbolic importance*, in the workplace in particular and in societies in general. This change in the role of the body in work is very important in understandings of the construction and performance of masculinities in service work.

The body has been largely implicit in general social theory (Shilling 2003, 2007). Wolkowitz (2002) argues that contemporary scholarship of the body has tended to ignore the role of labour. Due to the decline of manual work there has been a decline in functional importance of the body at work and an increase in importance of appearance and 'presentability'. In service work, the body and emotional performance of the worker combine to become part of what is sold (Hochschild 1983, Leidner 1991a, 1991b, Henson 1996, Henson and Rogers 2001, Korczynski 2002, Bolton and Boyd 2003, Pettinger 2005). Emotional, gendered and bodily performance are thus interconnected and embedded in service work. Retail and service work simply cannot be done correctly without some bodily performance.

Male workers may be aware that they 'embody' the organisation for which they work. However understandings and enactments of 'aesthetic' labour are gender dependent (Warhurst *et al* 2000, Wolkowitz 2002, Pettinger 2005). Williams (2006) argues that the gender, ethnic and social class of a worker will also affect the way that their 'performance' is judged both by customers and managers. Williams (2006: 100-11) argues that customer expectations often serve to perpetuate gender (and class and ethnic) stereotypes because the organisations' goals (profit) are best met by adapting to, rather than challenging such stereotypes. The relevance of the male body in service work is that men may resist an emphasis on their emotional 'performance' and on their body in terms of appearance. For a man to focus excessively on his physical appearance (beyond 'smartness') is still considered by many as effeminate (Connell 1987, Chapman 1988, Watson 2000).

The common emphasis placed by supermarkets on the consistently high quality of customer service has meant that the significance placed by organisations on the physical work undertaken by customer facing staff has been marginalised[22]. This marginalisation is present in the way work is organised (putting customer service above all else) and through recruitment which is primarily focused on finding customer-friendly workers.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the sociological meaning of work and its evolution in post-industrial societies. It has explored the relationship between gender and work and has noted that genders are also typically classed. It has outlined the sociology of work literature which is most useful in understanding the construction of masculinities at work. It has also focused on how the rise of service work puts into sharp relief the relationship between gender and work and issues of how masculinities are performed in service work. This chapter has outlined the theoretical tools of 'hegemonic' masculinities (Connell 1987, 1995), bodily and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) and

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[22] This means almost everyone in the store as one Human Resource manager argued, if a staff member doesn't want to do customer service then supermarket work is probably a bad choice for them (Carrie 20, *Tempus 2*).

gendered performance (Butler 1990, Charlesworth 2000) which will be utilised in this thesis.

The literature reviewed so far would support the hypothesis that service work will present problems of identity construction for working-class men. The following chapter will examine the rise of service work in greater detail and consider the supermarket as a specific and modern mode of shopping. It will then unpick the role of social stigma in the relationship between work and masculinities.

Chapter 2

Service, Deference and Stigma

Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the overarching changes to the labour market that have had a particular impact on working-class men. The importance of 'appropriate' work for the construction of masculinities was established and the potential identity formation problems for a man working in service work were demonstrated. There are two factors which make service work unacceptable to men, the content of the work (emotional work/deference) and its gendered and generally low social status. The following chapter seeks to explore these two factors in more detail and to look at the responses of male workers to threats to their masculine identities.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the rise of the supermarket as a particular way of shopping. The supermarket is then contextualised through a discussion of the literature on service work, the role of 'emotional' work and the gendering of skills. This will then be followed by a discussion of 'non-traditional' work and the role of stigma in the relationship between work and masculinities.

The rise of the supermarket

During the life of this research the supermarket has become a conveniently popular subject of discussion in the media with reference to issues as diverse as obesity, the environment, community cohesion, the globalisation of production and the political economics of mass food production (Samways 2007). With the rise in the past ten to

fifteen years of the large-scale supermarket chains, the 'big four' supermarket companies (Asda, Morrisons, Tesco and Sainsbury's) have come under increasing political scrutiny. Over the past thirty years supermarkets have taken control of 80% of the food sales market (Blythman 2004) and in 2005 Tesco was visited by up to 63% of all British consumers (Farndon 2006). It is estimated that since 1980 the average number of products carried by a typical supermarket has more than tripled, from 15,000 to 50,000 (Nestle 2002).

Figure 2 below provides some figures for Tesco, the market leader giving a sense of the scale of supermarket chains, (UUwww.tescocorporate.com).

Fig. 2. Tesco: Number and Size of Stores (2005).

Type of Store	Number of Stores.	Sales area (million sq ft)	% of UK Space.	
Extra	100	6.6	27.2	
Superstore	446	13.9	57.4	
Metro	160	1.9	7.8	
Express	546	1.1	4.5	
Total Tesco	1,252[23]	23.5		

(Correct to end of 04/05 financial year (UK & ROI: 26 Feb 2005).

While Tesco is the market leader, it is followed closely by Sainsbury's, Morrisons and Asda. The chart below shows their relative market shares. In 1989 the 'big four' held 67.3% of the grocery market compared to 32.7% for 'independents' and 'others'. By 2008 this share had increased to 78.4% (with 21.6% held by 'independents' and 'others').

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[23] The Group also has an additional 527 stores under the 'One Stop' fascia.

Fig. 3 A Comparison of the Market Share of Supermarket Chains

COMPARING THE GROCERY MARKET

1998	2008
Tesco: 21.8%	Tesco: 31.4%
Others: 27%	Asda: 12.1%	Others: 19.1%	Asda: 16.9%
Sainsbury's: 18.9%	Sainsbury's 16.4%
Morrisons/Safeway: 13.3%	Morrisons/Safeway: 11.5%
Independents: 5.7%	Independents: 2.5%

SOURCE: TNS Worldpanel
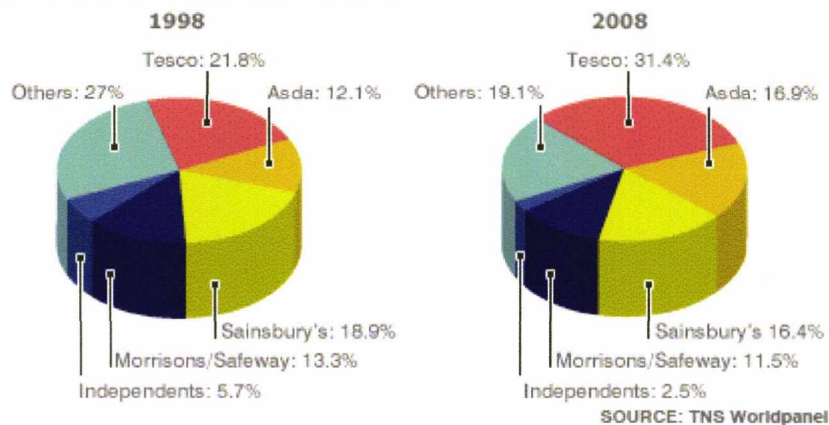
(www.tnsglobal.com)

As a mode of shopping, supermarkets are also relatively new. Supermarkets are often seen as symbolic of modernisation in that they draw together produce from all over the world and, at the same time, centralise services and functions which were previously separate. Responsibility for the loss of local shops and local communities is often laid at the door of large supermarket chains (Farndon 2006, Samways 2007).

The competition for customers between chains through low price groceries has led to increasingly coercive market practice and great emphasis on economies of scale (Du Gay 2006, Rogaly 2008). However, despite the focus (on low prices) in the large-scale grocery industry, there has also been a continued focus on customer service[24] and the retention of repeat customers (Fuller and Smith 1991, Rosenthal *et al* 1997, Thompson and Findlay 1999, Sturdy 2001, Taylor 2002, Kerfoot and Korczynski 2005). In addition to customer-focused staff training and Human Resource practices, this has been promoted through continuous advertising, celebrity endorsement and numerous incentive schemes (such as data tracking loyalty cards).

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[24] With the exception of the emerging economy brands such as Lidl and Netto.

Self-Service Shopping

One of the main characteristics of large scale supermarkets is that they operate largely on a self-service system. The development of 'self-service[25]' shopping following the second world war is often seen as having 'revolutionised' both retail work and consumption, as well as restructuring the relationship between retail employees and consumers (Bamfield 1980, Davies and Howard 1988, Ducatel and Blomley 1990, Gardner and Sheppard 1989, Du Gay 2004). However, it took a long time before 'self-service' shopping became dominant in Britain. As late as 1963, 16 years after the first self-service store opened in Britain, of the 580,000 shops operating in the country only 13,000 operated on a self-service basis (Towsey 1964). Du Gay (2004: 151) argues that a great deal of work was undertaken by retailers to convince shoppers of the benefits of 'going self-service'. Du Gay (2004) argues that while the benefits of self-service shopping principally accrued to retailers in the form of reduced staffing costs and increased sales volumes, self service was 'sold' to customers as enhancing choice, individuality and freedom (Slater 2002). The shift to 'self-service' also,

> '...effected a change in both the nature of the job of retail sales assistance (and management) and the social characteristics of those performing that work.' (Du Gay 2004: 161).

Du Gay (2004: 151-2) argues that while the effects of the introduction of self-service and discourses of freedom and choice employed by retailers are often overstated, they have, together with other factors, had a great conditioning effect on the way consumers (and staff) are 'made up'.

The way that large supermarkets are organised has led to a distancing of the worker from the products which are sold and a change in their relationship to customers and the sales encounter. These changes can also be seen as leading to the de-skilling of retail work, and to some extent, a decline in status (due to a decline in shopkeepers). To some degree the introduction of self-service removed workers from the process of selecting products with and/or for customers and making recommendations. Large

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[25] There are a variety of degrees of self-service, however, the term broadly refers to arrangements where goods are displayed or provided in a manner which allows customers to help themselves. This

scale supermarkets have also reduced the potential and actual product knowledge of workers. The sheer number and variety of products available in even a 'medium' sized supermarket store, makes it very difficult for staff to build up knowledge. This is exacerbated by the common practice of using 'multi-skillers': staff who are moved from department to department based on staffing and the flow of customers. While supermarkets are different from many other branches of retail, they do share many similarities with service work in general. The following section will examine the literature on service work which has grown and diversified over the past two decades.

Service Work

Supermarkets

The rise of supermarkets has occurred as part of the wider growth of service work. There has been a great deal of research which focuses on the technical and organisational elements of supermarkets. This has included work on customer perceptions and loyalty (Sirohi *et al* 1998), the use of background music to affect customer behaviour (Millman 1982), analysis of the role of parent-child interaction in decision-making (Atkin 1982) and more recently the effects of brand names on internet customer behaviour (Degeratu *et al* 2000). Du Gay (1996, 2004) also looked at the way that self-service shopping changed the relationship between customers and workers and also effected a shift in the nature of supermarket work and who does it. This change included the decline of smaller shops and with them the male shopkeeper. The shift in the grocery industry from small businesses to large chains can also be linked to the increase in women in the workforce and the increase in part-time working.

Despite the wealth of technical and managerial literature, there has been little research which focuses specifically on the role of gender in the organisation of supermarket work. The only example which focuses specifically on this is Tolich and Briar (1999) which was originally research examining the effects of deskilling on supermarket workers. Tolich and Briar's research was based on the assumption that, because the

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has recently changed to include options for customers to 'check out' their own goods and process their

roles held by men and women in the store were paid equally and had the same job description gender inequalities would be minimal. However, they soon found that there were major gender divisions and that discrimination had a major impact on the women involved. Tolich and Briar found that women were often confined to work on the checkouts whereas men were allowed to move about the store freely. This had the dual effect of allowing men to resist customer service and deny women the opportunity to gain a variety of skills and therefore promotion. This meant that women were responsible for most of the emotional labour. Some of the male workers also worked at night in order to avoid customers and checkout work altogether (Tolich and Briar 1999: 130). Tolich and Briar also argue that women were disadvantaged by their inability to work flexible or long hours due to their greater caring responsibilities (*ibid*).

Rafaeli (1989) conducted a participant observation of supermarket checkout workers in Israel. However, Rafaeli's research interest was not supermarkets *per se* but the way that relationships within organisations affected the production of 'good' customer service (Rafaeli 1989: 246). Interestingly in Rafaeli's study all checkout operators were female and the gendered division of labour was perhaps less contested. Rafaeli's (1989: 247) research suggested that the close proximity of the checkout clerk-customer relationship created tension. She argues that this tension resulted from the struggle between customers and clerks for control of the sales transaction. Similar findings were also produced in research focussing on bar and restaurant waiting staff (Whyte1948, Butler and Snizek 1976, Mars and Nicod 1984).

General Service Work

The wider literature on service work has fallen broadly into two categories: that which has focused on business and management processes and that which has focused on gender (and to a lesser extent class). Discussing the gendering of work, Biswas and Cassell argue that,

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own payments.

'Numerous studies have documented the ways in which work is structured along gender lines. Predominantly such investigations have reported on the inequity of the sexual division of labour and have argued that such gender segregation operates in favour of males, with the majority of female economic activity concentrated in the low-paid areas of the service sector'(Biswas and Cassell 1996: 18).

The gendering of service work has been studied in a wide variety of service settings, such as airlines (Hochschild 1983, 2003, Bolton and Boyd 2003), restaurants (Whyte 1948, Butler and Snizek 1976, Mars and Nicod 1984, Hall 1993), hotels and public houses, (Adkins 1995, Adib and Guerrier 2003), clothing retail (Pettinger 2005) and supermarkets (Du Gay 1996, Tolich and Briar 1999). It is also well established that the nature of the work or the product which is sold also influences the gender of the workers chosen to sell or provide it and the gendered performance they give (Cockburn and Omrod 1993, Penn and Wirth 1993, Biswas and Cassell 1996, Kinniard and Hall 1996, Lawson 2000, Adib and Guerrier 2003, Williams 2006).

The structuring of service work means that due to gender stereotypes regarding their 'proper' place and their 'natural' abilities in so called 'soft' skills (Tyler and Taylor, 1998, 2001, Bradley, 1999, Erickson and Ritter 2001), women become trapped in 'occupational ghettos' (Goffee and Scase 1995: 127, Kerfoot and Korczynski 2005). This process also means women are isolated from promotion opportunities and advantages more often extended to men (Williams 1995: 69, Tolich and Briar 1999: 130).

Beynon (1992) argues that there has been less of a qualitative shift in the nature of work (from manufacturing to service work) than many accounts might suggest. For Beynon (1992: 182), the organisation of most service work is an extension of industrial labour into new areas of work and work relationships. Beynon sees this move as a result of the needs of capitalism and one which further reduces the possibility of positive identity and meaning being produced through work. This account is in keeping with perspectives which see service work as leading to an impoverishment of work identity.

Similarly, Ritzer's (1993) 'McDonaldization' thesis suggests that service work has become increasingly Taylorised and that rationalisation and bureaucracy are the main structuring features of service work. While there is no doubting the grim nature of many 'McJobs', the 'McDonaldization' thesis lends itself well to popular accounts of the 'end of work' and an assumption that all service jobs are 'McJobs'. It has also given a language to middle-class disdain for the work done by disadvantaged people with limited choices (Newman 1999).

Du Gay sees rationalisation and bureaucracy as secondary to the notion of the 'sovereign' customer which he sees as the most important factor in the way that service work is organised. However, both Du Gay (1996) and Ritzer (1993) tend to overemphasise the power of organisations to control interactions between workers and customers. Korczynski (2002) provides a more accurate framework, arguing that the study of front line service work must be balanced by a dual understanding of the importance of bureaucratic logic and the logic of the customer's orientation for service quality. Many studies have shown the way that these dual and often competing logics shape the gendering of service work and workers (Cockburn and Omrod 1993, Adkins 1995, Williams 2006) and are also central to the shaping of Human Resource policies (Penn and Wirth 1993, Biswas and Cassell 1996, Korczynski 2002, Williams 2006).

Korczynski argues that service work is undertaken by 'customer-focused bureaucracies (2002: 2). This perspective combined with Acker's (1990) assertion that organisations are not gender neutral is interesting. This thesis is in a sense about the attempts of workers to negotiate this situation and reconcile their needs in competition with customers, organisational logic and wider societal perceptions of their work. Korczynski (2002: 3) points out that service work is increasingly undertaken in a context of 'gender based servility.' This context is also part of the ongoing need to perpetuate the myth of customer sovereignty (Du Gay 1996). For Korczynski, it is this need which conditions management and Human Resource policies, labour processes and the division of labour. It should be pointed out here that it is not suggested that the gendered division of labour is exacted as an end in itself, rather as a competitive tool. Korczynski's (2002: 2) notion of 'customer-focused bureaucracies' allows the consideration of the 'contested terrain' created

when the needs of workers clash with organisational logic and the service quality orientations of 'sovereign' customers (Edwards 1979, Du Gay 1996). The gendering of work occurs within this space where competing groups must negotiate over the terms of work and the social meaning of interactions.

The struggle over the terms of service work is not a new phenomena and Korczynski's (2002) assessment of the customer service encounter should be seen in the context of a long history of research. Whyte (1948), Butler and Snizek (1976), Trist (1977), Mars and Nicod (1984) and Rafaeli (1989) all document the way that workers and recipients of customer service negotiate the terms of service and attempt to ensure that they get what they want. For example Whyte (1948) documented the attempts of waiting staff to ensure that customers are happy with the service they receive and in turn leave a large tip. Mars and Nicod (1984: 65) describe this whole set of relationships as the 'politics of service.'

Supermarket owners/managers employ, divide and manage workers as they do, in order to attract the maximum number of customers and to make as great a profit as possible. This is exacerbated because the way most businesses seek to do this is through providing a satisfying 'customer experience' and retaining the repeat business of customers. Satisfying customers often involves workers acting as 'buffers' between the customers' expectations of an organisation and the reality of that experience. Acting as a buffer and providing a service where the 'customer is always right' often involves a great deal of 'emotion work.' As Kerfoot and Korczynski put it,

> 'The concept of customer-orientated bureaucracy can also point us to the role of service workers themselves. While contradictory clashes of logics may lead to points of considerable tension that most workers must mediate, the existence of dual logics also suggests important spaces for workers. In these spaces, workers bring their own assumptions, identities and interests to bear in the enactment of service work. In this respect we can say that doing service work is 'doing gender' (Kerfoot and Korczynski 2005: 391).

Conceptualising service work in this way recognises that whilst there are considerable constraints on workers, there is also 'room for manoeuvre' within this 'contested terrain' and this is especially relevant where the construction and maintenance of masculinities is concerned (Edwards 1979). Workers bring their own needs, understandings and prejudices to bear on the service encounter (as do managers and customers (Williams 2006). The need for male workers to show deference and to do 'emotion work' is one of main reasons for seeing service work and masculinities as incompatible. Newman evokes this situation well giving the example of fast-food workers:

> 'Burger Barn workers are told that they must, at whatever cost to their own dignity, defer to the public. Customers can be unreasonably demanding, rude, even insulting, and workers must count backwards from a hundred in an effort to stifle their outrage. Servicing the customer with a smile pleases management because making money depends on keeping the clientele happy, but it can be an exercise in humiliation for teenagers' (Newman 1999: 89).

Indeed, there is a great deal of evidence that this process is resisted and negotiated by the men (and women) concerned (Henson 1996, Lupton 2006, Nixon 2006, 2009). The following section will consider 'emotion work' and the way that this process is gendered and negotiated in more detail.

Emotion Work

It is only relatively recently that the sociology of emotion has become an explicit area of study (although it is implicit in classical sociology). Emotion is increasingly recognised as being important in work and organisations (Hochschild 1983, 2003, Fineman 1993, 2000, 2003, Lee Trewick 1996, Bolton and Boyd 2003). Emotional 'performance' is now seen to be part of many work roles, and a legitimate focus for managerial intervention (Hochschild 1983, Rose 1990, Leidner 1991, Du Gay 1996, Hatcher 2003). Arlie Hochschild's work the *Managed Heart* demonstrates the way in which corporate management strategies commodify the emotions of workers. She

also persuasively argues that the strategic deployment of emotion is not only beneficial for companies in need of returning customers, but also an intrinsic part of many work roles (Hochschild 1983). Hochschild (1983) introduces the concept of 'emotional labour' which refers to the deployment by workers of emotion management which improves the service a customer receives. Such emotional labour could involve a worker responding politely to a rude or ignorant customer or feigning a jovial mood when actually upset or angry.

Lee Trewick (1996) draws a distinction between 'emotion work' and 'emotional labour', the latter referring only to paid roles. However, it is important to recognise that there is not a clear line which can be drawn between paid and unpaid 'emotion work,' (even within the paid work context). Hochschild and others following her have shown that the necessity for employees to manipulate their emotions is tacitly and explicitly acknowledged by companies, through training and informal management advice (Hochschild 1983, Bolton and Boyd 2003, Kakavelakis *et al* 2007). Emotional labour can also be used to produce a negative reaction in a customer which can then be exploited for organisational gain (Kakavelakis *et al* 2007)[26].

Bolton and Boyd (2003: 290) are critical of Hochschild's (1983) assumption that emotion workers will inevitably be harmed by their emotional performances. Bolton and Boyd (2003) argue that the worker's efforts do not inevitably lead to alienation from their 'true selves.' They argue that it is important to recognise that workers come to an organisation with 'a lifetime training in the "presentation of self"' (Bolton and Boyd 2003: 291, Goffman 1959). Bolton and Boyd also usefully identify 'philanthropic' emotion management[27], which is where,

'...an organizational actor may not only follow organisational prescription but may decide to give that 'little extra' during a social exchange in the work-place' (Bolton and Boyd 2003: 291).

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[26] Kakavelakis *et al* (2007: 16) give the example of 'hurt and rescue' techniques whereby a sales-person will upset a prospective customer and then offer a solution in the form of their products and service.

[27] A similar reaction is also demonstrated by Kakavelakis *et al* (2007) who show that workers do not always follow an organisational 'script' aimed at exploiting customers.

Many studies involving 'scripted' work show that staff often undermine or ignore scripts to either help or insult customers (Leidner 1991a, Bolton and Bird 2003, Kakavelakis *et al* 2007).

The level of 'emotion work' entered into by workers varies and is often dependent on the choices of workers (Bolton and Boyd 2003: 291). However, work (in particular service work), often creates situations which require 'emotion work' that extends beyond the specific requirements of the paid role (Hochschild 1983 and Bolton and Boyd 2003). As Goffman (1959) points out, women (and others in subordinate roles) will often be compelled to do additional emotion work (not necessarily voluntary), to save the 'face' of those in more powerful positions. This process can extend to supporting male workers conceptualisation of their work identity (Tolich and Briar 1999). This is usually achieved through the gendering of skills and a discursive focus on 'masculine' elements of work such as physicality (discussed in detail below).

The Essentialisation of Skills

The gendered nature of the skills required by particular forms of work has long been established (Cavendish 1982, Cockburn 1983, Acker 1990). The 'emotion work' involved in service work, has led to it being constructed as 'female' (Hochschild 1983, Lee Trewick 1996, Bolton and Boyd 2003). Service roles have traditionally involved work which positions those who perform it as subordinate to those who consume it. As Lee Trewick puts it, 'emotion work'

'...is work used to create a certain relationship with the recipient and to maintain that individual in a particular way' (Lee Trewick 1996: 118).

Work roles are also not only gendered but some are also seen to connotate sexuality (Hall 1993, Biswas and Cassell (1996), Henson 1996, Acker 1990, Adkins 1995, Cross and Bagilhole 2002). Lisa Adkins (1995) argues that as well as the frequently implicit gendering of service, in many sectors, women's sexuality is sold as part of the

labour bargain. Adkins (1995) gives examples women being asked/forced to wear suggestive or revealing uniforms or to tolerate or encourage flirtatious or sexual banter. An extreme instance of this is the case of the American chain *Hooters* which, while perhaps atypical, has a specific market strategy of employing large breasted, attractive women and markets itself largely to men. Service work tends to function in a way which reproduces 'normal conditions' (Offe 1985). It is this normalizing role which Offe (*ibid*) suggests distinguishes it from other forms of work. For Adkins this means that service work cannot be understood in terms of economic rationality alone. That is, it is not just about work and labour processes but about the (re)production of social structure (Adkins 1995) and the reaffirmation of the gender order. This is also because of the proximity of production, that is, services for customers must be produced and consumed in the same place. Such work often creates a gendered relationship which reinforces the hierarchy of genders and the value placed on skills and 'emotion work'. 'Emotion work' and empathetic attributes when displayed by workers in higher level positions, have commonly been re-conceptualised in popular management discourses as 'skills' (Hatcher 2003).

> The new interdependent way does not renounce individualism, but it has redrawn it. The characteristics of the feminine are inserted into an old moral order as new forms of ethical practice, but are made accessible to all and conceived of as 'skills' (Hatcher 2003: 399).

This shift, combined with widely diffused, 'common sense' essentialist perceptions of gender, often means that men and women are unevenly rewarded for doing 'emotion work' (McDowell 1997, Bolton and Boyd 2003, Hatcher 2003, Bolton 2005). For example, when a man undertakes 'emotion work' he is seen to be deploying skills and expending effort, whereas a woman performing the same type of work is often seen as doing what comes 'naturally'. While this situation is less immediately evident in supermarkets, normative understandings of workers as gendered subjects shape the qualitative and quantitative nature of the 'emotion work' that is expected of them.

The growth in the importance of 'feminine' skills is perhaps another reason for the common perception that 'masculinity' (and the position of 'men[28]')' has been undermined or is in some way under attack[29] (Ashwin and Lyktina (2004). This notion is not necessarily present in all social groups (McDowell 2003). Nonetheless, there is considerable evidence that men (and some women), see service work and deference as having a stigmatising effect on male workers (Henson 1996, Lindsay and McQuaid 2004, Moskos 2004, Nixon 1999, 2006, 2009). The following section will consider how this process has been utilised and perpetuated through organisational/management discourses.

Gender, Self and Service

The growing emphasis on customer service 'skills' has meant increasing attempts to standardise the interactions between supermarket workers and customers. This process of monitoring and intervening in workers' emotional performance has been combined with the growing tendency to conceptualise work as a means to self-fulfilment and workers as 'entrepreneurs of the self' (Rose 1990, Du Gay 1996). As Rose argues through work,

'…we can become more enterprising, take control of our careers, transform ourselves, not *in spite of* work, but *by means of* work' (Rose 1990: 14 emphasis in original).

This 'binding' of the worker to their work is combined with changes in the *types* of work done and the need for workers to internalise customer service discourses and be self-surveiling. It is very often necessary for workers in retail, to be on the shop-floor and to manage encounters with customers through 'responsible autonomy' (Watson 2003: 108). For workers to do this consistently in the way companies demand, there must be a level of congruence between at least the companies stated aims and the workers' attitudes and actions. In many areas of service, this is achieved through

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[28] Once again I would hesitate to see or discuss men as a coherent group, however they are often seen and discussed as such in popular discourse.

training schemes (Kakavelakis *et al* 2007), but often this training is minimal and managers must rely on existing understandings of customer service and the 'presentation of self' (Goffman 1959, Bolton and Boyd 2003: 291).

The need for service workers to be 'invested' in the work they do and the aims of the organisation is in direct conflict with the 'end of work' literature which argues for a decline in such attachment. This process is a complex one which involves people using their own orientations to work, the aims of the organisation and wider societal perceptions of their work to create meaning.

In retail, a key strategy aimed at harmonising organisation and worker interests was to place workers in work they found appropriate or interesting (Pettinger 2005). It is also common to put workers in departments which sell goods they will be knowledgeable about, for example, putting a young man who likes computers in the electrical department or a young woman in the women's clothes section (*ibid*). These examples are clearly gendered but the process of linking people to their work is often structured this way. Matching workers to their work not only reduces training needs but ensures they are more likely to 'fit' their role and give good service. Contrary to 'end of work' thesis, such Human Resource practices often further the binding of perceptions of self to the work role (Rose 1990).

There are a number of assumptions within the accounts given in the 'end of work' literature regarding the rise of service work and the types of work that can provide intrinsic satisfaction. Very often, alienating labour such as work on monotonous production lines, which is tied to the speed and rhythms of machines, is compared to work carried out by skilled craftsmen or artisans or the work of managers and knowledge workers. Whilst there are certainly historical problems with this distinction (Sonenscher 1987), more interesting is the way that this dichotomy seems to remain present (implicitly at least) in the analysis of Gorz (1982, 1985), Casey (1993), Bauman (1998), Sennett (1998). Very often, these writers contrast a managerial elite, who are able to realize themselves through the dynamic construction of entrepreneurial work identities, with those who are forced to work in insecure,

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[29] A good example of this is the 'outrage' caused by girls achieving better exam results than boys in some subjects.

poorly paid service work largely for subsistence. There is often an assumption that these jobs are the modern equivalent of factory work, being routinised and largely devoid of the exercise of discretion or initiative and, therefore, satisfaction. This assumption is partly due to the top-down nature of many of these accounts but also to general assumptions about lower-level work implicit within them. There is a significant distinction to be made here, between work which is governed by automation (machinery, computerised call centres and during busy periods checkout work) and customer service work (on the shop floor) which allows for some measure of discretion, initiative and control over the pace of work. This second type of work describes a great deal of roles within a supermarket (and retail work in general).

This difference is important for a number of reasons and there is a deal of sociological evidence from studies of such work which demonstrate the great importance attached to physical and personal autonomy in (automated) factory work. Beynon (1973: 116) details the continual battles fought to maintain even a small amount of autonomy over work time. Beynon (1973) showed how it was common for factory and production line workers to, 'work up the line,' that is, work at a higher pace to get ahead of the of the production line, which would then allow them to take short breaks while the line continued[30]. Similarly, workers studied by Milkman (1997: 39-40) preferred jobs which were not on the production line, which allowed for the accumulation of completed work, and therefore allowed workers some discretion over the management of their work time. Finally, Lupton (1963: 90) and Cavendish (1982) discuss the role of 'banking[31]' work which also played an important role in creating a small level of autonomy for workers as well as a cushion against 'bad[32]' jobs and problems with machinery[33]. These sort of discretionary moments which would be considered a great luxury in many manufacturing jobs, are a fundamental part of most shop-floor roles in a supermarket.

So far this chapter has looked at supermarkets as a specific form of retail and a relatively new place of work. The content of service work (emotional

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[30] See also discussion of resistance of 'blue-eye' system p145, the 'Friday night pool' p148 and the hatred of the 'time-study man'.

[31] This also refers to the accumulation of completed work.

[32] Batches of work or machines which make it difficult or impossible to make a good piece rate.

work/deference) has been considered in detail and it has been shown how it might conflict with masculinities as they are usually conceived and/or produced. Many academic studies of gendered workplaces have rightly focused on the way women are positioned within organisations. Consequently, there has been a great deal of discussion concerning inequality, discrimination and 'feminisation' (Cockburn 1991, Crompton 1997).

The following section will show how the gendering of women in work has also affected the way men position themselves. In particular, there will be a detailed focus on the way that ideas of gendered work and 'femininity' in general, construct certain aspects of service work as potentially stigmatising for male workers. This process, in turn, affects the way men working in 'non-traditional' roles or those in 'feminised' workplaces (such as a supermarket) manage their identities. It will be shown that supermarket work is of particular interest as it lacks both the 'escape routes' of middle-class 'non-traditional' roles, such as teaching, as well as the conditions for a strong occupational identity as in the case of 'dirty work'.

Gender 'Non-traditional' Work

Women Working in 'Non-traditional' Occupations

The term 'non-traditional' is used here to refer to a man or a woman working in a role usually associated with the opposite gender (such as a female truck driver or a male nurse). Women's entry into a world of work dominated largely by men has taken place on a gendered 'terrain' (Fine 1987). McDowell (1997: 151-3) argues that there are a limited number of roles open to women in 'male' environments, for example seductress, wife, mother or 'iron lady' (see also Cockburn 1991, Adkins 1995, 2001). Women moving into 'non-traditional' roles have had to manage their identities in 'appropriate' ways and often fit the mould of a worker which is premised on the assumption of maleness (Acker 1990). It has been suggested that the only way for a woman to succeed in 'male' environments is to become an honorary male (Fine 1987, Rhode 1988, Romaine 1999). While the gender roles of men are also constrained,

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[33] This process was also part of the management of piece work rates, but this was not the sole reason

they are not classified or stereotyped in the same way. This is perhaps because men's conspicuous presence in most public spheres, work spaces and positions of power is understood as normal. Conversely, the presence of a woman in a similar context is often seen as unusual or 'un-natural' and therefore in need of 'classification' and comment by male colleagues (Acker 1990, Hollway 1996).

This process is particularly important with regard to social or organisational power because it often serves to maintain women's subordinate organisational position and emphasises their status as an organisational and social 'other' (Acker 1990). This means that to be working in a role designated as a 'woman's' could be a particular source of stigma for a man. Men entering work 'traditionally' associated with women, do so within these social expectations. The following section will consider how men making this move are considered and, in turn, how they consider themselves and manage their identities.

Men Working in 'Non-traditional' Work

Following the shift in employment which is the context for this thesis (manual to service) there has been significant interest in men working in 'non-traditional' occupations, (for examples, see Pierce 1995, Williams 1995, Henson 1996, Maume 1999, Henson and Rogers 2001, Cross and Bagilhole 2002, Simpson 2004, Lupton 2006). The literature on this area says two things very clearly: first that men working in female dominated occupations perceive challenges to their masculinities and secondly that men and women are rewarded differentially for crossing 'traditional' gender boundaries in work.

Most research on men in 'women's' work is dominated by research on middle/lower middle-class occupations, such as primary school teachers, nurses and librarians. Whilst these studies are both interesting and important, they tend to focus on careers in which there is a coherent career ladder and also a set of skills or knowledge which can be drawn upon readily to 'masculinise' the role (see Cross and Bagilhole 2002 and Lupton 2006 for examples). This means that very often male workers are able to

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for 'banking.'

deploy identity management strategies to avoid the application of negative labels or stigma arising from doing women's work. One of the main reasons for using supermarket workers in this research was the relative absence of this structure and of the privilege deriving from male 'token' status more generally.

Kanter (1977) argues that, in many situations, individuals accrue penalties due to their minority status (particularly where they are female, non-white or non-heterosexual). However, male workers in 'non-traditional,' female dominated professions, for example, nursing and primary school teaching are often rewarded for their minority status (Pierce 1995, Williams 1995, Henson 1996, Cross and Bagilhole 2002). This process is often referred to as the 'glass escalator' effect (Williams 1995: 69). The 'glass escalator' is very often based on assumptions about the career priorities and interests of men in organisations and beliefs about the essential attributes of 'masculinity' (Williams 1995, Henson 1996, Cross and Bagilhole 2002). This also allows greater scope for avoiding the negative connotations of these jobs and making them more acceptable as work for the men involved (Henson 1996)[34].

The following discussion draws on Simpson's (2004) detailed analysis of the benefits accruing to men in 'non-traditional' roles[35]. Simpson (2004: 356) argues that there are four key themes regarding this process, the 'career effect', the 'assumed authority effect', the 'special consideration effect' and the 'zone of comfort effect[36].' The 'career effect' refers to the general way in which men's minority status was recognised by them and others to enhance their career prospects. As Simpson put's it,

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[34] Lupton (2006) argues that there are two main phenomena related to the 'glass escalator' effect. First that men progress to senior positions more quickly than their female counterparts (Cockburn 1991, Williams 1995). This often involves 'fast-tracking' and, as discussed above, they often gain greater rewards for doing the same work as women (Acker 1990, Cockburn 1991, Hollway 1996, McDowell 1997, Bolton 2005). A good illustration of this would be in primary school teaching where men comprise 14 per cent of all teachers, but 41 per cent of head teachers (Department for Education and Skills, 2001). Men also tend to avoid discrimination from both male and female superiors (Williams 1995). Secondly, men tend to be channelled into certain specialties (which are also often gendered, particularly in roles such as nursing where technical expertise can be set against care or 'emotion work' (Bolton 2005). This process is one which appeals both to men's own sense of what is appropriate to their gender and that of others. These beliefs have the potential to unsettle men who are content in 'lower' positions (Lupton 2006: 105). It is also likely that while men entering female dominated work roles will often have a pay advantage over women, they will often earn less than men in similar 'male' roles.
[35] Other writers have produced similar typologies for explaining this process but Simpson's is the most clearly articulated.

'…these advantages were particularly evident in teaching where men felt welcomed into the profession' (Simpson 2004: 356).

It is often perceived (both by the men and their female colleagues) that male applicants were favoured in recruitment and given greater opportunities to develop their careers (Simpson 2004, Bolton 2005, Lupton 2006). The 'assumed authority effect' describes the benefit that many men were able to gain from the belief of colleagues and customers/patients in their greater authority. The assumption that men are more assertive and better able to control situations was beneficial in many roles particularly teaching and air cabin work (Simpson 2004). This could also be a 'double-edged sword' for example for male aircraft cabin crew who were often called upon to deal with difficult situations (Simpson 2004). The 'assumed authority effect' could also act to make male workers who lacked status and authority painfully aware of their position, when based on this effect they are assumed to be their own boss or another higher placed worker (Henson 1996, Henson and Rogers 2001, Simpson 2004, Bolton 2005). The 'special consideration effect' refers to the way many men felt that their token status often meant they received special treatment as far as rules and expectations (Simpson 2004). Finally, the 'zone of comfort effect' refers to the way that many men felt more comfortable working and being in the company of women (Simpson 2004), and as Lupton (2006) notes this can also be related to the perceived lack of competition from other men in such roles.

These processes are all related to a system which differentially rewards male and female workers' performance and the embodiment of 'male' and 'female' qualities and attributes depending on the context and the gender of the individual concerned. While this process of assumptions and rewards tends to act in a way which rewards men to the detriment of their female colleagues, it also illustrates the social consequences of not conforming to gendered stereotypes. These consequences are neatly illustrated by examples given by Henson (1996) of two types of male worker: men who did not want to go into management and were therefore seen as lacking ambition and those mistaken for managers or senior staff and subsequently embarrassed when their actual 'lowly' position was discovered.

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[36] These themes are analytically distinct but in practice interrelated.

Male Negotiating Strategies

The two dominant themes of research into men in traditionally female dominated work are that: i) they employ a variety of common strategies to protect and maintain their masculinities and; ii) that this combined with their general presence often disadvantages female colleagues.

As discussed above, much of the research on men in 'non-traditional' roles focuses on middle/lower middle-class occupations, with significant cultural and social resources to minimise the stigma of a 'non-traditional' role. A notable exception is Henson and Roger's (2001) study of male temporary office workers which focused on the way men constructed their identities in a job role which did not allow the identity 'escape routes' described above. Due to the temporary nature of the work and the absence of the possibility of promotion, temporary workers were unable to take advantage of the 'glass escalators' available to men in other 'non-traditional' roles. The men in these jobs faced a dual assessment of their masculine status, due to their lack of a permanent or 'real' job (Henson and Rogers 2001). They were also located in an environment and job role which called for the performance of what Henson and Rogers (2001: 220) call 'emphasised femininity.' This would take the form of deference and caretaker behaviours (as in service roles), which called into question (in the eyes of some of those involved) their presumed heterosexuality. Men working in such jobs could be seen from one point of view, as questioning the 'naturalness' of an organisation's gender order. However, the presence of a man in an 'inappropriate' role is usually understood as reflecting some form of inherent 'deficiency' in the individual, such as homosexuality, lack of ability or ambition (Henson and Rogers 2001). Rather than challenging the 'feminine' nature of the work they did, male 'temps' tended to simultaneously reassert it while denying its application to themselves (Henson and Rogers 2001, Cross and Bagilhole 2002). Male temporary workers attempted this in a number of ways: first by resisting demands for deference even when doing so risked their job and secondly by employing 'cover stories.' A 'cover story' could involve explaining one's current role as supporting a 'higher' aim, such as acting or writing (Henson and Rogers 2001: 220). Paradoxically, these gender strategies, rather than disrupting the gender order, helped to reproduce and

naturalise the gendered organisation of work and reinvigorate hegemonic masculinity and its domination over women and subaltern men.

Re-labelling, Re-focusing and Status Enhancement

There are three main types of identity management strategies that have been identified as employed by men in female dominated occupations to avoid social stigma, which are similar to the 'cover-stories' described by Henson and Rogers (2001). The first is 're-labelling,' (Simpson 2004) or 're-naming' work (Henson and Rogers 2001), for example a librarian referring to himself as an information technologist (Lupton 2006, Cross and Bagilhole 2002). This strategy is linked to the second which is 're-focusing,' (Henson and Rogers 2001), and can take a variety of different forms. An example of this would be dismissing the job's significance to one's identity, the 'a job's a job' process (Cross and Bagilhole 2002). Similarly, workers can focus selectively on different aspects of their work and employ masculinised job titles. Examples of this would be a male nurse emphasising organisation over care (Cross and Bagilhole 2002) an 'information technician' emphasising technology over service (Simpson 2004) or an 'industrial cleaner' emphasising physicality over the usually 'feminine' connotations of the role of cleaner (Wills 2008). Such discourses draw on an implicit understanding of the association of technology and 'masculinity' (Cockburn 1991, 1993, Connell 1995, Henson and Rogers 2001). This is again interconnected with the final strategy which is 'status enhancement' which involves 'borrowing' prestige from the organisation or superiors, for example a legal secretary discussing the important work of his boss as opposed to his own (Henson and Rogers 2001: 232, Simpson 2004).

These strategies are usually undertaken simultaneously with the rejection of the application of the job's 'femaleness' to oneself which Henson and Rogers (2001) describe. This can be achieved by demonstrating that one has not been affected by the job by openly rejecting the 'new man' and embracing 'traditional' masculinities (Cross and Bagilhole 2002). Similarly, this process can be achieved by male workers through taking steps to 'prove' that they and men in general are superior to women as

workers (Cross and Bagilhole 2002). This again serves to reassert gender stereotypes and to undermine and disadvantage female workers.

'Dirty Work' and Social Taint

The examples discussed above have shown that the way service work is gendered can create problems for men who do it. This section seeks to make a more explicit link between this and the idea that service work (and other roles which are not gender 'appropriate') can cause social stigma. Through identifying the possibility of stigma or social 'taint', the need for men to employ identity management strategies can be better understood. This will be linked in later chapters with the symbolic boundaries drawn by supermarket workers. Hughes argues that 'dirty work,'

'...may be simply physically disgusting,' it may be a symbol of degradation, something that wounds one's dignity or it may be dirty work in that it in some way 'goes counter to the more heroic of our moral conceptions' (Hughes 1958: 319).

When it is defined in this way, dirty work could refer to low status work and particularly work which could also be seen as counter to dominant ideas about gender. In the case of a male supermarket worker, this could be largely due to the assumption that a servile job runs counter to most conceptions of hegemonic masculinities. In discussing the identity management strategies of those doing 'dirty work', Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) argue that there are two broad processes that workers adopt to resist negative perceptions of their roles. The first involve what they describe as the process of 'reframing', 'refocusing' and 'recalibration,' which is very similar to the processes adopted by men in 'non-traditional' work.

'Reframing infuses the work with positive value and/or negates its negative value...' (Ashforth *et al* 2007: 5-6).

Ashforth *et al* (2007: 5-6) illustrate reframing by giving the example of nuclear weapons scientists (studied by Gusterson, 1996) who coped with their occupational taint by invoking the belief that their work enhanced rather than threatened world peace. Recalibrating adjusts the standards by which a role is evaluated (Ashforth *et al* 2007: 5-6). A good example of this is the way that dogcatchers apply an inverted value hierarchy to physically tainting tasks (Palmer 1978). By making reference to their role in preventing bites or the spread of rabies dogcatchers confer greater value on their most difficult /stigmatizing tasks (*ibid*). Finally, Ashforth *et al* refer to *refocusing* where attention is shifted from the tainted aspects of the occupation to the non-tainted aspects, giving the example of a manure spreader emphasized his autonomy and enjoyment of being outdoors (Ashforth *et al* 2007: 5-6).

Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) are critical of the over-extension of the concept of 'dirty work' to include the tedious, trivial or unnecessary (e.g. Henson 1996) or tasks that seem unrewarded or unappreciated (e.g. Davies 1982). They argue that these,

> '… do not preserve the seminal notion of dirty work as both necessary and polluting and, thereby, that the work threatens to brand the workers themselves as polluted' (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999: 416).

This is particularly so given Hughes' later, potentially more inclusive definition of 'dirty work' as, 'physically, socially or morally dirty' (Hughes 1958: 122). It is not argued here that retail or supermarket work is in itself 'dirty work' in the spirit of Ashforth and Kreiners' (1999) article. However, there are some interesting parallels, for example their arguments concerning the possibilities and difficulties of identity construction in low-status or stigmatised/stigmatising work. In their discussion of prestige and 'social taint,' Ashforth and Kreiner (1999: 415) argue that work roles 'where the worker appears to have a servile relationship to others' are likely to 'severely reduce the status element of prestige' (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999: 416).

To systematically compare the processes discussed by Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) and men in 'non-traditional' work would be to become needlessly mired in terminology. However, this connection between such 'tainted' occupations and those

which go against prevailing notions of gender appropriateness have not previously been explicitly made[37]. What studies of 'stigmatised' work groups reveal is the common need for workers to defend themselves in a variety of situations against attacks on their personal identity which arise due to their work role. This need suggests that there is a common understanding that an individual's work reflects his or her identity and that one is judged according to the work one does. Regardless of an individual's personal response to this process, such ideas are still prevalent and shape individual action and understanding. This discussion will be revisited with reference to the empirical data produced in this research in an attempt to combine the notion of taint with gender, class and work more generally. One of the reasons social researchers study 'dirty workers' is to look at the way they maintain a positive work identity in the light of common negative perceptions of their work. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), for example, focused on lower status workers because they were less likely to be afforded the protection of a 'status shield,' a buffer against social assaults by others (Stenross and Kleinman 1989: 415). This process is similar to the 'escape routes' discussed above for middle-class men in 'non-traditional' roles.

Due to the prestige associated with higher status 'dirty work' such as funeral directors or dentists, these groups are better able to reduce the salience of negative perceptions of their work (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999: 430). This is also due to organisational structure and the training and socialisation involved in these jobs (see Trice and Beyer 1993 and Van Maanen and Barley 1984). Morticians, for example, go through lengthy training with their peers and are more likely to go on training courses and to conferences. Through this process, workers in higher status 'dirty work' roles are more likely to be able to foster and maintain a coherent oppositional work ideology (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999: 430).

Not only are supermarket workers denied this socialisation and training, they also lack the same coherent work identities which many 'dirty' workers possess. Very often among working-class men (including those interviewed and observed for this research) there is the belief that all work is of a similar nature and varying only in its conditions (Donaldson 1991). However, this is not to say that work is not important

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[37] As far as I am aware.

in the construction of their identities. On the contrary, these men are likely to engage in strenuous and ongoing strategies to defend their masculinities/work identities (Henson 1996, 2001, Cross and Bagilhole 2002). With this in mind, what makes the study of masculinities in retail and supermarket work so interesting, is that while this work shares many of the problems and stigmas of so called 'dirty work' *it lacks* the possibly cohesive elements of truly 'dirty work.' It therefore also lacks much of the potential for mitigating the negative effects on status and identity construction through the use of a 'status shield' (Stenross and Kleinman 1989). Similarly, it does not have the usual promotional routes present for men in non-traditional work. The male workers who are the focus of this research (full-time 'breadwinners') are therefore less likely to have 'cover stories'.

Class and Masculinities

Burawoy (1979) argues that a worker's sense of identity is not a product of individual biography or social attributes such as gender, race and age. For Beynon, while social attributes may determine an individual's position in an organisation and the labour process, it is this position and not 'objective' social characteristics which shape identity. Burawoy (1979) therefore suggests that the behaviour and satisfactions of shop-floor workers can be understood largely without reference to factors such as gender and ethnicity. This focus is a result of the Marxist focus on labour as an explanatory category which 'trumps' all others and is latent in a great deal of literature on work and identity.

Just as 'dirty workers' use the stigmatizing or degrading aspects of their work as 'badges of honour' to demonstrate their toughness or moral worth (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999), many workers in low-status jobs believe that to be working, regardless of the role, is something worthy of some respect (Newman 1999, Lamont 2000). Seeing work in such moralistic terms has strong associations to working-class ideas about respectability (Skeggs 1997, Lamont 2000, Kefalas 2003, Sayer 2005). There is also a similarity between the reluctance of men to participate in gender 'inappropriate' work and the classed 'boundary drawing' between rough and respectable discussed by

Skeggs (1997) and Kefalas (2003).   It could be the case that such men are forced to balance the stigma of having no work against that of gender 'inappropriate' work. Many of Michelle Lamont's (2000) respondents, who saw a moral value in 'putting up' with low status work, also believed that some indignities were not to be accepted, even if it meant losing a job:

> 'We have to stay inline with what we really think, not adapt to outside constraints, not go beyond what we really believe in. If I were asked to do something that is incompatible with my values, I would certainly refuse even if it meant losing my job (Lamont 2000: 164).

It was felt by many men in Lamont's (2000) study that if one was sacked one could perhaps find another job, whereas one's self-respect, once lost, was gone for good. What this perhaps suggests is that there are boundaries to be maintained and these boundaries are gendered as well as classed. This is reflected in research about the attitudes of unemployed working-class men to service work (Lindsay and McQuaid 2004, Moskos 2004, Nixon 1999, 2006, 2009). Finally, Newman (1999) shows how difficult it is for workers in low-status work to maintain a positive perception of themselves and their work in the face of indifference and often derision from their peers and wider society. All of these factors intersect to shape the gender and work identities of male supermarket workers.

Summary

Work and Gender

In the opening two chapters it has been argued that social ideas of work have been shaped by a dichotomous understanding of gender and one which has systematically positioned the public world of work as symbolically and materially superior to that of the unpaid, domestic sphere. Conventional, often essentialist understandings of work, family roles and normative gender stereotypes have been used to construct a powerful hierarchical 'coding' of types of work and those who do them (Acker 1990, Hollway 1996).

A key assertion of this research is that contrary to the 'end of work' literature; work is still an important element of the construction of a masculine identity, regardless of whether this is achieved through the acceptance or the rejection of one's work identity. Discussions of work identity, masculinities and class take place within a historical context structured by gendered meaning. Understandings of what a 'worker' is and what is gender 'appropriate' work draw on these meanings but are also shaped by class and the moral significance of work. In many ways this is a dialectical process, as (capitalist) work has also played a significant part in the construction of gender, through the separation of paid and unpaid work and the public and private spheres (Hølter 1997, Lupton 1997). For men, work was and still is the primary sphere for the construction and defence of masculinities (Hollway 1996) and is important in the way gendered identities are re/produced more generally. Identity is formed primarily through the gendered institutions of the family, the school and the workplace. The historical and social significance of work and capitalism has shaped the family and schooling rather than vice-versa (Hølter 1997).

Service Work

The deference involved in service work runs counter to many tenets of the construction of working-class masculinities. This deference can be a source of stigma and work spaces are negotiated and shaped by the competing logics of organisations, customers and staff (Korczynski 2002). These customer expectations and organisational logics often serve to reaffirm gender (class and ethnicity) stereotypes and create boundaries (Offe 1985, Kerfoot and Korczynski 2005, Williams 2006).

Work is constituted by, and in turn constitutes, masculinities and gender more generally. In many instances men (and women) can be said to re/produce their gender through their work performance (Offe 1985, Nixon 1999, 2006). The context of service work is relevant here, due to the simultaneous production and consumption of the product (the service encounter) and the way that companies require deferent and docile workers. A wide range of factors, including Human Resource practices serve to bind a man's work role with his wider social identity.

While it is conceded that consumption is of increased importance, it is still very difficult for a man to reject his work identity. When a man attempts to do this he does it against normative ideologies in witch work is still broadly seen as fundamental to a man's identity (Connell 1987, 2000). Any man rejecting the significance of his work role to his wider identity will be doing so in a society in which the majority believe that to work is of value in and of itself (Bauman 1998). As such the rejection of work identity as inapplicable to a man's sense of self, is an ideology which can be read in different ways depending upon the 'story' and the occupation or workgroup of the man who tells it. The ability and/or desire to distance oneself from one's work must also be understood in the context of its dialectical relationship with the often high turnover and short-term nature of much low status work (Bauman 1998, Sennett 1998, Wills 2008). Not only does the often transient nature of such work allow distancing, it also encourages it, and as Lamont (2000) argues reinforces the low status of the work. It also must be understood as an ambivalent reaction to dominant social perceptions of service work.

Shifts in the type of work available to British working-class men are crucial to our understanding of the gendered culture of supermarkets. Many of the key attributes of service work are 'female.' The strongly gendered nature of work, and the 'feminised' discourses applied to service and 'emotion work' mean that they will not sit comfortably with masculinities (specifically working-class ones). This research is about what happens when the cultural and historical notion of masculinities and 'men's work' meets service work and how these factors shape the gendered terrain of the store and the meaning workers give to their work.

The following chapter will explain how the research questions were operationalised and discuss the ethical and methodological considerations of this research.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Ethics

Introduction

This chapter will demonstrate how the research questions were operationalised and will give details of the geographic and social settings of the research sites. In order to provide context there will be a discussion of the epistemological foundations of this research and some common problems with qualitative methodologies[38]. These will be followed by an analysis of the ethical and methodological problems of covert ethnographic observation and interviewing.

Research Setting

This research draws on extensive ethnographic observation[39] generated through work as a general assistant in the produce department of a supermarket. It also draws on 37 semi-structured interviews completed with men (n=25) and women (n=12) who worked in supermarkets, (for a full table of interviewees see figures 4 to 7 in appendix 1). The fieldwork comprised two distinct but interrelated stages. The observation which took place from the 29th of June 2006 to the 20th of December 2006 was conducted at a single site (*Densmores*). The majority of interviews were conducted from January 2007 to March 2007 at three other sites (*Tempus* 1 and 2 and *Fugit*) and

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[38] The discussion concerning the relative strengths and weaknesses of qualitative methods will be brief as this is a well established area of literature.

[39] Smith has noted that 'the terms *ethnography, field methods, participant observation, case study, naturalistic methods* and *responsive evaluation* have become practically synonymous' (Smith 1992).

individual interviews with Human Resource managers were conducted at a further three supermarket stores. All interviews (excluding some with Human Resource Managers) were conducted within 20 miles of Canterbury. *Densmores*, where the observation was conducted, and *Tempus* store 2 were in what could be loosely described as the Canterbury 'area' (within 10 miles). However, the remaining interviews at *Tempus* store 1 and *Fugit* were conducted in the less affluent Thanet area. This may have meant that there are some differences in the social characteristics of the people employed in these stores as well as those who shopped there.

Local Demographics

The majority of interviews with male and female workers were conducted at two different companies (*Fugit* and *Tempus 1 and 2*) on three main sites in Kent within a 20 mile radius. All the companies where interviews were conducted, were assigned pseudonyms including those with individual Human Resource managers (*Tempus and Temps 2, Fugit, Densmores and Rowen*). Including these interviews a total of seven stores were visited for interviews, all in the Kent area and within the same 30 mile radius.

There is little ethnic diversity in the areas where this research was conducted especially in the Thanet area where 94.9% of the population is white[40], compared with 92.8% in Canterbury (which is closer to the national average of 92.1%[41] ONS Neighbourhood Statistics 2006, Census 2001). This homogeneity was reflected in the interviewees, all of whom were White British. The focus on class and masculinity however, does not entirely exclude ethnicity and there is evidence of class and ethnicity interrelating (Fine *et al* 1997). There is also research which suggests that there has been a re-racialisation of 'whiteness' (Preston 2007). Preston (2007) argues that terms such as 'chav' (in Britain) and 'white trash' (in America) used as shorthand

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The term 'ethnographic observation' denotes a distinction between this long term (six month) in-depth study undertaken here and other more structured or short-term forms of observation.

[40] This figure includes White British, White Irish and White Other.

[41] This figure is taken from the 2001 Census and is therefore outdated, however projections indicate that the national proportion of 'White' people will continue to decline (2007 GLA Round of Projections).

descriptors for the white working-class. However, race and ethnicity were rarely alluded to in the interviews, probably because of the focus on gender and work.

There were some indications that local demographics and customer profiles were taken into account in recruitment. Jeanette, a Human Resource manager at *Tempus* store 1, a chain which was self-consciously targeted at older more affluent customers, was explicit about taking these into consideration in recruitment.

S: Do you take you customer profile into account when you recruit?

JE: We try and get more mature people, we do try to keep not such a high percentage of students mainly because if they was just all young kids working on the till that would be an imbalance to our customer profile. So we have got some mature ladies working here who don't have kids and can work of an evening (Jeanette, 43. Human Resource Manager, *Tempus 1*).

Due to the presence of the university the stores in Canterbury had a higher number of students than those in Thanet. However, the focus on 'breadwinners,' combined with the nature of their employment meant that there were a number of similarities between the respondents[42]. Students and part-time workers were avoided in the interview stage in order to focus on men who had less obvious reason or opportunity to distance themselves from their work identity. However, as this selection was not possible during the ethnographic observation, many of the produce staff at *Densmores* were students and/or part-time workers.

The stores were all located on retail parks, however, within walking distance of towns, with parking facilities and on bus routes (some included free buses for customers). Nevertheless, issues of accessibility may still have had some effect on the type of people who worked at the store, although this may have made reaching the targeted group of 'breadwinners' easier as they were a demographic more likely to have access to a car. The role of space and place in the organisational construction of gendered identities is well established (Halford and Leonard 2006). However, this

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[42] 25 of the 27 men interviewed were between 18 and 50.

research sought to explore the construction of masculinities in the context of service work, as opposed to the discrete locations of individual supermarkets.

Job, Age and Hours of Work

The mean average tenure for male interviewees was 8 years and 1 month and for female interviewees it was 10 years and 1 month.[43] The mean average age for men was 33 years and 6 months and 47 years for women. The majority of interviewees were full-time workers (27 of 37 total, with 3 who worker 30-35hrs[44],)

Epistemological Foundations

Before the discussion of the epistemological foundations of this research, for the sake of clarity the main research aims will be repeated.

The hypothesis which this research sought to explore was that working-class men would experience service work as a threat to their construction of 'appropriate' masculinities.

Questions within this hypothesis are:

- If work is no longer 'manly' enough, how are masculinities constructed and maintained?

- How does organisational setting affect the construction of masculine identities? For example, how does the way people are recruited, managed, jobs advertised and defined within an organisation and society at large, affect the way jobs are perceived?

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[43] This higher average tenure must be offset against the higher average age of the female interviewees and their higher organisational seniority (most were Human Resource managers).
[44] See Appendix 1 for more details.

- How do men's attempts to masculinise work affect them and their colleagues and the processes of recruitment and management?

These questions have been situated within the debates surrounding the 'end of work' literature. Thesis argues that work is still of great importance, particularly to men, and that service work often provides satisfaction beyond extrinsic benefits.

The period of ethnographic observation necessitated the reassessment of the assumption driving the main research question. It had originally been assumed that, due to the deference and 'emotional work' required of service workers, work in 'feminised' settings (such as a supermarket) would cause problems for the construction and maintenance of 'acceptable' masculinities. The findings do not suggest that this was not the case, but, the observational data *strongly* suggest that organisations take the needs of masculinity into account in recruitment and in assigning and designing job roles. Gender 'appropriate' roles within the workplace were therefore usually achieved without problem, although the way they were defined and maintained was often crude and involved the concession and complicity of female workers and management. The organisational awareness of the need for male workers to construct 'viable' masculinities implicitly influenced Human Resource practices. This knowledge proved to be very important when interpreting data produced in the interviews. The interview stage may have taken a very different shape and direction had it been conducted without this insight. It may also have been difficult to come to this conclusion without the use of ethnography.

Feminist Theory and Qualitative Methods

A particularly heated discussion of the relative validity of qualitative and quantitative methods took place in feminist research in the 1970s and 1980s (Gunew 1990). Such debates arose, at least in part, due to the contention by feminist theorists that 'knowledge, reason and science have been "man-made"' (Letherby 2003: 20). It is persuasively argued that knowledge and culture are produced by relatively few people and that most of these few have been privileged (usually white and heterosexual) men,

(Evans 1997, Letherby 2003). Haraway (1988) argues that this has led to the production of 'situated knowledges.' Haraway points out that all knowledge is partial and situated but that early social science failed to recognise this. The debate within feminism is particularly relevant to this question because its critique of the academy and positivist research perspectives created a research climate which favoured qualitative methods, particularly face to face, in depth interviews (Maynard 1994: 16). Maynard points out that such open-ended exploration:

'...developed into something of an un-problematized [sic] orthodoxy against which the political correctness, or otherwise, of *all* feminist research could be judged' (Maynard 1994: 16).

The preference for qualitative methods in feminist research is part of a broader rejection of the cold detachment and 'cleanness' of 'scientific' social research and an attempt to acknowledge the role of the social researcher in knowledge production. It is worth noting however, that quantitative methods are far from an anathema to feminist researchers (for example Crompton or Hakim), and many use such data to 'triangulate[45].'

The inspiration for social research often comes from 'everyday' interaction and Hammersly and Atkinson (1983: 1) point out that 'there is a sense in which all social researchers are participant observers.' Letherby (2003) argues that it is impossible for a researcher to be detached or objective in any real sense, as no individual can separate themselves from their values and opinions. Indeed, this study was shaped by a belief in the value of a qualitative, in-depth approach to social research and a focus on the importance of masculinities in the shaping of the workplace.

Just as research is affected by the beliefs and approaches of the researcher, the very presence of an observer, (whether formal or informal) affects the actions and responses of research subjects. This effect is usually known as 'reactivity' or 'appearance management' (Burgess 1984: 103, Miles and Huberman 1994: 10).

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[45] The term 'triangulation' refers to a technique used in map reading to establish a position, by taking a bearing from two fixed points, two lines can be drawn and the point where they cross is the location of the map reader (Hammersly and Atkinson 1983: 228-230).

Examples of this would be an interviewee hiding sexist views when talking to a female interviewer, or a criminal exaggerating or minimising discussions of criminal activities due to the presence of a researcher. The most common factors involved in 'reactivity' are perhaps the most socially obvious such as gender/sex, race, ethnicity, and class and perhaps to a lesser extent sexual orientation and regional origin or accent where they are known. These factors will often affect the respondents' openness and shape the 'story' presented. While some characteristics of the interviewer are potentially open to manipulation, their tone of voice, accent and their various social characteristics (gender, race etc) cannot be changed. It is worth noting that even if these factors could be manipulated, there would be no way of knowing how one would make changes to produce 'better' data.

Gold (1958) identifies four ideal type observer roles: complete participant; participant as observer; observer as participant and complete observer. However, it seems that there are many different types of observation, in some senses as many as there are observers. As Junker (1960) points out, to assume that one can enter a social situation, especially a politically or emotionally charged one, and remain a non-participant or even a neutral participant observer is over-simplistic. The very nature of the social world means that individuals and events are continually interacting and for a researcher to remain purely an observer in any methodologically meaningful sense is practically impossible. It is, therefore problematic to see the researcher in any method or context as being neutral or divorced from the research process.

One potential theoretical and methodological strategy, for reducing the effects of this problem, is to situate the researcher as a social actor in the research process and avoid trying to 'clean up' data (Murray 2003). This is important in all forms of research, but particularly important in participant methods such as observation and interviewing. 'Situating' the researcher involves recognising that our research tells us things about ourselves as well as those we study (Letherby 2003: 8), and that our emotional responses to those people and the research setting also constitute sources of knowledge (Hammersly and Atkinson 1983, Miles and Huberman 1994). This recognition was particularly relevant for both stages of this research which involved analysing work which the researcher had undertaken in the past with men from a similar social origin.

Reflexivity, Data Collection and Analysis

The importance of reflexivity is widely acknowledged within social sciences and there is widespread recognition that the interpretation of data is also reflexive process where meanings are 'made' rather than found (Mauthner 1998, Pettinger 2005). The processes of collecting and analysing data in observation are, in some situations, simultaneous. This means that, where possible, all elements of interaction must be monitored by the researcher and the notion of entirely distinct collection and analysis stages in research should be questioned. Working in this way creates challenging situations for the researcher and Hammersly and Atkinson (1983) argue that 'reactivity' should be monitored, not only to minimise its negative effects on data collection and analysis, but in order to exploit its positive potential. Burgess (1984) highlights the role gender plays in interaction, giving the example of how female researchers have used both past experience, such as childbirth, and the fact that they were not men, to elicit information which may have eluded even an artful male researcher (Burgess 1984:103-4). Similarly, Oakley (1981) found that the ability to share past experience and answer as well as ask questions allowed her to build and maintain relationships with respondents which may have otherwise been impossible. The question of information exchange is a difficult one, as the researcher risks influencing the information they receive. However it seems that some level of information exchange is essential for establishing rapport, especially in the introductory stages of research (Oakley 1980, Burgess 1984: 104-5, Mac an Ghaill 1994).

Murray (2003: 379) states that 'as a qualitative researcher I know that good reflexive practice is endemic to the fieldwork process – data collection, analysis, and writing cannot proceed without reflexivity.' Reflexivity is important because in a given situation (be it in the field, during transcription or during informal reflection) the researcher must be receptive to the emergence of themes or directions which are not expected, nor even necessarily desirable (Lee Trewick 1996, Murray 2003, Mauthner and Doucet 2003). It is possible that research will take the researcher in different and

unexpected directions, and this is possible in theoretical undertakings, but particularly during fieldwork. To resist reflexivity could be problematic in fieldwork for a number of reasons. First, if another avenue of interest or theoretical theme presents itself, it would seem that there is a theoretical and ethical or methodological 'duty' to pursue it (whether or not it is necessary or 'relevant' to the research). Secondly, if a theme presents itself during an interview context it could create an unnatural or forced research situation to continuously press an area of interest against the 'flow' of the interview or conversation. Finally, this theoretical/methodological emphasis can minimise power imbalances and could perhaps allow researchers to resist imposing their assumptions and interpretations onto situations or individuals.

During the interview stage, power imbalances were not often readily apparent and many respondents were ready to challenge and discuss ideas and themes of work and masculinity in general[46]. Perhaps one sign of the seemingly minimal power imbalance was the frequent dismissal by respondents of my attempts to explain and discuss 'informed consent'. Sometimes this led to outright derision of the idea that somebody could be upset by the publication of things said during a 'chat.' While the content of the interviews was not likely to touch on the personal or sensitive subjects, significant attempts were still made to achieve meaningful 'informed consent'. This was important in creating a 'good' interview context and as well as 'protecting' respondents who may change their minds at a later stage.

Reactivity shapes the information respondents are likely to divulge, in both positive and negative ways. Letherby (2003) argues that the possible effects of 'reactivity' and the general power imbalances inherent in interviews can be partially offset by demonstrating knowledge and/or experiences similar to those of interviewees. Cross and Bagilhole (2002) in their study of men in non-traditional employment, give the example of how using a researcher with experience in similar work was likely to affect their data. They argue that the researcher's shared experience was likely to elicit more information, for example, regarding the problems for men in such jobs. However, they also point out that this shared experience would perhaps reduce their respondents' need to justify their occupation or to defend their masculinities, due to

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[46] Or as in the case of John (43, Fugit), lecture me at length on the political economy of supermarket chains.

an assumed level of understanding on the part of the researcher (Cross and Bagilhole 2002: 211).

This research began with extensive informal observation[47] in the public, 'front stage' areas of supermarkets. While I was familiar with supermarkets as a workplace I wanted to spend some time observing interactions and considering supermarkets as a research site. Observations made in the role of customer provided access to one set of interactions and data produced in this way is not necessarily impoverished, but represents just one dimension of interaction in the store. Access to 'backstage' areas provided (sometimes conflicting point of view), and the chance to see staff interactions which were freed from the constraints of 'emotion work' and customer service. Tolich and Briar (1999: 129) argue that in their ethnography of supermarkets, access to staff areas was particularly important.

The production of different forms of data in this way was not only an attempt at 'triangulation' (Hammersly and Atkinson 1983: 228-230), but was also the result of a recognition that different research positions produce different forms of knowledge (Pettinger 2005). The role of customers has been likened to that of 'partial employees' (Miles and Morris 1986: 726) and the ability to observe male workers before, during and after customer encounters, and also to monitor and record the researcher's reactions to customers was essential.

When planning this research attempts were made to take into account the likely effects of the researcher's social characteristics on respondents and in turn the data produced (Stacey and Thorne 1985: 311). The general perception of respondents may well have been that they were talking to an apparently 'middle-class' and relatively privileged individual. As discussed above, in certain work cultures and among some social groups, education and perhaps the pursuit of social research in particular is likely to be regarded as questionable, both in terms of its status as 'work' and as a 'masculine' pursuit. While it was hoped that these preconceptions would be dis-proven in practice, it was important to consider this in the planning stage and wherever possible, to use any potential reactivity as a probing device. With both the ethnographic observation and the interview stage, the aim was to elicit 'thick' data in

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[47] Informal observation was in part what prompted a focus on supermarkets, due to the apparently rigid gendered division of tasks in many stores.

part to expose what Segal (1999: 159) describes as the 'fragility, contradiction and context-bound resistance or compliance within gendered experiences and performances'. This information is important if research is to describe the complexity, multidimensionality, disorder and uncertainty in people's lives and to create rounded as opposed to flat characters (Mac an Ghaill 1994: 2).

Ethnographic Observation Stage

May (2002) argues that the processes of observing, recording and analysing data are inextricably linked. Indeed, in many cases involving more reflexive methods such as observation and open ended interviews, the process of continual analysis is crucial to the methods success (May 2002). There were numerous occasions, during both the observation and interview stages, where unexpected opportunities or themes arose which were pursued in order to gain insight or additional information. Due to this the ongoing ability to monitor and adapt theoretical assumptions was vital.

There are inherent problems concerning the recording of data in all types of observation. When adopting a covert role there can be the problem of recording data quickly and accurately without cover being 'blown' (see discussion of note taking strategies below). The problem in overt participation and non-participation roles is that, even when the researcher's 'neutral' role is well understood by participants, those participants will still be interested in the opinion of the researcher and in what is being written or recorded (Burgess 1984: 81). In fact, the observer's supposed neutrality may increase the likelihood that their opinion will be sought.

Another problem would be research which involved a dramatic incident such as a riot or a confrontation of some kind. There would be difficulty in offsetting 'heat of the moment' reactions and observations. This was the case in the observation stage when comments made by a customer produced an angry reaction. One way of surmounting this problem, however, would be by contrasting the data collected during such instances with subsequent data, reflection and reference to theory.

Respondent Validation?

As Miles and Huberman (1994: 10) point out, qualitative data are not so much about behaviour as *actions* 'which carry with them intentions and meanings and lead to consequences'. With this in mind one way of 'triangulating' and supporting data and interpretations is through respondent validation. Respondent validation is seen to be of value due to its recognition that the respondent may have access to additional knowledge of the context, motivation or ulterior motives of themselves or others (Hammersly and Atkinson 1983: 228). Respondent validation can also be undertaken during the liminal phase between the completion of observation and the analysis of data. In this way the data can be reviewed both in the light of the respondent's comments and once some interpretive categories have been imposed. However, it is wrong to assume that an individual necessarily has privileged knowledge or a more valid perspective on their own actions (Hammersly and Atkinson 1983: 229). Indeed there are many reasons to be very cautious in the use of respondent validation. As with other aspects of quantitative research, there are many reasons to doubt the interpretations which individuals make about their own actions. In some senses we could consider the research subject the least reliable resource. People can provide erroneous data due to denial, embarrassment, 'appearance management', or alternatively because their motivations were subconscious or because they simply would not remember what they did or why they did it. The overriding reason for eschewing respondent validation in this research was that the ethnographic observation was done covertly. The interview stage provided the opportunity to directly interrogate the meanings and motives of men working in supermarkets.

Covert Observation

The use of covert observation is fraught with both ethical and practical problems and is becoming a rarely used method. Regarding his own covert participation, Homan argues that,

'In view of the strong objections against covert methods I perhaps owe a defence of the methods to the profession' (Homan 1980: 52).

The majority of objections to covert methods refer to radical, sociological and social psychological studies, (for examples see studies of Psychiatric Hospitals, Caudill *et al* 1952, Rosenhan 1973, eschatological beliefs, Festinger *et al* 1956 and homosexual meetings in public toilets Humphries 1970). These early studies, which would certainly be considered unethical by today's standards, have shaped the way covert methods are understood. Another element of this discussion surrounds 'traditional' ethnographies, studies of close-knit communities, tribal, or ethnic groups usually associated with anthropology, but also studies of coherent occupational groups in industrial sociology (Lupton 1963). These studies locate specific groups and may make individuals identifiable to members of the group themselves, thereby generating problems around the issue of anonymity. This can lead to the possibility of disagreement and feelings of betrayal on the part of those studied (Labaree 2002). It is also not uncommon for researchers to live and socialise within the community or group they are studying. This of course increases the chances both of the cover being 'blown' and for destructive forces flowing from the close relationships which may have developed (Charlesworth 2000, Bourgois 2003).

Clearly there are many situations where other methods are preferable. However, covert methods are not inherently unethical. While it is important to engage with the potential problems involved in covert study, their significant benefits and insights should not be ignored. The following section will set out the principal objections to covert methods.

Prevailing attitudes towards covert methods

There have been a number of specific problems raised regarding covert methods. Indeed:

> '…on ethical grounds they have been criticized for violating the principles of informed consent, invading subjects' privacy, using deception, and betraying trust, possibly harming the interests of the group studied, and having un-

measurable effects on the investigator him or herself and the data collected' (Homan 1982: 252).

The considerable concern about the use of covert research methods is influenced by and also enshrined in research ethics guidelines. The British Sociological Association's (B.S.A.) guidelines on ethical conduct and the use of covert methods state that:

'There are serious ethical and legal issues in the use of covert research but the use of covert methods may be justified in certain circumstances. For example, difficulties arise when research participants change their behaviour because they know they are being studied. Researchers may also face problems when access to spheres of social life is closed to social scientists by powerful or secretive interests' (B.S.A. 2002: Section 3.2).

While this guideline is relatively general, it seems that the orthodoxy which has developed around such guidelines is one in which covert methods are more often than not seen as unacceptable. The current focus on ethical practice is often advocated as a means to producing superior data and this argument is certainly not without its merits. However, the move towards mandatory 'informed consent' as 'best practice' in research, while often motivated by honest academic concern for the respectful treatment of research participants, has also been adopted as an exercise in organisational 'back-covering.' It can also be seen as a response to the increasing preoccupation with managing 'risk' (Beck 1992, Power 2004). This focus creates the possibility of the complete removal of covert methods, regardless of the situation or proposed research group. Crow *et al* (2006: 84) argue that conventional ethical codes may severely restrict research involving vulnerable groups, such as young or older people, those receiving palliative care or with learning disabilities or mental health problems.

A Right to knowledge?

The social and theoretical terrain of this debate has shifted in the past twenty or so years, and the possible reasons for using 'covert' methods have also changed. Roger Homan (1980), in his ongoing discussion with Martin Bulmer regarding the use of covert methods, tentatively puts forward the idea that there is an inherent right to knowledge; that knowledge is superior to ignorance and that sociological knowledge is of a value of such order that anything which impedes it is undesirable. Homan does not explicitly endorse this viewpoint regarding covert methods. He does, however, use the example of the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. This is an endorsement of the 'right to knowledge' argument, in that Abraham saw himself as moving towards a higher aim but without the consent or approval of those who were his means[48]. There is a distinction between this outdated 'ends justifies the means' view of knowledge production, with its implicit hierarchies and elitism on the one hand and the willingness to assess research settings individually on the other.

The question is no longer 'are "covert" methods justified?' but 'in what situations are they necessary?' (Bulmer 1980: 57). Bulmer (1980: 60) points out that it is not uncommon in overt participation to 'gloss over or be evasive' about research aims. In practice this is also the case in other forms of social research. However, this is considered to be 'finesse'. It is also often assumed that when people are deceived they are being studied either through covert observation involving 'out and out' deception or the 'experimental manipulation of research participants without their knowledge' (B.S.A. Research Guidelines: Section 3.2). However, covert research can often involve indirect deception or research participants physically or legally unable to give informed consent.

The Fieldwork – Ethnographic Observation

The ethnographic observation was undertaken at a branch of *Densmores* which was in the same 20 mile area as the interview sites. It was sited on a small retail park outside

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[48] This echoes the 'teleological' suspension of ethics discussed by Kierkegaard (1985), also with reference to the story of Abraham.

a large town and was roughly half a mile from the town centre, (although there was parking and a regular bus route nearby). Details about this store will be limited to ensure it is not easily identifiable.

This section will be written in the first person due to the use of ethnographic data but also in order to incorporate the emotions and thoughts of the researcher. While there was an element of deception involved in the ethnographic observation stage, it was by way of omission as opposed to wilfully acting to mislead colleagues. Although none of my colleagues asked me if I was conducting research, I was prepared to answer this question honestly if it were posed. Indeed this was a condition imposed by the university's ethics board. My initial feeling on beginning participant observation was that I would not experience any ethical problems with my covert role. However, as the extract from my field-notes (relating to a job interview) below illustrates I had difficulty from the outset, with conducting conversations and interactions that I felt to be fundamentally inauthentic.

'Despite my belief that there would not be a big problem as far as ethics were concerned, I immediately felt concerns around the deception involved in my study. I felt dishonest and torn between liking the interviewer, wanting to be an honest and genuine person and doing my research' (Field-notes June 29th 2006 First Job Interview, '*Densmores*').

Practical Reasons for Using Covert Methods

Participation does not have to be covert, but there were a number of methodological reasons for using this method. In this research the reasons were primarily pragmatic. The only alternative to covert participation would have been to notify the Human Resource manager when applying that the main reason for the application was to conduct research while doing the job. This option was seriously considered however, two main factors militated against this approach. First, there were few jobs available in supermarkets and in retail in general at the time of applying (the store in which the research was eventually conducted had rejected previous applications) and this was a real risk of failing to secure a research site and the implications of this for my PhD to

consider. Secondly, and most importantly, after discussion with a number of friends who worked in supermarket management and Human Resources it was advised that it was highly unlikely for a post to be granted when the primary motive was *not* work[49]. With the current trend for supermarkets (and retail in general) to be focused on customer service managers, were likely to be suspicious of the motives of research and/or simply see the researcher as an unnecessary source of trouble.

As discussed above the deception involved was by way of omission as opposed to wilfully misleading colleagues and the university's ethics board stipulated that the aims of the research should be revealed if the researcher was challenged by colleagues. Homan (1980: 53) argues that in some situations the presence of a conspicuous researcher could cause more discomfort than one adopting a covert role. While this could be a form of *post hoc* rationalisation on his part, this is the case in certain situations. Provided that the results are not overstated or over-generalised, there are significant benefits to be gained from covert participant observation. Fincham (2006: 196) argues that there are good reasons for putting yourself in the same situation as those you wish to study and understand, beyond the benefits of access and credibility. The data produced can be very rich and prolonged exposure to situations may through understanding of context, render intelligible actions and beliefs which seem unjustified or illogical from an 'outsider's' point of view (*ibid*), for example, in this research the way workers gained satisfaction from the physical results of their work. Also as Fincham (2006: 196) points out there is also 'a certain value in recognising that data generated while "un-reflexively" involved in an activity' can be usefully examined.

Insiderness?

Becker (1996: 58) warns against making assumptions based solely on observed situations. Often during the course of this research there was a need to clarify interpretations of things said in group situations or in passing. This was often achieved through what Vail (2001: 713) describes as the 'performance of incompetence.' Due to the relatively mechanical nature of the work there was a

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[49] Several chains even refused access to interview workers or management in any setting.

culture of question-asking to pass the time and also to allow staff to become familiar with those who had recently joined the company. This meant that it was possible to ask relatively probing questions about people's feelings, the job and work and life in general. These questions were perceived as legitimate within the general culture of the department and the role of new member of staff[50].

Labaree (2002: 99) argues that the methodological and ethical dilemmas faced by participant observers are often hidden by the assumption that there is a measurable advantage in 'insiderness'. Labaree (2002: 99) argues that there are possible advantages to be gained from 'insiderness' but these are situational and very much 'dictated by the circumstance of the moment'. Similarly, the ethical considerations involved in covert study are contextual. Had relationships with co-workers become more personal in nature, I feel the risk of harm would have been increased. One of the most important benefits of a covert role was taking advantage of what Burke (1989) calls 'privileged eavesdropping.' Observing as a member of staff provided many opportunities to listen to other members of staff, both in their interactions with one another and with customers. In many ways this would be no different to informal observation, except that it included access to interactions which took place 'backstage.' It was often possible to listen in a way which was unobtrusive. This was mainly because fellow members of staff were usually not concerned about being overheard, as for example when a racist discussion between two night workers was overheard (see Chapter 4). It was also often possible to listen and observe whilst carrying out work and to therefore remain inconspicuous.

During my first job interview at *Densmores* with a female assistant manager I felt very guilty indeed when discussing my reasons for wanting to work in the store. These feelings were exacerbated at least in the early stages of my observations, by my genuine affection for a number of colleagues from the produce department. However, as Murray points out,

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[50] It should be noted that many, if not all conversations were based on genuine interest and that relationships with most of the team were based on genuine affection. This is not to say that this relationship was a close one, rather that it was not simulated. While this was initially an ethical concern, it later created a cushion against such fears and allowed me to feel that I was undertaking my role as a worker and a colleague with adequate authenticity.

'Keeping secrets and impression management are necessary tools for the field researcher. Gaining the confidence of all participants in each research site is always the goal' (Murray 2003: 386).

I gradually resolved these feelings, not as Homan suggests, through the sort of professional 'hardening' associated with surgeons or nurses (1980: 53), but through the recognition of reciprocity which he describes as also having helped him (*ibid*). In other words, whilst my main aim in working in the store was as a researcher and an observer, my emotional responses were genuine and in the purely physical sense, I worked the same hours and lifted the same boxes as my colleagues. This was still at times a difficult line to walk, as I was not able to be as honest with my colleagues as they were with me. However, I would argue that due to the amount of time I spent in the store (a minimum total of 25hrs a week for 6 weeks and then 12-24 hrs a week for another 18 weeks, as well as time before and after work, totalling over 400hrs) I presented a generally authentic 'performance.' To have maintained a radically different persona over such a long period would have been difficult, if not impossible and of little if any methodological benefit. Indeed, it may have detracted from the quality observations and interactions.

I have argued above that 'traditional' anthropological ethnographies are one source of criticisms of covert methods. This is because these are studies of specific groupings, which can be located and/or identified. My research, while about a specific group (supermarket workers), could be analysed and presented in non-specific way, therefore minimising the potential for these problems. Groups studied through covert participation are often involved in politically and emotionally charged struggles, such as social or political conflicts. This makes any published research of greater interest to these groups and therefore more likely to be sought after and read. Not only would any publications resulting from my research be anonymised (including names of informants and the name and location of the store) but I felt that any subsequent publications would be read by relatively few people outside academia. These factors reduced the ethical problems associated with my covert role and further minimised the potential for harm to my respondents.

Practicalities of Covert Field-work

I was able to make notes during work time, under the guise of noting what stock was needed from the stores and also during breaks by truthfully describing what I was doing as related to my studies. I coupled this with covert note taking in store-rooms and toilet stalls. When approached by colleagues (in the store rooms) I said simply that I was writing a shopping list and this sometimes led to useful conversations concerning domesticity. Based on my previous experience in two other service work places,[51] where I had regularly made notes for short stories, I knew that while such behaviour was often regarded as odd, it was readily accepted when treated openly and with humour.

My in-store notes were encoded and kept on my person at all times and the list of aliases were kept at home. I tried as much as possible to record my thoughts and impressions as soon as they occurred and also wrote detailed notes during breaks and after work and then transcribed them in full soon after. By subsequently combining thoughts and impressions recorded 'in the moment' with more detailed and thoughtful analyses grounded in theory, I tried to maintain a coherence between my 'lived experience', my ideas, impressions and emotional responses and my more considered and theoretically informed analyses. By doing this I hoped to achieve a more faithful representation of my observations and the thoughts and actions of those with whom I worked. Also, by including my thoughts and emotional responses I hoped to maintain a reflexive attitude to my data and avoid 'taking myself out' of the research. As this was participant observation, I was often involved in the conversations and events I observed, and, of course, even those with which I was not directly involved, I was almost always involved indirectly as an observer. My presence therefore, was one ingredient which shaped the scenes which occurred and the stories that were told and the way in which they were told.

Observing 'Un-ethical' Conversations or Actions

While it was not possible to radically manipulate the identity I presented, it was also often impossible to act wholly authentically (or at least in the way that I would have

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[51] A supermarket and a duty free shop on a cross channel ferry.

wished). My position as an observer and a researcher continually made it difficult to know when to be active in situations and when to remain silent. This was often the case when colleagues displayed sexist or homophobic behaviour. Fincham (2006: 194) argues that as with most forms of social research trust is very important for the participant observer. Due to shared knowledge and 'insider' status informants often make assumptions about the researcher's knowledge and beliefs. Often in this situation it was assumed that I shared ideas and beliefs which I did not. While this was sometimes difficult or uncomfortable it was also generally useful. To have continually disagreed or pointed out the 'unacceptability' of such viewpoints would have perhaps created a situation where such views were no longer expressed in my presence. As Murray points out,

'Sometimes, however, the various participants in each setting are at odds with one another. As a sociologist my job is not to judge which side is 'correct' or 'morally wanting'; instead, my job is to understand, contextualize, and re-construct the definitions that each side holds to be true' (Murray 2003: 386).

This is not to say that I was entirely passive and I did sometimes enter discussions and offer alternate points of view. This again I tried to undertake in the form of suggestions and questions, which is different from the more confrontational stance I would ordinarily have taken. In some situations I felt deeply uncomfortable in drawing clear lines. For example I resisted Tony's continual attempts to draw me into discussions about female members of staff, particularly the newly qualified Human Resource manager Marie (Field-notes 8th August 2006.)

Interaction and Reflection

The process of undertaking covert participant-observation allowed me to reflect and analyse the way I interacted and presented myself, at least in the work setting. This is primarily due to the necessity of balancing a level of neutrality needed in research and the impossibility of not being part of the work setting. My initial introductory interactions with all members of the team identified me as heterosexual (when asked what I had done the previous night I mentioned going out with my girlfriend), when

asked if I liked or played sport, I also mentioned my interest in boxing and, when pushed, that I have been doing martial arts for ten years. I always attempted to balance being honest and giving enough information so as to build trust, with not sharing too much so as to influence respondents unduly. I decided to be as honest as possible for a number of reasons. First, because I was already uneasy with the deception involved in a covert study and did not want to exacerbate this situation and secondly, because I felt that it would be tiring to maintain effective observation and to do my job at the same time. To try to remember a cover story at the same time as carrying out the work would be even more demanding and mistakes could result in loss of trust or my cover being 'blown' as well as shifting my focus from observing. I also felt that to try to alter my social interests to make them less 'fitting' would not lead to data which were any more authentic and would perhaps go against the aims of participant study.

The desire to be liked and to fit in shaped the way I presented myself. This was an dual process in that it was in my interest as a researcher to fit in and do a good job, but also felt 'natural' in the situation. Being a researcher however did make me more conscious of doing a good job and being a 'good worker.' In many situations such as those with rude or difficult colleagues or customers I acted differently than I would have had I not been a researcher. Many times I had to refrain from being argumentative or pointing out what I saw as logical flaws in statements by customers where I otherwise might have. Inevitably, when working a minimum of three eight hour shifts a week there were large amounts of interactions which were 'natural.' This is simply because there is no way of being 'in character' all of the time. I think this was beneficial, and added to the authenticity of my interactions with colleagues. It is also worth noting that while there were 'natural' periods, there were no times where I was completely detached from my role as researcher.

In setting out, I believed that an ethnographic element would be very useful in informing my main research stage of semi-structured interviews. My experiences and observations would also help me to ask the 'right' questions in the 'right' way. By this I mean it would allow me to identify points of conflict and allegiance, to see how worker identities were negotiated and then probe these processes from a position of understanding. In other words, I would have first hand experience of the being and

doing, the 'lived experience' (Vickerstaff 2007: 336) of life in the supermarket and I did not think that this knowledge could be gained through other methods. Fincham (2006: 199) argues that a non-ethnographic study, for example, one from the outside such as a survey, may achieve very different responses from the respondents as opposed to one where they imagined that the researcher had some kind of insider knowledge or understanding of the things that they were disclosing.

Informed Consent

While 'informed consent' is desirable in almost all research settings, 'informed consent' was not achievable during covert observation in a supermarket. Retail outlets offer a combination of 'open' and 'closed' areas for researchers and (as mentioned above) this project began with some less formal observation as a 'customer' in the 'open' areas. However, in this role, the 'closed' backstage areas, such as storerooms and canteens were not accessible. Furthermore, the thoughts and words of members of staff were also only accessible in the role of customer and intermittent observer. It must be noted here that, as with many distinctions, the line between open/public settings and closed settings is not a hard and fast one (Bryman 2001: 294). However, there were benefits in the access this method provided, particularly due to the 'emotion work' (Hochschild 1983) required in service roles. To rely solely on data, from an outsider/customer position would be limited and comprise only one facet of work and work identity construction (Pettinger 2005).

The possibility of conducting participant observation in a supermarket with meaningful 'informed consent', seemed deeply problematic. Had the permission of management been sought and attempts been made to obtain full informed consent, would there not also have been a need to notify *all* members of staff?[52] If this had been done would it have negated the main benefits of observing authentic interaction and identity work? Even if access had been granted and all members of staff had given informed consent, customers (who are of course very active in shaping this research setting) would be unaware of the research. It seemed that whatever steps

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[52] Numbering over 150.

were taken, that, as with other forms of research, data would inevitably be produced using people who had not given informed consent (Crow 2006: 92).

Homan (1980: 57) points out that even as a layman, he cannot attend any religious service (his area of research) without at some point becoming a social observer. A further difficulty is that the interest for this research and some of the working hypotheses were generated from recollections of retail work. Would this use of 'retrospective ethnography' also be deemed unethical as it involved no forethought or planning and was not passed by a university ethics committee (Bulmer 1982: 254, Bryman 2001: 292)? As argued above a clear distinction between purposeful and everyday observation is problematic and Homan's (1980: 56) analysis of this distinction is similar to the one given here. However, to illustrate his point Homan cites an example given by Julius Roth. Roth (1962) draws clear moral distinction between taking a job and then subsequently using observational data produced *through it* and getting a job *specifically* to produce observational data. However, it is questionable in the case of this research if there is a meaningful difference. Research funding meant that this job was not a financial necessity. However, my student debts and the nature of student life also meant that this was not playing at 'work.' Indeed, the job entirely fitted with my lifestyle and the wage was beneficial. The main practical objection to Roth's point is that the initial entrance into the workplace is often the most rich period of data collection. The natural process of getting to know colleagues is a good opportunity to ask questions which in other situations may seem obtrusive. It is also when organisational and identity boundaries are both established and reinforced and when 'outsiderness' is most keenly felt.

Smoking and Access

There were inevitably parts of the store which were difficult to access, for example the smoking room. The research was undertaken before the 2007 ban on public smoking and was not reasonable for a non-smoker to access the smoking room during breaks. This room was male-dominated and would undoubtedly have been an interesting source of information. However, this also highlights one of the problems of working predominantly among male members of staff, as was the case on the

produce department. The perspective this provided (particularly with a focus on men and gender) had the potential to be clouded and behaviours which are not gender specific risked being given too much emphasis. The time spent on the checkouts, (while very useful), only occurred during busy periods, so there was very little opportunity for conversation and observation was difficult due to the attention required to do the work. Through spending a large amount of time just *being* in the store interaction with members of staff generally was increased and allowed a better 'feel' for the store. Being able to pursue the themes and ideas apparent during observations in the interview stage to some extent offset these problems.

In hindsight; while the covert element of the ethnographic research was not unethical, it was, at times, uncomfortable. Were this research to be repeated it would be preferable to attempt to gain access sooner and to exhaust all other possibilities (for example, overt observation). This is not because superior data would be produced with this method (on the contrary), but largely because it would create less anxiety for the researcher. Finally, one of the greatest frustrations of covert participation is the inability to directly interrogate research subjects (despite the subsequent opportunity to interview other male supermarket workers in this research).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Access

Access to the three stores in which the majority of the interviews were conducted was gained by sending out letters to human resource managers in all of the large supermarket stores in selected areas of the South-East. These letters were followed up with telephone calls, which were often more successful once it was possible to explain that the research concerned workers as opposed to companies. Ethical guidance was explained, such as the requirement to anonymise stores and staff members' in any publications. While access for interviews was not particularly difficult to gain, protecting the methodological integrity of the research was often a problem. In one store, interviews had to be conducted in a staff canteen and in another store, a helpful (but over-eager) manager offered in his words, to 'press gang' staff into being

interviewed. After these experiences the approach to access was adapted. Through interviewing human resource managers[53] as part of the research it was possible to more clearly explain the aims of the research. Through this approach, it was possible to achieve access to a private room in which to conduct interviews. It was also possible to use the contacts established with human resource managers to gain recommendations which allowed access to other stores.

37 semi-structured interviews were conducted, with men (n=25) and women (n=12)[54]. Interviews ranged from twenty minutes to one hour and forty minutes but averaged at one hour. It was often not possible to extend interviews but as they were often conducted during break times or in work time such that there was pressure to not create problems by unduly keeping staff from their work. A semi-structured format was used with a prompt sheet[55] with questions, themes and examples on it. This sheet was adapted as interviews progressed and questions were added and removed as themes emerged. An indirect approach to gender was most effective with men, as direct questions about 'maleness' or masculinities were often interpreted as questions about sexuality. This often led to discomfort on the part of the respondent. Adding and modifying questions was a particularly useful strategy as it allowed more data to be elicited and emerging themes to be explored and tested. In some cases it was possible to use a respondent's interest in the research to ask questions outright. This was both interesting and was a good way of diminishing possible power imbalances. Where this occurred the interviews became discussions and were often the most rich in terms of data and insight.

Data Analysis

As with all research there is an inevitable process of 'funnelling' which involves making choices (Miles and Huberman 1994: 9-10). It is worth repeating that observational data are different from many other forms of social research material in that they are often unstructured when in a 'raw' form (Hammersly and Atkinson

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[53] Whilst pursuing the idea of complicity between management and workers in the gendering of the store.

[54] See Chapter 6 for a full break down of names, ages and work roles of interviewees.

[55] See appendix 2 for prompt sheets for main interviews and 3 for Human Resource managers, (these were only used as a basis for the interviews and emphasis was put on probing and developing themes.

1983: 208).   One way of verifying or supporting conclusions and interpretations reached through observation is the use of 'triangulation'.   In a research setting 'triangulation' most often refers to the use of multiple methods and sources to verify and make comparisons but it can also be the contrasting of accounts given by actors in different locations (Hammersly and Atkinson 1983: 228-230).

In this research casual and unstructured observations were used to construct a working hypothesis, which was then modified in the light of data gained from covert ethnographic observation. These data was then used to inform the questions asked in the interview stage.   Through the data produced in the interviews, the data and theoretical assumptions produced through observation were tested, supplemented and modified.   As discussed above this process was not linear or simple or one capable of being divided easily into stages.   Observational data were produced during the interview stage which involved spending days at a time in the 'front' and 'backstage' areas of supermarkets.   In the observation stage data were produced which were closer to interview data, through conversations and questions which comprised the 'getting to know you' part of a new job.   In a sense, *every stage* involved both data collection and analysis, due to the fact that it involved reflection on previous data and theory. All stages of research were a process of learning and as new themes emerged from observations, interviews and data analysis ideas were revised and used to direct subsequent data collection.

Computer Data Analysis

For both the ethnographic field notes and interview transcripts[56] the QSR Nvivo 7 qualitative computer data analysis package was used.   Mauthner and Doucet (2003: 415) have argued that the 'positivistic model of the absent or neutral researcher is reinforced by computer aided programs for qualitative data analysis.'   They argue that the use of technology can confer an 'an air of scientific objectivity onto what remains a fundamentally subjective, interpretative process' (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998: 122) and that this in turn can obscure the fact that data analysis is not just the application of neutral techniques.   This research is reported with an awareness that it is one of many

possible representations of the data, but attempts to construct the most plausible and authentic representation possible. The strong reaction to qualitative computer analysis packages is perhaps due to the belief that they oppose the spirit of much qualitative research. However, the way Nvivo was used primarily as a data management package, allowed the creation and development of themes or strands which emerged from the data. As mentioned above the process of data production is an ongoing and dialectical one which involves many 'layers,' and the use of Nvivo was just one of those 'layers.' Contra Mauthner and Doucet, (2003) it is not suggested that the use of a computer package produced data which are in any way superior to those produced in other ways.

Using the 'tree node' function it was possible to create broad themes such as 'gender,' 'class' or 'identity' and then within them, sub themes such as 'defensiveness' or 'job satisfaction.' Nvivo allows the collation of quotes or examples from transcriptions or field-notes to be compiled in these 'nodes' (data are often placed in more than one sub-theme at a time). So, as during research or as one reads over and over transcriptions and field-notes, recurring themes and ideas can be identified, these can then be used as sorting devices within Nvivo. Furthermore, the process of re-reading data and then 'coding' them into the sub-themes in Nvivo should also be seen as another 'layer' of analysis as new or modified themes and ideas continue to emerge. Finally, when all data has been 'coded,' the output for sub-themes can be produced in a Word document and then analysed as a whole.

Conclusion

The methodology used in this research led to the collection of detailed and rich data and allowed the construction of a detailed understanding of men and masculinities in supermarket work. In the first instance, the ethnographic stage allowed for the exploration and development of the research question. While it was initially intended to only be a pilot study, the observation became *as important* as the interview stage and was a vital source of data and understanding. The effect of the observation stage

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[56] It should be noted that transcription is a significant stage of data analysis and often produces insights

was to substantially alter the way the intersection of masculinities and service work was theorised. The experience of being recruited, trained and socialised into a 'male' role in a supermarket illuminated the dialectical process of gendering work. This process was based both on the type of work role Human Resource managers expected male workers to want and also on pragmatic organisational logic (Acker 1990, Williams 2006). The themes and discourses which emerged from the observation stage (the importance of physicality in 'masculinising' work, establishing symbolic boundaries and the importance of mobility and autonomy) were developed and explored through the interviews. The following chapter is a discussion of the covert ethnographic stage, it shows how these themes began to emerge and through 'thick description' (Geertz 1973: 5-6), details and discusses masculinities in supermarkets.

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as themes and ideas begin to recur.

Chapter 4

Working at *Densmores*: 'You're not a *lady!*'

Introduction

This chapter is based on participant ethnographic observation conducted in a supermarket store from June the 29th 2006 to December the 20th 2006. In order to successfully relate personal thoughts and feelings and to situate myself in the research this chapter will be written in the first person.

This chapter is designed to report the data produced during this period and signpost the themes which emerged. The main findings of this stage were that service work, or at least certain roles within it did not constitute as serious a challenge to male workers' masculinities as anticipated. This was due to the second finding, that human resource managers were careful to consider the requirements of gender implicitly and to 'funnel' workers into specific jobs which were 'sold' as 'appropriate' for certain workers. The final finding of this stage of the research reflects much of the work on men in 'non-traditional' work. I found that male workers masculinised work in two interrelated ways. This was achieved in two ways, first, many men 're-focused' discussions of their work onto aspects they considered to be 'masculine', for example prioritising physicality over customer service or deference (Simpson 2004). Secondly, work was gendered by establishing and maintaining symbolic boundaries between different forms of tasks or products (Cockburn and Omrod 1993, Adkins 1995, Lawson 2000, Williams 2006).

Research Context

Densmores is located just outside a medium sized city in the South-East of England. It is part of a retail park with a variety of other large stores, including a pet store, a stationer, a computer store and a chemist. However, the Supermarket *Densmores* is by far the dominant store front, not only because it is the largest, but also because it is the most colourful[57] and attention grabbing. The *Densmores* store and the whole retail park are relatively new having recently celebrated their ten-year anniversary.

Densmores has over 400 stores nationwide, employing over 110,000 people and it is one of the leading supermarket chains in the UK. *Densmores'* main market strategy is based on exemplary customer service; this in itself is fairly standard in the grocery industry which is already saturated with very cheap prices and special offers. However, *Densmores* has also won awards for its customer service[58] which perhaps lends credence to this aim. Another aspect of *Densmores'* market strategy is that it allows a personalised approach to management and some elements of store presentation. While it was difficult to see if this actually happened, there were certainly a number of training and staff feedback systems which were instituted by the current store manager and not directed by the company.

The first section of the store is modelled on a traditional marketplace, and it is arranged so that it must always be passed through by customers. In this 'market' as well as the large fresh produce section in which I worked, there are a number of different counters including a baker, butcher, fishmonger and an oven department selling cooked meats and pies. The company emphasis is on providing skilled and knowledgeable staff in authentic 'traditional' roles: trained butchers and fishmongers, as opposed to people simply wearing the uniforms for these roles. In this sense it could be argued that there has been a limited 're-skilling' of this work. It is also interesting to note that while the Butcher and the Baker and even the Florist are known by these job roles, those working on the produce section are not known as Greengrocers, nor is there any mention of this title. The manager in charge is called the 'Produce Manager', not the 'Greengrocer'. This could perhaps be explained by

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[57] Colour withheld to aid anonymisation.

the decline of small high-street Greengrocers and therefore the lack of significance of the term. The irony is that this decline was a result of competition from large supermarket chains.

My field-work began in June during the 2006 Football World Cup. This had an effect on the atmosphere of the store, as there were many football-themed promotions and advertisements. This was illustrated to me while waiting in the customer café of a rival supermarket store where I heard an advertisement played over the store's PA system. The advert was coupled with another on national television which featured a famous England footballer running through the store to get some beer. It was accompanied by a voice over which mimicked a sports commentator. The commentary said, 'he side steps the cleaning products and heads straight for the beer!' This advert immediately caught my attention and without wishing to overstate its importance it seemed to confirm my assumption that by its nature a supermarket store is a gendered space. It seemed to distil very neatly the meeting of public and private, work and leisure, masculine and feminine. It portrayed the man entering the 'female' sphere, avoiding the 'tainting' 'feminine' goods and reaffirming his masculinity by moving boldly and directly towards the beer, and supposedly, the football. On a subsequent visit to this supermarket, I heard another World Cup themed advert, which was aimed at women. This advert featured a female voice and said, 'Ladies, are you sick of the football? Then get the girls round!' It then listed offers on white wine.

Supermarkets

Retail outlets offer a combination of 'open' and 'closed' areas for researchers and initially I conducted some less formal observation as a customer in the 'open' areas. However, as an informal customer/observer the 'closed' backstage areas, such as storerooms and canteens, were out of access to me. Similarly, access to the thoughts and words of members of staff was only possible in my role as customer and observer. It must be noted that, as with many distinctions, the line between open/public settings and closed is not a hard and fast one (Bryman 2001: 294). I felt that there would be

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[58] These details are deliberately vague and slightly altered to maintain the anonymity of the company

great benefits from the access provided by this method particularly due to the 'emotion work' required in service roles. It seemed fair to assume that data from 'outsider' observation would be limited by the constraints of customer service and would therefore comprise only one facet of work and work identity construction (Hochschild 1983).

While I have significant experience working in Supermarkets and other service roles[59], it was only by once again putting myself in this role, that I was able to remember many of the emotions and experiences from the past and to fully tap into my tacit knowledge. A good example of this process was when I worked as a 'relief cashier' (a worker drawn from various other roles within the store to work on a checkout during busy periods). During my till[60] training and for the first few weeks, I did not find the customer service involved troubling. In fact I quite enjoyed the interactions and began to question the strong dislike I had previously felt, as this quote from my first day of till training illustrates:

> 'I found working on the till pleasant and not a process which clashed with my sense of self. This is radically different from my previous experience when I was 17/18 and again at 20/21, where I experienced work on checkouts as demeaning and maddening. It could simply be that familiarity with the role will eventually breed contempt, or it could be that my perception of customer's words and actions is now different. However, it could also be that since in some senses I have a strong 'cover story' (as a covert researcher), that any affronts the work would have otherwise presented to me, are not perceived as so?' (Field-notes, Monday 11th July 2006).

When I worked as a cashier during my 'A' levels I had found the experience demeaning due to the persistent disregard and rudeness of customers. During that period I also strongly resisted the deference and 'emotion work' required by the customers. It was only after a month or so that the customers and the checkout work at *Densmores* began to grate and I began to fully remember how I had previously felt and more importantly *why*.

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[59] Two different supermarkets, a duty free shop on a cross channel ferry and as a barman.
[60] I will be interchanging the terms till and checkout simply for the sake of variety.

What this illustrates, is that in this case my subsequent understanding was altered and I would argue enhanced, by actually performing the work I was studying. Gaining an understanding of the frustrations which working as a 'relief cashier' could produce was very important. During the interview stage the role of 'relief cashier' and till work in general proved to be a strong point of contention and resistance for many male workers (see Chapters 5 and 6). Due to the experience I gained during the ethnographic observation stage I felt better able to interrogate and understand this process.

The meaning we give to information is shaped by our ability to understand context and the situations which shape individual reactions. I felt that the meanings and understanding I imposed on the words of informants would be shaped by my ability to understand and empathise with those contexts. As a PhD student whose funding meant he did not have to 'work,' I was not sure I was in the best position to do this. I also felt that it was important to be aware of the fact that this was a form of work which I was consciously moving away from. The study of working-class lives and work is very often undertaken by middle-class men and women and this can lead to a romantic heroisation of work and workers[61] (Wright-Mills 1951: 220, Braverman 1974, Anthony 1977: 113-45, Pahl 1989 Cavendish 1982). Doing working-class jobs, can be a powerful antidote to the possibility of romanticizing the lives and experiences of the working-class (Cavendish 1982).

'Funnelling', Gender and the Job Application

Job Application

The application process had four main parts: the application form, the first and second recruitment interviews and the induction day. The application form was relatively standard and less complicated than those of some of the other main supermarket companies, (some of which involved detailed questions about attitudes and also in one case a psychometric test). As well as biographical information, including

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[61] This is not to say that working-class researchers are immune to this!

qualifications and work history, it had questions concerning positions of responsibility and leisure interests. There were also sections asking why I wanted to work for *Densmores* and finally what specific qualities I possessed which made me suitable for the position.

I filled the form out honestly but also, of course, with a view to getting the position. I had previously applied for a similar post at the store and not been given an interview. However, I believed that my previous failure to secure an interview was not due to an inadequate application form, as both applications I submitted were practically identical. Due to the structure and brevity of the form, there was little I could change on the second application form as even the sections on past experience gave room for only three or four lines of information. I did not declare my main intention, which was to carry out covert participant observation at the store (see Chapter 3 for full discussion of this decision). About two weeks after completing the job application form I was telephoned and offered an initial recruitment interview.

First Recruitment Interview

The first recruitment interview was conducted by a female assistant manger in her early-to-mid 30s, called Kerry[62]. The interview lasted about 15 minutes and was surprisingly friendly and informal; it comprised of general and practical questions to do with my availability for work. I got the impression that it was just to see if I was of a generally acceptable standard and available to work enough to be practical.

There were a number of positions on offer within the store:

- Two different positions on the produce section (fruit and vegetables).
- One preparing chickens for roasting.
- One in the bakery putting cream into cakes.
- One operating the till.

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[62] All names are pseudonyms.

Kerry's primary focus in the first recruitment interview was which job I was going to do. She told me that the two produce jobs, involved working with fruit and some vegetables and heavy lifting. Kerry referred to the produce 'team' as 'guys' and 'a couple of women who look after the flowers' (Field-notes, June 29th 2006). Whilst running through the other jobs available it seemed that Kerry assumed that I would not want them. This could be due to the interest I expressed in having a job which would allow me a degree of movement between 'front' and 'backstage' and around the store. I asked for this type of position to aid my research and to allow adequate opportunity to make notes. However, even when considering other jobs which may have allowed this, Kerry assumed that I would not want them. For example, when considering me for the job creaming cakes, which would perhaps have provided the activity I had asked for, although she offered it to me, it was by way of a rhetorical formality. Before I could respond she answered, 'you don't want that do you?' Kerry seemed to be working on assumptions about what I would and would not do or want to do, (my own gender 'logic' or expectations), as opposed to imposing her own views. This seemed to be quite a pragmatic concern; a person who does not like their job, will not stay as long and is unlikely to do as good a job, particularly in terms of customer service. I subsequently conducted a series of interviews with human resource managers to explore this process (discussed in section 1 in Chapter 5).

Second Recruitment Interview

I was recalled for a second recruitment interview with the human resource manager, a woman in her mid-to-late 30s called Debbie. This again seemed to take the form of a friendly, relatively informal 'chat'. The main topics covered were my availability in the present and the future, my leisure activities and my future career aspirations and timelines for the completion of my studies, which was probably connected more or less to future availability as a member of staff. It seemed that as a result of my previous interview with Kerry, I was being considered only for the jobs on the produce section. My impression was that the majority of the discussion was directed at establishing where I would best 'fit' in the store and this was confirmed more or less explicitly to be the produce section. The human resource manager emphasised that produce was a 'man's job,' saying 'I'll say this and it might sound sexist but it's

not, but most of the men want to work on the produce because, well it's active and physical' (Field-notes, Tuesday 4th July 2006).

This point was reaffirmed or in a way 'checked' with the supervisor Matt (mid-twenties, male) who came into the room at the end of the interview. Matt was to show me around the produce section and 'check me out.' The above quote regarding jobs on produce complete with qualifier was repeated almost verbatim by Debbie the human resource manager, and then sheepishly confirmed by the supervisor. It was repeatedly emphasised by both Debbie and Matt, that speed and strength were required to work on the produce section. In instances like this people are not just idly reporting their lives but are 'trying to accomplish things in the telling' (Gubrium and Holstein 1997: 49). The way workers and managers discussed the work and those who did it had a constitutive effect, it changed the way workers acted and how the work was understood. For example, the way I was perceived by fellow staff would most likely have changed if I had said I did not want the 'active,' 'man's' job in produce and would prefer to put cream into cakes.

Hobbies and Interests

The job application form contained a short section on hobbies and interests which I answered carefully but honestly. I listed my interests as Tae Kwan Do (a martial art), reading and cooking. The only personal interest which was mentioned by the human resource manager during the interview was Tae Kwon Do and kayaking which I had mentioned when discussing my potential holiday plans. Although we had discussed my studies and I had raised my interest in cooking and reading, it was these sports which the human resource manager had raised when introducing me to the supervisor as a prospective team member. This could be seen as odd because knowledge of food and cooking was of more practical use when working on the produce section than being 'sporty', (which is how Debbie described me to Matt). Also the supposedly 'tough' and physical elements of martial arts were emphasised by making jokes. Debbie was telling me about the tour of the produce section Matt was going to take me on and when discussing what would happen when it was finished she paused and I said, 'and then you can chuck me out.' To this they both responded with jokes about

not wanting to try and 'chuck out' a person who did martial arts. While this was in not entirely a one way process (in that I had given them the information upon which they were basing their opinions), I did feel that their discussions were aimed at constructing me in a certain way which I felt was selective and not necessarily the most accurate interpretation available. It did, however, construct me in a way (strong, tough, 'masculine,' etc) which was most appropriate for the construction of the work in the produce department.

General Impressions

I got the overall impression from both recruitment interviews, but particularly the second (with the human resource manager Debbie), that it was more important to establish my 'fit' in the 'man's team' than my knowledge and ability. It is probably worth noting that I am above average size and height, with short hair and so perhaps lend myself to the categorisations imposed by my colleagues. However, during both interviews I made an effort to show that I would be willing to work in any role or area of the store. Although for the purpose of the study I had stated a preference for a job which allowed mobility, the rationale I gave for this was that I liked to be active. This mobility was intended to allow me access to 'front' and 'backstage' areas often with frequent 'to'ing and fro'ing' which I hoped would serve to illustrate all the more clearly the difference between the two and allow more opportunities for note taking. I realise that my request for mobility risked influencing the way I was perceived, but it seemed necessary to be able to move about the store to achieve the aims of the research.

On writing up my field-notes I had the opportunity to reflect on the wisdom of mentioning martial arts as a hobby as it could perhaps have acted as a cue to my personality or preferences in work. But on consideration it was coupled with my academic studies and enjoyment of cooking and reading, and so was not the only 'cue' available when assessing me. I also made a conscious effort to be friendly and outgoing, but also to avoid seeming aggressive or domineering. I felt that there was an effort on the part of those interviewing me to sell the job and its benefits, as much

as I was trying to 'sell' myself as a potential employee. This is due, most likely to problems experienced in recruiting and retaining suitable staff, (later described by the produce supervisor). This raises the question of whether the apparent eagerness to put me in the produce section was simply a pragmatic decision based on what the human resource staff expected *me* to want to do and where they thought I would fit in.

Tour of the Produce and Flower Sections

After the recruitment interview I was taken on a short 'tour' around the produce section by the produce supervisor Matt. It was made clear by the human resource manager that Matt's impressions of me would be fed back to her and would be important in the decision on whether or not to hire me. The tour was general, friendly and informal and Matt was immediately very likeable. I was introduced to another male member of the team Tony (17) who was of very slight build and did not appear particularly 'sporty' or strong.

During the interview with the human resource manager, Debbie, the issue of the flower section had been raised. She had said, 'we have a couple of women who come in and look after the flowers.' The flower section is considered part of the produce section but is 'looked after' by female staff known as Florists. The Florists were discussed by male members of the produce team as peripheral to (and perhaps distinct from), but part of the produce team. During this discussion following Debbie's comments regarding the 'manly' nature of the work on produce, the supervisor interjected and in a joking tone said, 'we don't have much to do with them [its], not so manly?' (Field-notes, 4th July 2006). When I pointed out that Samurai used to practice flower arranging, this was seen as a joke and laughed off. I made this comment 'naturally' and not to elicit a particular response. Had I considered it I probably would have said nothing, however, it seemed to create discomfort.

During the tour of the produce section with the supervisor, the subject of the flower section was again raised. On Sundays the female staff members responsible for the flowers do not work, so the other (male) members of the team must make sure that the

section was fully stocked and tidy. As Matt the supervisor put it: 'we don't touch them much, but on a Sunday we may have to, so we just fill 'em up and throw some out' (Field-notes, 4th July 2006).

The 'throw some out' is at odds with the care generally taken with the handling and presentation of the rest of the produce (fruit and vegetables). The later mistreatment of the flowers I saw confirmed that the flowers were not treated similarly, despite being very fragile. Perhaps an obvious working distinction which was being drawn by male members of staff is between the heavy/instrumental/male fruit and vegetables and the light/ornamental/'frivolous'/female flowers. While this is a simplistic opposition, it did seem that the flowers and the florists were used as a means of masculinising work on the produce section and creating symbolic definitions and boundaries. This issue is taken up in more detail below and was raised in interviews.

Defensiveness and Masculinising of Work Roles

There were a number of ways that the men working at *Densmores* were able to see their job roles as gender 'appropriate'. First, all except Alan the produce manager saw their job as a transitional stage of one kind or another. Alan said that he had turned down the offer of promotion to a higher management position because he did not want to commit to relocating (I overheard this and therefore was not able to probe further). I would argue that his current role in management could be seen as suitably 'masculine' by him and others with the associated responsibility and power and would not therefore be problematic. All of the other male members of staff had reasons to see themselves as working at *Densmores* temporarily. Gary and Matt (the supervisor) were the two oldest members of the team (excluding myself and the manager) and both were aiming to leave and find a 'better' job. Gary was in his mid-to-late thirties and exemplified most clearly what I would describe as a 'traditional' working-class masculinity. He had worked previously in farming, gardening and maintenance and expressed a preference for early starts and work which quickly passed time. He often did the 6am-3pm shift which was the hardest work, but due to this it was also unanimously agreed upon as being the 'quickest' to pass. Gary was working both

indoors and in service work for the first time, he also said that he was used to earning more money. When Gary confided in me that he was applying for work elsewhere, I asked him what type of work, he said 'General maintenance and landscaping, that's more like it.' Gary described these jobs as more 'me' and when I asked him what he meant he said he had not intended to stay at *Densmores* for as long as he had, but he had experienced difficulty in securing 'better' work. When I asked Gary what he thought of working at *Densmores* he replied, 'It's a job, isn't it?' (Field-notes, 9 August 2006).

This was a phrase which I would hear repeatedly throughout the ethnographic observation and interview stages. 'It's a job, isn't it?' was both an assertion of the jobs lack of direct relevance to the men's identities, but also a pragmatic assessment of the value of work. It was my feeling, based on the context of the conversations in which this phrase was used, that there was an assumption that to work regardless of the job, was 'better' both morally and practically. While this is not an unlikely finding amongst those already working, the moral quality which Bauman (2005) argues is attributed to work, resonates with many of the comments I heard. The notion that there is a moral or dignifying quality in taking a bad job over no job at all is put forward by Newman (1999) and Lamont (2000) and this is one of the rationales driving such comments. However, it is difficult, if not impossible to de-couple this notion with the simultaneous distancing which it allows from an individual's work identity.

As well as conferring respect when compared with those who 'choose' not to work, a job which is instrumentally pursued is often held to have minimum relevance to the self-identity of the individual pursuing it. This is perhaps similar to the way that 'stop-gaps[63]' are seen by those doing them. This does not mean that the person involved does not want to move on, but it means that work is necessary, and preferable to unemployment. A good example of this is Gary with who I worked on the produce section. My conversations with Gary (which were extensive) led me to believe that he had an instrumental attitude to work and did not struggle with the construction of an 'appropriate' identity. Gary said he had never done service work

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[63] A job taken before moving onto another stage.

before and wanted work that was more 'me.' Gary worked hard and favoured the early shifts, and while he was always polite to customers, he seemed to avoid interaction and saw it as a necessary evil as opposed to an intrinsic part of the role. On several occasions he expressed sympathy towards me when I was called to the checkouts as a relief cashier (which interestingly he had successfully resisted). This is of course not to say that work did not play an important role in Gary's identity, or indeed the identities of other workers who expressed this sentiment. In a sense they were acknowledging the importance of work *per se*, but denying the significance of their current work role. This was similar to the process described by Henson[64] (1996, Henson and Rogers 2001) among male clerical 'temp' workers. Male 'temps' often reaffirmed the 'feminine' nature of their work, but denied its significance to their identity (for other studies with similar findings see Cross and Bagilhole 2002, Simpson 2004).

Matt, the produce supervisor, was interesting in terms of his attachment to his job. He was clearly the most enthusiastic member of the team (he subsequently succeeded Alan as produce manager) and Alan, the manager, delegated significantly to him. However, I was later to find from Neil (a fellow produce worker) that Matt was applying for a job in the Fire Brigade. It was a surprise to find that Matt was applying for other jobs as he seemed so well motivated. When I asked him about it, Matt said, 'this isn't what I wanted to do, I wanted to be a Policeman, but it's too late now, I'm too old' (Field-notes, 14th July 2006). I found it hard to determine how Matt saw his job and his work identity and the following incident illustrates his complex position.

The Strawberry Incident

During a normal shift a customer complained and Matt, in his capacity as produce supervisor, had been called to the customer service desk. The customer was someone who worked packing strawberries and he was complaining about the quality of the in-store strawberries. The customer complained for about 15 minutes, (which I felt was

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[64] Discussed in greater detail below.

quite a long time), whilst picking through the strawberry display, selecting examples of poor quality fruit. I was able to stand close-by and listen to most of the conversation and watch it all. Matt was polite and offered apologies but mainly listened.

I spoke to Matt later in the shift and listened to his description of the exchange, (which he also discussed with most of the other team members). According to Matt, the customer had no financial interest in either *Densmores* or the in-store strawberries, but worked elsewhere producing strawberries. The customer had told Matt that if he had packed the fruit he would be ashamed to sell it. There may have been many reasons for the customer to complain, but it is interesting that Matt the supervisor, who would be considered at least by company logic (and perhaps in other ways) to be a Greengrocer, did not admit to feeling this shame about the poor quality produce. After the customer left Matt expressed annoyance and wondered aloud why someone with no financial or corporate interest would take the time to complain about produce. He expressed a desire to have said to the man: 'Why don't you just piss off and mind your own business?'

It is difficult to interpret exactly what was going on in this situation, but it seems that the 'backstage' performance; Matt explaining what he 'really' wanted to say was an attempt to counter-balance the deference necessary to deal politely with the complaint. What I believe Matt was attempting to highlight, was that had he not been bound by company rules, he would have responded more 'appropriately,' that is by telling the customer to go away and to mind his own business. It could simply be argued that this whole process was about the defence and rehearsal of masculinity. However, I think that perhaps it has as much to do with work identity and shame.

I often observed that there was a tendency for staff members to distance themselves from poor-quality produce. This is mainly because they want (rightly) to assert that they had nothing to do with its production and have no ability to control ordering or to determine the source of products. However, it sometimes seemed that there was a level of pride amongst the produce team regarding the quality of goods. The criteria used at *Densmores* to determine whether or not goods are fit for sale (as I was repeatedly reminded) was, 'would you buy and consume it?' Perhaps the real source

of Matt's annoyance was the double bind of being ashamed by the quality of the goods and having them connected with his ability to do his job by someone in the same trade.

This is a good illustration of the way that workers are called upon to act as organisational 'buffers.' The situation was compounded by the lack of worker agency in two ways; first, Matt was not in the position to express dissatisfaction with the company or its produce. Secondly, Matt was also put into a position in which he had to apologise (as happens very often in retail and service work in general) for something which was not his fault. It is also possible that some of this annoyance was due to Matt's recognition that staff are often called upon to use their own efforts and emotions to fill the gap between customer expectations and the products and services of companies (Du Gay 1996). This is another example of the way that staff are forced to negotiate the competing logic of 'customer-focused bureaucracies and the logic of the customer orientation for service quality (Korczynski 2002: 2).

The 'would you buy it?' standard creates a situation where a member of staff must see themselves as both a member of staff and a potential customer, similar to the 'enterprising self' described by Rose (1990). This is, no doubt, part of attempts to 'brand' staff (Edwards 2005), but it also creates questions around how they identify with work and their role. (This process is discussed below regarding the way it is used as a resource for resisting customer service training).

Those who have little choice but to take work they do not wish to do, understand their work role differently to those who have greater choice. By not recognising this code, the customer who criticised the strawberries was insulting Matt by saying that he should be ashamed of the produce. From the point of view of the worker in the supermarket a customer should know that fruit and vegetables are not produced by supermarket workers. They should know that quality and buying policies are determined in the head office and are not influenced by a supervisor 'having a word' about the poor quality of a particular type of produce.

Similarly, when a female customer complained to Tony, also about the strawberries he replied, 'What do you expect, it's *Densmores*?' when the customer was surprised

and asked him what he had said he repeated himself and then walked away. The difference perhaps was that as a supervisor, Matt could not distance himself from his work identity or organisational position, whereas Tony, a 17 year old, part-time worker could. This could also have something to do with the age and gender of the customers involved. The customer Matt was interacting with was similar in age and could be considered a peer. Conversely, the customer Tony was talking to was a middle-aged woman and so the dynamic would perhaps be closer to a mother and son relationship. It was for this reason that I tried to avoid younger men who had greater scope to resist their work identities in the interview stage.

Cover Stories

With the exception of Alan the produce manager, all of the other team members saw themselves as working at a *Densmores* as a 'stop-gap'; in other words, as a temporary means to an end. While there is no need to doubt the intentions of these workers, there is evidence to suggest that these intentions do not necessarily translate into action or reality. Many of those I later interviewed at other stores had only intended to work in a supermarket for a short time but had stayed (Alex, Gareth, Pete for example) as had Matt and Gary at *Densmores*. The phrase 'stop-gap' was often used to describe the job and all male members of the produce team except the manager (Alan) or supervisor (Matt) said 'it's a job, isn't it?' at least once in response to my questions. Below is a table of the situations and intended career trajectories of the Produce team, and what had happened so far (excluding the manager).

Fig .8. Intended career trajectories of the Produce team

Name	Position	Age	Career Trajectory (Proposed or Taken).
Matt	Produce Supervisor	24	Applying for Fire Brigade/Stayed and became prod manager.
Gary	Produce Assistant	Late 30s	Applying for outdoor jobs; landscaping and maintenance.
Tony	Produce Assistant	17	Re-sitting GCSEs and hoping to do 'A' levels.
Neil	Produce Assistant	18	Recently finished 'A' levels, applying for Fire

			Brigade.
Paul	Produce Assistant	18/19	Going to university.
Richie	Produce Assistant	22	Final year of university degree.
Chas	Produce Assistant	17	Final year of 'A' levels, going to university.
Adrian	Produce Assistant	25	Left before end of trial period to work as a forklift truck driver.
Ed	Produce Assistant	17	Still at school (sixth-form).

There were a lot of comments about how working in *Densmores* was preferable to other similar work in terms of conditions (see similar discussions Jimmy/Phil in Chapter 5). Most of the team also resisted their association with negative comments made about *Densmores* and supermarkets or service work in general. They usually achieved this by appeals to their 'cover stories[65]' (Henson 1996: 219, see Chapter 2 for a full discussion).

The effect of the attitudes and proposed career trajectories of the men in the produce team was to emphasise definitions of service work as short-term, low-status and 'feminised' work (Bauman 1998, Sennett 1998, Lamont 2000). In other words, not only does the often transient nature of such work allow distancing, it also encourages it, and as Lamont (2000) argues this reinforces the low status of the work.

Strength

The strength needed to work on the produce section was emphasised by my colleagues, especially during the job interviews and introduction stages. It was also periodically reaffirmed, mainly through the mocking of the younger, weaker staff, by the older staff (Matt, Gary and Alan). For example, not for the first time, the supervisor (Matt) was making a joke about the lack of physical strength of two of the younger members of the team and their lack of ability to handle the heavier stock

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[65] Henson (1996) describes a 'cover story' as one that people tell to themselves and to others, which says that their current work role is temporary or transient, and therefore not necessarily attached to their personal or social identity

properly (without visible effort). Gary, Alan (the manager) and I were present during this discussion as well as Matt. The conversation concerned a woman on the morning shift who came over from another department to work on produce in the morning. It was pointed out that she 'usually just helped out with the salad' (which was much lighter), however, when I pointed out that I had been working with her on the citrus pallet (the heaviest) and that she seemed to be managing, this was conceded as true.

This led to an increase in the derision of Chas and Tony by Alan and Gary (which was not my intention) who were not present and Matt the supervisor saying that he would send Chas onto the 'dairy with the fairies' which he considered obviously to be less strenuous, more fitting work. The likening of weaker men to women or groups considered to be 'less' than men, in this case gay men, is very common among all male groups (Messner 1993, Bird 1996, Faludi 2000, Connell 2000). This discourse is usually deployed as warning to weaker members that they are either at risk of or already have breached group norms. This means that rather than undermining the speed and strength discourses applied to the work on produce, the presence of weaker men actually underlined them.

I do not want to completely dismiss the speed and strength discourse as entirely fallacious. Initially I found the work physically strenuous and I also experienced some mild back-ache. Some of the boxes needed to be lifted into awkward positions and this *was* difficult at times. A certain level of strength was required for the job, and being taller and stronger than average certainly made the work easier to perform. However, this is also true of some of the stock on the flower section. What I do want to emphasise is that the problems the younger members of staff experienced with the heavy stock, were not seen as making them unsuitable for the job.

The discourse of speed and strength, which was applied to the work by workers and management alike, served to define the work as opposed to 'screening' prospective workers. I am not arguing that this was a deliberate process, more an emphasis of certain elements of the job (the heavy handling and busy periods) and a de-emphasis of others, (slow periods and the constant tidying and attention to aesthetics). This point was illustrated well by Adrian, who left *Densmores* to drive a forklift after less

than two weeks. When I asked him if he liked the job he said, 'it's too slow, you have to look for work; that's not me.'

Flowers

The gender division in the team, although not without some practical merit, was cosmetic or symbolic. The two female staff dealt primarily with the flowers and plants and price reductions. However, the practical reasons (i.e. those not explicitly related to gender) given for this division of tasks, did not seem sufficient to justify it. Although there were attempts by managers to place workers in positions which they are likely to stay, there were still continuing problems with recruiting and retaining staff. With this in mind and the obvious reluctance of the male workers to handle the flowers, it does seem that the boundaries were at least in part used to 'legitimise' work as gender 'appropriate'.

The symbolic importance of the flower section was apparent from the early stages of the research, and was mentioned in my second job interview. Through a number of comments and events it became clear that the flower section served as the symbolic 'feminine' to the produce section's 'masculine.' The following event took place while I was working on the 6am-3pm shift, which was the earliest 'day' shift. It was also the one most popular with the team, mainly because of the early finish, but also because there was usually still some of the night delivery left and so the work becomes faster and is basically manual handling. The other 'bonus' was the absence of customers and uniforms until eight o'clock. Most of the predominantly male night workers do not wear uniforms as they finish at 7am and therefore will not encounter customers. The following account serves to illustrate the symbolic importance of the flowers and the way that different work roles were established and maintained.

Neither of the women who usually worked on the flower section was working on this particular morning. Following the previous day's trading the flower section was very bare indeed and even though the rest of the produce section was full and ready the flowers were left until Elle came in at 8am. This meant that the shelves would be left

bare while customers were in the store and Elle was also left with a lot of work to do. From what I saw while working at *Densmores* this is simply something that would not have been allowed to happen to the rest of the produce section. One of the criteria in the *Grocer 33*, a prestigious trade magazine award, is 'availability.' This means that supermarket stores are assessed on the breadth of the ranges they offer. They lose marks for not having certain 'key' items and also for having bare spaces on a shelf. When I first worked at *Densmores* it was made clear to me, that one of the main aims of produce workers was *never* to leave gaps. If the mushrooms were all sold, the space was filled with salad and if the salad ran low the space was filled with pre-packed vegetables and so on and so forth. The point is that a space would *never* be left if there was stock to fill it. It would also have been seen as unforgivable to have a variety of produce in the cold stores which was not on the shelves. However, all that was done with the flower delivery was that it was taken to the back of the store into the refrigerated 'pod' which was used to keep refrigerated produce stock near the shop-floor.

While they were moving the flower pallet, Baz, a night shift worker, and Matt, the supervisor, carelessly ran the top of the pallet into the doorway. The pallet had been stacked too high and some of the stock was squashed between the pallet and the top of the door frame. This took place at 6.40am, one hour and twenty minutes before customers were due to be allowed in. This left more than enough time for the flowers to be put out on the shop-floor. Baz and I carried the fallen flowers into the 'pod' by hand and straightened out the boxes, while Matt and Baz discussed the flowers.

> Matt: I'm not putting these out, they can wait until Elle comes gets in.
> Baz: (Night worker) You're not a lady! (In a loud voice),
> (Field-notes, Wednesday 26 July 2006. 6-3).

The tone of voice Baz used here is important, as he was imitating the character Emily Howard from the comedy television series *Little Britain*. This is significant because the character is a male-to-female transvestite. The 'joke' is based on her being recognised as such by those she encounters, but 'she' nevertheless continually and conspicuously asserts 'I'm a lady!' in a high pitched, but nonetheless recognisably masculine voice.

The rough treatment of the flowers was a display of indifference and not in keeping with the careful way in which the slightly less fragile fruit and vegetables were treated. The decision not to put the flowers out on display was also approved by the produce manager. When I overheard the supervisor (Matt) telling Alan what he had done, Alan did not seem to find this problematic. Part of the rationale for leaving the flowers for Elle, was also that none of the male members of the produce team knew how to display them. Matt believed that if we put them out it would ultimately make more work for Elle who would have to correct our mistakes. It was perhaps true that we did not know where to put the flowers, however, this was only due to lack of familiarity which I felt could be overcome very quickly.

The neglectful way in which the flowers were treated by Baz and Matt, and the almost fearful way that male produce staff dissociated from them were important in the process of boundary drawing. This seemingly arbitrary distinction between 'men's' and 'women's' work is illuminated by the fact that when necessity dictated, these boundaries were permeable. For example when one of the female night shift workers worked with me on the heaviest fruit pallet, or that when there was no one else available, the produce manager tended to fill the flowers himself.

I feel that this symbolic distancing from the flowers was part of the means of constructing the fruit and vegetable section as 'masculine' and was implicitly approved by the manager. There was a distinction drawn between the 'neatness' of the fruit and vegetable displays and the arrangement of flowers. In other words handling and 'tidying' or 'neatening' was 'men's' work and displaying or making things look pretty was 'women's' work

On another occasion while in the store room, we needed to make some space for incoming stock, I suggested that we move some of the stock temporarily into the florist's space. When Elle, one of the florists protested that she was working in that space, the supervisor said in a joking tone, 'florists don't work' (Field-notes, 18th of July 6am-3pm). Earlier on the same day the supervisor was talking about buying his girlfriend some flowers and having spent £40. When asked why he had not bought them in the store (which would have been considerably cheaper) he said that it was

because he hadn't wanted carry them home. When I asked Matt, 'why? because you would look like you'd been stood up?' he replied,

'You look like a knob [fool] don't you?' (Field-notes 18th of July 6am-3pm).

Although there was no explicit mention of it, the distinction between the practicality of the fruit and vegetables and the visual, 'frivolous' nature of the flowers reinforced traditional gender stereotypes of male instrumentality and female emotionality. The comments above about a man carrying flowers in public and who should work on the flower section also suggest a fear of the potential stigmatising effect of being associated with flowers and perhaps 'femininity.' The comments regarding a man carrying flowers in public also suggest a fear of being seen as emotionally invested in a relationship and therefore vulnerable or perhaps of being seen as 'womanless.'

Sport, Socialising and Bonding

Sport was a very important element in the identities and interactions most of the male members of the produce team and it was almost omni-present within the culture of the produce team. Three members played for football teams and the supervisor ran a store wide fantasy-football league. Once, while I was talking to Gary he said he could 'not do without' sports channels (Field-notes, 15th July 2006).

I found my knowledge of boxing and rugby and a passing knowledge of football of great use in generating conversation and then moving on to other topics. Discussions of sport were a useful way for workers to pass the time and served as an easy form of interaction for a group who sometimes shared little else in common. There was also an all male social group of the core male produce members who played golf and pool. The team interacted in ways consistent with the literature on all male groups and homo-social bonding (Schafer 1975, Beneke 1982, Connell 1995, 2000, Messner 1990, 1993 Cockburn 1991, Bird 1996).

When discussing football team allegiances with Matt, I said that I no longer really followed football. He told me that in the past the manager's first question to a new (male) member of staff was to ask them which football team they supported. Matt also said that in the past, the whole produce team had all supported the same team (Arsenal). The whole process of establishing football allegiances and discussing the intricacies of football player transfers and tactics, seemed to be a way for men to relate to one another, while also establishing a suitably 'masculine' tone for the team. Personal antagonisms were often indulged through allegiance to opposing football sides. As I had experienced in other work-places, team allegiances can be central to work identity. People's names are often embellished according to their favoured team, for example Matt referred to 'Scouse-Mike' (a Liverpool FC supporter) in the bakery, who in turn called Matt 'Gooner' (a reference to Arsenal's nickname 'The Gunners).'

The reliance by members of the produce team on sports as a source of interest and discussion had the effect of excluding female members. As Acker puts it,

> '…support for all-male work and play groups where casual talk is about sexual exploits or sports are examples [of expressions of male control]. These symbolic expressions of male dominance also act as significant controls over women in work organizations because they are per se excluded from the informal bonding men produce with the "body talk" of sex and sports.'
> (Acker 1990: 152-3)

I did not get the impression that this was a deliberate process, but it certainly seemed to be the case. For example, on one occasion a discussion about sport initiated by Matt clearly excluded one of the female members/employees (Liz), and as she lacked the requisite football knowledge (or the confidence or interest) to put forward a view, she and others in that position were excluded. There was an element of differentiation between the male and female workers on the team. The florists wore the same coloured uniform, worked out of the same cold store, under the same manager, who would ask them to work on the fruit and vegetables during busy periods. However, they were still seen as distinct from the male produce workers.

'Doing time'

A great emphasis was placed on the importance of time passing quickly while at work, (this was mentioned by four of the team Matt (the supervisor), Paul, Gary and Neil). This was often in response to questions about what they liked about the job, as Gary put it:

'I like it when it's busy, like on Saturday, the time passes really quickly. That's what you want isn't it.' (Field-notes, 13th July 2006).

There was a sense, that work at *Densmores* was a necessary evil which must be endured and 'made the best of'. To some extent this rationale was extended to work in general, although there was also a recognition that some jobs (or aspects of them) were preferable to others. As mentioned earlier a good example of this was the early shift (6am-3pm), which involved the most physically demanding work, but was seen to pass most quickly and was therefore valued. The first two hours of the shift (6-8am) took place before the store had opened and were therefore largely devoid of the surveillance and 'feminising' or civilising influences of customers (i.e. language and behaviour regulation and correct uniform).

This shift was also seen as passing more 'quickly' than the others because as well as the earlier finishing time, there was more physical work involved (usually until about 11am). These preferences, which were (as far as I could tell) universal among the team, suggest that work was seen largely as something to be got through until 'life' started. It often seemed that many believed that the best one could hope for was that time would pass easily, and perhaps to have a joke with fellow members of staff. While I am not suggesting that this is a particularly significant or original finding in itself, I will be drawing on it for later discussions of work and identity. This is also not to say that the content of the day and the type of work which enabled the passing of time were not important.

There were many references to the lack of mental effort needed to complete the work. For example whilst writing a note on the board I hesitated in spelling Wednesday,

Tony said, 'Yeah mate, workin' here proper dumbs you down' (Tony, Field-notes 8th August 2006). Gary described his work as 'mind numbing' and said:

'You don't have to think, I know it's the wrong attitude but it's so boring, you don't need to think' (Field-notes 10th August 2006).

Gary had had no success with his applications for other jobs and later in the same shift, with a little fearfulness and despair he likened his job to a prison:

'I'll probably be here 'til I get my pension…tomorrow, I'll come in and do another bit of my sentence,' (Field-notes 10th August 2006).

Gary said he could not wait to leave, and wanted to 'be outside,' crucially he disliked the lack of self-determination involved in retail work and also being visible. Gary said he resented being unable to smoke whenever he wanted and while he knew it to be a counter-intuitive position, resented the presence of customers while he was trying to work. This feeling was expressed by many workers (in the interview and observation stage). Similarly, I found it hard to not occasionally become annoyed with customer inconsideration. Gary said he liked to be able to work at his own pace which would usually involve working at a brisk pace and taking shorter, more frequent breaks (usually for a cigarette or a coffee). The break structure at *Densmores* was a bone of contention particularly for Gary, but it was a common source of complaint. We were paid for an half-hour break during a nine hour shift, but as part of that nine hour shift we were also forced to take an hour lunch break which was not paid. This was generally disliked and was considered to be too long[66]. The main problem with this was that it was felt that the long lunch break was unproductive for the worker because it was unpaid and also meant longer spent at work. It was also felt (and I felt this too) that a break of such a length meant that workers often did not want to go back to work and were de-motivated. Most would have preferred a shorter break and an earlier finish, but the rule was fixed and this was also resented. Such inflexibility was held up, with other factors to be a sign of management's lack of creativity and inefficiency. This was part of the feeling that being part of a big

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[66] I did not speak to anyone who preferred the longer break.

organisation entailed subjecting oneself to arbitrary and from this point of view, irrational rules. This feeling or opinion manifested itself in a many ways.

When discussing the merits of the early shift with the supervisor Matt, I raised the issue of uniforms, as on that shift he had told me to leave my tie and apron in my locker until the store opened (because it was July and therefore hot and the exertion exacerbated this. Matt mentioned several times that the Human Resource manager Debbie had made him put on his tie before the store had opened up. I pointed out that many of the night-shift were not wearing any form of uniform at all and he said that he had also raised this point. Matt said that Debbie had told him that this was not relevant. This had made him very angry and he said it made him want to 'lay her out' (hit her). I did not take him to mean that he actually wanted to do this, as my impression of him was of someone generally calm and very nice. However, his words were quite a surprise and seemed a strong reaction.

I am not sure if this was a reaction to being told what to do by a woman, or the feelings of inconsistent treatment by management. Either is possible, but it should be noted that most of those not wearing uniform were out of sight of the waiting customers, whereas the produce department is directly in front of the entrance and the first thing customers see. Indeed, in my first two encounters Matt (the supervisor), he stressed this himself and pointed out the need to create a good impression. This is why it was so important to make the displays neat and appealing and to remove spoiled produce. This even extended to ensuring that the bottom of the cardboard recycling bin was free of dirt and rubbish when taking it through the store. One of the female team members (Karen) suggested that the produce supervisor Matt was a 'neat freak.'

Returning to the issue of uniforms, it is possible that the wearing of uniform and control over dress creates a general feeling of subordination among service workers (Henson 1996). Henson (1996: 122) argues that 'the right to dictate or define appropriate appearance' increases management control over workers. Clothes are often closely associated with self-image (Garber 2001) and therefore control over them by management is felt keenly as humiliating and degrading and a reminder of subordination (Henson 1996, Du Gay 1996). While such interventions are now, seen as legitimate particularly in service work, (Du Gay 1996) they are not necessarily

appreciated or accepted without resistance. It is also common for workers in 'McJobs' to be marked out by garish uniforms (Ritzer 1993, Newman 1999). As previously mentioned, not wearing an apron was the privilege of supervisors and department managers and 'higher' managers wore their own clothes. Some of the male members of the produce team did not wear their aprons. Similarly, a look around the shop floor would show that the *Densmores* policy does not neatly fit with its implementation. The training videos I saw during my induction said that facial piercing, more than one ring/earring, trainers and coloured or outlandish hair were all forbidden. However, I observed all of these forms of dress among the current staff. Such attention to uniform and dress was reminiscent of school and was a potent reminder of the subordinate nature of a workers' position. I would also suggest that resistance to uniform and discipline has echoes of the resistance of young male workers to the perceived 'feminising' influences of school and authority (Willis 1977, Jordan and Cowan 2001).

Customer Service

The lack of mental challenge involved in the job also led to a certain perception of customer service and customer service training. During my time at *Densmores* there was a month long initiative to give all staff who had not been recruited within the last six months a refresher course in customer service. This, as perhaps would be expected, was dismissed in discussion by many staff, treated with derision and seen as a waste of time. It seemed at first that it was largely the male staff who were complaining. However, one possible weakness of my position in the store was exposed by this assumption. By mixing mainly with other male workers I was limited in my understanding of female workers and their thoughts and opinions. Nevertheless, later, during the Staff Departmental Meeting (SDM) (a staff/management problem solving meeting discussed below) I heard some older female members of staff also complaining. This rejection of retraining was illuminating with regards to how workers saw themselves and their work. The main point of contention was not the standards being imposed (as they were not new), although this does not mean that they were not resisted or derided. The main problem

was that it was seen as insulting to be told how to say 'hello', 'thank you' and 'goodbye'. Customer service was seen as a matter of good manners and politeness.

Many members of staff considered, that customer service was something in which they did not need any further coaching. It was also felt that some of the proscribed measures (such as walking a customer to a product they could not find instead of directing them verbally), went too far and insulted the customer's intelligence as well as the worker's dignity. I did get the sense that there was some truth to these staff objections. In my experience at least half of the customers (all of whom I offered to walk to products) only wanted to be directed so that they would not have to go out of their way if the product was at the other end of the store. Perhaps then the issue was that staff members were not allowed to use their own judgement and to decide the appropriate measure to apply. Yet, there are a number of potential elements to this process, particularly for the male workers. First, this could in part be a resistance strategy used by male workers to avoid what could be seen as a servile relationship to customers. Those who viewed the presence of customers as an impediment to the achievement of their work may have taken this view.

Secondly, I felt that the resistance to the 'always walk the customer to the product' policy, was also based in part on what the staff members would expect if they were customers. This is actually the thrust of some of the customer service training and quality assessments; I was told to ask myself, 'would you buy this?', 'would you see this as excellent service?' So it is perhaps an unintended consequence that these ideas were drawn on to resist customer service. That this process was structured by gender (men perhaps expecting a different type or level of 'service') is possible, and considering the clichés about men and directions is tempting to suggest this. However, from what I observed I felt that it would be difficult to make this argument as there was simply not enough consistent evidence (this issue is picked up in Chapter 6 in the light of my interview data).

From what I saw it seems that for both male and female workers, basic customer service politeness and helpfulness is conceived of as 'natural' and not a skill. Or at least it is seen as something which does not need teaching. This, it seems, is not something that follows from gender-specific abilities or characteristics but from

common sense and basic politeness. However, the emphasis in the literature (with exceptions, Forseth 2005) is on how management has organised and conceived these processes as gender specific skills, rather than on how they are perceived, experienced and put into practice by staff. This subject will be followed up in the following chapters, but one thing to keep in mind is that these skills or abilities may be conceived of as gender neutral. Nonetheless, how these skills are experienced and practiced may vary along gendered lines, for example in terms of how deference is performed and rudeness dealt with.

Should I Stay or Should I Go?

It often seemed that some form of responsibility or power is required to keep male workers at *Densmores*. This is perhaps because responsibility and/or power give legitimacy to work roles in the eyes of male workers and importantly in the eyes of their colleagues and others. It also provides the illusion, (if not the reality) of progression and promotional prospects. Such positions create and demand involvement, commitment and integration into the workplace. There is, of course, a circular logic to this process, in that only the integrated and long-standing members are likely to be given such positions. Yet, a job role with responsibility particularly for a certain function or area of the store, could be seen to give meaning to work. There seemed to be a pattern of needing the job to 'fit' to one's identity, and although this seemed partly to do with status it was also bound up in notions of masculinities.

I struck up a conversation with Colin, a male in his mid-20s, who had been an undergraduate at the same time as me at the same university, (although we had not met before). He was very interesting and useful to talk to, particularly as he was reflective in his comments about himself and his current work situation. I was able to talk to him more directly about himself and workers at *Densmores* as I had told him what about research interests in general terms. He was present at the Staff Departmental Meeting (SDM) and said that he goes (despite being discouraged because he is a supervisor) because it 'is the only mental stimulation I get in this job,' (again despite the level of responsibility that came with being a supervisor).

Colin had been quite active and outspoken in the SDM I had attended. In our conversations we discussed the nature of service work and this also led to a discussion of the media and its generally low level of intellectual engagement. We talked about work identity and he said he thought it is very important and illustrated this with an example from his own life. Admitting that he felt embarrassed when telling people he worked in a supermarket, Colin said:

> '…it's embarrassing, especially when they find out you've got a degree' (Field-notes 27th July 2006).

Colin had applied for the in-company graduate scheme but had been turned down and described this as a 'kick in the teeth.' He said that he would be leaving soon, to go travelling. Being given an increased level of power and status as supervisor was not sufficient to retaining Colin.

From our discussions it was evident that while he was working at *Densmores* as a student on a part-time basis, (he had been there approximately three years) he had not found the job to be inconsistent with his identity. By his own admission this seemed to have changed after his graduation and becoming a full-time member of staff. Through this transition he then came to find the work identity embarrassing and conflicting with the identity and expectations of a graduate. I suggested to him that the liminal status of the supervisor's role, between shop-floor and management was perhaps the cause of his feelings. Rather than making him feel more 'at home' in his work role, being a supervisor actually made him feel uncomfortable. My suggestion was mainly a response to comments he had made about the nature of the job and he agreed that being a supervisor meant 'you have to care about things that don't matter.' In other words, the job became more closely associated with his identity because it was harder for him to dissociate from it or offer a 'cover story' which was convincing to himself or others. He was also assiduous in his criticism of one of the junior managers who worked very long hours and whom Colin felt, displayed too much enthusiasm and commitment to his work, to the point where he had 'no life.'

It could be seen that Colin's desperation to leave was instructive regarding how he saw his work and identity. Becoming a graduate had not significantly altered his ability to do the job, as his degree (in social science) was unrelated to retail. In other words, his graduation was a change in status but not necessarily a substantive one. For example, would he have felt his work identity to be incongruous during the liminal phase between final examinations and graduation? Or was it primarily to do with how he felt, based on the expectations of a 'graduate' held by himself and others? He said that being rejected from the in-store gradate programme had 'turned it all upside down.'

The Night Shift

One of the most interesting insights to come from the ethnographic stage was the dramatic change in atmosphere when the store was closed to customers. This meant that the whole of the store (between 8pm and 7am) effectively became 'backstage'. The night shift was dominated by older men and the working atmosphere became significantly more 'masculine'. The props of a warehouse or building site were readily apparent, such as high visibility jackets, and hydraulic trolleys. Through simply walking around while the store was closed I heard a distinct change in the conversation, including casual racism among the night shelf fillers. It seems that by demanding politeness, political correctness and deference, simply by virtue of their presence, it is the public who make the store a 'feminised' work space and determines what is and what is not 'front stage.'

This changes the store as a workplace and also the character of the work. I felt that this change would be very interesting to pursue beyond the scope of this research and could possibly shed light on some of the points of contention created by the presence of customers. It seemed likely that the night workers may include men who were trying to minimise or avoid customer interaction. Also, my experience of the differing atmosphere suggested that different work values and interactions were likely to be present.

Conclusion

To some extent, my initial supposition about the performance of masculinities in supermarkets proved to be inaccurate. I had hypothesised that the demands of service work, particularly in a 'feminised' work environment such as a supermarket, would present significant challenges to the performance and defence of acceptable or 'appropriate' masculinities. I also anticipated that the need for enforced deference in service work would create continual problems for male workers who would struggle to reconcile their work with their masculine identities. However, the data I collected during my observation suggest that this process was negotiated through various strategies employed by workers. My initial belief that there would be a continual clash between male workers' assertion of their masculinities and the drive for profit had neglected the power of workers to contest and negotiate the 'terrain' of a workplace (Edwards 1979). I had also assumed that the provision of gender 'appropriate' roles was necessarily at odds with the aims of supermarket companies.

The negotiation process between male workers, (male and female) colleagues and management allowed sufficiently 'masculine' roles to be created. This negotiation was one which balanced the needs of the supermarket management, customers and male workers. Following this, it seemed that recruitment was not simply a process of funnelling people into gender 'appropriate' positions in order to fit management or customer expectations. The use of 'gender logic' in recruitment was primarily about retaining staff (Hossfield 1990) and minimising the chances of their feeling uncomfortable at work. So in one sense, these Human Resource discourses and practices are designed to satisfy the needs of staff. However, this is ultimately instrumental, as it is a way of recruiting 'customer-focused' staff who will be more likely to perform well. This is entirely consistent with Korczynski's (2002: 2) notion of 'customer-focused bureaucracies' in which the needs of staff, the profit motive and the customer's orientation for service quality compete and are combined. The means through which 'excellent' customer service was achieved allowed and to some extent necessitated the consideration of gender. In particular the provision of jobs which were in accordance with gender stereotypes.

The ethnographic element of my research began as a pilot stage which was designed to help structure and inform my interviews. While I certainly achieved this aim, due to the length of the observation my findings carry weight beyond simply being a pilot study. I left after six months of working on the produce department and occasionally (as a relief cashier) on the checkouts. Including lunch hours and going in early before work, I spent over 400 hours in the store, working, listening and interacting with customers and colleagues. The themes that arose through this observation were pursued in the interview stage and provided me with an enhanced language and understanding of supermarket work. In the end I modified my starting assumption, that supermarket work would create significant problems for the construction and expression of masculine identities.

My experiences during the job application and interview process suggested that one of the main aims of human resource managers was to place workers in roles which 'fit' and which were congruent with the workers' sense of identity. Ideas about appropriate work meant that this process was fundamentally gendered. I felt that this was primarily a strategy aimed first at ensuring that the worker stayed with the company for as long as possible. Secondly, it was assumed that a worker who either liked, or at least accepted, their role would perform better than one who did not, particularly in terms of customer service. One of the ways this 'fit' was established was to interrogate the hobbies and interests of the applicant. My observations strongly suggest that there was a general perception (that is among male and female workers and by their managers) that for a male worker to work in a 'non-appropriate' role would cause an injury to their dignity and would constitute a source of stigma and discomfort about their job.

Certain types of work within the store were characterised as more 'appropriate' and more popular with men than others. During my job interviews at *Densmores* I was 'funnelled' towards the produce department. It also seemed that there were attempts, both by the human resource manager and the produce supervisor, to 'sell' the job role to me. This involved emphasising the 'masculine' aspects of the work: that it was physically arduous, fast paced and popular with other men. This process led to the creation and maintenance of 'symbolic boundaries.' The clearest example of these

boundaries was the attempt to position the work on produce against the less conventionally masculine work of the florists (despite the similarities and parallels between the two roles). The importance of strength was used to justify this divide, despite the presence of several teenage boys who struggled with the heavier work and a woman who did not. The younger men's lack of strength was mocked, but it was not seen to make them 'out of place'. A masculine ethos was maintained was through laughing and joking, the discussion of sport and the expression of allegiance to football teams. The lack of appropriate knowledge could mean exclusion from many conversations.

Whilst the physical nature of the work was valued because it aided the passing of time, the presence of customers was often resented. This was partly because their physical presence made it more difficult to complete the work. But mainly because their presence had the effect of restricting workers, in terms of the way they behaved, spoke and dressed. This 'feminising' (by virtue of being regulating) influence was strongly resented as it reduced autonomy and expression, and created the need for politeness and deference. Customer service was another source of tension, not only in terms of the process of dealing with customers and the effects of their presence, but also because of the policing of customer service 'values' by management. This was often experienced as insulting and became another factor which reduced autonomy and discretion. The resistance of uniforms (in particular aprons) was also an example of the resistance of stigma.

How the working in a supermarket affected the identity of individual men varied. However, it was the case that often those who were able saw themselves as 'passing through' and were therefore less attached to their work role. It also seemed common for those who had been employed for a long time to prioritise colleagues and personal relationships over duty to the company or job role.

Finally, the change from day to night shift and the absence of customers after closing had a drastic affect on the atmosphere of the store and the actions of workers. The night shift was considerably different to the day shift and was much closer to a factory or a construction site in dress and attitude. This seemed to suggest that the constraints

on workers created by the presence of customers was strongly felt and perhaps avoided.

These are the broad themes which arose from the ethnographic observation stage at *Densmores*. These themes informed my thinking and shaped the questions that I sought to interrogate during my interview stage. Chapter 5 is comprised of two sections, the first of which looks at the reasons male interviewees gave for their entry into service work. The second half draws on interviews conducted with Human Resource managers and explores the role of gender and recruitment in shaping the gendering of work roles. This chapter builds on the insights gained through the ethnographic observation and will be followed by Chapter 6 which will examine in detail the way that men discuss the content of their work and use a variety of discourses to masculinise it.

Chapter 5

When Masculinities Meet Management

'Our proposals are based on a simple deal: more support in return for greater responsibility... We will help people find work, but they will be expected to take a job' (James Purnell, Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions 2008).

S: '...do you find that different people gravitate towards different types of jobs, do you find that you have a certain person in mind?'
J: 'Your brain will take you down, err, for the like warehouse positions, the more male. But, I would never, disregard someone because of that, because at the store we had a female *warehouseman'* (Jan, 34. Human Resource Manager, *Tempus 2,* emphasis added).

Introduction

This chapter is broken into two main sections, the first of which explores the rationales that male interviewees[67] gave for their entry into service work. The second half of this chapter considers the role of recruitment in shaping the gendering of work roles. This section draws on interviews conducted with Human Resource managers (and other managers with recruitment responsibilities) and seeks to draw out the 'gender logic' behind the recruitment process (Hossfield 1990). It begins to provide

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[67] See Appendix 1 for a table of interviewees.

an analysis of the interview data, and develops themes which provide significant context for the chapters that follow.

This chapter shows how gendered social and personal attitudes to 'men's' work shapes the way that male workers explain and understand their entrance and continued presence in service work. Further to this, it will examine the way that these attitudes condition men's interactions with recruitment mechanisms and the organisational need to recruit the right staff. The drive to recruit workers who are customer-focused means that attempts are made to provide work which 'fits' applicants and this, in turn, serves to 'tie' workers to their roles. The competing needs of workers and managers/organisations meet on the contested and gendered 'terrain' of service work and this negotiation serves to determine the way that service work is organised and gendered (Edwards 1979). Finally, Chapter 5 will show that the process of constructing 'appropriate' work is one which is based on the assumption of the continuing importance of work in the construction of male identities. This discussion will inform the subsequent chapter which looks in further detail at the way in which the shop floor/job roles are, to some extent structured to meet gendered needs of workers, but are ultimately driven by the needs/profit motive of the organisation and a capitalist motive more generally.

Interviewees

The male interviewees were predominantly full-time permanent workers[68] (for reasons discussed in Chapter 3). The reasons and rationales given by male interviewees regarding their entry into service work are important because they condition the way the men saw themselves and their work.

Many of the interviewees were long-serving workers, the mean average of service of male interviewees was 8 years and 1 month[69]. Part-time workers or those with an 'exit strategy', such as 'gap' year students, have clear reasons for denying the

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[68] Only one part-time worker and one in a gap year were included and one worker worked on a part-time (30hr) contract but often did full-time hours.

[69] As stated above for female interviewees it was 10 years and 1 month.

relevance of their work role to their identity. However, the majority of those interviewed did not fit this category, (although some expressed intentions to leave or regret at not having done so). Interviews with part-time and temporary workers were intentionally avoided, with the aim of interviewing primarily full-time, long-serving[70] men, preferably with familial responsibilities (11 of the total 25 men interviewed were either already parents or were shortly to become parents). This was a deliberate focus to ensure that those interviewed conformed as closely as possible to the popular conception of a 'breadwinner.' This was to ensure that, in theory at least, there were fewer obvious reasons for these men to avoid the association of their work role with their identity. However, this strategy was not always successful as demonstrated by Pete, who initially seemed to fit the breadwinner label.

S: Do you work lates or earlies?

PE: 'Yeah, I've got a late turn every other Friday and I have to do one, two Saturdays a month. Sometimes it's a bit hard, because obviously I've got a family at home. Got a young child. You'll probably come onto the question in a minute probably regarding, 'Why have you chosen a career in *Tempus*?' It's a case of when I met my wife, my wife's a qualified nurse, and she earns….. four times more than me, so I'm more like the part-time dad. I come to work, get my wages and then go home and look after the child. While my wife is more of a career minded person' (Pete, 51. Back door, *Tempus*).

However, as pointed out by Forseth (2005), the reasons put forward for work are also conditioned by the nature of that work. Given this, those in less socially-valued work are more likely to focus on factors outside of work for motivation.

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[70] 6 months service or more.

Morality and Orientation to Work

The belief that almost any work is better than no work (as exemplified by the quotation from James Purnell which opens this chapter[71]) is widely held in Britain (Bauman 1998). It is expounded by politicians across the political spectrum (Newman 1999, Lamont 2000) and is also consistently communicated through popular culture and media attitudes towards work and unemployment benefits.

Such opinions are widespread and it is worth noting that they are not unlikely finding among those who are working There is evidence that the 'all work is of value' sentiment does not extend to service work among some groups of unemployed working-class men (Lindsay and McQuaid 2004, Moskos 2004, Nixon 2006, 2009). However, Newman (1999) argues that people who work in low-paid, (often stigmatised) work roles tend to have far less liberal attitudes towards such perceived indolence than those in well paid secure work.

The notion that work was of value almost regardless of the role was latent throughout the interview stage and should be borne in mind throughout this chapter. The following quote from Pete illustrates this sentiment well;

S: So how did you come to work here?

PE: 'I was out of work for two years after leaving the electrical plating job, and it was a case of sponge off the government, which I didn't want to do, or get myself in gear and get a job, and this job came up' (Pete, 51. Back Door, *Tempus*).

Such beliefs were fundamental to the way men understood and discussed their work. The flow chart below shows the main social factors which shape the work identity of male workers with limited work employment options as they move into service work.

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[71] From above: 'Our proposals are based on a simple deal: more support in return for greater responsibility… We will help people find work, but they will be expected to take a job' (James Purnell, Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions, 2008).

Fig. 9. Elements which condition the work identity of male workers as they move into service work.

Pre-existing Social Expectations
↓
Morality/Orientation to Work
↓
Limited Options
↓
Entry in to Service Work
↓
Organisational/Human Resource Logic
↓
Content of Work (service/deference)
↓
Rationale/'Cover Story'
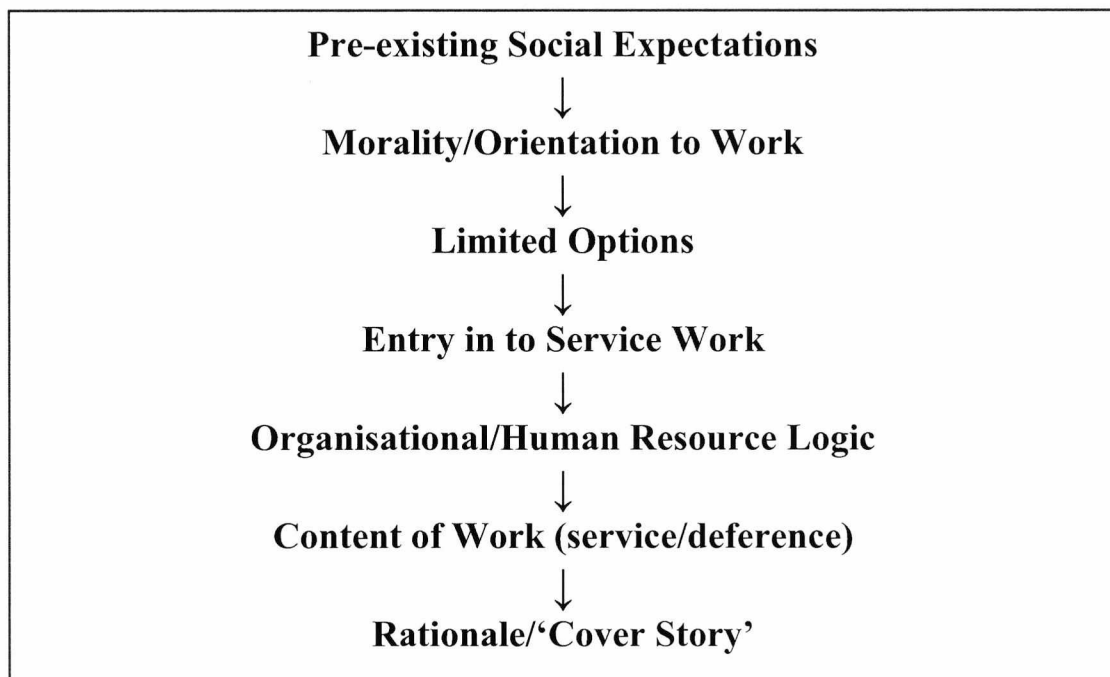
The following section will elaborate on the themes of lack of alternatives, progression and personal choice. This will be followed by an analysis of how this process shapes and is shaped by recruitment practices.

Section 1: Entry into Service Work

Lack of Alternatives, Progression and Personal Choice

The reasons that male respondents gave for their entry into, and presence in, supermarket work/the service sector were varied. Nevertheless, they did fall into three broad categories: *lack of alternatives, progression* (those who started work part-time and became full-time or a 'stopgap' stage) and *personal choice*. These categories are interrelated and many of the men interviewed can be seen as moving through a combination of more than one.

The 'lack of alternatives' category includes those who had few employment options open to them, those who were made redundant and those who took the first

job offered to them after finishing full-time education. 'Progression' refers to workers who said that they had stayed at a supermarket after joining on a part-time or temporary basis. There were three forms of progression: first those who started work after they had left compulsory education; secondly, those who had started work after being made redundant from another job and had not intended to stay; finally there were those who had worked part-time or during the school holidays and then became full-time or permanent once this period was over. Many of these workers also cited a lack of alternatives for their progression to permanent full-time work or in the case of those who started work as a 'stopgap' the inability to find a 'better' job. Many workers also, cited 'choice' as a reason for working in retail, these workers often pointed to the security of the supermarket industry.[72]

S: What made you come to work for *Tempus* in the first place?

G: 'So I just started with them and I always thought, the food industry it's not exactly a place you're going to be sacked unless you've done something wrong. Everyone's going to need food. So I thought, well. And I've just stuck with it. There are times when I wished I hadn't stuck with it' (Gareth, 47. Warehouse/Back door, *Tempus 2*).

The comparatively good working conditions were also cited as a reason for male workers choosing supermarket work and their rationale for remaining. Choice was frequently combined with the previous two rationales (lack of alternatives and progression).

It was common for workers of all ages to have started work at the supermarket store on a part-time or temporary basis and then to move either to a full-time or permanent position.

S: So did you expect to work in retail?

MA: 'No, I had no idea what I wanted and I turned 16 and got a part-time job and went from there'.

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[72] Interviews were undertaken between January and March 2007 and so were well before the 'credit crunch.'

S: Well when you were younger, did you have anything in mind?

MA: 'No, there was a few sort of ideas that kids have, but no really serious ones. I never thought about work when I was younger, I never thought about what my mum and dad did and how they did it or…. it's just something you fall into' (Mark, 21. Frozen, *Tempus*).

S: Before that where did you work?

DA: 'No that's it that's all I've done, since school, yeah' (Damian, 31, Stock Control/Warehouse, *Tempus 2*).

Many of the men interviewed saw retail as the only type of work available to them (at least at the time they started) and pointed out that it was a pragmatic choice. This resignation was commonly coupled with the belief that work was something that had to be done and was generally of a kind. Work was often 'what you made it.'

S: I found nights pretty tough.

JI: 'Well I done them with factories, things like that, so I got used to it, it's all the same to me' (Jimmy, 21. Stock Overflow, *Fugit*).

The perceived lack of alternatives also manifested in the belief that all work was similar, and to a large degree interchangeable. Perceptions about the inevitability of work were often coupled with the desire to have some 'banter' or a 'laugh' with colleagues. This desire shared many similarities with the literature on shop-floor, male group and working-class work culture more generally (Lupton 1963, Beynon 1973, Willis 1977, Lyman 1987, Milkman 1997, Hodson 2001).

Stop-gap

It was also common for supermarket/service work to be the first work available and for workers to have seen their move into retail as a 'stop-gap' to get money, before moving onto a 'better' or more 'appropriate' role.

S: What did you do before that?

A: College, erm I did a computing course in college for about a year or two I think and then just decided I wanted money now and I just decided to get a job as quick as possible. I mean, I didn't plan to stay here to be honest but it's just the way it's worked out.

S: So when you came here it was just like, get some money and move on?

A: Yeah, that was my plan to be honest with you, just get some money and then obviously find a decent career. Erm and then move on, but I've stuck here, erm, I just seem to work my way up at the moment.

(Alex, 24. General Merchandising Manager, *Tempus*).

While the interviews focused on full-time, 'breadwinner' workers, some younger men working full and part-time who saw their role as temporary were also included. All of these respondents offer rationales or 'cover stories' for their work at supermarkets (Henson 1996 and Henson and Rogers 2001). However, there are grounds upon which to doubt the reality of these claims. Many of the long-term employees who were interviewed (who entered service work either straight after leaving education or following redundancy) had also not intended to stay for a long period (such as John, Andrew and Gareth).

S: So what brought you to work here?

R: 'Well, mainly I just wanted a job and then I applied and when I found out that the hours, well I don't work Saturdays, there's so many different hours you can work. I just started working full-time because I'm on my gap year' (Rob, 18. Frozen Food, *Tempus*).

S: So are you planning on staying, for long term?

F: 'Only until the end of the year and then I'm going off into the Army'.

S: So what makes you, …why do you want to join the army then?

F: 'Er, well I spoke to a few people who have been here like 15-25 years and I can't really see myself being here. I've always wanted to go into the Army' (Frank, 21. Bakery, *Tempus 2*).

These workers were included in order to examine their thoughts on their work and its importance (or lack thereof) to their identities. Lamont (2000) and Sennett (1998) point out, that there is often a cycle involved in work being defined as low-status and short-term. The reactions and perceptions of workers can lead them to regard the work as low-status and only short-term, thereby reinforcing that status. Many of the comments made about entry into this work are represented well by this quote from Mark:

> **S: You've been all around the store? So what brought you to retail?**
> **MA:** 'Well, erm, being young there wasn't many jobs about, and it seemed like a perfect place to come while I was still at school. Then I didn't know what I wanted to do when I left, I still don't' (Mark, 21. Frozen Food, *Fugit*).

There is a great deal of evidence that young people's decisions about post-compulsory education, training and employment are shaped by their perceptions of what is available locally (Willis 1977, Raby and Walford 1981, Reay 2001, Green and White 2008, Evans 2009).

Green and White (2008: 213-6) emphasise the role of 'bounded horizons' in this process. They argue that, 'place-based social networks and attachment to place influence individuals' outlooks and how they interpret and act on the opportunities they see'. Green and White (2008: 213) suggest that individual perceptions of opportunities in local areas are often vastly different to 'objective' opportunities, due to a reliance on social networks for information and opportunities. There is also similar evidence that young working-class men seek to enact similar masculine identities to their fathers (without regard for the economic or social conditions that once made this possible) (McDowell 2003, Nixon 2009).

Choice: Pragmatism and Re-focusing

> '...when I say to people, I work at *Rowen*, 'oh you work at the tills.' It's like that's all they think of when they go into a supermarket, it's like, 'no I don't

work on the tills,' it's like their perception' (Christine 21, Human Resource Manager, *Rowen*).

Despite the common perception (indicated by Christine) of retail work as the lowest form of work or a last resort, many respondents said that they had made a conscious choice to work in a supermarket. There were a number of reasons for these choices. Many workers had experienced less stable, and far less pleasant work environments, (such as farm work, industrial cleaning and general factory work). This work was often organized by employment agencies and, as such, was an unreliable source of income (see Jimmy's comments below). In comparison with the monotony and work poor conditions common in these other jobs, as well as the inconsistent and often inadequate hours, retail in general was seen as a secure and preferable option. These workers particularly valued the certainty of the shift system, the reliable wages and the comparatively comfortable conditions and respectful treatment they received.

The following quote from Jimmy who at twenty-one already had a relatively long and varied work history picks up this theme:

S: What sort of factories [have you worked in]?

JI: 'A place called '*Shales*', loads of different places'.

S: Yeah, I know it.

JI: 'Horrible place, little plastic trays. Horrible work'.

S: Quite a lot of turnover there isn't there?

JI: 'Yeah, it's one of them job's innit, you can put up with it or you can't. I worked with an agency, so I've been pretty much all over the area'.

S: So what was it like with the agency?

JI: 'Well it's scarce, I mean one week you can be working six days and the next you can be working one day. You know, I've got rent to pay, so…… This is good because the rota's on the board, you come in, you know your shifts. You don't have to phone them everyday, 'yeah, you got any work, you got any work, you know.' No it's alright, I don't mind it. I've been in worse places'.

S: So you prefer this?

JI: 'Oh yeah, yeah. Well this is more relaxed, as long as you get your work done, you're all happy, you know, so you take your breaks when you want 'em.

No, they're alright here they do take care of you' (Jimmy 21, Stock Overflow, *Tempus*).

These sentiments can be linked back to the 'end of work' thesis and the way that it often relies on the conflation of service jobs with other low-status work. However, there is a significant difference between most supermarket roles and work which is done outdoors or to the rhythm of a machine. As many workers suggested, there is also a significant difference between the work conditions of supermarkets and many manual and factory jobs.

S: What brought you into that job and retail generally?
PH: 'When I saw them advertising for *Fugit*, I thought yeah, excellent. You know to go into something that would be…in the warm really…'(Phil 36, Junior Non-Foods Manager, *Fugit*).

In sum, despite popular clichés about 'stacking shelves in Tesco,' supermarket work is far from the worst work available and many workers were well aware of this. The possibility that someone might actually choose to work in a relatively poorly-paid retail role, particularly in a supermarket, is often ignored due to this perception that these jobs are at the bottom of the employment ladder. However, when compared to the job of cutting cabbages after a frost (when they are so cold they stick to your hands) or working in a noisy factory for 9-10 hours a day, repetitively placing plastic trays onto a conveyor belt, the relatively varied work in a warm supermarket can be an attractive option.

Redundancy

Another reason for male workers taking a job at a supermarket was redundancy from a previous position – often from better paid, higher status work (for example Jason (mechanic), Andrew (port worker), Jon (manager) and Pete (skilled factory worker). These respondents often emphasized the stability of their current work and set this against the risks and insecurities of their previous work. They also emphasized the importance of their current work/life balance and their family and children (such as

interviewees Andrew, Alan and Gary from the ethnographic stage). This quote from John is typical of this group:

S: So how did you find your way into retail then?

JO: 'I got greedy, I was working in the clothing business and got offered a big job and the company went bankrupt and I had a big home and a lifestyle to pay, so I went straight on to nights and then stayed in it'.

S: Yeah…….

JO: 'I've got a mortgage, I need guaranteed income, prior to working in retail they used to have bonuses and stuff. So my money can be good when I'm earning and it can be crap when I'm not. You know so this I just get a blanket wage, the reason why I'm here is because I got greedy and I'm certainly not about to play Russian roulette with my mortgage or my children. So this way I don't earn as much as what I probably would do, but what I earn, I know I'm gonna get. And plus it fits in with my son and with my family, which is an important side for me, it's more important, because you know I'm involved in everything with my son, I want my son to do better and to do all the things that I did' (John 43, Stock Control, *Fugit*).

John's account of his relationship with his work, appeals very strongly to dominant narratives of 'appropriate' masculinities. John emphasises the importance of his role as a 'breadwinner', which is achieved through stability; a regular wage from a secure job. John also emphasises the importance of his dependents and his aspirations for his son's life and future. John's work identity is still very important to him and plays a role in structuring other aspects of his life. While he does not appeal to the content of his job in discussing its importance too him, John exemplifies the importance of work in providing dignity and enabling men to be fathers and 'breadwinners.' The way that John emphasises security is similar to the 're-focusing' described by Henson (1996) or the 'reframing' which Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) discuss, in which focus is shifted to more positive or socially-valued elements when discussing a job. The importance of these narratives is that they relate to work in the construction of socially-valued masculinities. Despite a recognition that their current work is not as socially-valued as other roles, these men still draw on their current work in order to position themselves in relation to discourses of 'hegemonic' masculinities. This was

not the only strategy male workers used to construct their masculinities, many also pursued 'sidelines' (extra part-time jobs/pursuits).

'Sidelines' and Self-Determination

Many of the men who pursued 'sidelines' had entered supermarket work after being made redundant from 'better' jobs. Examples of interviewees' 'sideline' work were: 'power-selling[73]' on *e-bay* (John), plumbing (Andrew) and car repairs (Jason). While this provided supplementary income, it was also important as a source of self-determination and autonomy (which was perhaps seen to be lacking in their work life). Andrew, who had a quite open approach to his work and its relation to his masculinity, illustrates these points well in this quote:

> **AN:** '...I don't do Sundays or overtime and that's because if I want to earn extra money, I'd rather do it... like at the weekend I was doing some plumbing for someone.'
> **S: So you have a 'sideline' as well?**
> **AN:** 'Yeah, it's not very often, it's just when I want it, if I wanted more I could. I'd rather do that, then I dictate what I'm doing. But most of all I get to do what I want to do, I can work it around my life, rather than dropping everything in my life' (Andrew, 34. Produce, *Tempus*).

As well as this, interviewees also mentioned many other workers who did similar things (such as building, painting and decorating and computer building). In addition to extra income, this entrepreneurialism was pursued in order to give self-determination. The 'sidelines' were undertaken in the context (or at least the perception) of job security (the rationale being that supermarket work was secure because people always need food).

This prevalence of 'sidelines' echoed Milkman's (1997) study of car assembly lines in the United States where such additional work was also common. However, these 'sidelines' were a response to increasing employment insecurity, due to lay-offs and

industrial action as a result of mechanisation. Unlike the work undertaken by the workers in the U.S, the 'sideline' work pursued by supermarket workers was a response to a perceived lack of autonomy and self-determination which utilised the relative security and flexibility of retail work. For instance, Jason (29, Beer, Wines and Spirits, *Tempus 2*) had trained as a mechanic but had been unable to obtain permanent work in this area. However, Jason continued to work on the cars of colleagues and friends, because he enjoyed it, but also in the hope of maintaining his skills and eventually moving back to work as a mechanic.

Case Study: Andrew

The following is a brief case study of a produce-worker called Andrew, who exemplified the 'breadwinner' ideal type on which this research focuses (having a partner, a mortgage and three dependent children). His discussion of his entry into service work also provides an excellent synthesis of the most prevalent themes which emerged on this topic. Andrew chose to move into service work as a 'stopgap' due to limited alternatives (after being made redundant), he then progressed into working at the supermarket permanently. Andrew discusses his job in terms of the security it provides and emphasises personal choice. This case study should be considered in conjunction with the flow chart above in figure 8. It shows how Andrew negotiates his work to ensure that he is able to maintain his masculine identity in the workplace, but crucially also, the way that his status as a 'breadwinner' for his family is used as a resource in this process.

1) Limited Options and the Social Importance of Work

While Andrew did not make specific reference to the importance of work, his responses were predicated on the presumption that one *must* work. As evidence of this when discussing the content of his work, Andrew frequently alluded to the lack of choice one had in determining whether or not to perform certain duties or to

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[73] John described this as buying items in bulk and then re-selling them individually or looking for 'bargains' and re-selling them at a profit (all on *e-bay* which is an online trading website).

follow management initiatives (all quotes in this section are from Andrew, 34. Produce, *Fugit*):

Being customer-focused:

> **AN:** 'The people who struggle, the people who cause the most trouble are the ones who are, a lot of old school. Who have got set in their ways, who don't want to [work in new ways], they are like 'why are we doing this?' It doesn't have to be a reason why, we do it even if it is wrong, we'll state our opinion, but it's still going to come back to doing it 'cos that's how they [management] want to do it...'

This quote also highlights the potential importance of age/generation in this research. It is very likely that the 'old school' workers to which Andrew refers are those who entered the labour market before the decline of manual labour.

Changing working practices:

> **S: So, you like to be adaptable then?**
> **AN:** 'I think it makes my life easier, I don't mind speaking my opinion, I'm quite confrontational, I'll say if I think it's crap. And you've got to do it, so what's the point?'

Andrew says of changes to work practices: 'we do it even if it is wrong, we'll state our opinion, but it's still going to come back to doing it' (in the first quote) and 'you've got to do it, so what's the point?' (in the second quote). When Andrew says this he is emphasising what he sees as the inevitability of work. The lack of agency which he describes is the inevitable consequence of working for a large organisation, but also arises from the necessity of earning money.

2) From Stopgap to Progression

Andrew's lack of alternatives to service work after his redundancy is highlighted by the way in which he describes his entry into supermarket work.

S: How did you come to work here?

AN: 'I got made redundant from there [local port] and I took this job as a stopgap, supposedly a stopgap. I went in the bakery and then I ended up staying. I stayed on because it was easier.'

As well as being subject to financial pressures, male workers (including Andrew) are aware of pre-existing social expectations of men as 'breadwinners' and of the moral imperative to work. These factors combined with limited employment options, has led to the entrance of male workers into service work.

Two factors were operating in the way that Andrew discussed his choice to remain in service work. First was his recognition of the importance of having secure work, and secondly was his understanding of the social status of his work. While wishing to assert the value of a secure job (and therefore to defend his choice), Andrew was also seeking to create some distance between himself and his work role.

3) Security and Family Focus

The emphasis Andrew placed on his family/children was representative of the way that many men focused on the importance of work in fulfilling personal and social responsibilities. The nature of Andrew's progression into retail work also shaped the way he discussed its meaning to him.

AN: 'So this fits with my hours and my life and I've got three children. As I get older, as my kids get older I'll do something else, I don't know.'

S: So in a way then your emphasis is on that part of your life…..your family?

AN: 'Yeah that is why I wouldn't want to do management, they do later shifts and are expected to stay on. I want to see, my little girl's only five. So I'm not doing nothing for at least another ten years.'

In a similar way to other interviewees, Andrew valued the security of an industry which provides a necessity (food), though this attitude does neglect the diversity of

the products and services provided by the 'big four' supermarket chains, in particular Tesco (which has moved into communications and financial services). Regarding job security Andrew said:

AN: 'You see this is what, in retail, or what *Fugit* gives you, because it's not going to make you redundant is it, in today's market. With my ten year contract I get all sorts of benefits [*lists*[74]] so I'm not going to go somewhere else. There's nowhere I can get that.'

Andrew's case demonstrates well the way that male workers negotiate the process of entering and remaining in service work. His discussion of his work shows the conditioning effect of work on identity even in the case of someone who takes an instrumental approach to work. While valuing the security of his work, Andrew is somewhat ambivalent about the meaning of this work to him. This ambivalence is due to the conflict between the desire to assert the value of holding a job and the recognition of the low social status of that work and the way it is gendered. Andrew summarises his attitude by saying:

AN: It makes no odds does it? I just do it, a job's a job.

The way that male supermarket workers discussed the social importance of their entry into supermarket/service work exemplifies the continuing social importance of the work/masculinity dynamic in the construction of male identities. The accounts male workers give do not occur in a social 'vacuum', but take full account of their understandings of social expectations of men and work. One area beyond the scope of this research which could be explored further is the effect of generation on ideas about masculinities and work. Whilst there has been work on the formation of attitudes to work and education among young men (Jordan 1995, Kehily and Nayak 1997, McDowell 2003) an interesting comparison might be drawn between older workers who entered a largely manufacturing/manual economy and the young working-class men currently entering the labour market. Although young men who have entered the labour market in the last ten or twenty years may have had very

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[74] This list is not included to aid anonymisation, (some of the benefits are only provided by the company Andrew worked for).

different work experiences, this research suggests that they have similar understandings about how their masculinities will be achieved and work is central to this process. These men will have been socialised both at home and work by older, male workers, who are possibly, nostalgic for 'traditional 'manual work and this will have influenced the forms of work and masculinities that they value.

As shown in figure 8, pre-existing social expectations include attitudes to gender and ideas about what a 'man' is. These attitudes are very much linked to and shaped by orientations to work and often the desire for particular forms of work (such as manual work). They are also strongly associated with the moral expectation that those who can work will do so. These conditions, when combined with limited options, can often lead to a reluctant entry into service work.

In order to secure and maintain work in the service sector, male workers must negotiate Human Resource policies aimed at recruiting and retaining 'customer-focused' workers. This process is a dialectical one and one that involves concessions as well as demands on the part of those recruiting. The gendering of this process in turn leads to the shaping of the discourses used to describe work roles and in turn the content (tasks and responsibilities) of this work. The following section will look at the process of recruitment and the dialectical (but unequal) negotiation between Human Resource managers/organisations and male workers. This section will consider the interaction between the expectations of working-class men coming into service work and the (usually female) Human Resource managers who recruit and deploy them.

Section 2: Making the Worker 'Fit' the Work[75]

This thesis argues that recruitment for supermarket work is based on 'gender logic' (Hossfield 1990). This logic is shaped by the combination of the organisational drive to make profit and retain customers through good service and the personal/social requirements of workers for 'appropriate' work (Korczynski 2002, Kerfoot and

Korczynski 2005). Workers were steered by recruiters into gender 'appropriate' work for *primarily* pragmatic (profit and growth) reasons as opposed to ideological ones. Following this supposition, a series of interviews were undertaken with six Human Resource managers and a further three managers with recruitment responsibilities[76][77]. The following section explores the way that gender and masculinities in particular were taken into account during recruitment.

Human Resources and 'Gender Logic'

The following quote from Jeanette outlines well the general focus in supermarket recruitment on customer service, and the gendered nature of that recruitment. It also hints at the increasing emphasis on customer focus in retail and some of the progress that has been made in gender equality.

S: How do you assign people to specific jobs, I mean assuming that you have some degree of choice?

JE: 'Whatever positions we're taking on, we've got *Reality Recruitment*, so for pacific (sic) jobs there's a set way of interviewing somebody, erm, obviously we want all of our 'colleagues[78]' to be able to talk to anybody, so in the 'olden' days we might have, somebody who was really shy, we might have said, 'oh if you go on grocery then you won't have to talk to people, then…. now we can't afford for the shy people to hide them away. We need everybody to be able to open up a conversation with anybody, erm, so the selection process helps us to pick people for jobs. Gone are the days when you want all the pretty girls on the delicatessen counter.'

S: (Laughs).

JE: 'It used to happen! Or you wouldn't have any boys on checkouts, you know now it's just a mixture. If that person fulfils the criteria, then obviously

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[75] This section draws mainly on the interview data produced in interviews with Human Resource Managers (including general managers with recruitment responsibilities).

[76] n=7 female and n=2 male.

[77] It is interesting to note that all dedicated Human Resource managers who were interviewed were female.

[78] 'Colleagues' was a generic term used for staff.

we select them. Again we have to be very careful and years ago, if somebody was tiny, we wouldn't have put them on evening shift, well, they're probably still physically able to put the goods out, they just need a ladder or something. So when we recruit people now, we don't think, "oh, they'll only be suitable for tills" or "they'll only be suitable for this." we have to think that they could go anywhere in the shop because we need people to be multi-skilled and able to help out wherever' (Jeanette, 43. Human Resource Manager, *Tempus*).

While Jeanette's comments are consistent with the gender equality agenda, the skills she discusses are still highly gendered and some jobs are still seen to require more 'soft' or 'feminine' skills than others. Of all recruiting managers who were interviewed only one agreed that they had experienced any difficulty in recruiting staff in sufficient numbers or adequate quality. From this it is inferred that when recruiting there was usually a level of choice when assigning people to job roles.

Despite stating that they had adequate numbers of potential recruits, the Human Resource managers interviewed still emphasized that the process of good recruitment was not unproblematic. The qualities which they were looking for were usually not indicated by formal qualifications, but were often defined by the phrase 'fit'. As Jan put it:

JA: 'Job wise, there's nothing I can't teach you, but what I can't do … it's more difficult, it's your behaviour' (Jan, 34. Human Resource Manager, *Tempus 2*).

New members of staff must 'fit' the company, 'fit' the store and 'fit' their department. As well as the worker possessing the requisite attributes and 'fitting in', managers emphasised the importance of the job also being 'fitting' for the worker. Indeed as one Human Resource Manager I spoke to put it:

'It's the right people, the right place and the right time, the right hours.'
(Marion, 25. Human Resource Manager, *Densmores*).

While Marion's statement could be seen to represent little more than a management truism, it is in fact a neat summation of the way that roles are gendered. As Acker argues:

'Organisational logic appears to be gender-neutral; gender-neutral theories of bureaucracy and organisations employ and give expression to this logic. However, underlying both academic theories and practical guides for managers is a gendered substructure that is reproduced daily in the practical work activities...' (Acker 1990: 147).

Getting the 'right' people, in the 'right' place (work role and sector), is an implicitly gendered process.

In the interviews with recruiting managers, the question, 'How do you assign people to their job roles?' was asked and responses were probed. One of the most striking results to come out of this series of interviews was the degree of effort which was made by recruiting managers to fit around the non-work lives of workers. As Christine commented:

C: 'We work around them as well, if they can't do something because of football or things like that, we don't want, really want them to give up their whole life just to get a job...' (Christine 21, Human Resources, *Rowen*).

There was a recognition among recruiting managers that for many of the people that they employ, work was not the primary focus of life. However, this recognition arose largely from the high numbers of part-time workers who were employed, many of whom were students or mothers. This recognition was not extended to full-time male workers. The perception of Human Resource managers was that male workers were concerned primarily with *where* they worked (the nature of the product or tasks involved in their work) as opposed to *when* they worked:

JE: 'You normally tend to find that *people* who've got kids want to work Monday to Fridays 8-5 or 9-2. You've then got the *gentleman* (sic), the breadwinners, whatever you want to call them, who don't seem to mind what

you do, they do late nights, weekends, things like that' (Jeanette, 43. Human Resource Manager, *Tempus* emphasis added).

Acker describes the male workers such as this as 'disembodied' workers (Acker 1990:149). Such workers' temporal lives are dominated by full-time work and such arrangements are often supported by the domestic work of women[79].

It seemed that such men often comprised the core workers of the supermarket stores, working in key, full-time positions. These core workers were supplemented by a variety of part-time workers (most often young, older and female workers). Each company had a variety of recruitment stages and means to identify the staff in each area. These included quite detailed application forms, preliminary interviews, multiple-choice questions, role-playing and group interviews. The interviews were often tailored to the specific role, for example jobs which required better selling skills. The main aim of all of these methods was to identify those who were willing and able to be 'customer-focused'. The following quote demonstrates this focus:

S: So say you've got someone who's good in lots of ways but not really interested in the customers, do you try to put them behind the scenes perhaps?
CA: 'If someone turned around and said to me that they weren't very interested in customers. I would probably tell them that they weren't in the right job, because obviously [in] retail, customer service is really important' (Carrie, 20. Human Resources, *Tempus 2*).

While there is no doubt a strong element of truth in this statement, a Human Resource Manager is unlikely to concede their willingness to recruit a worker, (even one with limited customer contact) who was not 'customer-focused.' Human Resource managers are more likely to expound and perhaps share the company 'line' on this matter, due to their role in leading the whole store on this front. Many comments were made to me by Human Resource managers about the difficulty of persuading 'old hands' (fellow managers and general staff alike) of the importance of customer

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[79] Acker (1990: 149) does note that the 'ideal' of a male worker supporting a housewife was rarely a reality.

service (these workers are similar to the 'old school' workers mentioned above by Andrew). This was confirmed in my conversations with junior and section managers who were often responsible for their own recruitment (such as Alex and Neil). Contrary to their 'customer-focused' colleagues they, (along with one senior Human Resource manager), confirmed that in their opinion, night staff were employed to fill the shelves first and deal with customers second (see Alex, Neil, Both Carrie and Jan).

A job which is gender 'appropriate' was a major factor in determining a male worker's enjoyment of their work, or, at the very least, its acceptability to him. This acceptability was considered as important by Human Resource managers. A man finding his work to be too strongly in conflict with his ideas of what was 'appropriate' would be more likely to resist demands for deference or service (Henson 1996, Lamont 2000, Nixon 2009). This of course would cause problems in an industry with such a strong emphasis on customer service. There were some examples of workers resisting some forms of work such as the checkouts (discussed in greater detail in the following chapter):

> **C:** … we do training, three day training once they first start and we've had many [men] that have gone down there [checkouts] not liked it and just left and said, "sorry it's not for me"' (Christine 21, Human Resource Manager, *Rowen*).

Christine indicated that in most instances the rejection of checkouts had occurred where male workers had taken the role due to it being the only one on offer. This process recalls the literature in which workers will only accept certain affronts to their dignity before resisting (Henson 1996, Lamont 2000), will often struggle with face-to-face service work (Nixon 2009) and may resist entrance into service work altogether in favour of unemployment (Lindsay and McQuaid 2004, Moskos 2004, Nixon 1999, 2009).

For this reason many managers saw it as important that workers enjoyed their work, at least to some extent:

> **S: So do you think it's important that people fit the job, in terms of their own enjoyment?**

C: 'Yeah, I think some people, you think if they're not enjoying the job then they're not going to get out of bed for £5.71 an hour are they? You need something to, get something back out of your job I think' (Christine 21, Human Resource Manager, *Rowen*).

Investment and Employee 'Branding'

The notion that workers should enjoy or 'get something out of' their work raises another important element of the dialectic of job 'fit' and the attempts to 'brand' employees and gain their investment in work (Edwards 2005, Mangold and Jeanquart 2005, 2007, Hankinson 2007). One of the main characteristics of the recruitment interviews used by the retail sector is that they put great emphasis on a potential employee's personal life. The information this produces was used by recruiting managers to identify tacit skills and knowledge, which could be deployed at work. Numerous examples of this process were also given by Human Resource Managers. Male and female workers interested in clothes, computers, home interiors, visual and audio equipment and clothing were put in positions where they could deploy these skills.

Attempting to create this 'fit' had a number of benefits for the recruiting organisation. First, it reduced training costs due to the new recruit's existing knowledge. Secondly, more knowledgeable and interested workers are more likely to enjoy their work, to invest in it and perhaps remain employed for longer. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this process has benefits for men seeking 'appropriate' work. The ability to deploy knowledge and be associated with a suitably 'masculine' department (beers, wines and spirits or electronics) allows a more successful re-conceptualisation of service as help or advice. This in turn enables the worker to maintain feelings of power, competency and adequacy with respect to their colleagues and often too to the customer. The sense of self-worth associated with product-knowledge can therefore be central to workers' feelings about their jobs.

This process is particularly important when seeking to understand how people are assigned work roles and how the gendered division of work is maintained. If workers are systematically assigned to roles in which they are 'interested,' it becomes increasingly difficult for workers, men in this case, to distance themselves from their role or perhaps, more importantly the judgements and perceptions of colleagues and customers. For example, there is likely to be the suspicion or suggestion that a man working on the cosmetics counter has an interest in cosmetics. Indeed the very acquisition of the knowledge needed to do this role could be seen as stigmatising.

This process recalls Butler's assertion that gender is a '"strategy" which has cultural survival as its end' and that those who do not 'do' gender correctly are punished by society (Butler 1990: 66). The following quote is a particularly good example of this:

S: How do you go about finding the right job for people?

CA: 'Erm, we always have this thing where none of the boys want to work on health and beauty. But again that's, if they wanted to we'd have no problems putting them down there. But they don't want to work down there and I think it's seen in store, amongst the colleagues together if you turned around and said a big strapping chap wanted to work on health and beauty they'd all pull faces or something.'

S: Why do you think that is?

CA: 'No idea, absolutely no idea. We did have, I remember at my last store he erm, hurt his arm, he broke it and then come back to work, he was still quite weak and he worked on frozen food and again that's very heavy. And I remember having a conversation with him, 'why don't you move to health and beauty, just until your arm's better?' 'I don't want to work down there!' And I said 'well that's going to help you in the long run.' 'No, no, don't want to work down there, don't want to work down there, it's where all the girls work,' and it's so, I really don't know why' (Carrie, 20. Human Resources, *Tempus 2*).

Once again, Carrie's comments focus on the role that the workers' desires play in the assignment of work roles, 'if they wanted to we'd have no problems putting them

down there.' The following quotation from Jeanette, further illustrates the way that the gendering of work spaces, items and tasks can be highly gender specific, to the point that the gendering of work becomes a highly implicit, fine-grained process (Cockburn and Omrod 1993, Adkins 1995, Pettinger 2005).

S: So do you have any people, like do you have any men working on clothes?

JE: 'No, on the GM (general merchandising) section there's a couple of boys, but not on the, it's three ladies that do the clothing, all of them are ladies.'

S: GM is like TVs and stuff?

JE: 'TVs stuff like that, yeah. So they tend to deal with the electrical side, like John will do the electrical stuff and microwaves stuff like that and then the ladies tend to do the clothes. Haven't had a bloke interested in working on the clothes' (Jeanette, 43. Human Resource Manager, *Tempus*).

As with male workers' understandings of their role as 'men', the recruitment process does not exist in a social 'vacuum'. Recruiting managers are just as likely to be exposed to and/or to propagate gender stereotypes as anyone else, despite equal opportunity discourses.

S: So do you take into account other factors when you're trying to fit other people into a job, do men prefer to work in some jobs and women in others?

CA: 'Yeah, I think so, I mean not personally I would much prefer to mix them up a bit, but not to sound sexist but some jobs are really heavy and I couldn't do them, produce for example, I've gone on there to help out and it is back breaking' (Carrie, 20. Human Resources, *Tempus 2*).

There were a number of examples of men's efforts to resist being put into work they did not see as 'appropriate'. Jan, the HR manager at *Tempus 2*, described a case in which one young man was moved from the electronics department to the bakery, a move which was considered a promotion. However, he responded by withdrawing the effort which he had previously given (and which had inspired the promotion) and was eventually moved back to the electronics department. The young man's reactions

were described by Jan as the result of a mistake on the part of the Human Resource department (as opposed to a deficiency on the part of the worker). This is a good example of gender as shaping work in supermarkets and demonstrates how workers may use passive strategies of resistance to avoid gender 'inappropriate' work.

While matching workers to work roles has some benefits, both for organisations and workers, this process has the effect of reinforcing the application of a specific role to a worker's identity and this in turn reinforces the likelihood of an 'inappropriate' role being resisted or rejected. It was clear that gender 'appropriate' work was an important 'status shield' for full-time men working in a supermarket (Stenross and Kleinman 1989: 415). This was a strong theme in the data and was perhaps another motivating factor for the resistance of 'inappropriate' work roles. The construction of gender 'appropriate' roles within service work was often achieved through the construction of an 'other.' That 'other' was usually 'female' or a non-manual worker. This process had many similarities to other areas where masculinities are constructed and defended (Kaufman, 1987, Messner 1990, Jordan 1995, Nayak and Kehily 1996, Jordan and Cowan 2001, Kehily 2001).

Structuring Work

The criteria which are used to assess candidates, although not entirely subjective, seemed to rely quite heavily on the assessments of the recruiting manager. This process leaves a degree of latitude to include assessments of a job's 'appropriateness' in terms of prevailing ideas about gender. When it was suggested during interviews that gender might play a role in making a job acceptable or satisfying for a man, both Human Resources managers, and men themselves usually responded by saying that they had not considered this possibility. This is not to say that gender was never taken into account, but that this process was an implicit one, an unconscious, 'common-sense' assessment of the gendered nature of the work. This was also reflected in responses about gender more generally.

S: So do you think, does working have any meaning to you in terms of how you feel as a man?

MA: 'No, not really I never really thought about it like that. Well obviously the job that I do is quite physical and a lot of women wouldn't be able to sort of, wouldn't be able to do. But apart from that I don't really think of it at all' (Mark, 21. Frozen, *Tempus*).

It was the unspoken nature of these assessments that led to the shaping of the gendered terrain of stores in a way which seemed 'common sense' and 'natural.' Indeed, this is the most common way for organisations to be gendered (Acker 1990, Cockburn 1991). Although, this is not a new finding, what it illustrates is the way that unspoken ideas about gender and 'appropriate' work roles have a powerful role in structuring the assumptions and expectations of both Human Resource Managers and male applicants/workers.

Many of the Human Resource managers, all of whom were female, made pro-equal opportunities statements. However, as with male respondents, these statements were often undercut by references to the way some jobs were too physically arduous for most female staff. They expressed a desire to break down the gendered barriers which were present in some departments in the store, although they were also realistic about the likelihood of doing this. It is also possible, that as with the issue of the primacy of customer service, Human Resource managers were saying what they thought they should regarding equal opportunities. From an organisational point of view, there would be little benefit in them 'rocking the boat,' or trying to 'force the issue' of gender equality. As many writers have pointed out Human Resources is dominated at the lower levels by women and is primarily an administrative job, ultimately controlled by male senior managers (Cockburn 1991, Cockburn and Omrod 1993, Gooch and Ledwith 1996, Ledwith and Colgan 1996, Lupton and Shaw 2001). It is also likely that most stores would try wherever possible to employ as few staff as reasonably possible to keep the cost of staffing down. Following this, assuming managers believed men to be more likely to be capable of carrying out a role without assistance (which many did), they may have favoured them for more 'physical' positions.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored themes which arose from the ethnographic observation stage at *Densmores*. The first section has explored the reasons male interviewees gave for their entry into service work. It has shown how gendered social and personal attitudes to masculinities and work shape the way that male workers understand their entrance and continued presence in service work. This chapter has argued that the perceived security of the grocery industry provides a resource for the construction of viable 'breadwinner' masculinities. Furthermore, this chapter has shown the way that work is still fundamental in the construction of masculinities in Britain.

In order to secure and maintain work in the service sector male workers must negotiate Human Resource policies aimed at recruiting and retaining customer-focused workers. This process is a dialectical one and one that involves concessions as well as demands on the part of those recruiting. The gendering of this process in turn leads to the shaping of the discourses used (by workers and managers) to describe work roles and in turn the content of this work.

The second section of this chapter examined the role of recruitment in shaping the gendering of work roles. This section focused on the 'gender logic' behind recruitment (Hossfield 1990). It has been shown how the 'appropriateness' of a job was an important consideration in the recruitment process and that 'fitting' the person to the job and the job to the person, improved the chances of a worker enjoying or at least tolerating their job. This in turn meant that workers were more likely to provide 'good' customer service. Tacit skills and knowledge were also sought in interviews and these were exploited by deploying workers where these skills were relevant. It has been shown how this process provided benefits both to workers and to organisations, but that it also served to further the gendering of work and to bind workers' identities to their work role.

The way that the content (tasks and responsibilities) of supermarket work is structured is shaped by the combination of the organisational drive to make profit through good service, customers desire for good service and the requirements of workers for

'appropriate' work (Korczynski 2002, Kerfoot and Korczynski 2005). Customers' perceptions of 'good' service are also shaped by their understandings of gender, age and ethnicity (Williams 2006). This relationship is an unequal one and is dominated by the power of 'customer-focused bureaucracies' to structure work to ensure 'gender based servility' (Korczynski 2002: 2-3)

The process of gendering work was largely an implicit process, partly due to awareness of, and discomfort around, political correctness and equal opportunities, but also due to the largely unconscious nature of 'everyday' gender stereotypes. The following chapter will focus on the most explicit example of gendered work: the distinction between physical and non-physical work.

Chapter 6

Construction Work: Gender and Symbolic Boundaries

'To say that an organization, or any other analytic unit, is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender is not an addition to ongoing processes, conceived as gender neutral. Rather, it is an integral part of those processes, which cannot be properly understood without an analysis of gender' (Acker 1990: 146).

Introduction

This section will bring together some of the themes identified in the preceding two chapters, and discuss in greater detail the ways in which men's day-to-day work was defined as gender 'appropriate.' The ethnographic observation (Chapter 4) showed the way that male workers are 'funnelled' into particular roles and the way that workers focused on particular parts of their work (physicality) over others (service and deference). Through reference to interview data, Chapter 5 examined in greater detail the way that male workers discussed and understood their entry into and continuing presence in supermarket work. The second half of Chapter 5 then looked at the role of recruitment in mediating the requirements of male workers (for gender 'appropriate' work) and the needs of the organisation (for 'excellent' customer service). The rhetoric used to 'funnel' workers into 'appropriate' work was highly

gendered and usually involved some distinction between or prioritisation of physical activity over customer service. This chapter will explore the way that this rhetoric affected the way that work was organised and understood on the shop-floor.

Men's Work

As noted in previous chapters, the manual/non-manual distinction has been historically important in understandings of both classed and gendered work. This distinction and its association with gendered and classed identities is in many ways *the* unifying point of this research. The shift from manual to service work was also a move from work which centred on the production of things to the selling of things and the production of emotional responses in customers. The distinction between manual and non-manual work provides a focal point for discussions concerning the shift in types of work, the 'feminisation' of working-class jobs and the way that the construction of masculinities shaped the gendered (and classed) 'terrain' of the supermarket. The importance of the physical side of work was referred to repeatedly by male workers during the interview stage. This emphasis was also present during the ethnographic stage, for example when younger members of the produce team were mocked for their relative lack of physical strength.

This chapter will show the importance that male (and female) workers placed on physicality and endurance in 'men's' work. This emphasis is vital to any understanding of the gendering of work and the meaning or satisfaction that men found in supermarket work. This process has two main elements: first, the importance of strength and physicality was the main point of reference for the gendering of work roles and the establishment of symbolic boundaries. Secondly, productivity and the completion of physical work was used as a source of pride and a 'status shield[80],' (Stenross and Kleinman 1989: 415). Despite discussions of the 'end of work' and the decline of the intrinsic meaning of work there was significant evidence of the satisfaction produced through the physical results of supermarket work. This chapter will examine the way that male supermarket workers redefined

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[80] A buffer against social assaults by others.

the content and purpose of their work in order to masculinise it and to gain intrinsic satisfaction.

Strength and Physicality

Physicality was used as an implicit illustration of the gender 'appropriateness' of a job, almost a short-hand. The emphasis on the physical aspects of a job and the marginalisation of other aspects reflects more generally the way male workers would focus selectively on certain aspects of the job. This way of discussing work is consistent with many of the identity management strategies commonly used by men in resisting stigmatising or 'inappropriate' work roles (Hughes 1958, Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, Henson 1996, Henson and Rogers 2001, Cross and Bagilhole 2002, Simpson 2004, Lupton 2006, Ashforth *et al* 2007). The men's emphasis on the physical nature of their work set up two basic and related dichotomies;

- Work that only men can do versus work 'anyone' can do;
- Manual versus non-manual work;

The importance of work being physical had a number of interrelated elements, including:

- Seeing physical evidence of one's work;
- Gaining satisfaction from the completion of all tasks;
- Distinguishing one's work from less physical, less 'manly' work;
- Avoiding surveillance and the demands of customers through mobility;

Many respondents emphasised the physicality of their work, particularly in order to point out that this was the main distinction between it and 'women's' (non-manual) work. These men would argue that women were, on the whole, physically incapable of doing certain jobs. This was often coupled with the acceptance that women should be allowed to do any work which they were capable of. There seemed to be a coded sexism present in much of these statements, despite their egalitarian pretences.

S: So you think that things are changing a bit then?

A: 'They are definitely and that's fine 'cause we're all equal rights and stuff, the only thing is they have to be able to do that *person's* job. It's no good saying, I want to do a highly paid skilled job when you can't actually do it. 'Cause there's certain *people* going into these jobs, 'I want more money' they try to get *people* to help them out because they can't quite do it. So yeah if they fit the job, yeah. 'Cause I'm not being funny, some of these *girls* are probably stronger than me' (Al, 51, Delivery Driver, *Tempus*, emphasis added).

Al's explanation of his understanding of equal opportunities and changes in the gendered composition of the workforce is neutral in terms of the language he uses. However, it is clear who the 'people' trying to do someone else's job and needing help are, when he qualifies his statements by saying 'some of these girls are probably stronger than me.'

S: I wonder, because it's less clear now, there used to be just men's jobs and just women's jobs. But I was wondering what people think about that.

D: 'Obviously there's some jobs, that you wouldn't have a woman do, like where I'm working and on produce, the spuds and carrying all those heavy weights you're going to be knackered in ten minutes, well on an average. Some women can do it, most can't though' (Damian, 31. Stock Control/Warehouse, *Tempus 2*).

By emphasising the part of a job which required the only attribute which could 'reasonably' be seen as distinguishing some men and women, the essentialist perception of gender appropriate work was maintained and the 'manliness' of the men's work was established. Had the men tried to suggest that women lacked the intellectual capacities necessary for the job, they would also have risked the discussion veering onto a subject which would not enhance the status of their work. It was widely acknowledged amongst most male workers that no particular mental ability was needed for most supermarket work. More importantly, to make reference to a hierarchy of intellects, they would be stepping outside of accepted gender stereotypes and entering into more explicit sexism. Most interviewees were aware of what is currently acceptable, what is 'politically correct' and tended to follow the

popular route of never expressing explicit prejudice, even where such views were clearly present. This is not to make sweeping generalisations about the views of respondents, but there was a rhetorical quality to these recurring statements which contained the logic – anyone should be able to do any job which they are capable of – 'obviously' women are not strong enough to do certain jobs – these jobs are men's jobs. This view was supported by some of the Human Resource Managers I interviewed:

S: Produce? That's where I used to work.
CA: 'Yeah, I mean it's really heavy crates sometimes. When I went on there I just did salad packs and sort of tarted it up a bit. Erm, so yeah, I probably would think of, if a young girl was coming in or a lady, could she physically do it, because the last thing we want to do is hurt herself [sic] or struggle' (Carrie, 20. Human Resources, *Tempus 2*).

S: Do you think different people like different jobs?
JA: 'Yeah, there are certain…. If you looked at our produce department, first thing in the morning it's all men. The problem you've got then, with the greatest respect is that they don't do the 'nice' bits, the boys 'bang' it out and then we have females who come in and tidy it all up, if you want to go that sexist' Jan, 34. Human Resource Manager, *Tempus 2*).

At this point is seems useful to refer back to Acker's (1990) conceptualisation of work roles and organisations as fundamentally gendered. There was an implicit understanding among both staff and management of the gendered nature of most work roles in the supermarket. This understanding was expressed in an ambivalent way however, particularly by management who were conscious of popular discourses surrounding equality and 'political correctness' and also concerned to some degree about making seemingly discriminatory statements.

S: It seems like some people prefer certain jobs, do you see any of that?
JE: 'I haven't noticed so much I mean I have got some boys on there [checkouts] and they often tease them, you know it's a bit of a girly job on there.'

S: Where's that?

JE: 'On checkouts, we get some people that say, 'I can't go on the tills, I can't go on the tills. I'll stack shelves, I can't go on the till, because the whole thought of dealing with all that money and customers, freaks them out a little bit' (Jeanette, 43. Human Resource Manager, *Tempus*).

S: Ok, so how do you establish who you are going to employ?

AL: I don't know it's kind of hard, it depends, if it was for my electrical or something like that, I'd probably go for a male, erm, just for the physical side of it really, 'cause I mean if you go down you get a lot of call outs for electrical products, you go to the front end. Just the simple fact that some of the TVs are very, very heavy. I'm not saying that women can't do it, a lot of women can. I think blokes are more, just get on with it sort of thing. And you know, not worry about it' (Alex, (Male), 24. General Merchandising Manager, *Fugit*).

Whilst Jeanette went on to point out that some male workers saw checkouts as a good way of avoiding heavier physical work, it is clear that understandings of gender have to interacted with Human Resource practices. Similarly, Alex who was responsible for recruiting his own team members, is clearly operationalising his own understanding of gendered work. His comments above exemplify Acker's (1990: 140-1) argument that organisational conceptions of work and workers are not gender neutral, a worker means a male worker. Again it seems that the use of physicality as a rationale for gendering work is based on essentialist gender assumptions rather than physical difference (Cockburn and Omrod 1993, Adkins 2000). Whilst many areas of manual work are still, by British standards, poorly regulated in terms of health and safety, supermarkets, particularly the large chains, are not. Larger multiple retailers have well-articulated and well-enforced health and safety guidelines, including guidelines for the amount of weight any individual may lift. In the currently litigious social climate it is inconceivable that a worker would be asked to handle the sort of large screen televisions which are commonly sold. Such items are not only heavy, awkward and likely to cause injury if lifted alone, but are often very expensive. With all this in mind, it seems likely that two workers would handle such items, with the aid of a trolley. This point was reinforced below by Christine, and was also the case at *Densmores*. However, it

should be noted that this discussion is about health and safety guidelines, as opposed to actual working practices, and so this runs the risk of ignoring the informal work culture of organisations which can work against official safety measures. The desire for a strong male worker expressed above by Alex was about more than just practicality.

These findings support those of Tolich and Briar (1999: 130) who found that male supermarket workers were routinely assigned tasks which took them around the store, whereas female workers were confined to the checkouts. Similarly Williams (2006) found that male workers would routinely use a variety of strategies to avoid working on the checkout.

The resources and discourses employed by interviewees often drew on elements of what might be called 'traditional' working-class masculinity[81].

S: Do you think that different jobs are associated with men and women?
G: 'Yes, yeah I do, this isn't sexist, but I do actually think that tills are more a woman's job. I don't expect a woman to be out there unloading, erm, pulling roll pallets, you know even with an electric trolley, they're still, it's still heavy work. And some of the stuff you have to lift up is heavy. And you can't expect the women to do that, definitely not. That's why I don't think, well they do have some lady backdoor managers, but I don't know how that works. I don't know if they have a lot of blokes out there for all the manual work and she does all the paperwork and all the stock work and everything like that' (Gareth, 47. Warehouse, *Tempus 2*).

This quote quite neatly distils some of the basic ideas underpinning the distinction of male/female and manual/non-manual roles deployed both by those interviewed and observed. Jobs were distinguished not because of skills and knowledge but because they were physically arduous, either over the course of a shift or in terms of the weight of individual items.

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[81] By 'traditional' working-class masculinity I am referring to a form of male identity characterised by, physicality, stoicism and the rejection, denigration of non-manual work and feminine attributes, (a discussion of this is taken up below and also in Chapters 1-3).

During the ethnographic stage, several of the younger male produce workers (Chas and Tony) were less physically able to deal with the heavier parts of the work. While these workers were mocked both in their presence and behind their backs (see Chapter 4), they were not seen as undermining the 'manliness' of the work (their struggles could perhaps be seen as underlining it). Similarly, the fact that one of the female night workers was able to deal with the heaviest boxes was not seen to de-stabilise the way the job was understood and explained to both insiders and outsiders.

During the interview stage, two female managers who worked on the 'back door', were mentioned. The 'back door' was the entrance to the store room where delivery lorries arrived and stock was received. Due to the manual labour involved in this work, the 'back door' was seen as one of the places which was most unsuitable for women, (for example see quote above from Gareth on this subject).

> **F:** 'But really, girls get stuck in as well, it's all the same really. Men tend to
> gravitate towards the backdoor jobs, so like warehouse and that is mainly
> men...'
> **S: Why...**
> **F:** 'It's not to say that you can't have women there, because 'Sally', she actually
> was put in as the manager of the backdoor and she worked just as hard as the
> men did, in fact it was better when she was out there. But, I think it's just
> because women wouldn't apply to go out there, because they might think 'oh
> my god that's probably hard work', but I think if a woman did apply for it you
> wouldn't see any difference' (Fran, 36. Non-Foods Manager, *Fugit*).

Whilst these examples are interesting, they seem to be another example of self-selection, in that the female manager discussed by Fran, took the job working on the 'back-door' as a mandatory step in her career progression and may not have worked in that role otherwise (it is likely that this was also the case for the woman discussed by Gareth). Perhaps more logically it was also pointed out by Christine that strength should not be an issue and that if a member of staff found that an item they needed to lift too heavy, then they should simply ask for help with it:

S: Do you ever have to take into account the physical nature of jobs, you know, if they're too heavy?

C: 'Erm, I used to work on the chilled and it's down to you to know, 'oh that's too heavy' and then to go and ask somebody to help you. But there is a certain weight that they [health and safety] say you can lift. But I don't know what that is off the top of my head. If you think it's too heavy then you just don't do it and you get someone else to help you' (Christine, 21. Human Resource Manager, *Rowen*).

This, while a logical option, perhaps ignores the practical realities of both staffing levels, the work culture of a supermarket and, crucially, masculinities. It is likely that any member of staff needing assistance to lift a piece of stock which was not, clearly too heavy or awkward for one person to manage, would be likely to face ridicule, even if it were of a 'friendly' or joking variety. Similar to Chas and Tony who struggled to move some of the heavier stock, a woman in this situation would be likely to have to put up with jokes about her abilities. The following quote from Fran shows that this constraint was also present for women:

F: '… cos you know, the only time I'd ever look at the sex thing, is more about if it's a heavy physical job, so like lifting pallets and things. But then even that, to be honest, all the jobs are quite heavy and we have women and men working on them. Now and then we go a bit girly and go, "ooh can I have a man?" You know, to help me? But you know most of the time you do it on your own and you lift it anyway' (Fran, 36. Non-Foods Manager, *Fugit*).

It seems that the items which required Fran to 'go a bit girly' are those which would also require two men to lift together. This quote illustrates the way that women may have to use gender as a pre-emptive resource when negotiating the physical aspects of the supermarket work. This would presumably make life 'easier' in the sense of minimising jokes, but in another way it would also serve to reinforce the equation of masculinity with physicality and lack of strength with 'girliness.' This process also conditions the way that men who cannot lift relatively heavy items would be seen, Such men would understand that to ask for help, or to be unable to do manual work was to be 'a bit girly'.

Work in most supermarkets is organised on a relatively 'lean' basis (Du Gay 1996), a prime example of this being the use of 'relief' cashiers to cater for sudden rushes of customers. Staffing levels are carefully matched to the likely numbers of customers or amount of work to be done and organisationally this is premised on an asexual worker. However, as many writers have argued the notion of a 'worker' is almost always tacitly gendered (Pateman 1988, Acker 1990, Cockburn 1991). As Acker puts it:

'The concept "a job" is thus implicitly a gendered concept, even though organizational logic presents it as gender neutral. "A job" already contains the gender-based division of labor [sic] and the separation between the public and the private sphere' (Acker 1990: 149).

Perhaps the final sentence of the quote above from Alex (in Chapter6) is the most revealing:

'I'm not saying that women can't do it, a lot of women can. I think blokes are more, just get on with it sort of thing, and you know, not worry about it' (Alex, (Male), 24. General Merchandising Manager, *Fugit*).

A number of times during his interview Alex referred to his team as 'guys', even though there was a woman in the team. His preference for a 'bloke' who could 'just get on with it,' was based on wanting to have staff who fit his idea of a 'worker'. Perhaps 'just getting on with it' meant not needing help or more accurately not asking for it? It could also tie in to the commonly mentioned stereotype of the overly talkative woman. This seems to be a point at which the perceptions of gender of those recruiting and managing staff are creating the gendered 'reality' of a store. The propensity for male workers to draw boundaries along lines of gender and strength has, through their resistance and self-selection, gendered the store and the work within it. Furthermore, there are organisational and ideological 'common-sense' motivations for managers to recruit and manage in a way which perpetuates this.

Physical Transformation

The main rationale behind the differentiation between manual and non-manual work was the opposition of physical/practical and mental abilities. This distinction was understood through the more tangible evidence of physical work, the physical transformation of an area or a quantity of stock (for example filling shelves, emptying store rooms or cleaning/tidying an area).

The physical/manual often working-class masculinities were juxtaposed to cerebral/rational often middle-class masculinities. These discourses privilege physical work over service and knowledge work. This understanding was often combined with the belief that management was 'non-work', an impediment, rather than something that enabled the 'real' work to happen (Donaldson 1991). This was often conceptualised as managers meddling or interfering or getting in the way of the smooth, 'common-sense' running of work (Willis 1977, Holloway 1996).

Many workers made reference to the importance of seeing physical evidence of the work they had completed and it was one of the most consistent themes in the interview stage. One of the most interesting aspects was the way that presentation and the creation of aesthetically pleasing displays were recognised as gendered and re-conceptualised as tidying, neatness and maintaining order.

S: So what gives you satisfaction, is it work or outside of work or both?

JI: 'Yeah, both, I mean I do like to pride myself on what I do, you know I don't see the point in just doing the job half-heartedly, because I used to fit carpets so you can't go there and just do a botched job. You've got to make it good, stand back and think yeah, it looks awesome. You know so...'

S: So you like to feel like you've achieved something?

JI: Yeah, yeah.

S: So how do you go about that here?

JI: 'Basically it would be my job to make sure all the work's sitting there at three o'clock and between half-three and four, all the people start coming back, because they've been called to the tills. And there's boxes and rubbish

everywhere so, I'd quickly tidy it away, sweep up and make the place look clean, safe area to work' (Jimmy, 21. Stock Control, *Tempus*)'.

This quote captures the attitudes of many of the male interviewees. The completion of a discrete set of tasks in a given area was very important and was closely associated with feelings of satisfaction. Completing set tasks and leaving an area neat, a store room emptied or a set of shelves full were very often cited as principle sources of satisfaction.

S: So where do you get the most satisfaction from?

DA: 'Lunch time, pub! Laughs. Well usually, if you get to the end of the day, you see what you've done. The jobs I don't like doing, is where you've put your heart and soul into it and then you look at what you've done and think, 'it looks like I haven't done a damn thing!' But yeah, if you get to the end of the day and see that your chiller or whatever is near enough empty, the shop floor is really full, that's a good feeling, when it's brimmed up, it's very effective' (Damian, 31. Stock Control and Warehouse, *Tempus 2*).

S: So is there anything else you prefer about working out back?

G: 'I quite like meeting the lorry drivers and everything like that actually. Plus if you get it all tidy and everything out there you feel as if you've achieved something. You look out in the yard and think, well we have done a good job today, makes you feel as if you have done something.'

S: Is that part of your satisfaction then?

G: 'I think out there, there is at times when you know, what you've come in to and what it's ended up like by the time you go home. You think yeah we have done well today' (Gareth, 47. Warehouse, *Tempus 2*).

These quotes illuminate two things; first, the recognition by male workers of the intangible and gendered nature of the product of service work and the customer 'experience' which is produced through service, deference and emotion work. Secondly, that understandings of 'men's' work are still deeply ingrained with classed discourses and are framed by an emphasis on productivity and manual labour. Seeing physical evidence of work completed was a source of pride and dignity.

However, the way that men focused on empty store rooms or the full shelves as sources of satisfaction was not explicitly related to the commercial aims of supermarket companies. Male workers understood that their labour was aimed at enabling customers to buy goods, however, their satisfaction was in achieving the tasks assigned to them. The importance of work in providing money cannot be forgotten, but beyond this importance, productive work tasks provided satisfaction which service roles did not. The importance of completing work and seeing tangible evidence of success was emphasised by many workers.

Letting Yourself Down

While the male interviewees emphasised the importance of the physical evidence of work, they also mentioned the importance of completing all of the work which had to be done within their shift. Several said that if they failed to do this (for example because they were called away as relief cashiers during busy periods) they would feel frustrated or ashamed and that they had 'let themselves down'

S: Is it important to get everything done...
J: 'Yeah.'
S: to you?
JI: 'Yeah, I don't know about other people, whether it's just me?'
S: Yeah, a couple of people have said that, but it's sort of interesting though, how would you feel if you didn't achieve that.
JI: 'Well, I'd get it done...'
S: You just wouldn't...
JI: 'Yeah, I mean I don't care if I start breaking a sweat, I'll just get it done. It's just the way it is, I don't like mess all around the place' (Jimmy, 21. Stock Control, *Tempus*).

S: So what sort of satisfaction do you take from, at the end of the day, what makes you feel...

LU: 'Knowing that I've done all my work and got everything done and I've done it to the best of my abilities. I get quite narked if I don't get it all done, I don't like to…'

S: Why's that, do you feel…

LU: 'I feel like I've let myself down, really. Because it's not hard work, you know, but I do, I do feel quite let down with myself, if I don't get my work done' (Luke, 26. Meat, *Tempus*).

S: So, where do you get most of your satisfaction from, in work then?

MA: 'When you have a good day, a really good day and you get everything that you need to get done and you have a good time doing it and you leave, knowing that you've worked really hard and achieved everything. If you feel like you've done a good job' (Mark, 21. Frozen Food, *Tempus*).

A very important role of work was to occupy and prevent boredom. All respondents were asked if they would continue to work if it became financially unnecessary (for example if they were to come into a large sum of money), the so-called 'lottery question' (Kaplan 1985, Harpaz, 2002, Arvey *et al* 2004). While many of the male workers said they may either change jobs or leave their current job initially, consistent with prior studies, almost all said that they would want to work in some way (*ibid*).

S: So if you no longer had to work, would you need to do something?

JI: 'Yeah, I mean I get a week off work, I get edgy and want to do something.'

S: So what do you miss when you get a week off?

JI: 'Just doin' somethink [sic], I mean I'm not a person who can just sit around the house all the time, I mean I have to go out and do something. But yeah, I probably would quit my job yeah.'

S: Yeah, I know that's weird, I realised the other day that I just, like when I have a day off I don't know what to do with myself. If I haven't got plans to go out or something, if I'm just at home, I'm like, 'what do I do?'

JI: 'I get like that I get restless, I mean providing I've got money, I'll just go down the pub, couple of games of pool, a few pints.'

S: Do you prefer to be moving about?

JI: 'Yeah, practical, hands on. You know running around the place doing different things' (Jimmy, 21. Stock Control, *Tempus*).

S: Why is it, important to have a job, apart from the money of course?

ST: 'Well mainly to keep me busy and not sit at home, sit down watching the TV. I mean I don't see much of the TV like I used to, I used to just sit there and watch the TV…[when he was unemployed]' (Steve, 27. Frozen Food, *Tempus*).

Non-manual work was often linked to time spent when not at work and to the domestic sphere. Not only was non-manual work configured as 'non-work' or less than work it was seen as boring and confining. Checkouts and office work were often seen as degenerative. The boredom that was seen to be inherent in the sedentary, confined nature of non-manual work, was seen ultimately to result in the loss of physical and mental faculties. This quote from Luke, who was one of the most thoughtful respondents, is a good example.

S: So are there some jobs that you wouldn't do in the store?

LU: 'I wouldn't want to work in an office.'

S: Why's that?

LU: 'Because I couldn't sit in front of a desk all day.'

S: Why's that?

LU: 'Because I'm a moving person, I don't like all that, I've gotta be doing something.'

S: What, quite physical?

LU: 'Yeah, because you just get complacent really, if you're erm, if you're just sat in front of a desk, you just cabbage out don't you? It's like sitting in doors all bloody night' (Luke, 26. Meat, *Tempus*).

As with Jimmy's comments above, Luke links non-manual work with physical and mental degeneration and at the same time with the unpaid domestic sphere. The public/private dichotomy drawn on and non-manual work is linked with femininity and 'non-work.' Assumptions about men's and women's 'essential' natures are revealed through these discourses and these assumptions underlie rejections of non-

manual work. It was assumed by both male and female workers in a variety of roles (including management and Human Resources), that men needed to be physically occupied (unlike women). It was also commonly assumed that men were unlikely to be occupied or satisfied through interaction with customers. As with discussions regarding physicality, this whole area of ideas was often spoken about in a very muddled and ambivalent way by male respondents.

> **S: Do you think it has anything to do with being male like you said before? You know that people think it's not an 'appropriate' job for a man?**
>
> **T:** 'Yeah, 'it's a woman's job!' I've never had anything like that, but I have heard similar things. But a job's, a job.'
>
> **S: It's a computer isn't it, it's not like there's any…**
>
> **T:** 'Specific details, that you need to be a woman for, to do.'
>
> **S: So do you think that it's easier for women to do customer service?**
>
> **T:** 'Yeah, people say that, because women, talk a lot better. Like some men they, get like trapped and all shy and they don't know what to say, but women they are away before you even know it.'
>
> **S: Do you think that's a skill or do you think it's just like a characteristic of the sexes?**
>
> **T:** 'It's basically what makes men different from women, see if you've got a man that can do that, a male in our day and age would probably relate to him as someone being gay. It's just all, everything's muddled up these days' (Todd, 19. Hot Delicatessen, *Fugit*).

The way that male workers conceptualised what a 'worker' was (importance of physical transformation of a work area, completion of all of the tasks, mobility) involved inverting the organisational priority of customer service and refocusing attention onto 'appropriate' parts of the work (Henson 1996, Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, Henson and Rogers 2001, Simpson 2004). Most of the male interviewees also stressed the importance of activity and autonomy and the need to resist the stigmatising and atrophying effects of sedentary, non-manual work. The notion of a 'worker' as a busy person was linked to the resistance of some customer service and the surveillance that was entailed by working in a 'feminised' work environment.

A 'Worker' As a Busy Person

The 'refocusing' on the physical nature of work, away from customer service and in contrast with non-manual work was accompanied by an emphasis on activity and mobility (Henson 1996, Henson and Rogers 2001, Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, Cross and Bagilhole 2002, Simpson 2004, Lupton 2006).

In response to being asked if there were any jobs in the store they would *not* like to do, office work and the checkouts were almost always mentioned[82]. The principle reason for not wishing to do these jobs was not wanting to be confined to one place and wanting to be physically active. As Rafaeli (1989) argues, checkout workers often need permission even to go to the toilet.

S: Do you think there's a difference between manual work and people who work in an office?

AL: 'There is, I don't know what it is it seems like they're controlled, everyone's watching them. But all the jobs that I've been in I've been left in charge and I've been well happy. Because the same again, I'm me own person and then the job depends on what I do and what I don't do and if I know that I'm gonna get the results at the end of the day. I'm happy' (Al, 51. Delivery Driver, *Tempus*).

S: So is there anything you wouldn't want to do, any job that you wouldn't want to do in the shop?

JI: 'Anything I wouldn't want to do? Tills. For the sheer case of in the morning, or when I'm really just, "let me get on with my work." No, you know this smiling. That's the only job I don't want to do.'

S: Why?

JI: 'Yeah, the problem is they all want to talk don't they? They want to tell you…. I mean I don't know, my previous job in a shop, people come up to you and it's like talking to a psychiatrist. "Oh, I've broken up with my wife two weeks ago", "why are you telling me?"'

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[82] Except for two workers Todd and Kyle who were both young and not full-time workers.

S: Like a counsellor?

JI: 'Yeah, they're only buying a can of coke. I know what it's like, I mean if they're living on their own they don't get out much and communicate and chat away to people, but yeah, that's the only job I don't want to do. Sit down on the tills all day' (Jimmy, 21. Stock Control, *Tempus*).

S: Yeah, I mean, with that do you think it's partly to do with the emphasis on customers and service, things like that?

GA: 'They're very, erm, customer orientated now, I mean the amount of times you hear, "everyone to go down to the tills." My way of thinking it's all very well if you've got everyone on the tills but then the shelves are going empty. I mean if people come off and they've only got ten minutes left before their shift ends, well they're not going to be able to do all the work before their shift ends. So it's like a roll on effect, then the night shift come on and look at the shelves and think well what have the day shift done.'

S: Do you have to deal with customers?

GA: 'Not too much, we have to do the drinks if we've finished all the lorries. I don't mind the customers, some of them treat you with respect, but others they just look down their nose at you and, you're just their lackey, really….?'
(Gareth, 47. Warehouse, *Tempus 2*).

These quotes rehearse many of the dominant themes of the interviews. Al emphasises his desire for autonomy, to be left to do his work and to 'get results.' Similarly, Jimmy bridles at the forced interaction and 'emotion work' involved in dealing with customers. Finally, both Jimmy and Gareth see being called onto the tills as an impediment to completing their work. Gareth also hints at the possible shame of having to 'hand over' to the night shift having not completed all of his tasks.

The shift of focus by male workers on to manual-work and the physical evidence of its completion was a result of their understanding of work and masculinities. In turn, this world view was supported by the organisation of work. This understanding of 'work' and 'non-work' meant that men particularly resented being called to work on the checkouts as relief operators (as indicated in the quotes above). Not only was this a demand for service and deference, but it was also seen as a momentary reduction in

status and an impediment to the completion of one's 'actual' job (the manual elements of work). Similarly, it resulted in the re/construction of customers as a hindrance as opposed to the reason for the existence of the shop (and by extension the presence of the worker). This attitude also manifested itself in the way that deference, customer service and 'emotion work' were re-conceptualised as help, advice or guidance.

Avoiding Customers

The following section will examine the ways in which male workers sought to avoid customer service and the surveillance which the customer presence created. In order to illustrate the strategies male workers used to avoid customers, this section will examine the night shift, where customer service is minimal, and checkout work, where it is intensified.

Checkouts were strenuously avoided by almost all male workers in this research (and in other studies on the subject Rafaeli 1989, Rafaeli and Sutton 1989, Tolich and Briar 1999). Night shifts and early shifts were preferred by male workers, mainly because the amount of physical work helped to pass time and because early shifts meant an early finish to work. However, another significant benefit of these shifts was the absence of surveillance and control in the form of customers.

S: So how did you find nights?

AL: 'It's hard work, I mean it is hard work. It's good because you don't get the customers, complaints and you know, when you're out there trying to replenish. Customers get in your way, and you know, ask you stupid questions and you have to take them to the product and things like that. But during the night it's good, you get a lot more done, but it is a lot more harder, a lot harder physically' (Alex, 24. General Merchandise Manager, *Tempus*).

S: So what would you say are the worst parts?

R: 'Probably the customers, because when I work on Sundays I come in 8 o'clock before the store opens and it's so much better without customers you

can get work done and make as much mess as you want' (Rob, 18, Frozen Food, *Tempus*).

S: What did you think of working out back, warehouse?

LU: 'Yeah, I loved it.'

S: Did you prefer it?

LU: 'Yeah, I did, back in the day, like I mean. Now it's all different out there now.'

S: What? You feel like you had your own area?

LU: 'Yeah, yeah you were sort of left alone, no customers really' (Luke, 26. Meat, *Tempus*).

Whilst night workers in stores which are open twenty-four hours are required to deal with customers, many interviewees suggested that the customer service required at night was minimal. Managers at twenty-four hour stores (Jeanette and Neil) said that the numbers of customers coming into supermarkets between midnight and five am are very small. This quote from Jan suggests that some non-twenty-four hour stores are even quiet in the late evening:

S: The other thing as well is that it's [the night shift] a different job…..

JA: 'It's a completely different job, absolutely, completely. We don't shut 'til midnight so they do have that customer interaction, they start at 10. But there's no one here between ten and midnight. You get about 4, I don't know why we open that late but we do, so they have to have the same training as everybody else' (Jan, 34. Human Resource manager, *Tempus 2*).

Many of the managers (Fran, Neil and Jeanette) suggested that the numbers of customers visiting stores at night was small enough that (as many workers suggested) customers *could* just be seen as a nuisance to be 'put up' with.

S: The reason I ask is quite a lot of the people I've spoken to behind the scenes have said that they've actually gone there because they don't like…

DA: 'Customers, yeah'.

S: Is that the same for you?

DA: 'Not really, no. Well you do it for so long it's part of the job' (Damian, 31. Stock Control/Warehouse, *Tempus 2*).

The desire to avoid customers and annoyance at their presence was common, however when Damian refers to customers as 'part of the job', he is asserting an awareness of their economic importance. This awareness was also common and male workers were aware of the paradoxical nature of their desire to work unimpeded by customers. One way for workers to realise this desire was to work on the night shift where customer contact was either minimal (during cross-over periods before the store closed or in twenty-four hour stores with few customers) or non-existent (in stores that were closed during the night shift).

The Night Shift

'The change in the atmosphere in the store after closing time is quite marked. Once all of the customers have left the store, it is no longer 'front stage'. The night shift is dominated by men and the work atmosphere becomes significantly more 'masculine' for want of a better description. The props of a warehouse or building site are readily apparent, such as high-visibility jackets, and hydraulic trolleys.'

'It seems that the presence of the public is what makes the store 'front stage' and perhaps what makes it 'feminised.' By demanding politeness, political correctness and deference, simply by virtue of 'its' presence, the public radically alters the workplace and by virtue of this the character of the job' (Field-notes, *Densmores*, Monday 11th July 2006).

As indicated by this field-note excerpt from the ethnographic observation at *Densmores*, one of the main reasons for the change in the atmosphere in the store was the shift from night to day and the presence or absence of customers. The presence of

customers 'feminises' the 'front-stage' areas of the store and (more than managers) acts as a form of surveillance, disciplining workers[83].

The difference in day and night work manifested itself in a number of ways. Not only were night workers considered by their colleagues to have different personalities and ways of working, they were also seen to be different organisational 'entities'. Night workers (in non-twenty-four hour stores) did not have to wear uniforms and they worked as a more cohesive group and tended to have a group identity which was different to that of day workers. Due to their similar working hours and the ability to take breaks as a group, night workers tended to see themselves as night workers first, and departmental workers (dairy, frozen food or produce) second. Conversely, day workers tended to work on a variety of different shifts and therefore mixed mainly with those on their department. This meant that they tended to identify more with those in their department. As a result of this, only those who had worked in a store for a number of years and/or in a variety of locations, tended to be familiar with other workers. This process depended on the size of the store and the general tenure of the workforce, although according to the Human Resource managers interviewed, most stores had a relatively high turnover of staff. What this process meant was that night workers had a very different sense of their occupational identities to day workers and there was often an antagonism between the day and the night shifts.

In addition to the observations which were made at *Densmores*, interviewees also made persistent references to the difference in the atmosphere of supermarkets during the night shift. This quote below is from Jason who had previously worked on the night shift for eight years:

S: So how did you find nights?

JA: Well being here, because I've only done nights here, so I'm not sure what

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[83] The men working the night shift at *Densmores* were frequently observed during the ethnographic stage due to a significant amount of time spent working in the store, before it opened and after it had closed. No current night workers were spoken to during the interview stage. However, due to *Tempus'* policy of having the majority of new staff start on nights before promoting them to days, many of the male interviewees at *Tempus* had worked on the night shift and it was also common for managers to have spent some time working nights.

it's like in other places. But there is a definite line between days and nights. You get the people on days moaning about the people on nights.

S: Well maybe it's because there's so little communication or crossover?

J: It's sort of, night shifts seem to be stuck out in a corner and you don't get much. But it's changed a lot now, or over the years' (Jason, 29. Beers, Wines and Spirits, *Tempus 2*).

S: I get that impression [that day work is different from night work] where I work, because it seems like the store just changes.

N: You often find some of the night, a lot of the night people, are very different personalities and characters to the people on days. And they don't also cross over very well, so if one of them came onto days, it's not just the transition of nights to days, it's the transition of total personality and the way you can behave, the way they co-operate' (Neil, 42. Non-Foods Manager, *Fugit*).

The significance of the distinction between day and night work has implications beyond the scope of this research and would be an interesting subject to pursue. Due to the stigma attached to service work (and supermarkets), it may also be possible that men are seeking to avoid customers or more stigmatising roles (for example checkouts), by working at night (Briar and Tolich 1999: 130).

In some senses, the theme of night work unifies many of the themes raised by male interviewees in this research. Night work was undoubtedly more physical than the work on days and it could be argued that the 'status shields' employed by produce workers and other day workers could be applied to night-work with far greater validity (Stenross and Kleinman 1989: 415). As with the 6am-3pm shift at *Densmores*, the night shift was valued due to the absence of customers and their civilising influence or demands for service. Night work also provided the attributes of work which were most often prized: many roles were undertaken behind the scenes, with a discrete area of responsibility and/or set of tasks to be completed in a fixed amount of time. The majority of night work was either cleaning or stock replenishment and therefore allowed the physical autonomy which was so highly prized by men. It also allowed for the physical transformation of areas. An interesting aspect of this process was the introduction of later closing times and, in the

case of some stores, twenty-four hour opening meant the 'authentic,' 'male' workspace is encroached upon by customers.

S: So on nights it seems they have more freedom in what they can do?

N: 'I suppose there's more freedom. They're more, I think people on nights are stronger personalities, so they can tend to be more aggressive. They can tend to be more, er, outspoken, they can tend to be more Bolshy'.

S: Do you think that's why they end up there? They choose to go there or you put them there?

N: 'Yeah, I think one, in the interview you think that's what they suit, and two, it probably suits them, 'cos they have more freedom to be like that, 'cos the customer base isn't there of a night' (Neil, 42. Non-Foods Manager, *Fugit*).

S: What are the differences between when customers are in the store and when they aren't?

FR: 'It's a completely different ball game, once the customers start shopping, that's it...'

S: You can't shout and swear?

FR: 'That's it, no swearing, you can't wear what you like, you gotta wear uniform, look smart. It's a whole different thing really...' (Fran, 35. Junior Non-Foods Manager, *Fugit*).

The night shift was seen as distinct even in stores which were open twenty-four hours. In these stores there was only one time (Sunday afternoon-evening) when there were no customers. Nevertheless there was still the perception that different ways of working and different rules pertained late at night.

S: So do you have like different criteria for say someone who is going to work just with staff or just behind scenes?

PH: 'I suppose that in the day you're looking for people that are friendly and approachable, that are going to interact with the customer, at night time, obviously they don't see so many customers, so it's a completely different atmosphere of a night time and I've worked over night, doing overtime and it feels more factory based, so like you come in, you work on a certain area, but

you don't maybe see anyone, you're working on your own, you don't have any customer interaction' (Phil, 36. Junior Non-Food Manager, *Fugit*).

S: I noticed that some of the people on nights are different, their way of working is different, and they're different characters?
A: 'Exactly, yeah, I don't know I suppose in the evening you don't have to deal with the customers, you don't have to be… you find… probably sounds out of order, but the night shift are, they're just there to put out, not really to worry about the customers, if you see what I mean. Whereas the people that are in during the day are a lot more customer services [*sic*]' (Alex, 24. General Merchandise Manager, *Tempus*).

While the store discussed above was open to customers almost all of the time, the focus of the majority of workers in the store at night was the replenishment of the stock sold during the day. The main difference is in the way work is done, and the way workers conduct themselves must change (due to the presence of customers). As the quote above from Fran indicates, this means that workers can no longer work in an untidy (and therefore potentially unsafe) way, must avoid blocking aisles and behave in a more appropriate, customer-focused manner.

During interviews, workers and managers were asked if night work was sought as a way of avoiding customer service. While many workers saw this as an added benefit, none cited it as their main motivation for working at night. This was largely due to the fact that rates of pay for night shifts were higher than those for day work and this was the primary motivation for many workers. Other than the higher rate of pay available, the other reasons given for working at night were that it was the only job available at the time, or practical issues such as child care[84]. These were also the rationalisations offered to me by Human Resource managers who were quick to 'toe' the company line that all workers must be customer-focused. However, this was not the case with department managers who were responsible for their own recruitment. Department managers tended to be more pragmatic and open about their recruitment aims (for example see comments from Neil, Alex and Phil, Fran).

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[84] Issues around childcare were most often cited as reasons for women to work nights.

Although the improved rate of pay would probably be the main factor in the decision by men to work at night, avoiding customers would most likely be marginalised as an ostensible reason because of the organisational focus on customer service. Workers were aware of the attitudes of Human Resource managers and managers in general and this was reflected in the way they discussed customer service. As illustrated in Chapter 5, workers would be aware that if they mentioned that they did not want to work with customers they would be unlikely to secure a job in a retail role, especially due to the increase in twenty-four hour stores. Similarly, a Human Resource manager working in retail is unlikely to admit that they would recruit someone who was not 'customer-focused', although as with other elements of recruitment, it was often insinuated by section managers that there was informal latitude in the type of night workers which were recruited.

As in other, areas of this research, there seem to be implicit gendered themes at work in the way night work was discussed. Based on observations at *Densmores*, the 'aggressive' and 'Bolshy' night workers mentioned above by Neil[85] were likely to be men. As indicated by the quote above (and by others), it was acknowledged that men were often allowed to just 'bang it [stock] out' and then women would 'come in and tidy it all up' (Jan, 34. Human Resource Manager, *Tempus 2*). Based on interview and observational data, it seems that there were informal allowances made for masculinities. Even if the avoidance of customers was not the main reason for male workers to choose night work, it was often referred to as one of the main benefits.

Phil a Junior Non-Foods manager at a twenty-four hour hyper-market compared night replenishing work to a factory:

S: Is nights more like a physical job then?
PH: Yeah, it's more physical and they all come to break at the same time, and they leave the shop floor…
S: Of course yeah they can…

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[85] Neil, 42. Non-Foods Manager, Fugit.

PH: And it's like a factory, it feels more like a factory of a night time, it's more about, "we've go to get this on the shelf and that's that", whereas in the day they are more about the standards, making it….

S: Do you think some of them actually prefer that?

PH: I think some people do, do nights because they, you know, obviously the money's better of a night time, so a lot of people are, you know have to do it , financially, you know, they can't afford not to do that, but, I think a lot of it is to do with the fact that they prefer to not have customers around them, so if you speak to nights, they're like, 'oh god not Christmas', they hate it 'cos obviously people are doing shopping over night and they're like 'oh no, it's customers, customers' (Phil, 36. Junior Non-Food Manager, *Fugit*).

The physical nature of night work meant a more 'industrial' way of working, the monotonous flow of stock to be stacked on shelves symmetrically, with all labels facing out, could be likened to a production line or a conveyor belt of sorts, the shelves would never stay full and there would always be more stock to be 'worked.'

Night work carried out in the ways described above fulfils the main areas of satisfaction identified by male interviewees. Furthermore, night work involved more manual labour and allowed greater mobility linked to the themes many day workers used to define their work as 'men's' work. Most night workers had their own work area which they were responsible for and a discrete set of tasks to be completed or stock to be replenished during a shift. Night work, particularly in stores which close at night, allows escape from customers and the satisfaction of being relatively autonomous and seeing the physical evidence of labour through the transformation of shelves and stock rooms.

Checkouts

J: 'I think the worst bit is, what you're expected to do, because being on the department I am, they've brought this new clause in that everyone must be till trained and as you've probably heard all the [till trained staff] down to check

outs. So every sort of ten to fifteen minutes you are sort of backwards and forwards to checkouts and you don't get a sense of completing your job' (James, 29. Beers, Wines and Spirits, *Tempus*).

Due to checkout work being identified as a source of tension and struggle during the ethnographic observation stage and early interviews, the question, 'Are there some jobs in retail you would do and others not?' was included in later interviews. This question was used to gauge some of the reasons for this apparent dislike. Of the twenty male workers asked this question, sixteen said that they would not like to work on checkouts.[86] Of the four who did not mention checkouts as somewhere they would not like to work, two said that they did not mind where they worked and would 'try' anything, (however, neither of these two workers had been asked to work on the checkouts). Only two other workers (Terry and Kyle) said that they liked working as cashiers (and they are discussed below), both of these men were young, part-time workers.

The perception of work as necessarily physical and that a 'worker' was someone who is busy and mobile shapes the way that checkout work is seen by many workers.

S: No. I mean other than that, are there any jobs you wouldn't want to do?
F: Tills. I would hate to do tills, they've already asked me and I've said no. I don't want to do it.
S: So what don't you like, why don't you want to do that?
F: 'Cause, er, I don't know it's just, just being stuck again, in one place, I mean yeah you do talk to customers. But it's just, you just don't do nothing, you just sit there all day' (Frank, 21. Bakery, *Tempus 2*).

S: So, are there some jobs in retail you would do and others you wouldn't do?
DA: 'I wouldn't want to work in personnel and checkouts! I couldn't, wouldn't want to sit down all the time. For an 8 hour shift I couldn't do it.'

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[86] Some of these workers did work on checkouts and said that they disliked it.

S: So you don't like tills, is that because…

DA: 'That is because you're sitting down all the time and you're thinking, 'oh god, I just want to get up and do something' (Damian, 31. Stock Control Warehouse, *Tempus 2*).

One of the main reasons given for disliking work as a relief cashier was that it interfered with one's 'proper' job, as Jason put it: 'you don't get a sense of completing your job'. Checkout work was seen as 'non-work' in a similar way to dealing with customers, (which was also seen as an impediment to the completion of 'work'). Frank makes reference to this ('non-work') when he says above, 'you just don't do nothing, you just sit there all day,' similarly, Damian says 'I just want to get up and do something.' The negative perceptions of till work were strengthened by the predominance of young and female workers in this role. Also among some male workers, (particularly older ones), checkout work was resisted due to the belief that they did not have the skills to deal either with the computers and money or the customers at close quarters. This links to work done on the attitudes of the long-term unemployed to service work (Nixon 1999, 2006, Forthcoming, Moskos 2004, Lindsay and McQuaid 2004). According to Lindsay and McQuaid:

'The targeting of occupations outside service employment by the majority of job seekers (at odds with the manner in which services now account for a growing number of vacancies in the local economy) reflects the reality that many amongst the registered unemployed are former manual workers who are seeking similar work, despite the continuing decline of manufacturing and other 'traditional' industries' (Lindsay and McQuaid 2004: 306).

Lindsay and McQuaids' findings were supported by the experiences of Human Resource managers in this study,

JE: 'I mean we also get some people that say, 'I can't go on the tills, I can't go on the tills. I'll stack shelves, I can't go on the till, because the whole thought of dealing with all that money and customers, freaks them out a little bit' (Jeanette, 43. Human Resource Manager, *Tempus*).

This process is illuminated further by Gareth:

S: So are there any jobs you wouldn't do in retail?

G: 'I wouldn't do the tills.'

S: Why not?

G: 'I just, it's not me. I'd get too flustered on there to be quite honest.'

S: Why's that…

GA: 'Cause of the customers, especially the one's that you can hear going "tut, oh god, I've been here five minutes, and look how slow he is" and all that sort of stuff. I'd have to bite me tongue a hell of a lot then. Like just shut the tills down and say, "come outside and we'll finish talking about it out there!" But no I wouldn't want to do tills work no' (Gareth, 47. Warehouse, *Tempus 2*).

One possible reason for the strength of Gareth's reaction is that till work was seen to create an inescapable situation which threatened masculinity and created stigma. Men were literally confined, but also in terms of their work role, they were no longer able to move about the store freely. This confinement was exacerbated when the men in question did not feel that they had the requisite skills to deal with the situation. Without the usual resources (mobility, manual work) to mitigate stigma, (however tenuous), male workers felt the possibility of an 'appropriate' identity threatened. Gareth's suggestion that he take disrespectful customers 'outside' (to fight) is a direct result of the clash of a particular form of working-class masculinities and service work. It is similar to the desire of Nixon's (2009) respondents to 'front-up' and the desire of Lamont's (2000) respondents to protect their dignity even at the cost of their job. Checkout work was disliked due to its confining nature, due to the way it reduced the opportunity for re-conceptualising service and the work in general. It was much more difficult to see checkout work as anything but deferential, service work. Rafaeli produced similar findings in her study of supermarket checkouts:

'In sum, although management's legitimate influence allows it to have a certain degree of remote control over cashiers, several factors set the customers apart as having the potential for immediate influence over cashiers. Management plans and rules may set the stage for the interaction between a cashier and her customer, but because of their physical proximity, the amount of time spent

together, the flow of feedback and information, and the crucial role cashiers attribute to customers, it is the cashier and the customer who determine how this interaction unfolds' (Rafaeli 1989: 259).

This quote from Dan deals with this relationship:

S: So you just don't like working on the tills?

D: 'I think it's just because I'm a bit close to the customer really and they're a bit more, they're not very nice after that. On the shop floor they're not too bad, but when they get near the end and they're waiting, they get impatient and they're more of an "arsey" customer I think.'

S: So normally do you like interacting with customers on the shop floor.

D: 'On the shop floor, yeah, basically, they ask me where something is and I take them to it and lately because we've, we was going to lose our mystery shopper bonus. So we've got this new thing in where we've got to show the customer where something is and then you've got to ask them for something else. Be really polite and that.'

S: So how do you find that overall then?

D: 'Yeah, it's not too bad, you sort of can get away from them, you know what I mean….'

S: Yeah, go and hide out the back.

D: 'If they're really nasty sort of run away' (Dan, 24. Grocery, *Tempus 2*).

Despite Rafaeli's (1989) assertion that there is some element of freedom, that customers and cashiers are able to determine the way they interact; this negotiation is an unequal one. The customer is almost always positioned as superior to the cashier for a number of reasons. First, 'the customer is always right' which creates a default hierarchy for all interactions. Secondly, staff are frequently used as organisational 'buffers' to meet the shortfall between customer expectations and organisational performance. This means that staff are often called upon to apologise for things which are not their fault. Finally, the inability of male checkout operators to reposition themselves both figuratively and literally creates a situation where the stigmatising elements of service work are magnified. The use of physical mobility to

avoid customers or to limit loss of face was no longer possible (Briar and Tolich 1999). It was also much more difficult to re-conceive customer service in general as advice or help. There was a general reduction in the scope for appearance management, and should a friend or acquaintance be in the store, less opportunity to 'explain' the situation.

It should be noted that not all of the men disliked working on the checkouts, some were seen to like it due to the perception that it was physically easier work.

> **JE:** 'On checkouts. But the lads that work on there, when I've tried saying, 'do you want to work on produce,' 'nah, I don't want to be humping bananas around,' they go. No thanks, I'd much rather sit on a till and chat to customers, so yeah it could be, that some' (Jeanette, 43. Human Resource Manager, *Tempus*).

> **S: So you get moved around a bit?**
> **T:** 'Not really, cos where I work it's usually a stuck place unless they call for multi-skillers on the Tannoy and then I get called onto checkouts.'
> **S: Yeah, I get the same thing….**
> **T:** 'It's annoying….'
> **S: You don't like checkouts?**
> **T:** 'No, I love checkouts, it's easy, it's easy work. Just sit down and wait'
> (Todd, 19. Hot-Deli/Multi Skiller, *Fugit*).

This ambivalence reflects Terry's interview more generally, and checkout work was often seen as easy, and working as relief cashier was often seen as a 'nice break' or a 'sit down.' There was a tendency for male workers to frame a preference for checkouts within the existing understanding of them as a rest or a break, in other words not to destabilise the dominant perception of the work. Paradoxically, these workers were those most likely to be aware that this was often not the case and that checkout work was often physically demanding.

During the participant observation at *Densmores,* checkout work (except during very quiet periods) was found to be both mentally and physically draining. During busy

periods, it was possible to work for four hours without more than a few seconds pause. Further to this, the role of relief cashier, by definition, was only performed during busy periods, and this increased the difficulty of the work. As soon as the queues subsided, checkout supervisors will close the workstation of the relief cashier to allow them to go back to their usual department. To send a relief cashier back to their department as soon as possible is seen as a favour on the part of the checkout supervisor. It is not uncommon for a checkout supervisor to say apologetically to a relief cashier, 'I'll try to get you off [the checkout] as soon as possible[87].' However, this way of organising actually intensifies work because the relief cashiers will not have the opportunity to enjoy the easy part of till work. Rather than sitting and waiting for customers during quiet periods, relief cashiers will return to untouched workloads, untidy departments and often jokes from colleagues about 'skyving.'

The occasional nature of the relief role reinforces the way till work is seen, and this attitude of necessary evil is also reinforced by managers and those running the tills. There was a general acceptance by checkout supervisors and department and general managers of the prevailing understanding of the role of relief cashier. There was no attempt to challenge the conceptualisation of the role as a necessary evil or a distraction which impeded real work. As with other areas of contention, such as those around 'appropriate' work generally, there was a complicity of management and workers (mainly male) in the construction of an acceptable way of viewing parts of the job. By allowing the negative and gendered perception of relief cashier work and checkout work more generally to go unchallenged, workers entered into a 'game' of symbolic resistance to the work which ultimately led to general compliance. In other words, the role was branded as 'inappropriate' and 'non-work' and the resistance of the male workers was noted by managers and colleagues (they were allowed to save face), and through this, the gendering of work roles was perpetuated and the relief checkout work was still completed. This was similar to the way that the male 'temps' studied by Henson (1996) reaffirmed the feminine nature of the work, whilst at the same time denying its applicability to them. This had the affect of reaffirming rather than de-stabilising the gendered nature of the work.

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[87] This was observed and experienced numerous times *Densmores*.

This section has shown the way that male staff drew on a range of resources to re-define their work and to refocus attention onto the more conventionally masculine aspects. They did this by focusing on the physical elements of their work and arguing that this distinguished their work as 'men's' work, because women would not be able to do it. They also drew on understandings of manual work as distinct from sedentary/non-manual work. This work was viewed as 'non-work' or less than work and seen as degenerative and likened to the domestic sphere. The emphasis on physical work was also drawn upon as a source of meaning and satisfaction. Male workers valued the completion of all tasks and seeing physical evidence that an area had been transformed. Finally, male workers used mobility to avoid customer service or to re-conceptualise customer service as help or advice.

'Traditional' Working-class Masculinity?

The process of managing a 'flawed' work identity is a complex one, and when undertaken by those with little social and cultural capital, it often involves the perpetuation of negative stereotypes (Henson 1996, Henson and Rogers 2001, Bolton 2005). The emphasis placed by working-class men on practice and physical production (Winlow *et al* 2001), can be seen as an inversion of the classed hierarchy of knowledge which positions them below middle-class managers. Not only is this reversal a common-sense understanding of the usefulness of education, but it is also a form of identity management. In this way, manual workers are similar to 'dirty workers' to the extent that they often find a source of pride and solidarity in the parts of their work which are seen by others as being the worst or most difficult (Hughes 1958, Ashforth and Kreiner 1999). The ability to put up with hard conditions and the ability to quickly 'pick up' any job or task is seen as valuable, often more so than the ability to pass examinations.

It would be easy to draw simple conclusions about the way the distinction between manual and non-manual work is used and understood by male workers. There are almost echoes of a primeval masculinity, the 'warrior narratives' discussed by Jordan and Cowan (2001) or early Enlightenment ideas of man's domination of nature.

Relying too heavily on such explanations runs the risk of reproducing popular mythologies of masculinity and essentialising the roles and attributes of men and women. However, it does seem, due to their popular currency, that these ideas were often drawn on both explicitly and implicitly by workers to understand their work through narratives of the 'traditional'. In using a 'catch-all' phrase, such as 'traditional' there is also a risk of replicating the romanticisation and heroisation of masculinities and manual labour this research seeks to avoid. Similarly, such ideas often draw on nostalgic notions of a 'golden age' of work which may never have existed or make reference to a very vague set of ideas, which may never have been coherently held or drawn on (Gabriel 1993, Connell 1995). Despite these caveats, the way many male workers conceptualise, understand and re/present their work does seem to be strongly influenced by ideas commonly associated with 'traditional' masculinity. This set of discourses is a way of understanding work which would have been more fitting twenty or thirty years ago when manual work was central to male working-class identities. It is also worth noting that just because a 'golden age' of work and/or 'traditional' working-class masculinities is empirically questionable, it does not mean that they are not important resources which influence the construction of popular consciousness and notions of hegemonic or 'acceptable' masculinities (Connell 1995, 2000, Messner 1990, 1993, Messerschmidt 1993). Indeed, they seem to be an important tool for understanding and rationalizing current perceived instability and change (particularly in work) and making sense of the nature of contemporary work identity. From this point of view, the presence of such ideas is more important than their 'reality.' As Linda McDowell (2003) points out in *Redundant Masculinities?*, many young men still wish to follow similar transitions into adulthood to their fathers (school to work, home to heterosexual relationship and an independent household). It is perhaps a mistake to assume that such ideas will disappear quickly as their presence during the childhood and adolescence of today's young men will have played a significant role in shaping their ideas about work and masculinity.

Conclusion

The initial hypothesis that the shift in the type of work available for working-class men would cause problems in the construction and maintenance of socially viable masculinities was perhaps misplaced. While a significant amount of tacit effort was put into the construction and maintenance of symbolic boundaries, the masculinities of male supermarket workers were generally protected through the complicity of male and female colleagues (Goffman 1959, West and Zimmerman 1989).

The Human Resource management and recruitment practices of supermarkets drew upon gendered assumptions about 'appropriate work,' and deployed staff pragmatically along gendered lines. These gendered (and age-based) assumptions created a dialectical relationship between Human Resource practices, staff expectations and the placement of workers into work roles.

This division of labour created by male workers' need to construct 'appropriate' masculinities meant that women were responsible for most of the emotional labour. Some of the male workers also worked at night in order to avoid customers and checkout work altogether (Hochschild 1983, Bolton and Boyd 2003, Tolich and Briar 1999: 130). The degree of 'emotion work' entered into by workers varied and was often dependent to some extent on the individual discretion of workers. Women and others in subordinate positions will often do 'emotion work' (not necessarily voluntarily), to save the face of those in more powerful positions (Goffman 1959).

This is rarely an egalitarian process, due to the very fact that what the men are avoiding is the deference involved in this work: the implicit understanding that the person giving service is usually subordinate to the one who receives it (Lee Trewick 1996: 118). The use of symbolic boundaries to construct certain jobs as 'masculine' or 'feminine' had 'social consequences' for all staff and the store as a whole (Butler 1990:66). This finding supports Tolich and Briar (1999) who found that women were often confined to work on the checkouts, whereas men were allowed to move about the store freely and to avoid interaction with customers to a considerable degree. They argue that this had the dual effect of allowing men to resist customer service

whilst denying women the opportunity to gain a variety of skills and therefore promotion. This finding is also well supported in the literature (Hochschild 1983, Ogbonna and Wilkinson 1990, Rafaeli 1989, Rafaeli and Sutton 1989, Tolich 1993, Bolton 2005).

These findings suggest that gendered and classed understandings of work and the worker; particularly with reference to manual and non-manual, work still have the power to shape action and understanding. The resistance of confinement and the common preference for physical work among working-class men warrants further research, particularly with reference to the question of work as a source of identity.

Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

This research began with casual observations made whilst shopping in local supermarkets. The main aim of this research was to examine the way that shifts in the work available for unskilled and semi-skilled working-class men over the past twenty to thirty years would impact on the enactment of 'appropriate' masculinities. The much noted decline in manual jobs such as mining and heavy industry was particularly relevant to the areas in which this research was conducted. The manual work which working-class men tended to do in the past required and produced very different expressions of masculinity than service work. In conducting a literature review for this research and when considering the work of Acker (1990) McDowell (1997, 2003) and Adkins (1995) (among others) it seemed that service work was understood as 'women's work' and was in turn strongly gendered and sexualised, particularly due to the deference and 'emotion work' involved. These cultural understandings created a potential for such work to be seen as stigmatising for and by men, in particular those from working-class, manual backgrounds.

Based on the belief that service work would constitute a threat to the construction of 'appropriate' masculinities, a theoretical link was identified between the identity management strategies of 'dirty workers' (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, Ashforth et al 2007) and men in 'non-traditional' (female-dominated) work (Pierce 1995, Williams 1995, Henson 1996, Maume 1999, Henson and Rogers 2001, Cross and Bagilhole 2002, Simpson 2004, Lupton 2006). These strategies also involve men re-positioning themselves in relation to 'hegemonic' forms of masculinity (Wetherell and Edley

1999). The responses of men in 'non-traditional' employment reflect this potential for stigma and demonstrate an acute awareness of the gendered nature of work and the demands of 'appropriate' masculine roles. The way that non-manual service work is understood is still very different from manual work. Ideas about what is 'appropriate' masculine work or even 'real' work in relation to dominant ideas about men and masculinities, are still relevant in many cultural and class contexts.

The working hypothesis that the construction and maintenance of 'viable' masculine identities would be problematic for the men working in supermarkets, (particularly with respect to the demands of customer service) was to some extent borne out by the ethnographic observation stage. For example, men often resisted deference to customers and company rules, emphasised the physical strength needed in their work over the role of customer service and used various strategies to re-conceptualise service as help or advice. However, there was some degree of latitude in the way that men were able to 'do' customer service and their preferences for 'appropriate' work were clearly taken into account in recruitment and Human Resource practices and discourses. This finding supported much of the literature on masculinity and in particular Acker's (1990) assertion that organisations and the roles within them are not gender neutral. Attitudes to gender were simultaneously anticipated and constructed by Human Resource managers.

Male workers reduced the threats to their masculinities created by working in a supermarket through complicity with female workers, Human Resource and general managers, all of whom also perceived and made investments in particular gendered identities. Through a series of discourses which allowed the construction and maintenance of symbolic boundaries, certain jobs and products were portrayed as more 'appropriately' male than others (Cockburn and Omrod 1993, Adkins 1995, Lawson 2000, Williams 2006). Workers' exposure to these discourses and organisational socialisation begin at recruitment. This was observed during the recruitment interviews at *Densmores* when the produce department was described as 'fast work' by the deputy manager. This narrative continued throughout the second recruitment interview with the Human Resource manager and into the introductory tour of the produce section with the supervisor, Matt. The attitude of Matt to the flowers was that 'we don't touch them much, but on a Sunday we may have to, so we

just fill 'em up and throw some out' (Field-notes 4th July 2006). This attitude was part of an overall denigration of the florists and their work, which culminated in the throwing and damage of floral stock by Matt and Baz and the joking assertion by Matt that 'florists don't work' (Field-notes 18th of July 6am-3pm *Densmores*).

Chapter 5 expanded upon themes identified during the ethnographic observation stage at *Densmores*. The reasons male interviewees gave for their entry into service work were varied but could be divided into three categories: *lack of alternatives*, *progression*[88] and *personal choice*. These categories are interrelated and many of the men interviewed can be seen as moving through a combination of more than one.

The importance that most men attached to performing an 'appropriately' masculine work role was understood by Human Resource managers. Not only was this process of seeking gendered work seen as natural and inevitable most of the time and by most of the staff, it also had a number of benefits for Human Resource managers and the companies they served. Due to the low-paid and low-status nature of service work there are very often problems with recruiting staff of a suitable quality that will also stay in the company for an extended period. Supermarket work is also often 'interactive service work' (Leidner 1991a/b) and there is a need for consistently high levels of customer service to ensure satisfied and therefore returning customers.

One of the ways companies try to achieve this is through a strong emphasis on employee 'branding' (Edwards 2005). Supermarket chains need their employees to 'embody' the brand both literally, through uniforms and behaviour and figuratively, through their interaction with and service of customers (Mangold and Jeanquart 2007). Human Resource managers sought to recruit and retain suitable staff by fitting them to work roles which suited their strengths and interests and this process very often has a gendered aspect to it. This is largely due to the way that the personal interests of staff (hobbies, sports, studies etc) are utilised by Human Resource managers. The second way that the recruitment process is gendered is that Human Resource managers will often assign work roles based on gendered assumptions (Hossfield 1990). This process is one in which Human Resource managers draw on

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[88] Those who started work part-time or as a 'stopgap' and then became full-time permanent members of staff.

their understandings of British culture in general, and in particular, expectations about gender 'appropriate' work and behaviour. It also seems optimal in organisational terms not to 'rock the boat' by forcing workers into roles that will make them uncomfortable.

Taking the example given by Carrie (in Chapter 6) of the male worker who resisted being put on the health and beauty section, we can see the way that 'inappropriate' work can be seen as stigmatising. This is consistent with the literature where the gendering of products and services has been well demonstrated (Cockburn and Omrod 1993, Penn and Wirth 1993, Biswas and Cassell 1996, Kinniard and Hall 1996, Adib and Guerrier 2003, Williams 2006). The worker Carrie refers to is in the position of being doubly stigmatised: he is not strong enough to carry out his usual 'appropriate' work and he is being asked instead to work in the health and beauty section. One of the causes for the strong resistance of men to such roles, is the Human Resource practice of trying to 'fit' people into 'appropriate' roles discussed above. As argued in Chapter 5 and 6, the process of assigning people to gendered work roles is beneficial for organisational aims and the identity management requirements of men. However, it creates an assumption among workers (and often customers) that someone must have some sort of interest or investment in the work role they do. This process means that men are far more likely to resist working in areas such as health and beauty due to the negative perceptions associated with the role. Even the acquisition of knowledge about stock has gendered connotations, for example it is far more likely that a male worker would be building up knowledge on wine or electrical goods than on cosmetics. It is also important here to point out that customer perceptions are also very important in this process (Williams 2006). During the observation stage, customer perceptions about 'appropriate' work were given equal salience to those of colleagues, due to their cumulative nature. Just as customers' disregard for the feelings of checkout operators accumulated, so would comments about male workers in gender 'non-traditional' work roles. It was common for workers to be very aware of the likely perceptions of such work and to wish to either avoid the role altogether, or to position themselves counter to these.

This resistance to 'inappropriate' work roles is a process in which class and gender intersect. Perceptions of service work as 'women's work' or gender 'inappropriate'

have particular currency among working-class men with a history of manual-work (Nixon 1999, 2006, 2009, Lindsay and McQuaid 2004). This is a classed investment in gender; however, class and gender are two factors which in practice, cannot be clearly separated. Connell (1989, 2000) argues that beliefs about 'hegemonic masculinity' condition prevailing understandings about which traits and actions are desirable in all men. Due to the fluid and context-dependent nature of gendered identities, Connell's (1989, 2000) theory allows for differential understandings of what is hegemonic within masculine subcultures. It is possible for men in different social positions to appeal to and express different elements of 'hegemonic masculinity.' Connell (1989, 2000) sees this process occurring in a similar way to which, according to Butler (1990), individuals make investments in the gender order more generally. To invest in masculinity 'appropriately' is

'... a "strategy" which has cultural survival as its end, since those who do not 'do' their gender correctly are punished by society' (Butler 1990:66, repeated from Chapter 1).

The avoidance of gender 'inappropriate' work was a response by male supermarket workers to the understanding that incorrect or inadequate investments in masculinities have social costs, often in the form of stigma. This investment is strongly influenced by what are considered valuable social and cultural capital in a given context (Bourdieu 1984, Skeggs 1997, 2001). For example, historic understandings of what is 'men's work' can often lead to investments in physicality and this process is also often related to specific forms of working-class masculinity (Charlesworth 2000). The slightly tenuous viability of supermarket work as 'men's work' within such contexts was understood by male respondents. This process also interacted with the common perception of supermarket work as low-status. There was ambivalence in the way that the men who were observed and interviewed managed their work identities. This was expressed in the way that many of them resisted employee 'branding,' customer service and emotion work. Similar expressions of ambivalence have also been associated with the way that people discuss class identities (Savage 2000).

Work and Identity

While many of the workers who were observed and interviewed partially accepted the generally negative societal perceptions of their work, as 'low-status' and intrinsically unsatisfying, they also sought to resist it. The belief that supermarket work is of a low-status is best expressed in the cliché 'I can always get a job stacking shelves in Tesco.' This suggests that work in a supermarket is something which 'anyone' can fall back on. Workers' understandings of this sentiment were also expressed in the way they compared work to school, which was, in part, a way of expressing the belief that work was inevitable but also to be resisted. It was also expressed in the common statement 'it's a job isn't it?' which was a way for workers to distance themselves from their work identity. However, workers also wished to resist these perceptions to some extent. On one hand, there was a feeling among some of those who do service work that it is often something which is forced upon people and that it is unfair to say or do things which suppose that someone's identity is strongly tied to that role. This process can be illuminated by returning to Korczynski's (2002: 2) notion of 'customer-focused bureaucracies'. Korczynski (2002: 3) argues that service work is undertaken in a context of 'gender based servility' and that 'customer-focused bureaucracies' are structured through the competing logics of organisations, customers and employees. The ambivalence of men towards their work identities is a result of their recognition that their need for gender 'appropriate' work is subordinate to organisational requirements and the drive to achieve them through satisfying the customers' logic for good customer service.

This process can be linked to the identity management strategies used by men in 'non-traditional occupations' (Pierce 1995, Williams 1995, Henson 1996, Maume 1999, Henson and Rogers 2001, Cross and Bagilhole 2002, Simpson 2004, Lupton 2006). In other words, many of the men who worked in supermarkets accepted that their work was not as 'masculine' as it could be, but asserted that it was 'masculine' enough. They did this by 'refocusing' attention in discussions about their work, from the service and 'emotion work' elements of their work to the 'physical'/manual elements (Henson 1996, Henson and Rogers 2001).

Male workers also appealed to the general consensus that there is a positive moral value attached to working (Sayers 1988 2005, Bauman 1998, Sayer 2005); that what they are doing is far better than not working (Newman 1999, Lamont 2000). This process can also be likened to the way that workers in potentially stigmatising, 'dirty work,' see the worst elements of their work as constituting a 'badge of honour' (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, Ashforth *et al* 2007). Similarly, male (and female) workers saw working in a supermarket, despite the relatively low-status of the work, as worthy of respect, more respect, than those they saw as 'choosing' not to work. By doing this, male supermarket workers were undertaking a classed process of 'boundary drawing' between the 'respectable' (workers) and the 'rough' (non-workers) (Skeggs 1997, Kefalas 2003, Sayer 2005). The influence of class was very much present in how the men 'refocused' discussions and their understandings of their work.

Strength and Physicality

The importance of strength and physicality was the main theme to emerge in this research. It was used as an orientation point for discussions of 'men's work' and was used as a 'common sense' short-hand for defining work as such. It was seen as beyond discussion by male and female staff at all levels, that there were certain jobs which most women would be physically unable to do due to the weight of the stock involved. While it is acknowledged that some stock was reasonably heavy (10-12kg), it was not so heavy that only someone of above average size and strength could work with it. As with the resistance by staff at *Densmores* of work involving flowers (and other 'female' stock) this emphasis on strength was primarily a symbolic boundary (Adkins 1995). The presence of a woman who could lift even the heaviest stock and two young men (Chas and Tony) who could not was not seen to undermine the gendered assumptions surrounding work on produce. On the contrary, these exceptions were seen to underline and reinforce existing boundaries. The woman was seen as an anomaly (being stronger than average) and the young men were seen as lacking in masculinity (due to their lack of strength). This process, where exceptions to gender stereotypes are understood as individual deviations and therefore ultimately

serve to reaffirm gender stereotypes is common in the literature on gender (Cockburn 1991, Henson 1996, Henson and Rogers 2001).

There are a number of reasons why male workers focused on physicality instead of other aspects of their work. First, manual work has a strong history among working-class men and has long been both a source of masculine pride and a way of distinguishing 'men's' and 'women's' work. Male interviewees were aware of equal opportunities discourses and notions of 'political correctness.' This meant that their discussions tended to be characterised by an avoidance of explicit sexism. So for example, arguing that women lacked the mental capacity to complete their work would be an obvious breach of 'political correctness.' Also, to appeal to a distinction between 'men's' and 'women's' work based on mental ability would also run a risk of exposing the general lack of mental effort required in supermarket work.[89][90] This is not to say that there was no sexism present in the attitudes of the men interviewed, just that it was implicit[91]. The process of focusing on physicality and setting 'men's work' against 'women's' is also a good example of the way that masculinities are constructed with the resources 'at hand' (Connell 1989, 2000, Messerschmidt 1993). The men observed and interviewed were faced with a situation where they had access to limited forms of social and economic capital and were also faced with negative public perceptions of their work and the general absence of ways to mitigate or resist these perceptions.

Satisfaction and Letting Yourself Down

Another main argument of this research is that some accounts of the 'end of work' thesis are too far ranging in their assumptions about the possibilities for working-class work to provide intrinsic satisfaction (Bauman 1998, Casey 1999). This research does not support the argument that work has declined in importance for the identity construction of men and has produced evidence to the contrary. The focus by male

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[89] Although some workers (Andrew and Luke) resisted this characterisation of their work as they had roles which required greater mental engagement.
[90] When considering the context of the interview (i.e. with a university graduate) and the general perceptions of supermarket work, this is an unlikely source of distinction.
[91] Following 'political correctness' where prejudices are not present, but simply not voiced.

workers on physicality as evidence of the masculine nature of their job was also linked to the intrinsic satisfaction it provided. There were many references to the importance of seeing evidence of one's work however, it is interesting that where they were implicitly referred to, aesthetically pleasing displays were re-conceptualised as tidying, neatness and maintaining order. This quote from Damian repeated from Chapter 6 is a good example of these ideas

The jobs I don't like doing, is where you've put your heart and soul into it and then you look at what you've done and think, 'it looks like I haven't done a damn thing!' But yeah, if you get to the end of the day and see that your chiller or whatever is near enough empty, the shop floor is really full, that's a good feeling, when it's brimmed up, it's very effective, (Damian, 31. Stock Control and Warehouse *Tempus 2*).

In the light of the data produced by this research, it seems difficult to believe that the main source of identity service workers' was whatever is 'currently being sold in the shops' (Bauman 1998: 29). It seems that physicality and the intrinsic satisfaction provided by productive work were an important part of the way male workers saw their work identity. The notion that service work was undertaken only out of financial necessity and was by definition devoid of intrinsic satisfaction is brought into question by the need to produce physical results. This pride in completed work was augmented by the frequent desire to finish one's assigned task in the appropriate time. It is important to note that satisfaction from work and assertions made by many workers about the importance of having work *per se* were infused with assumptions about providing for dependents. The satisfaction gained from the completion of physical work is likely to have been combined with other elements of 'breadwinner' masculinities. However, these discourses all draw on a version of 'hegemonic' masculinity to inform notions of 'appropriate' work and male duty.

The desire to avoid 'letting yourself down' is another aspect of the experience of men in supermarkets which problematises some assumptions within the 'end of work' thesis. Several male interviewees said that if they failed to finish their assigned workload, they would feel frustrated or ashamed and they would have 'let themselves down.' The men's desire to finish the work assigned to them was not a result of their

loyalty to their employer, but of importance they attached to their work and the role of intrinsic satisfaction (through achievement) in the way they construct their identities.

Autonomy and Mobility

The need for work to provide autonomy and mobility was also an important theme to emerge in this research. In Chapter 2 it was argued that accounts of service work (particularly those given in the 'end of work' literature) often assume that it is the worst available work, and conflate the problems associated with service work with those involved in factory work. However, service work often allows for a considerably different level of autonomy due to the fact that many roles are not tied to the rhythms of a machine. This is an important distinction because the one role in a supermarket that could be likened to factory work was the checkouts which was also the role most resisted by the men in this study.

It was seen as important to have the freedom to move about the store; this preference was combined with the desire for one's own section, particularly if this was in a backstage area, or a job which no-one else did. Mobility and autonomy were prized for two reasons, the first of which, the minimisation and resistance of supervision is self-explanatory. Many workers felt that they were more effective when they were allowed to do things their own way (of course a reasonable level of autonomy is commonly seen as a factor in job satisfaction). The second reason that mobility and autonomy was important was that it allowed men to resist and re-conceptualise their encounters with customers. This was very important in their identity management strategies and allowed some avoidance of the more 'female' aspects of the work. Through being mobile, workers could avoid being seen as a lower-level employee (as mobility is usually associated with higher level roles) and to some degree they could also avoid customer demands and interaction. This attitude to customers is clearly displayed in this quote from Dan repeated from the previous chapter,

S: So how do you find that overall then?

D: Yeah, it's not too bad, you sort of can get away from them, you know what I mean….

S: Yeah, go and hide out the back.

D: If they're really nasty sort of run away

(Dan, 24. Grocery, *Tempus 2*).

The ability to be mobile also allowed the men some degree of choice in when and how to engage with customers. For example, someone with a role which was either fully or partially 'backstage,' could avoid customer service by not entering the shop-floor if they were busy or did not feel like dealing with customers at that time. This level of choice often allowed the re-configuration of encounters with customers as help, advice or as an inconvenience. This could also involve seeing customers (often female ones) as lacking in 'common-sense.' A good example of the way this process worked would be the common company policy of always walking customers to a product they cannot find. When a customer needed to be led to a product which was considered by workers as easy to find, the customer was often mocked (in their absence). This process was similar to the way some managers were seen as a hindrance, and the way that worker's saw themselves as the possessors of superior knowledge which allowed the deferential nature of the service encounter to be mitigated and controlled.

This process was not simple and was by no means always effective, as there were still many occasions where customers controlled interactions. However, the possibility of re-conceptualising customer service was important in shaping men's general understanding of their interactions with customers. This process often allowed the construction of acceptable 'cover stories' (Henson 1996). Through seeing customer service as help or advice, interactions with customers which threatened definitions of their work as 'men's' work, could be understood as being caused by an individual defect or lack of respect on the part of customers. One of the few situations in which this re-conceptualisation was not possible was when male workers were called to work on the checkouts as relief cashiers.

Avoiding the Checkouts

With a few exceptions,[92] work on the checkouts (often as a relief cashier) was the role most resisted by the men in this research. This was due in part to the associations of this work with young, part-time, and female workers, and the low-status associated with these groups. However, men's resistance to this work was more complex than just a rejection of these groups. Not only was checkout work stigmatising due to its associations with low-status groups, it also served to restrict the means by which male workers refocused and re-conceptualised their work, and distanced themselves from such associations. As Rafaeli (1989: 247) showed, the close proximity of customers at the checkouts heightened the strain between them and workers and intensified the struggle to control the service encounter. Furthermore, the role of checkout operator conflicted most strongly with notions of what constituted men's work.

Working on a supermarket checkout is intensified service and can be likened to some extent to factory work in that it is linked to external pressures. Checkout staffing was usually arranged so that there was as little idle time as possible, and by definition those who were relief cashiers only worked on the tills during busy spells and returned to their departments once the busy spell was over. The lack of mobility associated with checkouts meant that the ability of workers to resist customer and managerial surveillance was severely reduced. This also meant that workers were not able to work at their own pace, and even had to ask permission to go to the toilet (Rafaeli 1989), or wait to do it during break times. The confinement and lack of autonomy associated with checkouts also significantly limited the ability of male workers to focus attention on different aspects of their work (such as physicality) when discussing and defining it. The next section will look at some of the methodological weaknesses of this research and some possible ideas for future research.

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[92] Both young men working part-time.

Weaknesses and Future Study

While this research has produced rich data there are a number of improvements that could be made were a similar project to be conducted. The data gathered during the covert observation stage altered the themes explored in the interviews. Firsthand experience of the process of recruitment was achieved in a way which would not have been possible for an overt observer. However, using covert methods can also be a frustrating process due to the limited opportunities to ask direct questions. Similarly, while there are methodological benefits from being a 'privileged eavesdropper' (Burke 2002) (something an overt observer can do) there are also additional benefits to be gained from the form of 'insiderness' covert observation allows (Labaree 2002).

This research, due to its relatively limited scope (in terms of time and funding) has necessarily focused on certain aspects of work and masculinities. An area which would have been interesting to pursue further in interviews, would be the significance of consumption and leisure activities in work identities and masculinities. One hypothesis worth exploring would be that men working in jobs lacking in social and masculine capital would engage in compensating strategies in their family and leisure time or their consumption practices. Consumption was rarely regarded as important by respondents; however, it was not a major focus of questioning or probing. It would be interesting to explore these themes more fully and it is likely that such research would shed even more light on work identity, class and the 'end of work' debate.

Another aspect of this research which was present albeit often implicitly was the role of masculine embodiment in work. A principal argument advanced by this thesis regarding the research of men and masculinities is that it is dominated by extreme and transgressive cases. This argument could also be applied to the study of their bodies. The notion of the body as an absent presence put forward by Shilling (2007) is interesting here as it accurately describes the male body in service work. Due to the importance of interactive service work, the body has become both a text and a tool for service and emotion work. With this in mind it, future research could usefully explore the meaning and importance of male embodiment in service work. This would be

especially interesting considering the importance placed by male service workers on physicality, strength and on having physical evidence of their work.

One of the most interesting sub-themes to emerge from this research is the shifting nature of gendered space in supermarkets. The presence of customers is the principal 'feminising' force in supermarkets and the work space within stores can change depending on time of day or night and the presence or absence of customer surveillance. Considering the general resistance of male workers to emotion and service work reported in this research, it would be interesting to look at the attitudes of night workers to their work and to the presence of customers. This research could also make good use of the increasing prevalence of twenty-four hour supermarkets which mean that night workers have to deal with customers more often. This means that their work role will have changed, however their understandings of their work may not have. The higher wage rates available for night work may be the most important factor in workers choosing such work. However, considering the identity management strategies discussed in this research, there is also potential for night work to be seen as a 'status shield' by those who do it (Stenross and Kleinman 1989: 415). Due to the difficult nature of working at night, there is scope for male workers to see this as a source of distinction and/or a 'badge of honour' similar to the focus of 'dirty workers' on the worst parts of their work (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, Ashforth *et al* 2007). Finally, due to the fact that night work is primarily concerned with stock replenishment, there is legitimate scope for seeing it as more physical than day work. This would make it interesting to look at both in terms of the gendering of work and through the theme of male embodiment in service work discussed above. It would also be interesting to pursue all of the above themes through research in 'D.I.Y[93].' stores. This would be of interest as such stores would perhaps provide the means for 'masculinising' work (the 'male' nature of the stock and the industries which consume it) which were absent or problematic in supermarkets. The gendered division of labour and the discourses used by male and female workers in these stores would be a worthwhile addition to the data produced for this research.

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[93] 'Do it yourself.'

Contribution to Knowledge

This research provides an original contribution to the literature on masculinities/gender and work in a number of ways. Ethnographic methods have seldom been used in the study of service work (Hodson 2001, Pettinger 2005). Through the use of such methods, this study provides detailed data of the gendered 'terrain' of the supermarket and an insight into a particular form of service work.

This research has also provided data which suggests, contrary to the 'end of work' thesis, that work (including service work) is still central to the construction of the identities of men in Britain. It has shown that male service workers place great importance on the content of their work and take pride in the completion of their tasks. It has also shown that a great deal of effort is expended to define the work of men and women in certain ways. It seems that such an effort does not support assertions of the declining importance of work for social identity. Men who placed little value on their work identity would not go to such lengths to ensure that their work was defined and perceived as masculine.

Furthermore, while there have been a number of studies which look at male workers in 'non-traditional' roles (Pierce 1995, Williams 1995, Henson 1996, Maume 1999, Henson and Rogers 2001, Cross and Bagilhole 2002, Simpson 2004, Lupton 2006) they have often focused on occupations which have clear career structures or where men benefit from their minority status. This research has focused on a context where these 'escape routes' are largely absent. The data produced in this research also suggest that many working-class men see work as preferable to unemployment (Lamont 2000) and seek to follow conventional routes to constructing masculinity. However, this finding is likely to be influenced by the work status of those observed and interviewed (Lindsay and McQuaid 2004).

This research has also resisted the common focus on deviant or hyper-masculinities by studying a subordinate group in an 'everyday' setting. It has also resisted the tendency to focus only on mens' experiences and thoughts when studying masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) by involving female participants and

examining the way that men's attempts to masculinise their work impacted on the work roles of female workers.

This research has also shown the way that prevailing notions of gender and work create the possibility of stigma for male workers in service work. This stigma is explored through the innovative comparison between the identity management strategies of 'dirty workers' and men in gender 'non-traditional' work. Through this use of theory, this research adds to the literature concerning the clash between working-class masculinities and service work (Nixon 1999, 2006, 2009, Lindsay and McQuaid 2004, McDowell 2000,

Conclusion

The hypothesis which this research sought to explore was that working-class men would experience service work as a threat to their construction of 'appropriate' masculinities.

Questions within this hypothesis were:

- If work is no longer 'manly' enough, how are masculinities constructed and maintained?

- How does organisational setting affect the construction of masculine identities? For example, how does the way people are recruited, managed, jobs advertised and defined within an organisation and society at large, affect the way jobs are perceived?

- How do men's attempts to masculinise work affect them, their colleagues and processes of recruitment and management?

Grint (2005) argues that it is no longer necessary to assert that work is *the* dominant source of identity as opposed to *a* source of identity. While this research is based on

the assertion that work is still the most important source of identity, it is perhaps useful to acknowledge that the discussions concerning work identity have often tended towards polarisation. This may be due to the increasing expectation that work will be more than just a job and the dominance of middle-class discourses of self-actualisation and fulfilment. It is also likely that the continuing expansion of higher education and the ideology of meritocracy in Britain have heightened these expectations.

Work is still a very important source of identity for men and while this research has a relatively small scope and is not nationally representative, it is suggestive of general trends in masculinities. Indeed, one reason for choosing supermarket workers was the common nature of their work and experience. Despite the premature announcements of the 'death of class' and the 'end of work' there still seems to be a strong desire for manual work among working-class men and a level of pride in its results. This desire draws on ideas about 'hegemonic' masculinities to define 'appropriate' work and behaviour for men (Connell 1989).

This desire for 'appropriate' work is also not confined to older workers (30 or over) who were more likely to have been exposed to such ideas about men and work. Many younger men (in their early twenties) still understand work and masculinities through these 'traditional' discourses. This is not to say that working-class notions of 'hegemonic masculinity' are inflexible or that there is an essential need for men to perform manual work. However, ideas about what is 'appropriate' 'men's work' are slow to change and the socialisation of the young men now entering the labour market, is likely, in some areas to have involved a nostalgic account of past (pre-service) work. The common perception of service work as both 'low-status' and 'women's work' are not lost on male supermarket workers. Through entering into a dialectical process of gendering which involves fellow male and female managers, shop-floor workers and customers, men working in supermarkets are able to refocus discourses around their work and to reconstruct the meaning of their work. This reconstruction requires the differentiation of their work from 'women's work.' This is achieved through seeing women as incapable of doing their work, the creation and maintenance of symbolic boundaries and the avoidance of 'inappropriate' work roles. This has the effect which Henson and Rogers (2001) identify, whereby men in

potentially transgressive work roles, rather than problematising the prevailing gender order, actually perpetuate it. Men in roles which they or others see as lacking in masculinity have the greatest interest in perpetuating gendered stereotypes of work.

When discussing their work, the 'story' male supermarket workers tell is that their work is, fast and requires more strength than most women possess. They are mobile and busy and they can achieve results if they are left to 'get on with it'. They have a level of autonomy because they get those results and this allows them to move about the store. Customers are a small part of their work and while they are a necessary evil, they often get in the way and make it more difficult to 'do the job'. When they ask questions they are often disrespectful, but also lack basic knowledge and common sense and are therefore in need of help, guidance and advice.

The necessity of seeing certain roles as 'women's work' allows the differential valuation of men's and women's work roles. An example of this distinction would be the flowers at *Densmores*, which were seen by male workers as frivolous and troublesome, despite making more money per square metre than the fruit and vegetables. Work on produce was seen as something women could not do due to a lack of strength. This belief was perpetuated despite the fact that a woman who was not part of the team could do the job fully whereas two young men who were part of the team and could not.

Work is a very important factor in wider gender relations, beyond its ongoing significance for the construction of masculinities. Gender relations in the supermarkets studied during this research are shaped by the social and emotional needs of the men and to a lesser extent, the women who work there. These relations do not shape society but are a response to it. The irony is that the work which male supermarket workers seek to define as masculine, suffers from the traditional denigration of 'women's' work to improve the prestige of 'men's' work. The need to see some work as 'masculine' and to elevate 'men's' work over 'women's' will persist as long as men judge themselves and are judged against an illusory ideal.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Tables of interviewees:

Fig. 4. Men: *Tempus*

Name	Age	Department	Hours of Work	Store Number
Al	51	Online Delivery Driver	FT	1
Alan	55	Grocery	FT	1
Damian	31	Stock Control and Warehouse	FT	2
Dan	24	Grocery	FT	2
Frank	21	Bakery	FT	2
Gareth	47	Warehouse and Backdoor	FT	2
Jason	29	Beer, Wines and Spirits.	FT	2
Jimmy	21	Stock Overflow	FT	1
Luke	26	Meat and Fish	FT	1
Mark	21	Frozen Food	FT	1
Pete	51	Backdoor	FT	1
Rob	18	Fresh Foods	FT	1

Fig. 5. Men: *Fugit*

Name	Age	Department	Hours of Work	
Aaron	40	Grocery	FT	
Andrew	34	Produce	FT	
Anthony	21	Dairy	FT	
Bruce	22	Beer, Wines and Spirits	FT	
John	43	Stock Control	FT	
Kyle	21	Checkout Supervisor	PT	
Matt	42	Cleaning	FT	

Neil	42	Non-Food Manager	FT	
Phil	36	Non-Food Section Manager	FT	
Peter	29	Produce	FT	
Steve	27	Frozen	FT	
Todd	19	Hot Delicatessen	FT	
Vince	18	Backdoor	FT/PT[94]	

Fig. 6. Women: *Fugit*

Name	Age	Department	Hours of Work	
Fleur	35	Non-Food Section Manager	FT	
Katie	19	Hot Delicatessen	FT/PT	
Linda	54	Post Office	FT	
Lynette	52	Household Section	FT	
Nicky	38	Checkout Team-Leader	FT/PT	
Roz	63	Clothing	PT	
Sharon	63	Human Resource Manager	PT	

Fig. 7. Managers with Recruitment Responsibilities[95]

Name	Age	Department	Hours of Work	Company
Alex	24	Merchandise Manager	FT	*Fugit*
Carrie	20	Junior HR Manager	FT	*Tempus 2*
Christine	21	Junior HR Manager	FT	*Rowen*
Fleur	36	Junior Non-Food Manager	FT	*Fugit*
Jan	34	Human Resource Manager	FT	*Tempus 2*

[94] 30-35hrs a week.
[95] Alex, Fleur and Neil are also included above, but also fulfilled recruitment roles.

Jeanette	43	Human Resource Manager	FT	*Tempus 1*
Marion	25	Human Resource Manager	FT	*Densmores 2*[96]
Neil	42	Non-Food Manager	FT	*Fugit*
Sharon	63	Human Resource Manager	PT	*Fugit*

Appendix 2

Interview Question Sheet

Biographical Information

Age

How long with the company

How long have you worked in retail?

What brought you into retail? Why?

What other jobs have you done?

Did you expect to work in retail?

What Dept do you work on?

What Shifts?

What are the best bits of your job?

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[96] This was a different branch of *Densmores* to the ethnographic observation site.

What are the worst bits?

Do you like interacting with customers?

Are there some jobs in retail you would do and others not? – Why?

If you were telling a stranger about yourself, how would you describe yourself?
What you do etc?

What are your main interests outside of work?

Do you think that men's work has changed?

Do you think some types of work are more identified with men or women? Why?

What does work mean to you?

What does it mean to be a man at work?

Where do you get your most satisfaction from in life?

If you came into a large sum of money which meant you could afford to stop working
for a living, what would you do?

If your parents worked, what jobs did they do?

Do you think your job reflects your personality?

Does a person's job define them? If so how?

(What jobs would you like your children to have?)

Vignette.

Will where possible be tailored to be department specific.

A customer stops you to complain about the quality of a piece of stock. They do not want to buy it, but work in a farm/factory/shop which also produces that type of stock. They say that they would be ashamed to sell such poor stock.

How would you reply?
What do you think of their complaint?

Appendix 3

Human Resource Manager Interview Questions

Biographical Information.

Age

How long with the company

How long have you worked in retail?

What brought you into retail? Why?

What other jobs have you done?

Did you expect to work in retail?

Is it easy difficult to recruit?

What are the problems?

What is labour turnover like?

Do they think people identify with *******?

How are values transmitted?

Who wants to work what shifts?

How do you assign people to their job roles?

What are you hoping to achieve when you do this?

Is it important that people fit their job roles?

What drives this?

Customer/Individual/Management?

Do certain people suit certain roles better than others?

Do you different people work nights or behind the scenes? How do they get there?

May even venture a question about why do men and women tend to gravitate to certain sections?

Do people sometimes ask to move departments?

What reasons do they give?

If they have been in management for a while, what changes in the workforce have they noticed, ie. more men, older workers?

What issues seem to cause the most disputes or aggravation (may need to judge the particular interviewee as to whether this is an acceptable question.

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