Since the early 1990s, there has been an explosion in the use of discourse analysis in management studies. Whilst the notion of discourse has seduced many a qualitative researcher it is also acknowledged that this field of study is fraught with methodological and epistemological problems. Loose definition, diversity and richness constitute the field, and its territory has only recently been mapped in any systematic sense (Keenoy, Oswick and Grant, 1997; Alvesson and Karreman, 2000).
While recognising the productive potential of the taxonomy set out by Alvesson and Karreman, it has also led us to reflect upon its pragmatic implications. It can be seen as a welcome attempt to undo the ‘black-boxing’ of discourse, which has allowed analysts in this area to side-step the difficult issues of generalisability, structure and agency, determinism and so on. Nevertheless, our interest in the framework is not without concern. While it may be argued that “to classify is human” (Bowker and Star, 2000), any responsible evaluation of such an enterprise necessitates a contemplation of its boundaries; where and why such boundaries are drawn, what happens at the boundaries and what lies beyond them. In particular, we would argue that the focus of discourse analysis on talk and text tends to marginalise the consideration of materiality. Our interest in raising these issues is not to propose another axis to the framework which would then make it ‘complete’ and ‘comprehensive’. Instead we mean to bring attention to issues of boundaries and contingency inherent in all attempts at classification.
Introduction

Since the early 1990s there has been an explosion in the use of discourse analysis in management studies. The field has now produced its fourth conference on ‘Organizational Discourses’, from which have emerged a number of special issues and books addressing the growing importance of a concern for ‘discourse’ in organizational analysis. Key proponents of discourse analysis argue with some justification that “the study of discourse is emerging as one of the primary means of analysing complex organizational phenomena and engaging with the dynamic and often illusive features of organizing” (Oswick, Keenoy and Grant, 2000: 1115). However, there is a serious danger in the field of Organisation Studies (and in social science more generally) of what has been referred to as ‘discourse babble’, a term used by Henriques et al to highlight the “extravagant vagueness concerning the limits of application of the term” (1984: 105).

While the richness and diversity of discourse analysis is clearly a key strength of the approach, it is the chimerical nature of ‘discourse’ which has been a source of much criticism. For many writers, the source of these difficulties can be traced back to the nature of the field itself, in that “...it has few clear parameters and, as a field of study, it incorporates a variety of diverse perspectives and methodologies reflecting its multidisciplinary origins” (Grant, Keenoy and Oswick 1998: 2). It is argued that much of the ‘discourse analysis’ conducted in the field of Organisation Studies privileges empiricism over epistemological grounding, and rarely if ever reflects on the theoretical underpinnings of the claims being made. In such work, discourse is typically defined in the broadest terms, if at all, and the breadth of this definition can mask a number of fundamental epistemological and ontological differences. This conceptual ambiguity leads Henriques et al to ask; "Is everything discourse?
Are all practices and all subjects captured within the expansive nets of the discursiv e?” (1984: 105). While the ill-defined use of the term ‘discourse’ is clearly part of the problem, the challenge for discourse analysis is complicated as competing terminology such as 'culture' (Kunda, 1992), 'institutions' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), 'rationalities' (Parker, 1995), and 'narratives' (Law, 1994) all appear to cover very similar territory.

Concerns over the ambiguity, indeed the methodological laxity, of much of the work describing itself as addressing ‘discourse’ has recently led to a number of articles attempting to offer some perspective on the field as a whole. A welcome attempt at mapping the territory occupied by discourse and discourse analysis has recently been made by Alvesson and Karreman (2000) in the journal *Human Relations*. In their article, “Varieties of Discourse: On the study of organizations through discourse analysis”, the authors attempt to distinguish the various meanings of discourse adopted in organization studies and relate these different conceptions to a number of methodological approaches. We will start our discussion, therefore, by summarising our understanding of Alvesson and Karreman’s endeavour. It is our argument that Alvesson and Karreman’s work illuminates a number of critical issues for the field not only through what they address but through what they do not address, and for this reason such ‘boundary work’ is of broad significance for the discipline of organisation studies.

**Delimiting Discourse: Alvesson and Karreman’s Framework**

A key target of Alvesson and Karreman’s (2000) paper is the unreflective use of ‘discourse’ “to cover up muddled thinking or postponed decisions on vital analytical matter” (2000: 1129). The objective of their paper is simple; “to clarify the key analytical options available in discourse analysis and their consequences for the study of organizational and other
phenomena” (2000: 1126). This is achieved through the construction of a taxonomy of discourse analysis, differentiating conceptions of discourse along two axes.

For Alvesson and Karreman (2000), the first key dimension by which conceptions of discourse may be distinguished is their Analytical Level i.e. between, on the one hand, localised, context-specific ‘discourses’ and, on the other, generic, universal ‘epochal’ discourses, which they denote as ‘Discourse’. For clarity, they characterise this dimension as ranging from ‘Myopic’ to ‘Grandiose’ notions of discourse. The most ‘myopic’ involves a ‘micro-discourse’ approach, involving the detailed study of language use in readings of text/conversation with little or no connection drawn to surrounding social and power relations (cf. Schegloff, 1997) referred to by Alvesson and Karreman as “the trap of linguistic reductionism” (2000:1145). The most ‘grandiose’ they refer to as a Mega-Discourse approach, addressing a universal, if historically-situated, set of vocabularies, such as ‘masculinity’, or ‘globalisation’, indistinguishable in many senses from Althusserian conceptions of a ‘dominant ideology’. Between these extremes, they suggest it might be able to distinguish between a range of ‘ideal-typical’ approaches, such as a ‘meso-discourse approach’, which go “beyond details of the text and generalising to similar local contexts” (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000: 1133) up to a ‘Grand Discourse approach’, in which “an assembly of discourses (are) ordered and presented as an integrated frame” (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000: 1133).

In differentiating between ‘levels’ of discourse, Alvesson and Karreman highlight the tension between approaches which focus on ‘discourses’ and those concerned with examining ‘Discourse’; “Investigations of the local construction of discourse treat discourse as an emergent and locally constructed phenomenon, while the study of Discourses usually starts
from well established *a priori* understandings of the phenomenon in question.” (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000: 1134). This is not to imply that ‘discourse’ and ‘Discourse’ should be seen as incompatible; however, it does raise the vital issue of generalisability; “How does one in empirical work proceed from encounters with texts (documents, interview talk, observed talk) to make summaries and interpretations of wider sets of discourses including aggregations of a variety of elements, an integrated framework of vocabularies, ideas, cognition, and interrelated with these, practices of various kinds? In short: To what extent - and if so, when and how - can we move from discourses to Discourse(s)?” (2000: 1146). A related question concerns the reversal of this inductive process – when and how may we make the deductive shift from Discourse to discourse, in the sense of inferring/predicting micro action from macro-level Discourse.

The second axis focuses on the relationship presupposed between discourse and meaning. Here, Alvesson and Karreman distinguish between ‘muscular’ approaches, which see discourse as inseparable from meaning, and ‘transient’ approaches, in which discourse is largely decoupled from meaning. Thus ‘muscular’ approaches to discourse analysis tend to argue that discourse is fundamentally related to ‘meaning’ so much that discourse serves as “a structuring principle in society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity” (Weedon, 1987, cited in Alvesson and Karreman, 2000: 1131). At the other extreme, the ‘transient’ position might see discourse as involving little more than ‘linguistic performance’, with little or no necessary link to subjectivity or social structure beyond the limits of the specific interaction. Here, the authors refer to certain variants of conversation analysis where it is assumed that discourse in the form of speech or writing is used in a “sophisticated, politically conscious” way, with little or no necessary relationship with “what goes on in people’s heads and hearts” (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000: 1132). These extremes
they label ‘discourse determination’ and ‘discourse autonomy’, respectively. The authors also postulate a range of positions in-between these extremes, where ‘discourse’ is loosely coupled to ‘meaning’, subjectivity and other elements seen as non- or extra-discursive.

Alvesson and Karreman then develop these two dimensions, Close-Range/Long-Range Interest and Discourse Determination/Discourse Autonomy into a traditional two-by two grid (see fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Core Dimensions and Positions in Discourse Studies

Adapted from Alvesson and Karreman (2000)
While the proliferation of jargon in the paper does little to improve the clarity of the model, we would argue that it provides a useful guide to the current diversity of practice in the field of discourse analysis. By mapping the various conceptions of discourse, the model is largely effective in its cited objective, that is, to “clarify the key analytical options available” (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000: 1126).

Before entering into a more detailed examination of the implications of this model, it is important to make a brief comment on the issue of reflexivity. As writers in the field of organisation studies, Alvesson and Karreman are clearly not entirely independent and ‘objective’ arbiters of epistemological truth, nor do they claim to be. The authors are open without being overly dogmatic about their own theoretical and ontological inclinations, expressing a dissatisfaction with work which is overly ‘muscular’ and ‘grandiose’ in its conception of discourse, as well as criticising too ‘transient’ and too ‘myopic’ an approach. This leaves their own position conveniently placed somewhere near the centre of the grid, a position of equilibrium away from the ‘dangerous’ extremes which surround it. This, as much as anything else, brought to our attention the arbitrary nature of such mapping/modelling endeavours. In many senses, this article is the epitome of strong organisational studies research; neat, clean, balanced, and aesthetically pleasing. The danger in such a project is that the criteria behind the model are presented as mere epistemological concerns, far removed from political, power-laden conflicts. We would argue that the account lacks a consideration of the discursive production of this classification of discourse analysis, and in particular, the academic discourse which has produced such a model. In the next section we attempt to expand on some of the reasons why attention to the discursive context of a model of discourse analysis is of such importance.
Power, Classification and Its Consequences

Within the field of Science and Technology Studies, the labour involved in classifying, dividing and defining objects on enquiry for the purpose of greater understanding and control has long been of vital interest. While much of this work centres on the classification and model-building in which natural scientists engage on a daily basis, the insights of ANT are equally productive in analysing the construction of epistemological and ontological classification systems in the social sciences. In order to gain some analytic purchase on the power effects of theory building of this sort, we will draw on Bowker and Star’s analysis of classification, “Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences” (2000) as a text which highlights in detail the obscured consequences of classification, both intended and unintended.

As Bowker and Star (2000) argue, “to classify is human”. We are constantly surrounded by systems of classification and a large part of our daily routines in all aspects of life consist of building, adapting or using such classification systems. They cite as everyday examples “sorting dirty dishes from clean, white laundry from colorfast, important e-mail to be answered from e-junk” (2000: 2). More broadly, organisations of all kinds can only function through constant classifications; of patients into categories and priorities, claims into categories of eligibility, clients into socio-economic classes and marketing segments, exam scripts into grades and classes, employees into teams, departments, grades, and so on. However, the sources, criteria and consequences of many classificatory efforts are largely invisible in spite of their significance. “Remarkably for such a central part of our lives, we stand for the most part in formal ignorance of the social and moral order created by these invisible, potent entities.” (Bowker and Star, 2000: 3). This invisibility is neither dysfunctional nor trivial; indeed, classification requires that its work becomes invisible, and
its categories and criteria become quite literally a \textit{fait accompli}, naturalised and therefore beyond the need for constant re-evaluation. The very ubiquity of classificatory practices deters close scrutiny; as all aspects of life must be ordered and classified if they are to be understood and managed, what possible use can there be in critiquing classification?

In order to answer this, we need to consider in some detail Bowker and Star’s analysis of systems of classification. They start by defining classification very broadly as “a spatial, temporal or spatio-temporal segmentation of the world”. As they go on to elaborate, “A ‘classification system’ is a set of boxes (metaphorical or literal) into which things can be put to then do some kind of work – bureaucratic or knowledge production” (Bowker and Star, 2000: 10). This productive nature of classification is central to the argument; the ways in which we divide up and classify objects are of importance precisely because such classifications are then ‘put to work’, in prioritising claims, in articulating viewpoints, in providing a vocabulary by which concerns are addressed and, by the same token, by which concerns go unaddressed. As such, the work claims to draw some inspiration from Foucault’s argument that “an archaeological dig is necessary to find the origins and consequences of a range of social categories and practices” (Bowker and Star, 2000: 5). A corollary of this source is that their arguments are embedded in a Foucauldian conception of power/knowledge; that “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge which does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (..) In short, it is not the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power/knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it, and of which it is made up, that determine the form and possible domains of knowledge” (Foucault, 1979: 28-9)
Bowker and Star propose three ‘ideal’ properties of classification systems.

- Firstly, that there are consistent, unique classificatory principles in operation
- Secondly, that the categories are mutually exclusive
- Thirdly, that the system is complete

Clearly, as Bowker and Star argue, no actual system of classification could attain these conditions; in practice, classification is a process of negotiation, adaptation and compromise. Boundaries shift, leak and fade from view, criteria are stretched or ignored, and systems are adapted to incorporate novelties or aberrations. Nonetheless, the ideal remains, and is vital in preserving the authority and thus the effectiveness of the system itself.

Two main concerns arise from these unattainable ideals. Firstly, there is the issue of the invisibility of what lies outside our classifications. Classification operates by bringing certain classes of object and qualities of object ‘into the foreground’, which may only be accomplished by the relegation of other categories and qualities into the background; to use a musical metaphor, form and structure of a composition relies for its existence upon the surrounding silence or disorder. For the objects isolated through classification, visibility is part of the operation of power; as Townley explains, “the process of making something known or visible (...) also makes it potentially governable. To ‘know’ something is to create a new power relation” (1993: 224). At the same time, invisibility in such systems may have beneficial or deleterious consequences. The ‘monsters’ - the unnamed, unrecognised unclassified and unclassifiable - may one the one hand be therefore marginalised, beneath or outside of contemplation; on the other hand, such ‘monsters’ may in the same way evade
observation and manipulation by resisting categorisation\(^1\). Choices are necessarily made in the construction of classification systems with material and moral ramifications; “We need to consistently explore what is left dark by our current classifications (‘other’ categories) and design classification systems that do not foreclose on rearrangements suggested by new forms of social and natural knowledge” (Bowker and Star, 2000: 325)

A complementary point to be underlined is that boundary-setting is not an automatic, mimetic process determined by the nature of the objects themselves. Rather, decisions over boundaries are riven with issues of power and politics. In certain cases the construction and differentiation of categories is self-evidently political; where the boundary is drawn between the ‘genuine’ and the ‘bogus’ asylum seeker, the crime and the misdemeanour, the vote and the spoil ballot paper. However, the close connection between forms of knowledge and power relations underlines that the ontological and epistemological are inevitably the political. “Seemingly purely technical issues like how to name things and how to store data in fact constitute much of human interaction and much of what we come to know as natural” (Bowker and Star, 2000: 326). The implication of this is not to reject classification, or to do away with boundaries, categories and standards. Rather, there is a contingent moral point to be made here; “Each standard and each category valorizes some point of view and silences another. This is not inherently a bad thing – indeed it is inescapable. But it is an ethical choice and as such it is dangerous – not bad but dangerous” (Bowker and Star, 2000: 5)

Underlying much of this approach is the argument that such systems are not natural, self-maintaining institutions, although through the concealment of the significant ‘labour of

\(^1\) Bringing to mind the possibly apocryphal example of Queen Victoria’s supposed failure to prohibit lesbianism at the same time as male homosexuality under British law as she could not countenance women engaging in ‘such acts’.
division’ they may become naturalised and therefore taken as self-evident. A first step in questioning the consequences of established systems is therefore to ensure that “classifications (are) recognized as the significant site of political and ethical work that they are” (Bowker and Star, 2000: 319). This recognition is the first step towards a critical analysis of the effects of the categories on which and through which we work and live. A consideration of the category construction by Alvesson and Karreman thus follows.

**The Boundary Work of Alvesson and Karreman**

In an earlier draft of this paper involved an attempt at redrawing this classification according to our own criteria. In doing so, we quickly actualised Foucault's (1974) and Bowker and Star's (2000) observations that the drawing and qualifying of any classificatory and boundary regimes of this type is bound to be an exclusionary act which says more about the history of the field and of our own research interests, than who or what it comprises per se. So what does discursive production has influenced the boundary work of Alvesson and Karreman's framework?

A close examination of the dimensions they have chosen shows that they are reflexive upon recent discourses in organization theory. These debates are summed up in recent exchanges in 'Organization Studies', and arose following the arrival in the early 1990s of post structuralism into organizational analysis. It is arguable that the latter, in itself, *inter alia* arose from a need to examine identity, meaning and culture in organizations, the subject of revelatory claims by gurus in the late 1980s, with methodological, epistemological and ontological consistency and clarity.
Parker (1999) outlines the two main areas of organization studies currently embroiled in this discussion: labour process analysis and organizational analysis. In summarising the debate, he pitches social realists such as Smith and Thompson (1992), Thompson and Ackroyd (1995) against post structuralists such as Knights and Willmott (1995) highlighting the ‘fundamental antagonism’ (1995:35) between the two groups of writers. The root of this antagonism is embedded in the various commitments to which each position is bound in the research process. Whilst emergent post structuralists such as Knights, Willmott, Parker and others were arguing for an organizational microsociology which focused on the context-specific subject, or agent, as constructing reality, through speech as social action, structural realists such as Smith, Thompson, Ackroyd and Reed fundamentally oppose such ontological and epistemological positioning. The former critique latter accounts as the product of the white, heterosexual and phallogocentric, dualistic systems that we (sic) aim to critique, which ‘place[s] a constraining hierarchy around knowledge’ (Knights, 1997). Instead, the former approach advocates a dynamic conceptualisation of the power/resistance relation which calls the material, structural ‘givens’, such as class, gender and resistance, into question. Most notably, Knights and Willmott (1992) argue for a problematisation of the position of ‘the subject’, ‘subjectivity’ and ‘subjection’ in capitalist relations of power. This subject becomes the centre of empirical and epistemological interest and speaks per se, constituting identity, culture and power by speaking about their working lives. The speaking subject was, in theory at least, able to introduce many different, clashing, incongruous identities into its account of workplace assujetissement, which socially constructed, and hence problematised the aforementioned structural ‘givens’, and needed to be investigated in a theoretically grounded and methodologically consistent way. Thompson, Ackroyd, Smith and others, on the other hand, prefer to categorise (for example) the study of resistance in organizations in a deep, detailed and structured way, drawing on texts from across the range of social sciences to
provide a detailed a priori categorisation of what to expect in the process of empirical investigation. This is the basis of the realist critique of post structural work. Writers such as Reed (1997) attack anti-realist positions for failing to ‘confront’ and ‘conveniently forgetting’ structure, instead opting for radically subjective, one-level, relativist and process dominated social ontologies. Thus for Reed, the essence of this opposition, is the unconscionable dismissal of structure and its implications, such as the inadequate engagement with politics and ethics.

It seems that the two positions are fundamentally opposed over the two issues - structure/agency and generalisability, and realism versus relativism. Put simply, whether social structure exists in reality as something outside the text which legitimately structures and constrains action, or whether it is emergent from speaking or textually produced subject(s) and constitutive thereof, producing (inter alia) temporally unstable structures is what is at stake here. A focus on speech as action and organization as text have emerged as themes in organizational analysis, and all have been labelled 'discursive', but not without controversy.

As we have previously noted, discourse analysis, and the concept of 'discourse' has almost been posited as a cure - all to these inexorable 'paradigm wars'. These divisions, however, are still reflected in Alvesson and Karreman's framework. There are striking similarities between their two dimensions and the two issues we outlined in the last paragraph. For example, it is possible to re - read their 'levels of discourse' dimension (from micro to mega) as an iteration of the agency / structure and generalisation problematic. By distinguishing between the micro and mega discursive, the distinction between the transient action of a conversation and the durability of structures of meaning is drawn. The problem of generalisability remains: how do
we draw conclusions about overall social context from a studying interviews as conversations? How do we access contextually rich social action and negotiation by looking at the durability of meaning structures. Similarly, their distinction between muscular and transient modes of DA alludes to the type of relationship between the research act and 'reality' which the aforementioned factions have been debating for a number of years. Indeed, this is reflected in various areas of organization studies. For example, the dualistic distinction between rhetoric and reality has been a potent and enduring debate in studies of human resource management practice (Legge, 1995; Grant, 2000). Whether the gap is as wide for practitioners of HRM as it is for academics who study it is another matter, and one yet to be addressed. In respect of the latter, Foucault argues that discursive penetration is part of the battle when it comes to establishing 'truth claims' in order to legitimate one's practice.

So, what Alvesson and Karreman have effectively achieved is an organization studies specific territorialisation of discourse analysis, which reflects all our quirks and idiosyncrasies as a group of academics. Moreover, there is now, it seems, a conveniently classified mode of DA for us all to use: there is a type of DA to suit all tastes! Can we all now 'do it' without being subject to the wrath of Mike Reed and Paul Thompson, and the fervent protestations of Hugh Willmott and David Knights? Maybe, but there are facets of organizational life and its study which are excluded from this framework, but are absolutely vital if the production and circulation of D/discourse(s) are to be addressed. We refer to facets which are at the boundaries of discursive production itself, but in our view, are in tense relation to it: materialities, in terms both of physical embodiment, the technical/technological and the non-human.
Materiality: Bodies and Embodiment

A number of texts have been published recently to highlight, and to varying extents, to address directly the limitations of current sociological thinking on the body (e.g. Butler, 1990; Shilling, 1993; Burkitt, 1999). Most of these bemoan the lack of interest in the body and materiality in general in social science in favour of a thinly-disguised privileging of the cognitive and idealistic. Despite this tendency, however, Shilling (1993) argues that there are a number of partial exceptions to this tendency in the established sociological canon, writers in whose work the body is an ‘absent presence’. Among these writers he includes Marx, Weber and latterly a number of the social constructionists, by whom it is recognised that “social relations may take up and transform our embodied capacities in all manner of ways, but they still have a basis in human bodies” (1993: 13). Along with Burkitt, Shilling also recognises a number of more recent writers who have made the body a more central part of their philosophy; namely Goffman, Foucault, Bourdieu and Elias. Also worthy of note is the work of Bryan Turner (1984; 1992) who has played a major role in shifting the focus not only of sociology but by extension of organisation theory to a contemplation of embodiment and aspects of ‘bodily order’.

Before examining the ways in which each of these theorists has tried to incorporate the body in their investigations, it is vital to contextualise such debates with a consideration of the traditional neglect of issues related to the body. For Turner (1991), there are clear reasons why sociology, since its infancy, has emphasised its focus on the mind rather than the body. Concerns by Durkheim and subsequent writers to distinguish themselves from biology and psychology, their interests in recent social change which could not be explained by evolutionary arguments, their privileging of rational agency located in the mind, all militated
against a serious concern with human bodies. Shilling (1993) also suggests that the methodology of classical sociology valued the objectivity of the mind over the emotionality of animalistic bodily reactions, and also reflected the specifically masculinist concerns and ideology of the early writers. Burkitt (1999), on the other hand, traces the roots of this neglect to the legacy of Cartesian dualism in Western philosophy. In effect, we are still struggling within modes of thought which are founded on the notion of a separation between mind and body, within a social science which takes it lead from this atomistic and individualistic philosophy. What this misses is the embodied and relational nature of the mind and thus of individuals; “the ‘mind’ is an effect of bodily action in the world and of becoming a person from the recognition of one’s position in a diverse network of social relations” (Burkitt, 1999: 12).

In various ways, then, it is argued that writers such as Goffman, Foucault, Elias and most recently Bourdieu have brought into question this philosophy and ontology of the social world and thereby, the nature of social science. Such works are summarised very well elsewhere; we will restrict ourselves to a very brief outline of what we understand as their key insights. For Goffman, then, the body is a key element in the relationship between self-identity and social identity and much of his work focuses on analyses of what he termed “shared vocabularies of body idiom” (Goffman, 1963). Foucault, by way of contrast, sets out a position from *Discipline and Punish* (1977) onwards which, in Shilling’s view at least, verges on a ‘discursive essentialism’; for Foucault, the body is produced by and exists in discourse and thus by and in power relations. His work also revisits elements of the social constructionist perspective; as he argues, “We believe, in any event, that the body obeys the exclusive laws of physiology and that it escapes the influence of history, but this too is false. The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of
work, rest, and holidays; it is poisoned by food or values through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistances” (Foucault, 1986: 380). His abiding interest in “the body and the effects of power on it” (Foucault, 1980; 58) has been particularly influential on modern writers and accounts for much of the contemporary focus on the disciplinary and self-disciplinary aspects of embodiment. Similar to Foucault, the work of Norbert Elias focuses on historical changes in the body and our embodied experience related to the emergence of what he terms “the Civilized Body” (1991). Stemming from the mores of court society, Elias argues that we are subjected and have subjected ourselves to a socialisation and rationalisation of bodies linked to the individualisation of body and self, such that we now monitor and control our bodies to an unprecedented degree to achieve ‘appropriate’ civilised behaviour. Finally, Bourdieu’s (1977: 1990) conceptions of ‘habitus’ and ‘physical capital’ have also been widely influential, addressing the ways in which class relations are embodied. Bourdieu’s thesis is that the body is commodified such that it acts as the bearer of symbolic social value through education and acculturation. In common with the other writers, Bourdieu’s work introduces the body itself into our understanding of the social and elevates certain aspects of materiality frequently disregarded by the majority of social scientists.

Organisation Studies cannot be said to have been any less guilty of neglect of themes of embodiment than related social science. By virtue of its ancillary (parasitic?) relationship with social science more broadly, has inherited a number of the selfsame strengths and weaknesses as the disciplines from which it emerged and with which it interacts. Thus while there are notable exceptions, such as Hassard, Holliday and Willmott’s edited collection (2000), a more typical position has been the neglect of themes related to the body and embodiment in favour of a idealist focus. However, a number of recent social and philosophical developments have also brought this gap to our attention. Shilling describes
these twin features of what he terms High Modernity very well; “We now have the means to exert an unprecedented degree of control over bodies, yet we are also living in an age which has thrown into radical doubt our knowledge of what bodies are and how we should control them” (1993: 3).

Thus, organization studies, as a derivative of sociological enquiry, is lacking any extensive discussion of how we might incorporate a notion of the body, and develop organizationally applicable body ontologies. Until very recently, this was also true of existing studies of bodies in the workplace, which are of a very specific nature: those conducted by ergonomists. Ergonomists are primarily concerned with designing all aspects of the work environment (i.e. mental and physical) to best accommodate the human being, in its various shapes, sizes, genders, abilities and so on. The ergonomist aims to achieve maximum efficiency and minimum stress (mental and musculoskeletal) during task completion. Essentially, the body is seen as a machinic extension in this field, and is modelled using anthropomorphic datasets collected by the North American military in the early post war period. This, until recently, has been ‘the field of knowledge that has paid most direct attention to the embodied nature of work’ (Hassard, Holliday and Willmott, 2000: 4). Thus, the body itself, and the experience of having a body, being embodied has been unwittingly written out of this field, either because of its irrelevance, unscientificity, immeasurability, subjective focus, or all four. In this section, we make two suggestions as to how we might develop organizational body ontologies, based on the theorising of N Katherine Hayles (1999). They are thus: First, that the body be understood as a cultural construct, relative to a set of normative criteria, which is simultaneously lived and experienced; and second, that it be understood as a material entity which is part of a network with other organizational members, technologies and practices, which incorporate it as material, but also afford it relational meaning. These two suggestions
are not unrelated: both emphasise the role of normalisation in constructing bodily conduct, both emphasise the body’s connection with discourse, but distinguish it therefrom, and each suggestion incorporates a degree of tension and negotiation, which we are at pains to highlight. However, the latter has a greater emphasis upon technological materialities, with which we develop our arguments later in the paper.

Our first suggestion introduces the work of Longhurst (2001), a critical human geographer, who explicitly considers the meaning of the material body in the organizational setting, establishing, through reflexive empirical investigation, the social and cultural norms which it is expected to represent. She also examines the nature, construction and meaning of deviation from this norm. Longhurst asserts that business organizations have developed a normative body ontology which concerns its containment, fluidity, ability and impairment. The starting point for her analysis is the business suit. Her main thesis addresses the tension inherent in norms of corporate comportment: between strong, firm, upright, clean cut business attire, which hides the less firm, fluid sides of the human body. For Longhurst, it signifies creation of a norm concerning the impenetrability of bodily boundaries in the workplace. She argues that, in the workplace, it is considered inappropriate for matter to make its way from the inside to the outside of the body. For example, ‘farting, burping, urinating, spitting, dribbling, sneezing, coughing, having a runny nose, crying and sweating (2001: 99)’ are all considered unacceptable in the 'smart' office. Similarly, it is also questionable as to whether matter can enter the body in the workplace: drinking and eating at one's desk, and smoking, are appropriate examples. Furthermore, the business suit has a normalising effect on the types of body which are more organizationally 'appropriate' and 'acceptable'. The business suit creates an image of the controlled, firm, body: a body that is not controlled, not neatly concealed, arouses desire and disgust, and detracts from the rational controlled normality of
organizational life. The same is true for the corporate uniform, which disciplines workers bodies in a similar manner.

Corporate attire is thus the starting point for the construction of difference in the workplace, because of its concealment and revealment of the relative fluidity and fleshiness of the bodies they contain. Sometimes the body can seep, or even burst through this barrier, and in doing so is constructed as volatile, deviant, and different. For example, Longhurst cites larger bodied people who feel that the structured business suit firms up their squashy bodies, making them more organizationally acceptable. Seepage is also important in the coding of the female body. Irigaray (1985), for example, argues that fluids tend to be implicitly associated with women's bodies through maternity, pregnancy, and menstruation. In organizational body ontologies, the fluid is subordinated to the firm. This is supported by other studies of women's corporate attire. McDowell (1997) argues that managerial and administrative women are judged harshly in relation to their attire - whether what she is wearing is too bright, too revealing, or too masculine. Appropriate female office attire is precarious indeed. Women who 'play down their feminine side' in their workplace attire are considered 'butch', and their sexuality is called into question. Women who do not conceal their curves according to the 'norm' run the risk of arousing desire in their male colleagues, and, again, their sexuality is up for grabs. So what is the idealised body concealed by the corporate suit? Firm, upright, hairless, flawlessly contained, and on the masculine side of androgyny.

This idealised body is also, of course, an able, competent body and this is written into normative corporate language and image (Benschop and Meihuizen, 1999). Common competency requirements for every managerial job also have consequences at the level of the material body. 'Flexibility' would be one such example: flexibility in working hours, tasks,
colleagues and contexts all takes its toll on the body (Cooper 1999). More generally, over-flexing the managerial body leads to stress, where its mental and physical capacities are overwhelmed. Ironically, it is women's bodies which are often considered to '..be "naturally" more pliable, supple, bendable, limber, yielding, adaptable and compliant' (2001:119), but anything which is prone to leakage is probably best left unstretched lest it collapse. Embodied language features highly in descriptions of managerial and organizational life (Ball, 2001): the previous example of 'flexibility' serves to illustrate our point rather well. Organization theorists of all persuasions would agree with Longhurst's assertion that to be 'flexible' (as well as contained) is a competitive advantage, to 'bend over backwards' for one's customers is a must. So whilst the body is arguably the source of certain metaphors which create managerial languages of competence, which are seen in various technologies and techniques of management, it is also produced by them. And thus the interplay arises between the body as a cultural construct, and one which is lived in at a particular contextual moment in time and space.

It is at this point that we move to the second suggestion we make about organizational body ontologies: that they are experienced as interacting with other organizational members, technologies and practices. This ontology is not entirely exclusive from the one we just presented, but it explicitly introduces non-human elements of organization into the fray. It is the nature of their connection which is called into question. To elaborate upon this point, we again return to Hayles (1999). When addressing the nature of connectivity between bodies and other technological materialities (of the type one might find in organizations), she introduced two notions which are held together in a tense relation which have consequences at the level of the material body, material technology and culture: incorporation practice and inscription practice. Her analysis rests upon the tense notion that use and interaction with
technology incorporates the body as a material entity, but also inscribes it: marks, records and traces its actions in other textual and material media, which abstract from that body, mark and govern it, but do not essentialise it. Hayles' objective is to trouble the leap made from embodied reality to abstract information about that 'reality'. Her analysis makes us aware of the material body and the situations in which it is placed, as well as with the discursive constructions which inscribe and place it.

Put briefly, incorporating practices are defined as 'an action (such as a mouse click, or a carefully placed finger on a delete button) that is recorded in bodily memory by repeated performances until it becomes habitual' (1999: 199). Learning to type is an incorporating practice – when we say that someone knows how to type, it is not to say that they can recite all the relative positions of the keys on the typewriter keyboard, it is to say that they know where to place their hands over the keyboard until the keys seem to be an extension of his or her fingers. As Parker (2000: 75) says: *Our bodies are only ever given realisation through their connection with non –human materials. The hand becomes a hand when it holds a tool. The eye becomes an eye when it sees an icon.* In some ways, these competencies and skills are distinct from discourse, although in some situations they may produce it, or may be read discursively. Thus, Hayles follows Connerton (1989) in suggesting that incorporating practices may not be reduced to a sign altogether.

However, characteristic ways of performing incorporating practices are also culturally specific. Particular email shorthands, ways of dressing, walking, or particular gestures both begin in the body and construct an environment and flow from the environment to the body through learning. These are inscription practices: practices which attempt to abstract, code and normalise information about materialities, whilst dematerialising them per se.
Incorporating practices govern the performativity of bodily content, inscription practices regulate and correct that performance. Returning to our typing example, one would be referring to abstracted rules about where the hands should be placed over the keyboard, how quickly one should be able to type if one were to practice regularly, and so on, if one were to discuss the coding and inscription of typing practice in a particular setting.

Further, Johnson (1987), notes that when bodies are used in different ways, either because of technological changes or changes in culture, new forms of embodied practice encode into language. Thus, embodiment writes discourse. Embodied experience is articulated in language, which constructs new interfaces between, *inter alia* bodies with new uses and new technologies. Indeed, Lupton (1999) when discussing the embodied computer user and her relationship with the humanized computer identifies difficulties with the boundaries between humans and computers, troubling the human/computer, or human / non human dyad. In complete opposition to an ergonomic analysis, Lupton notes how inanimate electronic objects become extensions of the body, and become 'psychically invested into the self' (1999: 99). Culturally speaking, therefore:

'this relationship is symbiotic: users invest certain aspects of themselves and their cultures when "making sense" of their computers, and their use of computers may be viewed as contributing to individuals' images and experiences of their selves and their bodies. Our interactions with PCs 'inscribe' our bodies, so that, for example, pens start to feel awkward as writing instruments.'

Organizations incorporate and inscribe *par excellence*. Organizations produce and are produced by incorporating practices. We use our bodies in the workplace: our actions and
interactions at work incorporate us as embodied organizational members. Interacting socially and technologically in the organisation inscribes this embodiment. Organizational inscription practices - textual and cultural practices which govern bodily performance - are as widespread as the body is placed in the socio-technical arrays of organizational life. Organizational inscription practices are also silently embedded in soft and hard technologies, the materiality of workspace design, time reckoning practice, human resource management practice and knowledge management systems. Training, developing, judging and rewarding the organizational member on anything from technical ability to communication skills is a perfect example of how an incorporation practice has become inscribed, dematerialised and abstracted by organizations and organizing. So, after individual bodies leave the workplace, traces of their presence are left to be read. Each has cultural and discursive implications, but, following Hayles, is not reducible thereto.

In summary, we have suggested that there are two interconnecting ways in which we can begin to address the body in organizational analysis: as lived and experienced in relation to cultural constructs, and as incorporated, inscribed and marked by interaction with human and non human entities. Using Hayles and Longhurst’s work, we have highlighted the complexity and tension that may be interpellated between incorporation (body and embodiment), technological materialities, and inscription (culture, ‘D/discourse’, norm, text). This complexity is summarised by Hayles: ‘Formed by technology at the same as it creates technology, embodiment mediates between technology and discourse by creating new experiential frameworks that serve as boundary markers for the creation of corresponding discursive systems’ (1999:205).
The key to our argument is heterogeneity. Following Parker (2000) and Haraway (1999) we are keen to point out that we do not seek to reify or fetishise embodiment, the body and other materialities in studies of organization, but merely to problematise and interpellate its absence from existing work, suggest how it might be included, particularly in respect of its relation to discourse (Ball, 2001). How might a study such as this be conducted?

**Discourse and the Non-Human**

Towards the heterogeneity of actors, and connectivity between human and non human is where we feel the field should proceed in order to avoid reification of any particular elements of organization under analysis. A methodological suggestion would be to introduce notions of Actor Network Theory, which we will now briefly describe.

Any ANT-based analysis involves the construction of an analytical narrative which affords each actor identical and symmetrical ontological status, and focuses upon the way they become connected together to form a network which is durable and ‘value’ producing. Any socio-technical network is seen as durable purely because of the outcome of a set of negotiations between human and non human actors, conducted at a totally local level. The narrative constructs these negotiations, through extensive historical, documentary and empirical research. There are three basic tenets of ANT: *Intéressement, translation,* and *enrolment.* At a general level, *intéressement* refers to the way in which an enrolling actor troubles other actors offering them a position in a network which will cure their troubled state. The enrolling actor thus has authority and authorship of the network. Clearly, there is an issue of power relations here: enrolment is not a unilateral process. To enrol in a network, the enrolled party is yielding to the will of the enrolling actor. Power is thus dispersed in a relational sense around the network (Latour, 1986). *Enrolment* also implies the giving of a
specific role to various actors by other actors, the process of which is referred to by Callon (1991) as *translation*. This is also reflexive upon the authority and authorship of enrolling actors in their networks. Subsequently, Michael (1996) observes that when a network becomes established, its well trodden paths of identity - becoming form *'obligatory points of passage'* for enrolment therein. This ultimately results in the *'black boxing’* of an array as durable through time and space.

Three further elements of networks: *immutable mobiles, emissaries and intermediaries* help to define authorship of actors in creating networks (Callon 1991). According to its various proponents, human bodies feature among a number of materialities here. Generally speaking, the degree of differentiation between these terms stems from their inherent mutability. Intermediaries are defined as 'anything passing between actors that defines the relationship between them' (Callon 1991: 134 - 135), and can be 'texts….newspapers or popular press, objects…skills, or money, in all its forms' (Molloy 1999:82-83). According to Callon, intermediaries are central in any ANT analysis because of their circulatory nature. They are fundamental in defining the relation between actors. Emissaries (Law, 1987) are also similarly circulated, durable and are documents, devices and drilled people/disciplined bodies. Finally, the immutable mobile (Latour, 1986) is a text, graphic or figure which transcends spatio temporal distance in networks.

Introducing notions of incorporation and technological materiality into an ANT style narrative would be relatively unproblematic. Enrolment in a network refers to, among other things, the corporeal performativity involved in habituating requisite behaviours, skills and knowledge inherent within that particular context. Similarly, technological materialities are also afforded discussions of their incorporation. Translation processes between an array of
heterogeneous actors focus upon the manner in which they become governed, marked, coded and inscribed by various inscriptive means, even though the means of inscription are mobile and durable in themselves, introducing a notion of tension. Black boxing is the ultimate abstraction of the network, dematerialising its complexity and connectivity.

Discourse analysis is implicated in this method, but is similarly unreified and unfetishised by its proponents. It has its place in ANT, in that it may be used in various ways to examine languages of translation which socially construct the identity of different actors within a network (Michael 1996), using various techniques such as those proposed by Billig (1992); Fairclough (1992) and Potter and Wetherell (1987). However, it is only one of a number of analytical methods used in this area to engage with empirical material which primarily addresses the emergence and durability of scientific and technical innovations, although, according to its proponents is universally applicable. It is at this point that we examine the implications of this for this paper, the organization studies field and ourselves, and to draw some conclusions from what we have written.

**Implications for Organization Studies and some Conclusions**

In this paper, we have advocated a critical way of thinking about research and knowledge generation in and about organizations which acknowledges the importance of discourse(s), but also allows embodiment, and other materialities to emerge. We have constructed this argument by proposing an examination of the boundary work – the ‘labour of division’ - undertaken by Alvesson and Karreman’s (2000) framework which classifies the types of discourse analysis that may be used by organization analysts. The boundaries at the edge of the framework are drawn, and thus we are presented with a *fait accompli* which constitutes...
our field in DA terms. Upon its close reading, we were left wondering as to how we would challenge the *fait accompli* itself. We introduced work from Science and Technology Studies to mount this challenge, which examines the power and politics of classification, and the exclusionary practices of boundary drawing. We have shown that, not only is the division itself imbued with the power and political struggles which have dominated our field, it draws boundaries which background the tensions involved in the production and circulation of D/discourse(s).

We then offered an extensive discussion of what might be happening around the boundaries of this taxonomy, indeed, at the boundaries of D/discourse(s) circulation and production. It seems that the body as one specific example of materiality, and other materialities in general, are currently close to these boundaries. We think that we have highlighted, to some extent, the tensions and complexities which exist between bodily incorporation, technological materialities and inscription practices, wherein D/discourse(s) are implicit. Evidence from Hayles and Longhurst shows that the materialities involved in the creation and sustaining of D/discourse(s), and hence its study, can trouble the limits of discourse analysis.

These concepts certainly have application in organization studies. This way of thinking would, we think, open up analytical space which would influence the way in which organizational life is characterised. For example, to emphasise embodiment in the study of knowledge management, would un-black box the central problematic of KM in a completely different way. If the notion of tacit knowledge was recast as incorporated or embodied; one which is deeply sedimented into the body, habitual, contains improvisational elements which mutate upon contextual contact; KM would have available a resource which engendered a new gender based and post colonial critique, as well as exploding its more mainstream
problematic which is based on the conversion of tacit to explicit knowledge. Similarly, an organization theory - specific application of ANT to the use of ICTs in all their forms, and acknowledgement and deep investigation of the translation processes which occur between humans and non humans during processes of technological innovation, with the emphases we previously described, offers much to all dimensions (e.g. social, technological, organizational) understanding of systems implementation and use. Furthermore, recasting the resource based view of the firm in terms of social and cultural capital, to include notions of bodily normativity and representation, similar to the analysis offered by Longhurst (2001) and those of other materialities in the organization, would add new depth to these notions.

There is just one further point to address: that of our own reflexivity. We have spent most of this paper situating other people's work, so what about our own? We are two young (ish!) academics in organization studies who were brought up on Foucault, discourse analysis and the post structuralist research ideology of the early to mid 1990s, and who are now wondering what happened to materiality, but have no desire to be labelled either realist or relativist. Foucauldian discourse analysis, in particular, is a disembodied notion, and using two of the terms we have just presented - incorporation and inscription it has become clear, during the writing of this paper, that any form of discourse analysis is, too, an inscription practice. Using the forms of discourse analysis that we were taught, how realistic an option is it to assume that we can get to grips with issues surrounding materiality and incorporation? Discourse analysis is a technology of language which inscribes organizational life in a highly specialised and stylised way, which necessarily (according to Hayles) occludes incorporation. Furthermore, using Foucault, one could argue that this, in itself, produces a particular kind of researcher and research subject. We have highlighted the politics of boundary drawing, and the occlusion of materialities such as the body, but we are doing so partly because we are
embedded within a set of research related ideologies which make this strategy seem plausible.

As such, in writing this paper, we are also troubling our own boundary work in an attempt to take the field forward.
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