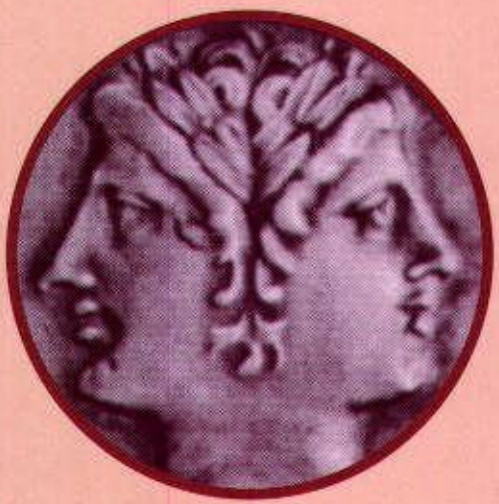
an analysis of government communicators' talk

discourse of



dilemmas

Hedwig te Molder

Stellingen

1. Hoe zakelijker de voorlichting, hoe politiek controversiëler het beleid. (dit proefschrift)
2. Alhoewel overheidsvoorlichters officieel niet verantwoordelijk zijn voor beleid, handelen zij in de praktijk alsof dit wel het geval is. (dit proefschrift)
3. Het feit dat overheidsvoorlichters hun neutrale status herhaaldelijk melden aan collega's die deze status geacht worden te kennen, geeft aan dat neutraliteit hier een probleem is. (dit proefschrift)
4. De voorlichtingscampagne tegen sexueel geweld steunt op precies die stereotypen van daders en slachtoffers waartegen zij ageert. (dit proefschrift)
5. De discussie of voorlichters beleid *mogen* maken, gaat voorbij aan het feit dat zij dit reeds doen. (dit proefschrift)
6. Adequate overheidsvoorlichting brengt de overheid in opspraak.
7. Het gekunstelde karakter van soaps als *The Bold and the Beautiful* toont feilloos aan dat het model van de mens als strategisch wezen niet voldoet.
8. Dat natuurlijk taalgebruik slechts sporadisch de basis vormt voor sociaal-wetenschappelijk onderzoek, kan worden verklaard uit een behoefte aan orde en voorspelbaarheid bij de onderzoeker.
9. Wetenschappers die menen dat onderzoek zijn praktische waarde ontleent aan de mate waarin 'concrete aanbevelingen' worden verstrekt, onderschatten de praktijk en overschatten het eigen intellect.
10. Het correctief referendum voedt de illusie dat het volk beschikt en het parlement wikt.
11. Bolkestein is het levende bewijs dat duidelijkheid op zichzelf geen kwaliteit is.

behorende bij het proefschrift

Discourse of Dilemmas:
An analysis of government communicators' talk

Hedwig te Molder
Wageningen, 18 december 1995

Discourse of Dilemmas

An analysis of government communicators' talk

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Hedwig te Molder

Discourse of Dilemmas

An analysis of government communicators' talk

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
in de landbouw- en milieuwetenschappen
op gezag van de rector magnificus,
dr. C.M. Karssen,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
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Front cover shows detail from 'Janus', Roman coin, 268 B.C.

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In much of human conduct there are no mechanisms,
only practices.

Rom Harré

To my parents

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Nijmegen, November 1995.

Contents

1

Government communication as discursive representation

This is a study of government communicators' talk. Government communication has been studied with respect to its history, its ethics, its position as a policy instrument and its (in)effectiveness. However, little is known about the mundane practice of government communication (Van Woerkum, 1994; 1995).

This thesis examines the daily communicative practices through which government communicators translate policies of the government into communication campaigns. More specifically, its focus is on the interactional resources government communicators use to make sense of government policies, and the actions they may accomplish through their reports on these policies. In its perspective and method, the study reflects the so-called linguistic turn in the human sciences. In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of discourse as a topic in its own right. Rather than considering language as a neutral medium for the description of reality, sociologists as well as psychologists have come to focus on the social and constructive nature of language. The specific form of discourse analysis on which the current study is based, has been developed by the social psychologists Potter,

Edwards and Wetherell. Informed by such diverse sources as linguistic philosophy, ethnomethodology, post-structuralism and social studies of science, its concern is with the things people *do* with their language and the contextual resources they deploy for these actions.

The present study, then, explores the domain of government communication from a language perspective. In this chapter, I first discuss some main themes in government communication research and argue why a study on the everyday conversational interactions of government communicators is relevant in this respect (section 1.1). Until now, no effort has been made to illuminate the fine grain of government communicators' talk, whereas it is precisely at this level that major discursive actions are accomplished and the rhetorical work is done. I shall point out how discourse analysis may be helpful in reformulating our view on government communication. The research questions will be pointed out in section 1.2. Finally, an overview of the thesis will be given (section 1.3).

1.1 EFFECTIVENESS AND LEGITIMACY OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION

In the Netherlands, government communication has always been a bone of contention. The main issues in communication research as well as in public debates about government communication, are the effectiveness of the communication and its legitimacy as a policy instrument. While there are similar discussions in, for example, Britain and the United States of America, I shall predominantly focus on the Dutch situation. Some understanding of government communication in the Netherlands is essential for the themes to be pursued in this thesis. I shall use the term government communication, rather than the more familiar government information. In the Netherlands, this term is increasingly preferred, particularly because it emphasizes the interactive nature of communication. As we shall see, it is precisely the interactive character of government communication which will be

examined in this thesis. The term government communication is also preferred to public communication. Government communication indicates that I refer to communication programmes which are initiated and sponsored by the national government. My interest is in the campaigns which are initiated by the government, rather than in, for example, press communication or the response to individual questions from the public (see Chapters 3 and 4).

The issues of effectiveness and legitimacy of government communication are discussed in turn. Clearly, these issues are related. For example, the effectiveness of a campaign may be dependent on the extent to which the recipients of this campaign consider its aims and nature as legitimate. However, as we shall see, the focus of each theme is different.

The effectiveness of government communication

In the eighties, Dutch government communication had become a thriving business (see also Appendix D). The number of government communicators was increased by 20 per cent. At the start of the nineties, the number of staff members amounted to more than 1000 people. In 1991, the expenditure on government communication totalled 659 million guilders, that is, about 0,3 per cent of the Budget (Algemene Rekenkamer/*Public Accounts Committee*, 1992). Note that these figures must be handled with care, since there is some difference of opinion as to which activities should be considered government communication (cf. Leeuw, 1993).

However, from 1991 onwards, the situation has changed. In that year, the Public Accounts Committee reported unfavourably on the effectiveness of government communication campaigns and demonstrated that procedures which could guarantee efficient expenditure were missing. This was the signal for a wave of criticism on government communication in the media. On the basis of this and a second report (Werkgroep GEO Voorlichting, 1991), the Cabinet decided to cut back

the government expenses by 51,7 million per year. The main criticism with respect to government communication campaigns was the lack of effectiveness and the putative moralizing character of the campaigns (cf. Middel, 1993). I shall elaborate on the latter aspect in the second part of this section.

The Public Accounts Committee studied the evaluation reports of 26 government communication campaigns in the period 1985-88. These reports described the results of the campaigns in terms of changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour or a combination of these variables. While it was the intention of the researchers to study 70 campaigns, only 26 reports were assessed as proper evaluation reports and taken into account as far as the effectiveness of the campaigns was concerned. In general, the effect of these 26 campaigns was considered to be far beneath their objectives. A second observation was that 34 out of the 70 campaigns had ambitious objectives, namely, in terms of changes in both knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. The Public Accounts Committee concluded that most campaigns were not subjected to evaluation studies, and if they were, that they could be considered largely ineffective in view of their objectives. The Public Accounts Committee, however, refrained from judging the quality of the objectives. This was considered a political task (cf. Leeuw, 1995: 103).

Evaluation studies are fraught with difficulties, as communication researchers have pointed out repeatedly (Weiss and Tschirhart, 1994). The absence of unambiguous evidence is predominantly attributed to the methodological difficulty of isolating and assessing the contributions of communication campaigns in the middle of a range of competing influences. More fundamental is the problem of how to *define* the effectiveness of campaigns. The diversity in definitions perhaps explains why the evaluation of campaigns displays radically different conclusions about their success (see Salmon, 1989b, for overview). As Salmon (1989a: 40) points out, the search for a definitive answer to the question "Are campaigns effective?" is a search for a minotaur, because the functions, duration, potentials, and levels of creativity and resources are exceptionally heterogeneous.

The image that campaigns generally do not have a particularly strong effect is based on research in the early fifties and sixties that sought to replicate the terrifying effects of the propaganda of Nazi Germany (Hymann and Sheatsley, 1947; Bauer, 1964). A review of this work by Klapper (1960) concluded that campaigns tend to have minimal effect, since they function among and through a range of mediating factors (see also Atkin, 1981). Perhaps because the issue of effectiveness is problematic, research on campaigns often confines itself to the observation that government communication campaigns, or public communication campaigns in general, display a lack of effectiveness (cf. Dervin, 1989). The focus is on improving the effectiveness of campaigns. In some of the approaches, the definition of effectiveness has also been reformulated. It is beyond the scope of this study to deal with these perspectives in detail. Instead, I shall have a brief look at the main perspectives: social psychological approaches, policy-instrument approaches and the interpretative approaches (see Leeuwis, 1993 for a critical review of these approaches).

Most of the campaign research is rooted in *cognitive social psychological theories and models* (for example, McGuire, 1985; 1989; Devine and Hirt, 1989). In practice, campaign research often takes the form of a survey (De Haas, 1993). These surveys predict or evaluate the campaigns in terms of the number of steps required if the communication is to be effective. The steps range from exposure to the message, to understanding, storing and retrieving the information and, in the case of persuasion campaigns, short-range and long-range effects in attitude and behaviour. McGuire (1985; 1989) describes these steps in his communication/ persuasion model. This model includes so-called input factors such as source, message and receiver, out of which one can construct the communication to change attitude and behaviour. The output factors consist of successive information-processing substeps that the communication must evoke in the 'target person' so that the persuasive impact occurs. In the Netherlands, campaigns are often centred around the so-called Post-box 51 commercials. Each year, 15 to 20 new commercials of 27 seconds are shown on television. On the basis of evaluation

research on the exposure to these commercials, it is claimed that after 85 transmissions about 80 per cent of the Dutch population has been reached (De Haas, 1993). Researchers have tried to improve the effectiveness of these campaigns by supporting the successive stages of communication with different theories of human behaviour. Two of the main theories in the stages of attitude change and changes in behaviour are Bandura's (1986) *social learning theory* and Ajzen's (1988) *theory of planned behaviour* (see also Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). The theories together distinguish three determinants of human behaviour: attitudes, social influence and self-efficacy (cf. Kok, 1995; De Vries, 1992; see 2.1 for a critical review of the attitude-concept). In addition, Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) *elaboration likelihood model* has become increasingly popular. It distinguishes two conditions under which information may be processed: the so-called central route, which comprises a thorough processing of information and therefore a fertile soil for permanent change of behaviour, and the periferal route, which stands for a marginal information processing on the basis of certain periferal cues, such as the source or form of the message, or the influence of others. Amongst other things, the model points out the interaction between cognition and emotion, which is considered to be of importance to the design of communication programmes (Van Woerkum, 1991).

As is the case with social psychological approaches, the *policy-instrument approach* is a heterogeneous collection of different perspectives (De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof, 1991; Klok, 1991; Van der Doelen, 1991; Van Woerkum, 1990; see also Hood, 1983; Howlett, 1991). However, the central idea behind these approaches is that the effectiveness of communication can be improved by combining it with other policy instruments, such as regulation and subsidies. Communication as a supportive instrument can be used in several ways (Van Woerkum, Van de Poel and Aarts, 1995): it may stimulate public awareness about the existence and nature of other instruments; it may enhance the acceptability or relevance of these instruments or it may stimulate an efficient implementation of other instruments. In response to linear conceptions of communication as a policy instrument, a more interactive approach has been developed (Aarts and Van Woerkum, 1994; Van Woerkum, 1993; Van

Woerkum, Van de Poel and Aarts, 1995; see also Chapter 8). This approach emphasizes participatory learning processes, thereby reflecting a wider awareness of the importance of participation of 'target groups' in communication (Engel, 1995; Leeuwis, 1993; Röling, 1994a; 1994b; Vaandrager, 1995). In this conception, the role of government is one of facilitating the process of communication with citizens by providing the relevant actors in the decision process with information, and stimulating debate among the general public (Van Woerkum, Van de Poel and Aarts, 1995; see also Frissen, 1993). This is not only considered to be a matter of consensus formation; the role of different power strategies is rapidly becoming a main topic of research.

The *receiver-oriented or interpretative approaches* (Bosman et al., 1989; Dervin, 1989) in government communication have been developed in response to what has been called the sender-oriented model. The main criticism of this model is that it assumes a mechanistic and linear relation between the message and its effects in terms of attitude and behaviour (Nelissen, 1995). The proposed alternative is based on the idea that receivers should be conceived of as *active* participants in the communication process. This assumes that communication planners gain insight into the ways in which people attribute meaning to phenomena in daily life. Not surprisingly perhaps, the theoretical foundations for these approaches can be found in symbolic interactionism (for example, Blumer, 1969), and the sociology of knowledge as it was developed by Schutz (1973) and elaborated by Berger and Luckmann (1967).

From this brief review of approaches to government communication, it is clear that the receivers of government communication, either in terms of social psychological theories or in terms of more interactive and interpretative approaches, have been a major subject of communication research. It is now widely agreed that the effectiveness of government communication, in whatever form, is largely dependent on the extent to which the consideration and practices of the recipients are known and understood. However, what is not addressed in this field of research, is what we tend to call the sender of communication. Gradually, but effectively,

communication researchers have excluded government communicators from their theories. Clearly, policy-instrument approaches have focused on communication as one of the policy instruments in the hands of policy experts and government communicators. However, this has been predominantly a theoretical enterprise. In general, little is known about how government communication is developed in daily practice (cf. Van de Poel and Van Woerkum, 1994). Although government communicators have provided us with campaign reconstructions (for example, De Roon and Middel, 1993), the reconstructive nature of these studies and their lack of detail obscure the *in situ* production of campaigns.

Discourse analysis can assist in studying the 'local' practices of government communicators, since it converges on everyday language practices. However, it is also relevant in a second sense. Discourse analysis in the form proposed by the British psychologists Potter, Edwards and Wetherell (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Edwards and Potter, 1992) denies the possibility of language as a neutral medium for the transmission of information. As we shall see in the next section, it is precisely this assumption which underlies the official principles of government communication.

The legitimacy of government communication

The putative, moralizing character of government communication has always been an issue of debate. The core of the matter lies in the question as to what extent the government is allowed to influence citizens by means of communication. Traditionally, this debate has been dominated by two rather clear-cut camps, namely, the so-called *rekkelijken* and the so-called *preciezen* or, in a free translation, the pliable and the strict. Whereas the protagonists of the first camp advocate the use of government communication as a way merely to explain and elucidate government policies, the latter group supports the use of government communication as an

instrument with which to change people's attitudes and behaviour. Both camps have their roots in the history of government communication.

Just after the Second World War, the Van Heuven Goedhart (1946) committee is set up to investigate the functions of government communication and to determine its boundaries in terms of influence (Katus and Volmer, 1991). As far as politically controversial matters are concerned, the committee declares itself against propaganda: explanation is the only function of government communication in this respect. However, in non-controversial matters of public interest, propaganda is allowed. The next committee (Biesheuvel, 1967), in the late sixties, claims that persuasive communication, that is, communication which influences the will, is not allowed during the process of policy making. However, it is allowed to use persuasion in the case of policies which have been politically approved. Most importantly, however, the committee proposes that the right of citizens to information about government policies has to be laid down in legislation (cf. Schelhaas, 1979). This results in the *Wet Openbaarheid van Bestuur*, a law which provides citizens with the right to complete and relevant information about government policies.

Studies on government communication which appear in that period (Dekker, 1969; Van der Haak, 1972; Schelhaas, 1979), focus on the functions which government communication could and should have. Their definition of government communication emphasizes the importance of explanation and elucidation of government policies in order to enable the receivers to make independent and well-considered assessments with respect to them.

However, in the eighties, a third committee (Werkgroep Heroverweging Voorlichting Rijksoverheid, 1984) shifts the focus of government communication somewhat. It distinguishes four different functions of government communication. First, government communication explains and elucidates policy proposals and policies which have been politically accepted, and provides background information in this respect. Second, government communication is used as a policy instrument to make government policies more effective. This kind of government communication

aims at changes in attitudes and/or behaviour of (different groups of) citizens in order to produce policy results. A third function of government communication is to enable citizens to make use of all kinds of facilities by providing the necessary information. Finally, government communication may also systematically stimulate good relations between government and society, or comprise activities to improve the image of government (organisations). The latter function can be described as public relations.

The current study focuses on government communication campaigns, rather than on government communication in its entirety. In this respect, the first two functions are most important. Information campaigns [*openbaarmakingscampagnes*] aim at informing citizens, thus corresponding with the first function. Persuasion campaigns [*instrumentele campagnes*] aim at changes in attitudes and/or behaviour, thus fulfilling the second task of government communication. While information campaigns are measured in terms of increase of knowledge, persuasion campaigns are valued in terms of attitude and/or behaviourial change. These campaigns are only allowed in the case of politically accepted policies. In addition, the campaigns must concern relatively non-controversial topics (cf. Katus, 1993).

Irrespective of whether the aim is to inform or to persuade, each communicative message should 'stand for' or represent the views which were politically approved of or about to be approved of. In other words, whatever the influence of government communication may be, it is not allowed to change policies. Government communication does not exclude the possibility of persuasion, but it assumes that the persuasive effect of communication messages arises from the persuasiveness of government policies per se, or from the way the message is designed. That is, communication planners are not allowed to 'add' persuasive features by dealing with the content of these policies, for example, by only partially conveying the policies (Memorie van Antwoord WOB, 1988).

This is equally valid where it concerns communication campaigns as a 'stand-alone' approach, that is, when communication campaigns are the only instrument by which a certain policy objective is reached. Also then, government communicators

are considered to represent the policies which are politically approved of or about to be approved of, in their communication. This is not to be taken literally, in that campaign commercials, for example, are considered complete descriptions of government policies. Campaigns do make selections. However, the idea behind government communication is that these selections can be neutral, that is, government communicators can make them without intervening in the aims and the nature of policies to be communicated. In other words, government communication assumes that form and content can be distinguished. It is in this respect that communication planners are supposed to passive media: they merely transport political messages to the public.

Recent studies on texts and talk, whether their roots lie in Wittgenstein, Saussure or Garfinkel, criticize this conception of communication as representation. Rather than imitations of reality, representations are considered to be *social practice*. That is, representations are 'designed' to accomplish actions, which range from blame, defence and compliments to maintaining inequality. The literary theorist Shapiro (1988) nicely underlines the discursive nature of representation by talking about "the *politics* of representation".

It is the aim of this thesis to study the representational practices of government communicators. While there are many varieties of perspective on language use, I focus on the form of discourse analysis which emphasizes the importance of studying the fine grain of 'natural' talk (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, forthcoming c). As we shall see in the following chapters, this approach focuses on the actions which are accomplished by representations and the contextual resources which are used to do so. I want to add two important points. Notice that by focusing on representational practices, I do not mean to focus in particular on the elements in a description which work to establish it as factual or neutral (Potter, forthcoming c). While factuality in itself may be one of the functions of government communication, my special interest is in the further actions for which it can be used, such as blaming others and deflecting potential criticism. Second, while my vocabulary may sometimes suggest this, I do not mean to depict government communicators' actions

as intentional actions per se (see 2.2 for comments on the intentional nature of human conduct).

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This bring us to the following research questions:

How do government communicators discursively represent government policies? That is, what kind of interactional resources do government communicators use to describe those policies, and what objectives are such descriptions designed to achieve?

1.3 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

In the chapters that follow, these questions will be focused on in terms of theory as well as in terms of analysis.

In *Chapter 2*, I trace the theoretical origins of talk and text as social practice and describe the main principles of discourse analysis. It becomes clear that discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary approach which builds on the insights of linguistic philosophy, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, post-structuralism and social studies of science. We see how discourse analysts draw on philosophical conceptions of language as social action, but also criticize the reified nature of these conceptions. The sociological perspectives of ethnomethodology and, in particular, conversation analysis have inspired them to study talk in its 'natural' surroundings, namely, through being sensitive to its contextual embeddedness and action-oriented

nature. More than conversation analysis however, discourse analysis is focused on the rhetorical dimensions of talk.

In *Chapter 3*, I discuss the methodological aspects of my research. I start the chapter with a reflection on the role of the researcher and the issue of reflexivity. While discourse analysis might be thought of as a succesful way of introducing participants' voices into the research report, it remains a representation of these voices. That is, it cannot escape the constructive nature of the descriptions which it produces. Rather than denying or trying to transcend the ultimate orchestration of the researcher, it is critically aware of it and even 'celebrates' it. The next sections of this chapter deal with the collection of the data at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment in the Netherlands and the specific procedure of changing a large body of conversations into a manageable amount of data. Attention is paid in particular to the quality control of the data.

Chapter 4 provides a concise overview of the four government communication campaigns which are being studied: the campaign on the Disability Facilities Act or *WVG* campaign, the campaign on the Disability Insurance Act or *WAO* campaign, the campaign on the Social Fiscal number or *SoFi* campaign and, finally, the campaign against *Sexual Harassment*.

Chapter 5 is the first analytical chapter. It explores in detail how communication planners, that is, policy experts and government communicators, formulate the central message of a campaign. In particular, I focus on how communicators make sense of governmental policies by juxtaposing and contrasting the needs of what they consider to be their main audiences. Their active orientation to the wishes of different audiences, ranging from politicians to press and public, establishes a complex picture of often contradictory claims as the starting-point for their message. This results in two different dilemmas: a so-called *political dilemma* and a so-called *efficacy dilemma*. The chapter describes the situations in which these dilemmas arise and, in particular, the ways in which these dilemmas are managed.

In *Chapter 6*, the accountability problems of communication planners are focused on. Studies of ordinary language have shown in detail how participants may

hold each other accountable for the veracity of their reports and what further consequences the reports may have. In reporting events, participants also display a concern for this aspect of their talk. For example, they design their messages in such a way as to allow others to hold them personally accountable for the message or, conversely, to prevent others from doing so. Managing their own accountability is one of the prime actions people accomplish with their discourse. With respect to communication planners, this suggests that planners' reports of governmental policies are simultaneously a way of dealing with issues of agency and personal responsibility. The main issue of this chapter is how communication planners, in their construction of governmental policies, attend to their *own* accountability. One of the things the analysis shows is that, despite their official position as passive intermediaries, communication planners feel potentially accountable and act accordingly. The official neutral identity is used as an accounting scheme in order to ward off potential criticism.

In *Chapter 7*, I deal with the construction of target group identity in the campaign against Sexual Harassment. This campaign represents a so-called 'deviant' case in the analysis. While in the other three campaigns, communication planners were caught in a political dilemma, in this campaign they were caught in an efficacy dilemma. I shall point out how this dilemma is bound up with an acceptance of accountability for the message. This acceptance of accountability allows for a message in which the identity of the target group is constructed so as to make the message more effective. As such, it deals with techniques to accomplish the efficacy of the message towards the 'official' target group. In particular, it focuses on how communication planners draw on images which, in the case of sexual harassment, boys may have of girls and vice versa.

In *Chapter 8*, I draw together the conclusions of the different chapters and provide some insight into the practical implications of this research.

2

Principles and foundations of discourse analysis

In the last four decades, philosophers and sociologists have turned their attention to the study of everyday language. Perhaps the most significant result of these varying pursuits has been a challenge to the traditional assumption that language is a neutral vehicle for the transmission of information. Instead of being considered a passive medium, language has come to be seen as social action. Recently, this conception of language has informed new developments in social psychology (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Edwards and Potter, 1992). These developments are the subject of this chapter. Their protagonists describe themselves as discourse analysts or discursive psychologists, depending on the task the description must accomplish (see also this chapter). Since it is not my aim to start a debate with psychologists in particular, I shall use the more interdisciplinary notion of discourse analysis.

As discourse analysts themselves continue to underline, the term discourse analysis is drawn upon pervasively and is therefore a potential source of confusion. It covers such different perspectives as language studies in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of linguistic philosophy and historical analysis in the tradition of Foucault.

Correspondingly, the term 'discourse' has different meanings. Some analysts take discourse to mean any particular unit above the sentence or clause (cf. Stubbs, 1983); others use it to refer to much broader, historically developed systems of order, which are constituted by the operation of particular kinds of social power (cf. Foucault, 1972); and yet others define it as all forms of written and spoken text (cf. Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984).

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide an overview of these and other approaches to discourse (for example, Schiffrin, 1994; Van Dijk, 1985). My intention is to focus on a specific form of discourse analysis, namely, discourse analysis as defined and developed by the British social psychologists Jonathan Potter, Margaret Wetherell and Derek Edwards (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Edwards and Potter, 1992). In this approach, viewing something as discourse is viewing it as texts and talk in social practices. In this chapter, I shall describe the theoretical background of discourse analysis by unfolding its interdisciplinary roots and contrasting these foundations with traditional conceptions of language and communication.

I shall focus on three themes: *action*, *'natural' talk* and *construction*. These themes represent main aspects of discourse analysis. The sections on these themes are organised in such a way as to highlight the different roots of discourse analysis: linguistic philosophy in section 2.1 on action, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis in section 2.2 on 'natural' talk, and post-structuralism and sociology of science in section 2.3 on construction. This is not to say that ethnomethodologists, for example, did not contribute to the discourse- analytic notion of action. They did. As we shall see, in many ways, the themes are closely related. Note that, although this chapter offers insight into the main components of discourse analysis, it is not a 'How to do it' chapter. For more specific methodological and practical considerations with regard to discourse analysis, I refer to Chapter 3.

2.1 ACTION

Text and talk are social practice. This is the basic tenet of discourse analysis. To grasp the implications of this starting point, it is useful to contrast it with its opposite: language conceived as merely describing reality. In this view, language is a passive medium which, in principle, smoothly conveys information about the world out there and what people think about this world. That is, reports are considered to be mere reflections of what is really the case and what people really think (cf. Edwards and Potter, 1992). Imagine a speaker saying "Anne phoned John". This utterance seems merely descriptive at first sight. However, the speaker may well be using it to accuse Anne of informing John while she was not allowed to do so. To understand for what purpose this statement, consciously or not, was made, we need to know the context in which the utterance occurred. We may need to know when it was said and for whom the talk was intended. Note that these contextual features of language are not simply there; they are selectively oriented to and continually updated (see 2.2). Discourse analysts are interested in the actions people accomplish with their language, such as blame, compliments, excuses and mitigation, and the ways in which people draw on the context to make sense of each other's talk and enable these actions. A discourse analyst may show how people rely on certain contextual resources to describe the cooking practices of their Turkish neighbours in such a way as to avoid the risk of being branded a racist. As we shall see, the term context is used to refer both to the 'local' surroundings of talk, that is, what has just been said and what participants anticipate might be said later, as well as to 'broader' cultural resources which people rely on.

Although this way of studying language has some very old roots, it is certainly not fully integrated in social science research. The conception of language as a neutral medium has been, and still is, a tacit assumption of most studies. One of the aims of discourse analysis has been to make this assumption visible, especially in cognitive social psychology. As will be enlarged on later, discourse analysts have sharply criticised a number of concepts of cognitive social psychology, such as

attitude and attribution. Interestingly, in the few cases in which the social or contextual nature of language has been acknowledged, for example in linguistics, it has been encountered as a troublesome phenomenon (Heritage, 1984). Instead of seeing it as a topic which is interesting in itself, the indexicality or context boundedness of meaning has been regarded as an obstacle to the formal analysis of language. We find a similar phenomenon in the field of social studies of science, with Merton (1973) and his followers. In Merton's view, true beliefs reflect reality, whereas false beliefs can be attributed to social factors, such as the influence of prejudice. This sociology of error (Bloor, 1976) focuses on social context as something that explains deviant cases, not as a factor which is inextricably entangled with the production of scientific facts. Thus, the notion of context has either been ignored or used to explain departures from 'real' facts and normal language practice.

One of the perspectives that reflects the inadequacy of these and related views, originates in linguistic philosophy. Wittgenstein's (1953) *Philosophical Investigations* made the important point that the meaning of language depends on the context in which it is used, or, in Wittgenstein's terms, that the understanding of an utterance depends on understanding the language game in which it is embedded. With this view, Wittgenstein departed radically from the idea that language describes reality, a view which he had once advocated (Wittgenstein, 1921). The idea that the meaning of language is inescapably bound up with its usage, is also at the heart of Austin's (1962) work. In his William James Lectures, published as *How to Do Things with Words*, the British philosopher disputed the idea that "the business of a statement can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact', which it must do either truly or falsely" (ibid.: 1). Austin began by pointing out that there was at least one class of utterances - *performatives*, as he called them - which are not so much saying but *doing* something. An example of a performative is the utterance "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth". However, in the course of his lectures, Austin showed that it was not a specific class of utterance which was doing things, but that all utterances were describing as well as doing things. For example, the utterance "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth" becomes problematic if there is no ship which

can be named as such. In other words, a performative, like a descriptive statement or *constative*, is linked with matters of truth and falseness. On the other hand, constatives, like performatives, can be appropriate or not. As Austin puts it, there is something unhappy about the utterance "There are fifty people in the next room" when you are not in the appropriate position to know and thus say that it is the case. This may be regarded as guessing or conjecturing, but not as describing the situation. Moreover, the purpose of the utterance is important. The utterance "France is hexagonal" is good enough for a general, perhaps, but not for a geographer. As Austin points out: "The truth or falsity of a statement depends not merely on the meanings of words, but on what act you were performing in what circumstances" (ibid.: 144). So, with both constatives and performatives, the question can arise whether or not this is the proper thing to say, in view of the facts, your knowledge of the facts and the purposes for which you are speaking. Amongst other things, these findings led Austin to conclude that stating and doing things are bound up with each other. In other words, all utterances can be considered conventionally grounded social actions. This conclusion became one of the central ideas of the general theory of speech acts, which was developed by Searle (1969).

Action and attitudes

Although the study of the action-oriented features of language is of vital importance to the understanding of human behaviour (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, forthcoming c), it has often been neglected in social science. The discipline that discourse analysts have strongly criticized for this neglect is cognitive social psychology (Te Molder, 1993; Te Molder and Martijn, 1994). The attitude-concept is one of the theoretical concepts which discourse analysts have scrutinized. It is interesting to consider this criticism in more detail, particularly

because the attitude-concept is widely used for audience research in public communication campaigns (cf. Rice and Atkin, 1989).

Attitudes have received ample treatment in cognitive social psychology (see Eagly and Chaiken, 1993, for overview). Most social psychologists define an attitude as an evaluation of an attitude-object, for example, an event, issue or person. This evaluation has consequences for the behaviour towards the attitude-object. An attitude is a relatively stable, mental state (Campbell, 1950; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993) and is often represented as a position on an evaluative dimension that varies from extremely positive to extremely negative (McGuire, 1985). The most important criticism of discourse analysts concerns the social psychologists' interpretation of an attitude as an abstract, cognitive state of mind (Billig, 1987; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Potter and Wetherell, 1988). When people give their opinion on a certain subject, they do not so much express a mental state (cf. Coulter, 1989), but rather perform a social action, such as blaming someone, reducing one's own responsibility or giving a compliment. It is because of the action-oriented nature of discourse that discourse analysts question the stability of an attitude (Wetherell and Potter, 1988). Consciously or not, views are designed and redesigned to fit a certain functional context (see 2.2, for comments on the issue of intentional talk). It is for this reason that they show considerable variation across different social situations. Quite often, people express varied views on the same topic within one conversation. Discourse analysts have provided several examples of this variation, for example in studies of discourse on racism (Wetherell and Potter, 1992), gender (Wetherell, Stiven and Potter, 1987), politics (Edwards and Potter, 1992) and science (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984; Potter, 1987).

Variation in opinions has not entirely been ignored by social psychologists. For example, in their studies on social judgment, Sherif and Hovland (1961) found that people tend to agree with more different attitude-positions if they are less personally committed to the attitude-object in question (see also Sherif and Sherif, 1953). However, as Billig (1989) shows in a study of talk on the Royal Family, people with a so-called strong opinion also tend to vary their opinions. The idea that

people hold a certain opinion ignores the phenomenon that views are continually redesigned, depending on the situation in which they are uttered. In this respect, Billig emphasizes that views, although rooted in a past history, are themselves a form of thinking: "in holding views people are thinking" (ibid.: 221).

Many cognitive social psychologists would probably agree with at least some of the arguments discourse analysts raise. Any attitude-researcher recognizes the contrast between the static character of the attitude-concept and the lively data she starts the research with. How to handle this variable, even contradictory data? Is one allowed to produce a generalized version of participants' accounts? However, the study of the variable uses of language is difficult to reconcile with the researcher's need for order and predictability. First and foremost, the attitude-concept seems to satisfy the researcher's need to quiet down 'reality'. Discourse analysts cannot and do not want to escape these kinds of pursuits, but they certainly try to postpone them in order to leave room for the ordering activities of participants. Talk is not immediately frozen and translated into the schemes of the researcher, but studied in its daily use.

However plausible this may sound, intervention still seems much easier if one starts from an approach which assumes a linear social stability, so that situation A can be changed into situation B. According to Shapiro, it is exactly the wish to control human behaviour why "the modern person has been *given* attitudes" (1988: 29, my emphasis). The notion of a cognitive category by which the reception and acceptance of information is measured in neat terms, links up nicely with the growing necessity to intervene from a distance, for example by means of communication campaigns, and the legitimation of this intervention. This is certainly one of the reasons why the attitude-concept is at the root of so many planning models in social science and communication studies in particular. However, despite its popularity, there are problems with the concept when it comes to the prediction of human behaviour. In this respect, social psychologists often refer to additional variables which influence behaviour, such as the social norm (cf. Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and personal efficacy or perceived behavioural control (cf. Bandura,

1986; Ajzen and Madden, 1986). Instead, discourse analysts attribute the lack of explanatory power to the attitude-concept itself. It is difficult to transplant results from a laboratory or questionnaire into other settings, precisely because the psychologist does not take an interest in the variable and dynamic features of discourse, that is, the action-oriented nature of 'attitudes'. This becomes particularly clear in the case of experimental research.

As Edwards and Potter (1992) effectively show, laboratory settings cannot simulate the social nature of daily life. However, a word of caution is needed here. Experimental studies generally do not claim to simulate the real world. In experimental studies, artificial surroundings are deliberately created and used to study a world which is less complex and thus more controllable than the 'real' one. The criticism of discourse analysts, however, is not so much focused on the artificiality of experimental studies, interviews or questionnaires per se. This would suggest, as Potter and Wetherell (1995) point out, that what happens in laboratories or interview settings is not genuine. However, laboratory action is as authentic as a discussion between people on a Sunday afternoon on the beach. The difference is not so much in the data, as in the research orientation. Discourse analysts do not so much preclude a particular kind of data beforehand, but rather reject a decontextualized analysis. In this sense, it is possible to analyse 'artificial' data in a discourse-analytic way, that is, sensitive to the action-orientation and contextual embeddedness of talk (cf. Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995, for an example with interviews), or to analyse 'natural' data in a decontextualized manner (cf. Burleson, 1986, quoted in Edwards and Potter, 1992).

The main objection which is raised against experimental studies, is that they ignore the laboratory context in which the research is done, or rather, suppress the ways in which participants may draw upon this and other contextual resources when they take part in an experiment. Participants, for example, may try to impress the experimentalist in certain ways, or provoke her. In addition, they may treat the ostensibly straightforward descriptions which the experimentalist provided as 'interested' depictions of reality and respond accordingly. Whereas this action-

oriented nature of talk is *the* interesting issue and focus for the discourse analyst, it is a plague to the experimentalist. Discourse analysts start from the contextual nature of language, but experimentalists try to get rid of it. Thus, experimental methodology invites participants to treat verbal descriptions as unmotivated depictions of the world and, vice versa, takes participants' descriptions as unproblematic reflections of their inner world. It is this research orientation which makes it difficult to transfer data from the experimental situation to other settings, in which participants may treat apparently factual descriptions as blame or compliments, rather than as disinterested descriptions of reality.

Rather than no predictability, discourse analysis offers us a different kind of order and predictability: one which is participant-centred and context-bound. Discourse analysis is an 'emic' perspective, to borrow a term from linguistics and anthropology. Instead of using a relatively extended framework of pre-established notions, as is the case with a so-called etic perspective, discourse analysts prefer to study the ways in which members themselves achieve the orderliness of particular settings, and for what purposes (cf. Atkinson and Drew, 1979; see 2.2). Interpretative repertoires (see 2.3), categories (Edwards, 1991) or narrative characters (Wetherell and Potter, 1989): they are the resources which people use to perform their actions with, rather than the relatively clear-cut variables which determine people's behaviour. Provided that one is interested in the contingencies of people's language practices and, most important, that the perspective suits the research area, discourse analysis is able to generate new insights, also with respect to studies in which intervention is involved. It is important to note that discourse analysis is a perspective, not a mere method (Edwards and Potter, 1992). A discourse-analytic framework cannot be employed unless the researcher accepts certain basic assumptions. Couching the research in discourse-analytic terms means that, in a sense, the research area itself will change. For example, discourse analysis does not consider human behaviour in causal terms. It focuses on behaviour in terms of a normative framework, by which people are not so much governed but to which they orient themselves (cf. Potter, forthcoming a; see 2.2). In terms of views or

'attitudes', participants do not so much hold certain views and act accordingly, but they orient themselves to these views in order to accomplish particular goals. In this sense, views do not predict behaviour, and, correspondingly, the researcher will not be able to provide a linear prediction.

However, it may be interesting to pose a discourse-analytic question where one does not expect such a question in the first place. Defining research from a discourse-analytic perspective may generate new insights about intervention, because it assumes a different patterning of human behaviour and a different kind of learning process. Discourse analysts do not consider intervention in behaviour in terms of cause and effect, but take learning processes to start from a critical reflection on everyday reasoning and legitimation practices (cf. 2.2). Take a researcher who is interested in the determinants of sexual harrassment, with the intent to change these practices. Although discourse analysis does not answer the question in the terms in which it is couched, it may enable the researcher to pose a question which sheds new light on the subject. Discourse analysis may, for example, give insight into the ways in which sex offenders describe the violent event, in such a way as to legitimate their own behaviour and blame the victim. In a courtroom study, Drew (1992) shows how the defence attorney depicts the alleged victim as someone who could or should have known about the defendant's sexual interest in her, without directly rejecting or contradicting the witness' version. It is the subtlety and flexibility of these language practices which makes them potentially effective. Although this kind of analysis does not reveal the causal determinants of sexual harassment, it does provide insight into the ways in which sexual harassment is legitimized throughout society, that is, the mechanisms by which the phenomenon is perpetuated in a barely visible way (see also Chapter 7). The discourse-analytic perspective has also proved fruitful in research on racism. Wetherell and Potter (1992) have shown how white New Zealanders use two different culture repertoires to disempower the indigenous Maori people (for the notion of interpretative repertoire, see 2.3). The Culture-As-Heritage repertoire, as Wetherell and Potter called it, was employed to define the resistance of the Maori as a response which

was 'out of tune' with their 'real' culture, thereby formulating Maori protest as an invalid activity. On the other hand, the Culture-As-Therapy repertoire was used to point out that the Maori were not fully rooted in their own culture; taking up their traditions and rituals could solve their discontent. In this way, the protest of the Maori could be depoliticized, that is, kept outside the mainstream of New Zealand politics. The idea that people change their repertoires of interpretation according to the circumstances can make things more complicated in the eyes of the researcher, but, at the same time, it is precisely the flexibility of these repertoires which helps to perpetuate inequality. That is why they are interesting. Critical awareness of this kind of legitimation practice may be the starting point for change.

It is not that a discourse-analytic perspective does not allow or hampers social learning processes. Rather, discourse analysis suggests a different kind of learning process: one that is not from position A to position B, but, for example, from one kind of dilemma to another (cf. Billig et al., 1988: 148; Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 129). Note that a discourse-analytic perspective does not preclude stable views, but rather does not consider stability as a matter of course. It is perfectly possible that participants are, no matter the situation, exposing the same views. However, it is not likely, a discourse analyst would say. Discourse analysis assumes that people draw on a range of opinions. Although people can be expected to maintain a *range* of variable and contradictory opinions, they may shift, broaden or reduce this range in different directions. Rather than focusing on a linear kind of change from position A to position B, discourse analysis may stimulate people to think about change by making them aware of their own reasoning practices.

Not all discourse analysts are interested in these potential applications of their perspective. In this sense, discourse analysis can be considered an example of a broader trend in social science, which holds relatively modest ambitions with respect to social change in general. However, discourse analysis may also be seen as a perspective which not so much implies scepticism about the possibility of social change, but rather considers change from a different perspective. From this point of view, a discourse-analytic view puts the orientation of participants themselves at the

root of social learning processes. Fortunately or not, this 'local' knowledge is not as neat, pre-given and clear-cut as would suit the analyst's ordering activities. However, it may confront us with the ways in which the flexibility of language practices enables people to legitimate and maintain other practices, and thereby it may provide us with fragments for change. The relevancy of discourse-analytic research for changing people's practices is, apart from being an issue for the analyst, also an issue for participants themselves. Deciding for others whether particular results of research are useful or not may even be considered a testimony to paternalism.

The focus on participants' rather than analysts' notions is directly derived from sociology. Ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts study the ordering practices of participants by focusing on so-called natural talk. As we have seen in this section, Austin and his followers have provided discourse analysts with the concept of language as social action. However, speech act theorists have never managed to escape the use of 'got up' materials (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). The data on which speech act theorists ground their statements are idealized examples of language use. Although they focus on the action orientation of language, this orientation is predominantly theorized rather than studied within the context of social interactions (see also Te Molder, 1994a). Discourse analysis, on the other hand, prefers to take 'natural' talk as the starting point for research. The next section will elaborate on what the consequences of this view are.

2.2 'NATURAL' TALK

One of the main differences between discourse analysis and other perspectives in social science research, concerns discourse analysts' focus on 'natural' talk. As I explained in the previous section, the distinction between natural and artificial is not as clear-cut as it may seem. Natural talk can be defined as a particular kind of data,

which is not 'contaminated' by the influence of the researcher. However, rather than taking natural language as a particular kind of data, discourse analysts consider natural language as the product of a specific research orientation (Potter and Wetherell, 1995). To show some important elements of this orientation, I need to describe the roots of the study of natural talk: ethnomethodology and the related discipline of conversation analysis.

Inspired by phenomenology and the work of the sociologist Talcott Parsons, ethnomethodologists elaborated the notion of language as social action in a programme of empirical research. The aim of ethnomethodology is to describe people's procedures for making their actions accountable, that is, "observable-and-reportable" (Garfinkel, 1967: 1). This study of how people organise their conduct as to make it visible, rational and understandable may seem rather abstract. However, ethnomethodologists, and the related discipline of conversation analysis, are well-known - and notorious - for their rigorous empirical orientation. Their methods for collecting and analysing data have strongly informed discourse analysis. Two of their analytic notions, *accountability practices* and *action sequences*, are particularly important to discourse analysts. As they clearly show what discourse analysts mean by the analysis of 'natural' data, I shall elaborate on them in more detail. It is important to keep in mind that conversation analysts themselves define natural talk somewhat differently from discourse analysts, although discourse analysts borrowed from conversation analysis to fill in their notion of natural talk. Conversation analysis defines natural talk as talk between peers (Heritage, 1984). It starts from the idea that ordinary or natural conversation is the 'bedrock' on which all other forms of conversation are based (Drew and Heritage, 1992). Discourse analysis, on the other hand, does not distinguish between natural conversation and other forms of conversation in this sense, but considers 'natural' data as a construction, that is, a way of looking at any data (cf. Bogen, 1992). What this way of looking comprises, will be shown next.

Accountability

Accountability is one of the focus points of discourse analysis (see also Chapter 6). The notion itself, at least in the sense used by discourse analysts, originates from ethnomethodology. As Garfinkel points out "by his accounting practices the member makes familiar, commonplace activities of everyday life recognizable *as* familiar, commonplace activities" (Garfinkel, 1967, cited in Heritage, 1984: 123; original emphasis). In defining accountability practices as ongoing, routine practices to create social order, Garfinkel departed from the sociological traditions that consider order the product of moral consensus among actors (for example, Parsons, 1937). These traditions employ a 'rule-governed' model of human action, in which the role of norms is essentially that of regulating or determining action. Garfinkel's focus on accounting practices as a member's activity reframed the issue of order from an analyst's question into an issue which members themselves have to solve. In this view, social order is not so much the result of a process in which certain norms are internalized, but the product of a set of locally managed procedures through which actions can be accomplished and recognized (cf. Heritage, 1984: ch. 5). These procedures are rooted in participants' reflexive awareness of the normative accountability of their conduct. That is, participants are practically aware of norms and capable of anticipating the interpretative consequences of breaching a norm. Moreover, they attribute this reflexive orientation to others and hold each other accountable in these terms. Consider, for example, someone who is greeting you. You may 'choose' to return the greeting and sustain 'normal life', or you may not return it and anticipate that you will be held accountable as the producer of this 'chosen' course of action. The orderliness of the setting is achieved not so much because the norm determines that greetings are returned, but rather because participants treat return or non-return as the product of an actor's practical choice, which can also be accounted for as such. Normative accountability is the 'grid' by reference to which whatever is done will become visible and assessable (Heritage,

1984: 117). Thus, norms are reflexively *constitutive* of the actions to which they are applied, rather than regulating or determining those actions.

In this perspective, the non-implementation of a normative framework does not imply social disorder: speakers will orient to this non-implementation and attribute meaning to it. When someone does not return a greeting, the greeter will probably interpret this as a sign that something is the matter. He may infer that she is angry with him, or that she treats his greeting as a form of sexual intimidation. Summing up, social order is constituted by members' procedures to make their actions intelligible and accountable. These procedures are rooted in participants' reflexive awareness of the normative accountability of their conduct, rather than in the regulating force of normative rules.

No thorough appraisal of Garfinkel's ideas can be made here. However, I would like to add two further comments. First, it is important to note that this reflexive stance is predominantly routine. In general, members do not consciously orient to the normative accountibility of human conduct, although they may do so, especially in situations in which their actions are potentially breaching a norm. In most situations, however, speakers rely on a tacit awareness. Nevertheless, it is striking how often analysts use the vocabulary of intended behaviour, that is, provide explanations of human action in terms of intention and strategy. As Heritage (1990/1991) points out, conversation analysts have always tried to avoid a intentionalist terminology. Since intentions are often designedly ambiguous or invisible, it is difficult to determine whether they are there or not. Moreover, even in what would be considered clear cases of strategic behaviour, it is extremely difficult to determine the point at which such an intention was formed and thereby to determine its scope or range. This is why conversation analysts, as well as discourse analysts, reject intentionalist conceptions of meaning *unless* participants orient to each other's behaviour in these terms. The conclusion that behaviour is strategically planned may well be a resource and outcome of participants' talk (see also Potter, forthcoming c: ch. 7).

Further, the greetings' example may give the impression that normative rules are clear-cut. However, even such an apparently obvious norm that a greeting must be returned does not give us exact certainty about what utterances should be taken as a greeting, a return or a non-return, let alone the question whether the greeting is being returned correctly. This is not the place to consider Wittgenstein's conception of rules in detail (see for an interesting example Lynch, 1992), but the core of his ideas is relevant here: rules never completely or exhaustively define a situation. No matter how transparent they are, rules, and also what counts as departures from them, are a matter of complex, practical negotiation and situated accomplishment (cf. Edwards, forthcoming). Even when we assume that the rule is that invitations must be accepted, the issue may be under what circumstances this rule should be applied, and what we should take as an invitation, or as an acceptance. Moreover, speakers may knowingly exploit the indeterminateness of rules and, for example, 'accept' the invitation in an evasive way.

These kinds of negotiation practices, in which people hold each other accountable for their reports and the interactional consequences these reports may have, are a central concern of discourse analysts. The accountability issue has often been ignored in social science research. In this respect, discourse analysts have criticized cognitive social psychology, particularly its attribution theories. Central to attribution theory is the question of how people causally explain events. In recent perspectives, the importance of language with respect to attribution issues is underlined. Take, for example, the *Linguistic Category Model* of Semin and Fiedler (1988, 1991), which is one of the most elaborate linguistic approaches to attribution. According to the *Linguistic Category Model*, events can be described by different types of verbs or adjectives. Each type of verb or adjective represents a different level of abstraction. An important assumption is that descriptions at the most concrete level are more or less objective. According to Semin and Fiedler, these latter kinds of description indicate that the cause of an event is attributed to the situation, whereas descriptions at the most abstract level, that is, adjectives, indicate an attribution to a person. For example, a concrete description of an event such as

"Anne phoned John" implies that the event is caused by situational demands, whereas an abstract description such as "Anne is extrovert" implies that Anne is responsible for the event that occurred. Amongst other things, discourse analysts have criticized the distinction between objective and more interpretative descriptions. As I pointed out earlier, the 'mere' description that Anne phoned John can be used as an accusation, or turn out to be an ironic remark. The question is not only what Anne did or John did, but also what the current speaker is doing in constructing Anne's action in precisely this way. What kind of interpretation is the speaker making relevant? She may be attributing a particular intent to Anne and reduce her own accountability in the matter (not she, but Anne phoned John). Moreover, such an ostensibly disinterested factual report may allow her to blame Anne without having to formulate the blame explicitly.

What the *Linguistic Category Model* ignores, is what ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts have demonstrated to be of crucial importance: the accountability of the current speaker. As Edwards and Potter (1992; 1993) point out, a social psychology of language and attribution not only requires a study of the accountability *in* the event, but also a study of the accountability of the current speaker. The issue is: how, in their construction of the accountability *in* the event, are speakers attending to their *own* accountability? In this respect, the method of the *Linguistic Category Model* is an important limitation. Research participants are presented with short descriptions (A talks to B) and are asked to explain the event (Why does A talk to B?). As a result of this method, important aspects of 'real-life' attributions, that is, attributions-in-interaction, are being ignored. As Edwards and Potter (1992; 1993) point out, Semin and Fiedler's linguistic approach to attribution confirms that language is an important means to express causal relations and that people are capable of distinguishing between different types of linguistic explanation. However, the *Linguistic Category Model* offers little insight into everyday explanations, in which the speakers' concern with their own accountability is a central one.

'Footing' (Goffman, 1981; see Chapter 6) plays an important part in accountability practices. Put simply, footing refers to the ability to mark when a speaker is speaking 'for herself' or, in contrast, reporting the speech of another (Potter, Edwards and Wetherell, 1993). In practice, these distinctions can become quite complicated. Note that footing is a participants' concern (cf. Potter, forthcoming b) and therefore a potentially contentious matter. For example, speakers may mark the footing for their report in a designedly ambiguous way or shift their footing rapidly. Footing is not a simple either/or affair, but a subtle and flexible way of indicating who should be held accountable for the report being done, and the interactional consequences it may have. Take the following example from a BBC radio broadcast during the Gulf War, in which the issue was the extent to which the Allied forces had knowledge of and could be held accountable for civilian casualties due to their bombing of Bagdad:

> Spain and Italy have expressed reservations about the Allied bombing strategy (.) after the attack on Wednesday on a
> (1) → building in Bagdad
> (2) → which the Iraqis say was a civilian shelter
> (3) → the Americans say it was a military bunker
> The Iraqis say they have now recovered more than two hundred and eighty bodies from the wreckage.
> A senior official in Italy's Foreign Affairs Ministry says there should be no more bombing of civilian areas (.) and in a letter to President Bush the Spanish prime minister Philippe Gonzalez has also called for a halt to raids on Bagdad and other cities.
>
> (BBC Radio 4 'Today' programme, 14 February 1991 in Edwards and Potter, 1992: 169)

As Edwards and Potter point out, the two quoted descriptions *civilian shelter* (2) and *military bunker* (3) imply differences in the culpability of the action: attacking a military bunker is legitimate, but attacking a civilian shelter is not. The newscaster

starts to describe the situation by proposing the 'neutral' term *building* (1), but he shifts his footing when making the more 'contentious' assertions. That is, he attributes the descriptions *civilian shelter* and *military bunker* to the Iraqis and Americans, respectively, thereby avoiding accountability for either of these descriptions and their consequences.

As we have seen then, the ethnomethodological notion of accountability has greatly inspired discourse analysts. It is important to emphasize that this notion is not an isolated focus of attention. On the contrary, the themes action and accountability are, for example, strongly related to one another. In fact, accountability concerns can only be recognized and accomplished within sequences of action. This brings us to the second issue in this section: the notion of action sequence.

Action sequences

For discourse analysts, it is action in sequence rather than the isolated sentence or utterance which is the basic unit of analysis. The notion of action sequence has been put forward by conversation analysts. As I pointed out earlier, speech act theorists have been criticized for their lack of interest in the interactional embeddedness of talk. Inspired by conversation analysts, discourse analysts have adopted the starting-point that all utterances "are *in the first instance* contextually understood by reference to their placement and participation within sequences of action" (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984:5; original emphasis). The relevance of the action sequence as a unit of analysis can be quite easily demonstrated. Consider the following extract, which is taken from a telephone conversation in which Ireen is trying to obtain a lift to Syracuse from Charles. At the start of this extract, Ireen proposes a date for the trip (How about the following weekend). After a pause, Charles refers to this proposal while redescribing the occasion which was suggested by Ireen:

1	Ireen:	How about the following weekend.
2		(0.8)
3 →	Charles:	hh Dat's the vacation isn't it?
4 →	Ireen:	hhhhh Oh:. hh ALright so: - no ha:ssle (.)
5		s o
6	Charles:	Ye:h

(Trip to Syracuse:2 in Drew, 1984: 130; see also Wooffitt, 1992, on the same material. Names added; see also Appendix A)

As can be seen in line 4, Ireen treats Charles' utterance "hh Dat's the vacation isn't it?" (line 3) as somehow indicating that Charles will not be able to make the trip on the date which Ireen had suggested:"hhhhh Oh:. hh ALright so: - no ha:ssle". Since Charles makes no attempt to correct Ireen's interpretation, Ireen may assume that she made the correct interpretation. In this piece of interaction, the utterance "hh Dat's the vacation isn't it?" does some important interactional business. In substituting 'weekend' with 'vacation', Charles suggests that the vacation cannot be treated as any weekend. For example, other things may have been arranged for the vacation. In doing so, Charles provides Ireen a set of materials from which she can infer that he will not not be able to make the trip on the date which she suggested. Notice that the accountability of the speaker is also at stake here. As Drew (1984) points out, rather than formulating an unwillingness or a decision not to do something, speakers commonly assert an inability to do it. In suggesting that he is not able to make the trip, rather than, for example, that he does not want to, Charles is externalizing accountability for rejecting Ireen's proposal.

Of course, Ireen could have interpreted Charles' utterance as a clarification of the period in which the trip would take place. Perhaps, this would have been the explanation of the utterance if it had been presented as an isolated sentence rather than as a part of the interaction. However, what is said will be said in a particular sequential context, for example, the context of an invitation sequence, and the action-orientedness of the utterance can only be understood within this context.

In general, participants draw upon what came before in the conversation in order to make adequate sense of what is being said and the actions which are being accomplished. More specifically, each utterance is informed by the one immediately prior. Note that the way in which Ireen responds to Charles depends upon how she interprets Charles' utterance "hh Dat's the vacation isn't it?", that is, as a clarification or as a rejection of the proposal. Participants use the turn-by-turn development of a conversation as a resource to make sense of it, thereby maintaining and displaying its orderliness.

As conversation analysts point out, many actions are accomplished in pairs (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973). Examples of these so-called adjacency pairs are question/answer pairs, or invitation/acceptance pairs. It is important to point out that the character of these paired actions is normative, a point emphasized in the earlier discussion on accountability, but which is worth reiterating. That is, a question is not automatically followed by an answer. Rather, the production of a question proposes that the answer is expected. The normative character of paired actions enables participants to make sense of deviations. Precisely because participants have a common expectation that questions are followed by answers, they can make inferences about the nature of the deviation and the action which it accomplishes.

The interpretation of the immediately prior turn, and the ways in which it informs the design of a next turn are not only available for conversationalists themselves, but also for social scientists. Minimally, the publicly displayed and continuously updated understandings are an important 'proof procedure' for scientists by which they can check their interpretations (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974; see Chapter 3). That is, researchers are able to 'observe' how speakers *treat each others' talk*. This is not to say that this procedure reveals speakers' understandings unproblematically (cf. Atkinson and Heritage, 1984). Speakers may respond to earlier parts of the conversation, so as to avoid dealing publicly with the interpretative consequence of the prior utterance. In so far as these phenomena are open to analytic inspection, comparative methods may be of use here. Nevertheless,

while not being an infallible method, the publicly displayed understandings are a major resource for analysis.

Summarizing, talk cannot be understood except by reference to the sequences of action in which it participates. That is, utterances are context-shaped. Context in this sense refers to the 'immediate' preceding activity as well as to the 'broader' context within which the action is recognized to occur (Drew and Heritage, 1992). Note that the 'immediate' and 'broader' context should not be thought of as domains which are entirely separated. For example, the utterance "hhhhh Oh:. hh ALright so: - no ha:ssle (.)" not only draws on what the previous utterance "hh Dat's the vacation isn't it?" is doing, but simultaneously orients to a 'broader' context of what people tend to do in vacations. More precisely, the participant - as well as the analyst - cannot understand the preceding activity without trading on their member's knowledge of what vacations are and what people normally do during these vacations.

Apart from being context-shaped, utterances are also context-renewing (Heritage, 1984). Each utterance provides a context for what comes next, that is, it becomes part of the contextual framework in terms of which the next action will be understood. This analytic stance implies that context is not a catch-all term, which stands for all features which surround the talk, but a notion which defines only those features as 'relevant' to which the speakers themselves display a sensitivity. As Schegloff (1991, 1992) points out, in so far as the analyst considers the 'context' as relevant to the analysis, she must be able to show how this context is arguably implicated in the production of the details of that interaction. Second, she must be able to show that these contextual elements are demonstrably consequential for some specifiable aspect of that interaction. Notice that this showing of sensitivity to the context can also be displayed in contrast, by considering different kinds of interaction in different settings.

The sheer idea that the notion of 'context' should only inform analytical considerations if it can be shown to inform the production of the interaction, is not very different from any other call for evidence. Any researcher has to show how the

analysis is rooted in the materials which are used. However, the difference is in the nature of the proof. The analyst has to show how, in the *particulars* of the interaction, participants orient to contextual features. The simple fact that the interaction takes place in a courtroom or in a laboratory is not enough; participants must show themselves sensitive to this context in the details of the interaction. This also means that the analyst has to provide extended pieces of transcribed materials in order to enable the reader to follow her interpretations (see also Chapter 3). This requirement of detailed, empirical evidence might evoke the image of a positivist science. However, the analyst does not look for *the* 'correct' version of the conversation. Rather, the analyst looks for *a* version, which is rooted in participants' own concepts and understandings. Like the participants themselves, the analysts can never be absolutely certain that the interpretation given is the 'actual' one (cf. Atkinson and Drew, 1979; see 3.1).

Whereas, indeed, these principles may stimulate some to convert insistent intuition into empirically detailed methodic analysis, as Schegloff puts it, it may discourage others. First and foremost, it is a matter of choosing what kind of evidence one requires and what kind of analysis one finds fruitful. Discourse analysts themselves have worked with different versions of the notion of context. In *Discursive Psychology* (Edwards and Potter, 1992), for example, the analysis is rooted in the principle that contextual elements are included only when participants themselves demonstrably orient to them. However, this principle features less in other studies (for example, Wetherell and Potter, 1992). These studies are strongly, that is, more strongly than the other discourse-analytic studies, rooted in ethnographic understanding (see Chapter 3). Note that the difference between these approaches is not in the *degree* of interpretativeness. The difference is in the extent to which inspection of the interpretation is possible. Extended tape-recorded and transcribed materials show the reader how the interpretation has come about. It reveals how the analyst has used her cultural competence to understand the participants' use of their tacit knowledge (see also Chapter 3). Thus, while high

value is put on participants' accounting practices, there is no denial of the researcher's own interpretive practices.

Conversation analysts in particular are readily suspected of such a denial. This is probably caused by the fact that they are associated with the analysis of ordinary conversation between peers, rather than with the analysis of 'macro'-contextual themes such as gender, class and ethnicity. The analysis of ordinary talk evokes the image of stating the obvious, whereas 'macro'-themes are experienced as the 'real business'. However, as I pointed out, there is nothing about the conversation-analytic notion of context which is inimical to the analysis of these themes. In fact, although not being their main concern, conversation analysts have always shown interest in them (for example, Zimmerman and West, 1975 on gender and West, 1984 and Ten Have, 1991 on asymmetry in doctor-patient relations). However, for reasons obvious after the discussion above, discourse analysts and conversation analysts avoid the micro/macro distinction. Rather than considering context as historically given, external constraints, they consider context as the *in situ* product of members of society (Boden, 1994). This is not to say that there are no external constraints. Rather, they are studied in terms of their local relevance, that is, the way they are made recognizable, accountable and repeatable in instances of daily practice (Boden and Zimmerman, 1991; see for a similar argument Knorr-Cetina, 1981a; 1988).

Summing up, although being rather strict, the conversation-analytic notion of context is first and foremost a stimulating concept. It draws the attention to the rich details of interaction, while not hampering the interest in what we used to call 'macro'-themes. However, it is only until recently that other than ordinary talk has become a *main* focus in conversation analysis. It is especially this focus which is related to the mainstream of discourse-analytic research.

As we have seen, then, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and discourse analysis have a strong resemblance. Action in sequence and accountability practices are essential analytical concerns for both conversation analysts and discourse analysts. The recent revival of institutional talk (see Drew and Heritage, 1992, for

overview) has made discourse analysts and conversation analysts share each other's interests even more. However, there is still a difference in emphasis. Discourse analysts are particularly interested in the rhetorical construction of talk. This brings us to the theme of the next section: the metaphor of construction.

2.3 CONSTRUCTION

Discourse analysts have a salient interest in 'descriptive' language: the domain of facts, truth and reality. However, instead of using descriptions as explanatory resources, discourse analysts treat them as a topic of analysis. Descriptions are not considered passive images of the world. Rather than being passive, descriptions are *made* to seem passive, solid and out there. Describing the world thus involves work, it involves *construction.*

The metaphor of construction is essential to discourse analysis. However, construction has become a term with a whole range of different meanings and connotations. Wetherell and Potter (1992) distinguish three different uses of the term construction. At the most basic level, construction refers to the idea that people conceive the world through referential terms or words, rather than through direct experience. That is, people work with discursive versions of reality. A more complex and satisfactory way of conceiving construction is the post-structuralist version of it; descriptions do not reflect reality, but are constructed in order to seem real, solid and stable. Post-structuralists have paid extensive attention to the nature and organization of representation in literary and philosophical texts (cf. Barthes, 1975). How are effects of realism produced in these texts? How does a particular argument come to be seen as neutral and separate from its protagonist? An important difference in conversation analysis is that the reading of texts is predominantly an analyst's concern (cf. Potter, forthcoming c: ch. 3). Rather than identifying a story as motivated in a particular way, because participants treat it as such, post-

structuralists start from their own readings of the story. This neglect of the participants' orientation is partly rooted in the stress that post-structuralists lay on the operation of abstract structures producing reality, rather than the activities of human agents.

The focus on participants' practices is captured by the third conception of construction. The description of any event can be extended indefinitely. Put the other way around: descriptions are never complete. As we have already seen in the discussion of Austin's work, the adequacy of a description is dependent on the context in which it is used rather than on its correspondence with reality. When participants 'describe' reality, they put together text in such a way as to higlight specific particulars of the phenomenon being described (cf. Wooffitt, 1992). They actively select certain descriptions in order to achieve certain goals. This perspective makes the construction of facts into a *practical* rather than a philosophical or literary concern. Ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts have made an important contribution to the understanding of factuality as accomplished by the participants themselves. Participants continually and practically solve questions of truth and falseness in a variety of ways.

As Pollner (1987) points out, in their talk, people assume that they all perceive the same world. However, disagreements about reality, or, as Pollner calls them, reality disjunctures, may arise. In the face of conflicting experiences, people use a range of methods to restore and maintain reality. For example, they attribute the disjuncture to the fact that the reporter was drunk, or just joking. They treat their opponent's report ironically by claiming his or her experience to be somehow deficient, whereas they treat their own experience of the world as definitive. In other words, people maintain the assumption that, in principle, they share a common world and a neutral language to describe this world. The innocence of language is rooted in daily life to such an extent that we do not even think of disputing it.

While people may hold the view that their own perception is definitive, they take into account that it may be undermined. That is, they orient to the possibility of having their versions of events discounted as being interested, biased or motivated in

specific ways. In this sense, they can be thought of as caught in a *dilemma of stake* (Edwards and Potter, 1992): how can one produce accounts which attend to interests without being undermined as interested? One of the ways to manage this dilemma is the production of ostensibly factual reports. These reports may be used to obscure or mitigate accountability for potentially reproachable acts. In section 2.1, I mentioned the example of the alleged sex offender who suggests that his victim is partly accountable for the offence by producing subtle descriptions of her behaviour. His descriptions are designed to show her 'interestedness', without having to blame her explicitly (see also Chapter 7). Conversation analysts and discourse analysts, partly inspired by sociologists of science, have found a range of devices or techniques through which people build up the factuality of their own reports (Potter, forthcoming c). The factuality of an account may be warranted by using for example vivid descriptions, particular narrative forms (cf. Atkinson, 1990), extreme case formulations ('Everybody does it', cf. Pomerantz, 1986), or lists and contrasts (see Chapter 5; Atkinson, 1984).

In many ways, conversation analysts have contributed to new insights in the detailed production of facts. More than conversation analysts, however, discourse analysts tend to underline the *rhetorical* construction of discourse (Billig, 1991; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Their conception of rhetoric draws on the post-structuralist assumption that the meaning of a text is produced in contrast to absent structures of meaning. As Billig et al. (1988) point out, by proposing a certain version of an event, people necessarily undermine, in explicit or implicit terms, an alternative, opposing version. Although in practice one version is privileged, the dualism is preserved. People possess both conflicting vocabularies and put them into use according to the needs of a particular rhetorical context. In a study on the British Royal Family, Billig (1989; 1992) shows, for example, how a strong opponent of the Royal Family changes into a supporter when accused of being a communist. The study vividly illustrates that participants defend and reject the practices of the Royal Family depending on the arguments they have to combat.

In some discourse-analytic studies, these contradictions in common sense are understood in terms of *ideological dilemmas* which are continuously 'resolved' and mobilized again (Billig et al., 1988; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). These studies start from the assumption that the immediate features of the accounting situation must be seen in the light of historical practice. Rather than focusing on the details of construction, they focus on how people construct reality by drawing on broad, sometimes contradictory or dilemmatic, repertoires.

The notion of *interpretative repertoire* derives from a study in the sociology of science. In this study, Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) examined how scientists made sense of the significance of experimental data. They showed how scientists accounted for these results in variable and even contradictory ways. These accounting systems were called interpretative repertoires. According to Gilbert and Mulkay, a repertoire is constituted through a limited range of terms used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions. Often a repertoire will be organized around specific metaphors and figures of speech. In their study, Gilbert and Mulkay identified two basic interpretative repertoires: the so-called empiricist repertoire and the contingent repertoire. The basic principle of the empiricist repertoire is that the choice for a particular theoretical model is unequivocally determined by scientific experiments. This repertoire was used predominantly in a formal context, that is, in scientific articles. The contingent repertoire, on the other hand, was drawn upon in more informal situations. According to the contingent repertoire, scientific actions and beliefs are crucially influenced by social factors. Experimental results only have uncertain implications with regard to the theory. The scientists that were interviewed clearly displayed an asymmetrical pattern of accounting for 'correct' and 'false' belief. As long as they made sense of their own correct scientific results, the empiricist repertoire was employed. But when they described the erroneous views of other scientists, the contingent repertoire showed up as the dominant accounting system. Gilbert and Mulkay also showed how scientists use a so-called *truth will out device*, when employing more than one

repertoire with regard to the same actions. They solve the conflict by stating that scientific experiments will, in the end, overcome social influences.

In *Discourse and Social Psychology* (1987), Potter and Wetherell suggest that the notion of an interpretative repertoire has many advantages compared with, for example, the attitude-concept, which is far too restrictive in describing natural language use. Although the notion is useful when aiming at an analysis of broad argumentative patterns, one runs the risk of missing essential aspects of the talk. Often, it is precisely in an ostensibly negligible detail that the action is accomplished. Think, for example, of the use of the word vacation in the discussion between Ireen and Charles (see 2.2). In addition, one may wonder whether the talk in Gilbert and Mulkay's study should be treated as *scientists'* talk (Wooffitt, 1992). Rather than treating pre-analytic categories as automatically relevant, it would be more fruitful to study the ways in which the participants themselves orient to different identities in their talk (cf. 2.2). Again, this might happen in the detail of the talk.

As we have seen in this chapter, discourse analysis is strongly rooted in a range of disciplines and perspectives, the most important being linguistic philosophy (see 2.1), ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (see 2.2) and post-structuralism and sociology of science (see 2.3). The basic tenet of discourse analysis is the discursive nature of language: rather than describing reality, language is used to perform a range of different actions. The flexibility of language has often been ignored, for example by cognitive social psychologists. This is a conspicuous fact, since language lost its innocence a long time ago in particular domains of philosophy and sociology. Discourse analysts derived the notion of accountability and action sequence from ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts, respectively. Like conversation analysis, discourse analysis focuses on the details of interaction and attempts to avoid or forestall idealizations of language use. More than ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts, however, discourse analysts pay attention to the rhetorical dimension of talk. It may only be a matter of time for

these differences to disappear. In the next chapter, I shall be concerned with the question of how to apply these theoretical principles to the 'practical' matter of doing research. In this chapter, the so-called *Discursive Action Model* will be displayed as a reminder and summary of the issues of this chapter.

3

Methodological issues

In this chapter, I discuss the methodological aspects of my research. Discourse analysts are keen on emphasizing that their perspective is not a mere method, but involves "some fairly radical theoretical rethinking" (Edwards and Potter, 1992: 11). Here, I use the term methodology to capture the practical issues which bother a researcher, such as the collection and transcription of materials, without losing sight of the theoretical assumptions which are tied to these 'practical' issues. Methodology in the discourse-analytic sense is not a mere technique but a research orientation. With this in mind, I want to discuss four methodological issues. I start with the least 'practical' of these themes: a reflection on the *role of the researcher and the issue of reflexivity*. Then I shall turn my attention to *the collection of data*. In the section on *transcription, translation, coding and analysis*, I provide a concise overview of the analytic concepts and, amongst other things, describe the specific procedure of changing a large body of conversations into a manageable amount of data. Finally, the focus will be on the *quality control* of the data.

3.1 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER AND THE ISSUE OF REFLEXIVITY

As Clifford (1988: 40; see also Atkinson, 1990) points out, practitioners of ethnography - a form of qualitative research which includes participant observation- tend to emphasize "the ethnographer's early ignorance, misunderstanding, lack of contact - frequently a sort childlike status within the culture". This early innocence is soon replaced by a growing awareness and ultimately confident knowledge of what exactly the culture in question consists of. From that moment on, the ethnographer is able to act as a knowledgeable representative of the culture. This process of transformation is expressed by the form of the ethnographic text. Once it has taken place, the ethnographer removes herself from the text. That is, she depicts the culture as if it speaks for itself, rather than highlighting her role as intervener and co-participant. This is why we tend to forget that the ethnography is the outcome of an essentially *dialogical process* in which the ethnographer interacts with particular members of a culture. Instead, we consider the ethnographer as a passive medium, someone who 'reads' the meaning of a culture over the shoulders of its members.

I start this chapter with Clifford's exposition, because I want to underline the dialogical and constructive character of research. Although my research is not only based on ethnographic methods, and I shall elaborate on that in the next section, the thrust of Clifford's remarks is relevant to it. Research always involves negotiations, some of these being more obvious than others. They range from where to cut off a piece of transcribed research material in the text, to gaining access to a research site. Researchers silence most of these casual and non-casual exchanges with 'real' and 'imaginary' target groups which are at the root of their project and which, consciously or not, lead them to make certain decisions. Their final report is a domesticated version of what happened. Or rather, it is *a* version of what happened which is necessarily orchestrated in order to accomplish certain goals.

Clifford suggests that ethnographers could try to break up the monophonic authority which governs most ethnographic research. In order to do so, authors

would have to share their texts with their indigenous collaborators. The collaborators would not be informants, but autonomous writers. Such a compendium of vernacular texts would approach the ideal of a transcended authorative stance, since it represents a variety of possible readings in itself. A so-called polyphony would be more open to readings which were not specifically intended.

The research presented here obviously does not employ a polyphonic model in this sense. However, it does try to capture participants' voices. It even attempts to do so in a quite literal sense. It presents relatively lengthy pieces of interaction in their 'raw' form (see 3.4). Amongst other things, research in the discourse-analytic tradition is 'putting oneself in someone else's place'. The issue is gaining insight into the ways in which participants treat each other's talk. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, discourse analysis is an 'emic' perspective. It starts with as few analytic notions as possible in order to capture the world from a participant's perspective. While discourse analysis might be thought of as a succesful way of introducing participants' voices into the research report, it remains a representation of these voices. That is, it cannot escape the constructive nature of the descriptions which it produces. Rather than denying or trying to transcend the ultimate orchestration of the researcher, it is critically aware of it (cf. Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1988) and even 'celebrates' it (cf. Ashmore, 1989). We shall have to live with the idea that there is no non-discursive discourse (Edwards and Potter, 1992: 173).

The question is whether new literary forms, such as the use of speech of invented characters in research reports or collective authorship (cf. Mulkay, 1985; Woolgar, 1988), will make us readers, more attentive to and aware of the constructive nature of research. In some cases, the new styles refocus our attention. However, even these writing styles gradually become part of the established way of saying things. As most of these writers would probably have no problem admitting, it is a temporary way of dealing with reflexivity.

Rather than having to live with it, we just live with it. The constructive nature of our own research is not so much a problem which can or cannot be solved, but an

issue which the researcher deals with practically. In fact, this practical way of dealing with it is much the same as what we tend to call mundane reason. Researchers have no problem in combining empiricist with contingent repertoires (cf. Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984; see Chapter 2). Like mundane reasoners, we tend to treat the perception of others as somehow deficient, whereas we commonly consider our own experience of the world as definitive (cf. Pollner, 1987). Mundane as well as scientific reasoning is fraught with inconsistencies. Or rather, scientific reasoning *is* mundane (cf. Knorr-Cetina, 1981b). The question is whether this saddles us with a real problem. As long as we are aware of these constructive features, and invite others to criticize and replace them, there should be none.

The aim of discourse analysis is *not* to provide us with a neutral analysis which does not allow of other interpretations than the one given. Nevertheless, the interpretation offered is supported by arguments which the researcher believes to be plausible. In this sense, its appearance is one of a conclusive argument. This is not to say that the argument is not open to criticism. Apart from the fact that the apparent conclusiveness of statements does not need to discourage people from disputing these statements, as for example Pollner (ibid.) shows, discourse analysis also stimulates debate by presenting its interpretations along with extended pieces of 'raw' data.

In the end, the issue is whether one finds the metaphor of construction productive (cf. Potter, forthcoming c). Discourse analysis enables the researcher to ask how talk is put together and for what use. It preserves her from taking facts and views at face value and stimulates a participant's orientation towards questions of truth and falseness. In Collin's (1982) terms, it starts from the principle of methodological relativism. What is true and false is taken as a topic of analysis in its own right. Rather than starting with scientists' judgements of truth and falseness, these judgments are considered issues of negotiation for participants. However, that the researcher is somehow part of these negotiations cannot and should not be denied.

The metaphor of construction works on two levels: descriptions construct 'the world' and these descriptions are necessarily themselves constructed. However, this should not prevent the researcher from doing her job. At the risk of depicting myself as an innocent researcher who became aware of the intricacies of a culture, I shall now turn to the practice of gaining access to a foreign territory: the ministry.

3.2 COLLECTION OF THE DATA

The data for this research was collected at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment in the Netherlands. The choice of this ministry was first and foremost dependent on the interest of its employees to participate in the research. I was fortunate enough to find the deputy manager from the Information Service of this ministry interested in my project. He and his collaborators were so kind as to tolerate me and my taperecorder for more than a year. One of the main reasons for their participation was the empirical orientation of the project (see Chapter 1). That is, rather than aiming at a prescriptive framework straightaway, I took an interest in the practical arena of producing government communication campaigns. Studies of government communication have displayed, for a large part, a distinct preference for a prescriptive approach to the processes of planning and conducting campaigns. Although, in principle, prescriptive research may well be rooted in the empirical research of government communicators' practice, or even should be, most of the campaign researchers do not seem to have an interest in it (see Chapter 1). Having conceived these processes primarily in idealized terms, the upshot is that we have a rather poor insight into the daily practice of government communicators. The government communicators at the ministry were interested in filling this hiatus. It was particularly the focus on *how* they got their job done rather than how they *should* get it done, which led them to participate in the project.

In the Netherlands, each ministry has a central Information Service [*Directie Voorlichting*] (see Appendix D). The Information Service has at least four different functions (De Roon, 1993): press communication, communication for the general public, internal communication and responding to individual questions from the public. My research took place at the communication department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment which designs campaigns for the general public or 'segments' of this public. It is important to note that, in its focus, planning and the nature of its message, government communication for the general public is significantly different from press communication. At the time of the research, the Information Service at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment had separate departments for press communication and communication for the general public. Whereas press communication is focused on informing the press about policy proposals and advising politicians in this matter, communication for the general public is directed at communicating politically accepted policies to the public or segments of this public. The projects of the communication department for the general public are long-range ones, in contrast to the short-range activities of press officers. It is no exception for a government communication campaign to take one year of preparation.

In general, the core of a government communication project is a mass-media campaign, which informs the public about new laws and policies which have been politically approved, or aims at changing people's attitude and behaviour according to these laws or policies (see Chapters 1 and 5). Since 1992, when the cabinet decided to reduce the number of government communication campaigns, there are thirty to thirty-five 'large' campaigns each year (De Roon, 1993). A so-called large campaign is one with a budget of 250.000 guilders or more. Normally, these campaigns make use of television commercials, brochures at post offices and in libraries (the so-called Post-box 51 commercials and Post-box 51 brochures), national advertisements and posters, or house-to-house distribution of communication materials.

I have studied (parts of) the realization of four large government communication campaigns: the campaign on the Disability Facilities Act or *WVG* campaign, the campaign on the Disability Insurance Act or *WAO* campaign, the campaign on the Social Fiscal number or *SoFi* campaign and, finally, the campaign against *Sexual Harassment* (see Chapter 4 for details). The three campaign leaders whom I followed - the SoFi campaign and the WVG campaign were run by the same campaign leader - were from the Ministry of Social Affairs. The campaigns were selected according to the diversity of their participants (involvement of several ministries or more than one department within the same ministry). The campaigns thus provided a certain richness of argument and a good opportunity to identify a number of constructive features of talk.

In correspondence with the nature of qualitative research, no claims are made for sample representativeness. Discourse analysis focuses on the particulars of social interaction rather than aiming at statistical generalizations. However, the focus on the particular does not mean that the results do not apply to cases outside the research. Theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was used to maximise the range of possible variability. Theoretical sampling means that one gathers new data, or searches again through original data, on theoretical grounds. That is, provisional analysis of materials focuses the attention on relevant themes, which are further refined on the basis of continous comparison of these themes within and between cases. Theoretical sampling stops when 'theoretical saturation' is reached, that is, when no new analytical insights are forthcoming from a given situation (Arber, 1993). With the exception of the SoFi campaign (see 3.3), I stopped following meetings when they did not generate any new theoretical insights.

I studied four campaigns, since that was the number I could handle practically and which allowed me some diversity. In the course of the research, I attempted to find cases which would go against the pattern (Heritage, 1984; 1988). Deviant cases do not necessarily refute the pattern; instead their special features may help confirm its genuineness (see also Potter, forthcoming a). The campaign against sexual harassment proved to be such a deviant case (see Chapters 5 and 7). A second

'solution' to the problem of generalization is through the gradual accumulation of different studies of the phenomenon (cf. Buttny, 1993: ch. 4). This study builds on the insights of a range of similar studies, in particular the work of Potter, Edwards and Wetherell. In this sense, earlier studies make the issues generated here recognizable as having broader validity (see 3.4).

The data for this study was collected over a period of fifteen months: a first period in February and March 1992 and a second period from September 1992 up to October 1993 inclusive. I started with a pilot study of two weeks, in which I followed a government communicator in the literal sense of the word. That is, apart from the formal meetings, I also joined him, for example, at corridor and elevator exchanges, chats in the canteen and around photocopy machines. The idea behind the small study was that it would provide some sense of what is going on in a government communicator's life. After these two weeks, I started with following one campaign: the SoFi campaign. In this initial stage of observation, I decided to refrain from tape-recording in order to make my presence as a researcher and intruder acceptable. For reasons altogether unrelated to the research, I only followed three meetings of the SoFi campaign. Ultimately, the (conversational) data on which the analysis of the campaign is based was drawn from three meetings of seven hours' duration, which took place in February and March 1992 (see 3.3, for considerations with respect to the analysis of the SoFi campaign). In consultation with the communication planners, I started to follow the other three campaigns from September 1992 onwards.

Since my aim was to study talk (see Chapter 1), one of the decisions I had to make was which talk I would select for the purposes of research. A problem of studying talk is that it occurs everywhere. Talk is at the heart of organizations (Boden, 1994). People talk all day, going from one meeting to another, chatting to each other while running, walking, waiting and sitting. As Mintzberg (1973) once showed, managers spent as much as 70 per cent of executive time in talking.

I have focused on the settings in which government communicators and policy experts - henceforth *communication planners* - met each other. Government

communication campaigns are co-productions of government communicators, policy experts and, at a later stage, advertising managers. At least, these are the participants who meet each other face-to-face at regular time intervals during the process of producing a campaign. This is not only a matter of policy makers having the policy expertise to produce these campaigns, and government communicators having the task of translating policies into communication projects. Policy departments are also authorized to decide about communication activities. In addition, they generally control the budgets for the campaigns. Thus, when producing communication campaigns, government communicators are obliged to obtain approval from the relevant policy experts. In turn, the directives of these experts have to embody the wishes of the political top, that is, the minister or under-minister, who is accountable to parliament.

Having offered these descriptions of their official roles, I must add an important note. In discourse analysis, contextual variables such as age, gender, ethnic group and role are not considered relevant in an automatic sense. Put another way, these variables are not treated as determinants of talk, unless participants themselves orient to them (see Chapter 2). This means that the difference between policy experts and government communicators was taken into account only in so far as these identities were made relevant in particular settings.

Clearly, the meetings were not the only place where communication planners talked to each other. I selected the meetings mainly for a practical reason. Since I wanted to follow more than one campaign, I had to restrict myself to a limited number of talk-based activities. Second, I focused on these interactions because it was at these meetings where the broadest range of participants could be studied. One of my interests was how communication planners accounted for their conduct in different situations, for example with different people in front of them. The meetings comprised formal as well as more informal meetings (cf. Boden, 1994). The formal meetings often worked with a fixed agenda and a Chair, and took place at regular time intervals. The more informal meetings, on the other hand, were smaller, sometimes with two participants, and task-oriented. They rarely had a fixed agenda,

although most of the times there was a specific reason for the meeting. Amongst other things, the small meetings provided participants the opportunity to come up with more personal issues and worries (see for example Chapter 6). Without saying that these latter meetings revealed the 'real' business, they generally proved to be the most informative.

The research presented here is primarily based on analysis of 'natural' conversations (by 'natural', I mean a specific kind of research orientation rather than ordinary conversation between peers - see Chapter 2). However, this is not to say that it does not make use of ethnographic understanding. In fact, research is not possible without some basic understanding of what the world is like. However, the issue is not so much that researchers use their cultural competence to make sense of participants' talk, but that they rely on it without explicating it in a way which is open to inspection (cf. Atkinson and Drew, 1979: ch. 1; Heritage, 1984). For conversation analysts and discourse analysts, it is essential to present extended pieces of 'raw' data or - ideally - all data on which the analysis is based. In doing so, they enable readers to follow the interpretative moves of the researcher as well as invite them to make their own assessments, by using their own member's knowledge. This possibility for a thorough reader's evaluation is one of the differences between discourse analysis and pure ethnographic research (cf. Atkinson and Drew, 1979: ch. 1). This research is in between, although it is more strongly based on analysis of conversations than on ethnographic understanding *tout court*. While conversation and discourse-analytic studies tend to focus on single cases or a small corpus of cases (but see Heritage and Sefi, 1992; Wetherell and Potter, 1992), this study draws on materials from four campaigns. As I pointed out earlier, the study does not aim at statistical generalization. However, based on the procedure of theoretical sampling, it compares and contrasts settings in which 'similar' activities occur on a larger scale than is usual in discourse studies. One of the consequences of this method has been that I present extended pieces of raw conversational materials rather than all data on which the analysis is based. Of course, it is simply not possible to present raw conversational materials of approximately ninety hours' duration (see 3.3).

Apart from having followed their discussions, I have also interviewed the major participants of the campaigns after these campaigns had taken place. In practice, those interviewed were the regular attendants at the meetings (see Appendix E). The aim of the interviews was to study participants' retrospective orientation. Note that I did not use the interviews to discover what *really* had been going on during all those conversations. Rather than a matter of revealing the true nature of the conversations, the interviews were a second setting in which participants' actions could be studied. Discourse analysts prefer to make use of less controlled interactional situations, but do not reject interviews per se (see Chapter 2). The analysis is based on the idea that the interview is a conversation between two participants (Wetherell and Potter, 1992: ch. 4; Widdicombe and Woofitt, 1995; Wooffitt, 1992). This, however, is an analytic issue, which I shall pursue in the next section.

3.3 TRANSCRIPTION, TRANSLATION, CODING AND ANALYSIS

With the exception of the conversations of the SoFi campaign, all conversations and interviews were tape-recorded. As far as the conversations were concerned, the tapes comprised recordings of approximately ninety hours' duration. In total, more than sixty meetings were attended and analysed. The tapes were not transcribed in their entirety. During the meetings, I made extended field notes. These notes were used as the basis for the selection of the materials which were transcribed and analysed in full.

As I pointed out in section 3.2, I did not tape-record the meetings of the SoFi campaign. In the case of this particular campaign, I analysed the data derived from the notes. Clearly, the sort of things which can be captured by tape-recording, such as exact serial placement and overlap, length of pauses and breathing, are ignored in this way. The inclusion of such features would certainly extend the possibilities for analysis. In addition, however accurate the description, notes lack the advantage of

recordings as a source of 'raw' data, which is not pre-organised by the researcher's descriptive practices prior to the start of the analysis. However, varied forms of understanding can be arrived at perfectly well with this kind of transcript. While I make no claim that they are complete, the notes can be considered a practically verbatim rendering of the discourse. Gross changes of volume, emphasis and intonation were included, whereas details of timing and overlap were ignored. The lack of detail in this respect was not considered an important obstacle, since the analysis did not focus on these aspects of the talk.

As I said earlier in this section, the data from the other three campaigns was tape-recorded. In order to make the job of analysis manageable, I made a first selection of materials from the notes. These materials were subsequently transcribed in full. Approximately a fifth part of this selection is presented here. The selection was based on the ongoing analysis of the data. In qualitative research, analysis begins when one is still gathering data (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Wester, 1987). Further data gathering is based on provisional analysis, which has revealed issues in which the researcher would like to gain further insight. A first and repeated step was to read the data carefully and search through it for themes of interest. The coding of the materials in terms of these themes was based on the research questions (see Chapter 1). In addition, I used the so-called *Discursive Action Model* (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, Edwards and Wetherell, 1993) as an analytic aid. Since this model was at the root of the research questions, the two linked up well. Although in a different order, all separate elements have been described in Chapter 2 (the numbers 2.1-2.3 refer to the relevant sections of that chapter).

Table 1: Discursive Action Model

(based on Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, Edwards and Wetherell, 1993)

Action (see 2.1)

1. The research focus is on *action* rather than cognition or behaviour.
2. As action is predominantly, and most clearly, performed through *discourse*, cognitive phenomena such as attitudes and attributions of causal responsibility are reconceptualized in discursive terms (see 2.1 and 2.2)
3. Actions done in discourse are overwhelmingly situated in broader *action sequences* such as those involving invitation refusals, blame and defence (see 2.2).

Fact and Interest (see 2.3)

4. In the case of many actions, there is a *dilemma of stake or interest*, which is often managed by producing ostensibly disinterested reports.
5. Reports are therefore displayed/constituted as factual by a variety of *discursive devices*.
6. Reports are *rhetorically organized* to undermine alternatives.

Accountability (see 2.2)

7. Reports attend to agency and accountability *in* the reported events.
8. Reports attend to agency and accountability in the current speaker's action, including those done *in the reporting*.
9. Concern 7 and concern 8 are often related. When constructing accountability in the event, speakers routinely attend to their own accountability. Vice versa, attending to one's own accountability can have implications for that of the persons and events in the reports.

The nine points in the model are not meant to be seen as hypotheses, but as a kind of 'sensitizing' themes. Rather than using it as a model in the strict sense of the word, it is used as a conceptual scheme which focused the attention on potential points of interest. The themes are strongly related to each other (see Chapter 2). For example, accountability concerns (points 7-9) are part of action sequences (point 3)

and problems of accountability can be solved by producing ostensibly disinterested reports (point 4).

The materials were first searched for variability in accounts. Variability is an important indication of the action-oriented nature of discourse (see Chapter 2). If there are multiple versions, these alternatives often signal that they are used to accomplish different actions. For example, it was typical in the materials for communication planners to manage governmental policies in terms of a dilemma of stake, in which the poles represented two contradictory versions of the policies. The other two main themes, fact and interest and the issue of accountability, were also tested for their relevancy (see for results Chapters 5-7). This involved asking questions, such as 'Do communication planners attend to their own accountability?' and 'How is the dilemma of stake managed?'

However, this was not a matter of simply discovering patterns. After having read and re-read the materials in detail, stretches of talk were put in order according to potentially interesting themes and provisionally coded in these terms. I compared these stretches with other relevant extracts and refined the themes accordingly. That is, I selected materials from the following meetings and went back to previous data to search for instances of themes I could now mark as relevant. In this sense, the analytical process is cyclical. Specific attention was paid to deviant cases, that is, cases which seemed to go against the general patterns that had been found until then. As I explained in section 3.2 , this procedure of comparing and contrasting was not only done within campaigns and between meetings, but also between campaigns. The campaign against Sexual Harassment proved to be an important deviant case (see Chapter 7).

It was only after a first series of codings that I transcribed the materials in their entirety. Until then, the analysis was done on the basis of notes. I used the computer for producing overviews of the analytic categories and the location of the relevant extracts. Note that transcription is not a mere technical matter, but already a form of analysis (Ochs, 1979). With the exception of the SoFi campaign, the materials were transcribed in the light of theoretical considerations, but also with

respect to readability. In the analysis, I have focused on relatively broad argumentative patterns, although I used more detail than an analysis in terms of interpretative repertoires (see Chapter 2) would require. Gross changes in emphasis, volume and intonation were captured, just like most speech errors and pauses (see for details Appendix A). I have added commas, full stops and question marks to improve the readability of the extracts, especially for non-discourse or conversation analysts. The decision to make line breaks at certain points was based mainly on the commas, full stops and question marks in those places.

All transcribed materials were first analysed in Dutch. The extracts which were presented in this and other reports, were translated in English. Again, translations are also forms of analysis. The extracts were translated with extreme care and with the help of a native speaker and a qualified English teacher. Often, these translations were done in several rounds. That is, we went back to previous versions and changed them after having consulted each other. The translations must be considered free translations (see Appendix C). The meaning of the talk, as it was understood from the analysis, was considered more important than the literal translation of words.

In addition to the conversations, I interviewed thirteen participants after the campaigns had taken place. The interviews dealt with a range of topics, which mainly concerned the process of producing the campaign. I worked from a basic schedule of open questions; the interviews often took more than an hour (see Appendix E). As I explained in the previous section, discourse analysts prefer dialogues to talk which is essentially a monologue in character. However, interviews are not treated in an orthodox way (Potter and Mulkay, 1985). Rather than merely transcribing the answers of participants, the interviews were transcribed in their entirety. The analysis of the interviews was based on the same principles as the analysis of the conversations. In particular, I looked for variation in accounts. At the time of the research, it was my approach to produce minimal signs of interest and encouragement during the interviews, for example 'mmmh'. The aim of this minimal encouragement was not to create an objective situation, but rather to provide the

participant enough space to express his or her views. A more vigorous approach to interviewing, in which the interviewer explicitly argues with the participant, may contribute to the conversational character of interviews (Potter and Wetherell, forthcoming). However, it is difficult to predict how participants react to this approach, since what they probably expect is a 'proper' interview. They could be discouraged from responding to the questions or even feel threatened. Clearly, this may be a point for analysis too (cf. Schegloff, 1992 for an example of a news interview).

3.4 QUALITY CONTROL

This section provides a summary of the ways in which the quality of the data has been checked. Reliability and validity are not clearly separated in this kind of research (Potter, forthcoming a). However, as we have seen, this does not mean that the quality of the interpretations cannot be addressed.

theoretical sampling and saturation

Generalizations are not made in statistical terms. New materials have been collected on the basis of theoretical considerations. That is, provisional analysis of a few cases, involving comparison between and within cases, provided a first impression of interesting themes. These themes were further elaborated by testing them on new, as well as on older materials which were searched for themes which could only now be seen as relevant. This cyclical process was finished when theoretical saturation was reached, that is, when no new analytical insight was gained from the inspection of the materials.

deviant case analysis

Exceptions to the pattern may provide a check on the quality of the pattern itself. Deviancy within as well as between cases is of importance. In this research, the campaign against Sexual Harassment proved to be a deviant case (see Chapters 5 and 7). By comparing and contrasting the interactional consequences of the pattern and the deviation from the pattern, I tried to find out what the precise features of the pattern were. It is precisely by studying its contrasts that one can discover the exact form of the pattern itself.

literature

Studies of similar topics may provide an extra basis for interpretations. In this research, I have extensively drawn on discourse-analytic as well as conversation-analytic studies to support the interpretations which were made. In this respect, the presentation of 'raw' data in this kind of study is an advantage: interactional patterns and their consequences can be quite easily compared with the patterns found in one's own research. Not only are these basic materials and their parallel interpretations a way to compare one's own interpretations, it also shows how to make an effective analysis.

'emic' perspective and presentation of 'raw' materials

Discourse analysis starts from the perspective of the participant rather than the perspective of the researcher. It is essential in discourse analysis to interpret the talk according to the meanings participants themselves attribute to it. That is, a discourse analyst treats the talk as the participant treats it. This, at least is what the researcher

aims at. As I pointed out in 3.1, this is not an either/or issue, but a matter of negotiation. Still, it is fair to say that the orientation of participants is taken seriously. In this research, participants' voices are captured in relatively extended pieces of 'raw' conversational materials. The interpretation of these materials can be checked by the reader, since the data and its interpretation run parallel most of the time. In contrast to pure ethnographic research, readers can make their own assessments of the materials.

In the subsequent chapters of this thesis, I shall pursue a number of empirical themes which arose from my research. The next chapter will provide some basic understanding of what the four government communication campaigns, which were studied, are about. In the Chapters 5, 6 and 7, I shall investigate the construction of the campaign message, the construction of the planners' own accountability, and the construction of the target group identity, respectively.

4

The campaigns: an introduction

In this chapter I give a concise overview of the government communication campaigns, which I studied. Successively, I give a description of the campaign against sexual harassment, the SoFi campaign, the WVG campaign (Disability Facilities Act), and the WAO campaign (Disability Insurance Act). For these descriptions, I have used government materials, such as policy documents and brochures. This means that the campaigns, that is, their roots, content and objectives, are described from a government's point of view, without taking account of, for example, reactions from press and public (see Chapters 5-7, for an elaborate picture of how communication planners take these reactions into account). First of all, in providing background information, I hope to give the reader something to hold on to during the empirical chapters which follow. It only seems fair to explain at least some of the resources the researcher has extensively, but tacitly, drawn upon during the analysis. As the reader will understand, this is merely factual information (for more on this see Chapter 2).

4.1 THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The campaign against sexual harrasment was started in 1991 and will last five years. The general aim of the campaign is to generate discussions about the problem of sexual harassment. The sub-campaign studied here is focused on young men from fourteen to eighteen years old. This campaign is specifically aimed at making boys aware of their responsibility in preventing sexual harassment. In addition, they are made aware of stereotype images of manliness and femininity and the influence which the images have on their behaviour with respect to young girls and women. The mass-media campaign consists of a television commercial and radio commercials, advertisements, an information leaflet available from post offices and libraries, posters which can be ordered free and a magazine "JongensSpecial; jongens over liefde en seks" (Young Men Special; young men talk about love and sex). The mass-media campaign has been designed to make a significant contribution to the raising of consciousness and bringing the subject into the open.

It was hoped that actual changes in behaviour would be achieved via intermediaries. These intermediaries, for example teachers, youth workers, and people employed in the prison system and the military forces, encounter boys in their work. In order to stimulate these intermediaries to pay attention to the prevention of sexual harassment, a number of brochures and teaching materials have been designed. Moreover, workshops and congresses have been organised, and an informative magazine "Menens" (In Ernest) is being published. This magazine provides information about the campaign and many similar initiatives from other organisations.

Four ministries participated in the campaign, namely the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, and, finally, the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment chaired the meetings. The meetings which were studied took place during the whole period that was used for designing

the sub-campaign directed at boys from fourteen to eighteen years old. This period lasted nine months, from September 1992 till May 1993.

4.2 THE SOFI CAMPAIGN

The social-fiscal number or SoFi-number is a registration number. Dutch people and non-Dutch people living in the Netherlands legally, are given a SoFi-number automatically. The number is used by bodies like the tax department and the industrial-insurance boards, which grant or receive government money. The direct reason for the SoFi campaign was the 'SoFi-bill' for municipalities, which was at the time of the meetings expected to pass into law within two months (April 1992). This bill creates a legal base for the introduction of the SoFi-number in municipal social-services departments and entitles the departments to check personal data with other bodies via the SoFi-number.

The bill also touches the question of the circulation of personal data. The rights of citizens to look at and, if necessary, correct collected data are laid down in the WPR, the Act on Personal Registrations. The WPR imposes a number of duties on the authorities doing the registration. For example, no more data may be collected than is necessary for the purpose of the data file. Both laws are connected with the PIB, the general policy on personal information matters. This policy mainly provides directives for official bodies on how to streamline personal data. In order to improve the service to citizens, personal data is collected and registered once only. Exchange of data should take place within the framework of privacy legislation. Mass and frequent exchanges of personal data require (legal) provisions which citizens can recognize and foresee as such.

The SoFi campaign was part of a larger project which was originally planned by the Home Office and the Department of Justice. This three-year project contained several communication programmes concerning the general policy on personal

information matters (PIB) in relation to the WPR. Since the direct reason for the SoFi campaign concerned a subject over which the Ministry of Social Affairs had authority, namely, the SoFi-bill for municipalities, this ministry chaired the meetings. In total, the working-group that has designed the campaign consisted of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Department of Justice, the Home Office, and, in the last few months, the Treasury. Two advertising agencies had been invited to provide creative ideas for the TV commercial (the so-called Postbus 51 or Post-Box 51-commercial) and the information leaflet (the so-called Postbus 51-leaflet which is available from post offices or libraries; see Chapter 3). The first preparations for the SoFi campaign started in November 1991. The selected conversations took place in February and March 1992. They formed a complete whole in the sense that throughout, the composition of the group studied did not change (for details see Chapter 3).

4.3 THE WVG CAMPAIGN

The Disabilty Facilities Act or WVG became effective in April 1994. This Act included a number of important changes with regard to the provision of facilities for the disabled. First of all, facilities became available not only for the young disabled, but also for people over the age of 65, the senior citizens. However, although a larger group of people may qualify for benefits to maintain, restore or improve their ability to live and work, the budget available for these facilities remained the same.

A second important change concerned the fact that, in the past, most facilities were available from the industrial insurance boards. This new law entitles the municipalities to provide a number of facilities, such as: transport facilities (e.g., wheel chair, car, reimbursement of taxi fares), small housing adaptations, and compensation in income (special assistance). The fact that municipalities are also providing facilities, is part of the decentralization the central government wants to

realize. The aim is to make the organizational network with regard to disability facilities easier for the user. Moreover, it can be expected that the provision of these facilities will be improved as far as their efficiency is concerned. However, a number of facilities, such as special diets, adaptation of the workplace, and vocational training are still provided by official bodies other than the municipalities. These bodies are health insurance organisations, the Health Insurance Funds Council, and the industrial insurance boards.

The WVG campaign or campaign on the Disability Facilities Act was designed within a period of fourteen months, with a short three month interruption. The preparations for the campaign started in September 1992, and were finished in November 1993. The whole period has been studied in this research.

4.4 THE WAO CAMPAIGN

In 1992 and 1993 the Dutch government ran two government communication campaigns about measures concerning sick leave and disability. The first campaign started in March 1992 and was focused on the TAV, that is, the Disability Volume Rentrenchment Act. This campaign aimed at providing information about a number of measures included in the TAV. This Act aims to reduce the *number* of people claiming sickness and disablement benefits in the Netherlands. It contains measures intended to motivate both employers and employees to resort to the Dutch Health Law and the WAO for the shortest possible period and as infrequently as possible. One of the most drastic measures concerns the introduction of a bonus/malus system for the employers. An employer receives a bonus if he employs a partially disabled person, but, on the other hand, he is penalized, if an employee becomes disabled or more disabled than he already was.

The second campaign aimed to inform the public about the TBA (Act to Reduce the Number of Claims Made Under the Disablement Insurance Act), TZ

(Sick Leave Retrenchment Act) and, finally, the Bill of Amendment concerning the Working Conditions Act (Arbowet). The TBA stipulates that a person claiming WAO benefit must be periodically re-examined. The criterion used to establish the extent of a person's disability is the kind of work a person is able to perform. By work is meant all generally accepted work that a person's abilities or skills allow him to perform. This means that education and/or previous occupation is no longer taken into account. One of the most controversial measures concerns the new method of calculating WAO benefits. During the first period -lasting for a maximum of six years, depending on the person's age-, the benefit totals 70% of the person's most recently earned salary in the event of total disablement. If disablement continues longer than this period, a follow-up benefit is awarded. This benefit depends on the extent of the disability. However, in the event of total disability, the follow-up benefit amounts to 70% of the minimum wage (AAW benefit), plus a supplementary payment. The older a person, and the higher his or her salary before becoming disabled, the higher this supplementary payment.

Important measures were also taken with respect to employers. The TZ (Sick Leave Entrenchment Act) determines that the employer bears the cost of sick leave during the first six weeks and is responsible for counselling during periods of illness. Moreover, the Bill of Amendment concerning the Working Conditions Act (Arbowet) requires that the employer pursues a sick-leave policy, draws up a list of the risks in his company and subsequently takes measures with those risks.

The WAO campaign was studied from August 1992 until July 1993, that is, for a period of eleven months. This study focuses on the organization of the so-called Superman campaign, which had already been designed in 1991 and the beginning of 1992. At the time of the research, this campaign still had to be worked out in detail. For example, an important question was how to combine this originally 'pure' persuasion campaign, directed at stimulating the self-activity of employers and employees, with detailed information about the relevant laws. The first campaign about the Disability Volume Rentrenchment Act or TAV had already been run at the time, but was still the subject of debate.

5

The communication planner as dilemmatic reasoner: constructing a message

Dutch government communication campaigns start from the assumption that policy rules and regulations are transmitted to the public in order to inform the public or to change their attitudes and behaviour according to the measures being taken. Although, officially, government communication may serve additional functions (Werkgroep Heroverweging Voorlichting Rijksoverheid, 1984), these two functions correspond with the dominant terms in which communication planners couch their campaigns. Either they merely inform citizens by means of information campaigns [*openbaarmakingscampagnes*], or they persuade them in persuasion campaigns [*instrumentele campagnes*].

Irrespective of whether the aim is to inform or to persuade, each communicative message should 'stand for' or represent the views which were politically approved of or about to be approved of (see Chapter 1). The persuasive effects of communication messages arise from the persuasiveness of government policies per se, or from a certain design of the message. Communication planners are not allowed to 'add' persuasive features by dealing with the content of these policies. In this respect,

communication planners are supposed to be passive media: they transport political messages to the public. Whether it concerns a 'stand-alone' communicative approach or communication as a supportive instrument, a communication campaign is considered to be an act of mere transmission. Communication planners are not allowed to exert influence on the policies to be communicated in any way whatsoever (see Chapter 1).

In this chapter, I examine in detail how communication planners formulate the central message of the campaign. In particular, I focus on how communicators make sense of government policies by juxtaposing and contrasting the needs of what they consider to be their main audiences. Their active orientation to the wishes of varying audiences, ranging from politicians to press and public, establishes a complex picture of often contradictory claims as the starting-point for their message.

Communication planners are conventionally depicted as preoccupied with one target audience or segments of it. A cursory glance at public communication literature in general, will reveal that public communication campaigns are supposed to be firmly rooted in research of the audience to which the message has to be transmitted (see Rice and Atkin, 1989, for overview). Thorough knowledge of the varying recipient characteristics such as demographic variables, personality and life style (McGuire, 1985) is considered a prerequisite for an effective campaign. Recently, it has been suggested that audience researchers should abandon their communication-as-transmission model and develop a communication-as-dialogue practice. Communication planners should 'listen' to their target audience and take account of how its members make sense of phenomena in the context of their daily lives (cf. Bosman et al., 1989; Dervin, 1989). Although different in some respects, the theories share the starting-point that communication planners do not reach their target audience because they misjudge it. An audience is wrongly perceived as a rather amorphous group of people, lacking in initiative and without relevant knowledge. Communication messages are based on a careful selection of arguments in favour of certain attitudes and behaviours, or a careful refutation of counterarguments, rather than rooted in the combined efforts of communication

planners and the target group to solve the problem. Therefore, these perspectives stress that improving communication is primarily a matter of improving empathetic capacities. This should result in less reified images of the audience and the conception of communication as a learning process.

Apart from perspectives that conceptualize the relation between communicator and audience as one-way traffic or rather as a relation between participants, one also finds theories that go beyond the communicator-audience connection in that they explicitly pay attention to the political dimension of government communication (cf. Katus, 1983; 1993; Salmon, 1989; Weiss and Tschirhart, 1994). These studies stress that government communication relies on two sorts of orientation: one towards the general public or segments of it, and one towards the institutional context in which government policies are being realized. Because of what is considered the manipulative dimension of this double orientation, some authors deny the potential participatory nature and emancipatory effects of government communication (cf. Edelman, 1967; Ellul, 1965). Most studies, however, underline the ultimate benefits of government communication, although they too express serious warnings concerning the potential danger of politically embedded communication.

It is striking that, despite these debates about its political features, government communication proceeds on the assumption that the only relation which matters, is the relation between communicator and public. Government policies can be transmitted, that is, merely reported, to the public without the transmission being 'tainted' by the political context. Although the political nature of communication messages is acknowledged as far as the inherent political nature of government policies is concerned, public communication planners are not considered to enhance the persuasive power of policies by changing their contents in any sense.

The fact that communication planners are still considered a neutral medium along which messages are made public, could be a result of the fact that few studies provide detailed and documented accounts of what exactly political and other 'external' factors mean for communication planners' daily practice. They either conclude that these factors do matter and subsequently provide little or only

incidental evidence about concrete aspects, or they confine themselves to influences concerning the 'form' of the communication rather than paying attention to its 'content'. For example, Van Woerkum and Kuiper (1995) point out that communication planners are often preoccupied with producing as many tangible communication products as possible, in order to be able to show immediate results to their superiors.

This chapter suggests that there are important shortcomings in these conceptions of government communication. Audience researchers may lack sufficient insight into the daily practices of the audience they want to reach, but filling up this gap by merely paying attention to communicator-public relations, also means ignoring the daily practice of communication planners themselves. Communication planners serve more than one audience. Furthermore, government communication may be political by nature, but without specifying its political appearance in the local contingencies of practical action, the observation is rather non-committal. Therefore, it is important to show how the socio-political context of government communication is oriented to in communication planners' discourse (see Chapters 2 and 3). In the following chapter, there is an examination of how communication planners use the model of adverse audiences to mould and remould their messages. This practice challenges received notions of what communication planners are doing. In actively mediating between audiences in order to satisfy the needs of this multiparty recipiency (cf. Drew, 1992), communication planners construct rather than transmit government policies.

5.1 DILEMMAS IN GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION

Current models of government communication (for example, De Roon, 1991; 1993; McGuire, 1989) imply that the interest in the campaign message is confined to a certain stage in the process. Important issues with regard to message construction

include types of appeals, speed of delivery, length and repetition of (parts of) the message. Although it is recognized that the formulation of the message takes time, the assumption is that most message factors relate to 'form' rather than 'content' matters. However, in each of the four campaigns studied, the 'content' of the message, that is, the policies to be communicated, was a continuous subject of discussion, irrespective of the stage in which the campaign was studied. In the campaign about the Disability Insurance Act (WAO campaign), the message had already been designed before the research period started, but even here, the message was repeatedly attended to and reconsidered. In the other campaigns, namely, the campaign against sexual harassment, the SoFi campaign and the campaign about the Disability Facilities Act (WVG campaign), the policies to be communicated dominated the discussions throughout.

In each of the four campaigns studied, communication planners referred to the policies to be communicated as more or less controversial. Depending on the audience which was considered to treat the policies as controversial, communication planners formulated the message in terms of a particular dilemma. Campaigns were fashioned as candidate solutions to either, what I have called, an *efficacy dilemma*, defined as a *political dilemma* (cf. Te Molder, 1994b). In the following, I examine when and how these dilemmas arise through studying their finer details. In addition, I show how each of these dilemmas is managed in practice.

5.2 THE EFFICACY DILEMMA

In the campaign against sexual harassment, communication planners defined the central message of the campaign in terms of what I have called an *efficacy dilemma*. Consider the following extract, in which a government Communicator from Social Affairs C3 explains why the production of a previous commercial about sexual harassment, with a similar content to the present one, has taken so much energy:

(1) SH <16/11/92 1>

1	C3		but this commercial has eaten up
2			such an incredible lot of energy,
3			it was so hard to translate in a way
4		1→	without you wiping the floor with women, in a way
5	A	2→	without you playing down the problem,
6		3→	without hurting people's feelings in that way
7	B		and yet strike home,
8			that I think that it remains extremely difficult.

C3 describes the communication problem in terms of a three-part-list (Jefferson, 1990) and a contrast (Atkinson, 1984), two rhetorical devices which have been shown to be extremely effective in public speaking.

In lines 4-6 (A), C3 mentions a list which consists of three parts. The first two parts deal with the nature of the requirements the commercial had to meet: it should not wipe the floor with women, nor play down the problem. In ordinary conversation, list construction is employed to indicate a general quality common to the separate parts in the list (Jefferson, 1990; Wooffitt, 1992). These lists are often formulated in three parts to suggest a complete argument to the recipient. Sometimes, as in this case, speakers do not provide a specific third part to complete the list, but use a 'generalized list completer'. Here, the list is completed by a summary of the first two criteria: one should neither wipe the floor with women, nor play down the problem and, in that way, not hurt people's feelings. In short, the list enables the speaker to convey the general message that communication planners have to take account of the sentiments of several groups of people when they produce a commercial. A commercial about sexual harassment should be respectful towards women, generally the victims of sexual harassment, and simultaneously present the problem as a serious problem, in order to avoid hurting people's feelings.

The second part of the extract (B, line 7) contrasts the list of requirements with the ultimate goal of the commercial: it should not offend people, and *yet* they should

be touched by it. A commercial should 'strike home' (line 7). The government communicator describes the formulation of the message not as a taken-for-granted transmission of government policies, but rather as a dilemma which has to be solved: one should avoid the message receiving an unsympathetic hearing, but it costs a lot of energy to produce effect without hurting anybody's feelings in one way or another.

Where it concerned the campaign against sexual harassment, it appeared that not 'hurting people's feelings' in practice referred to two audiences. First and foremost, the campaign was considered delicate in the eyes of the official target audience of the campaign, that is, boys between fourteen and eighteen years old. According to Billig (1991; see Chapter 2), opinions are organized rhetorically to work against widely available alternatives. By proposing a certain version of an event, people necessarily undermine, in explicit or implicit terms, an alternative, opposing version. In the campaign against sexual harassment, communication planners systematically oriented to a specific version of sexual harassment that they attributed to potential sex offenders. Instead of opposing this version in straightforward terms, they tried to integrate the version into their message, for example, by constructing the cause of sexual harassment in a specific way. The next extract shows the pattern. It is taken from a meeting in December 1992, more than halfway through the preparation process. Two policy experts P_1, P_2 and a government communicator from Social Affairs C_3 discuss the question whether sexual harassment is caused by a misunderstanding between the offender and the victim, and, if yes, what this perspective means for the message. One of the policy experts from Social Affairs, P_2, starts by stating that sexual harassment should *not* be seen as the consequence of a misunderstanding:

(2) SH <29/12/92 1>

1	P2	I think it is too friendly it absolve- it absolves the boy
2		whereas I [yes
3	C3	[yes, that is what's behind it
4	P2	and it absolves him [and that cannot be
5	C3	[and that isn't true
6	P1	but I think that however ri- however right you may be,
7		that we uh in a brochure shouldn't make that boy feel guilty
8		[pause] I mean that is what- what we have put
9		into that present commercial, that he phones and
10		makes it all up, that is precisely
11		in order to make all those boys not feel guilty
		[one-and-a-half transcribed pages omitted: the campaign against sexual harassment is compared with similar campaigns]
12	P1	So, in my opinion, with this sort of thing
13	P2	mm
14	P1	your best starting-point is "think, be careful-
15		be careful that misunderstandings can emerge",
16		for then you leave the- the question of who is to blame
17		or the- the cause of the misunderstanding aside
18	P2	mm
19	P1	you put a solution to the misunderstanding
20		to the side where we want it,
21		namely, with the boys
22	P2	mm [long pause] Well, that, yes, I could agree to that

In this extract, the communication planners do not focus on what they consider the 'real' cause of sexual harassment, but rather on the communicative effects of assuming certain causes. As the policy expert P2 and the communicator from Social Affairs C3 point out (lines 1-5), attributing sexual harassment to a misunderstanding between boy and girl could suggest that boys are 'absolved' from the charge of conscious sexual harassment, whereas they should feel responsible. A 'misunderstanding' leaves the question of who is to blame aside. It is for this reason that sexual harassment should not be attributed to a misunderstanding. According to P1, however, the assumption that sexual harassment is caused by a misunderstanding, rightly puts "a solution to the misunderstanding to the side where we want it, namely, with the boys" (lines 19-21). Thus, the cause of sexual harassment should

be constructed in such a way that boys are not blamed for it, because this would provoke defensive reactions. Instead, they should be encouraged to feel responsible for solving the problem.

The dilemma is between putting the blame on boys, because that would be quite true, and not putting the blame on them, because that would prevent defensive behaviour. So, the question is: to what extent can boys be portrayed as guilty without losing impact? In this sense, the dilemma can be described as an *efficacy dilemma*. A message both has to be 'true' and appealing in order to be effective in the end. The problem is how to strike a balance between these two elements.

In extract 3, this dilemma is referred to explicitly. The policy experts and government communicators are talking about a campaign magazine for boys, the text of which lies in front of them:

(3) SH <15/3/93 1>

1	P2	We think that the texts which we have now, let's say,
2		in terms of construction, very much hang on <u>one</u> story.
3		Besides, that does not suit the introduction
4		of the magazine very well, in which it is said that
5		it is a magazine about boys, love and sex, well,
6		that turns out a bit different,
7		I think, uh but the main objection against
8		the texts in front of us is that, in our opinion,
9		it goes along very far with the kind of behaviour uhh
10		which should be questioned.
11		There is really a <u>lot</u> of understanding being shown.
		[one transcribed page omitted: here it is discussed that the magazine could appeal to boys, just because understanding is shown. However, this is objected to:]
12	C3	it is, in itself, nice to know
13		how it scores in the communication,
14		but what they have is, of course,
15		a policy objection against the contents,
16		so you should then, that is
17	P1	[it might communicate but if the message is not in it
18	C3	[then you should consider how much emphasis you put
19		on the contents of the message, and how much are you prepared
20		to give in, on behalf of the communication which may be good.

The issue is to what extent the campaign magazine should show understanding for boys' behaviour without inadmissable changes in government policies. According to P2, the content of the magazine is very much on the side of the boys as potential offenders. It almost excuses this kind of conduct, whereas it allows of no excuse. In the end, the content of the message depends on how much importance you attach to direct appeal ("how it scores in the communication", line 13) and to what extent you are prepared to deny your 'real' message (lines 19-20).

In the campaign against sexual harassment, the dilemma was oriented to two target audiences. As we have seen, one of these target audiences was the official target audience: boys. The other part of the dilemma dealt with another 'target audience', namely the potential victims of sexual harassment. Consider the following exchange, which illustrates a recurrent issue in the discourse materials. Although girls were not approached officially as one of the target audiences of this campaign against sexual harassment, they were the subject of intense discussion. In this extract, two independent experts on sexual harassment, E1 and E2, and a policy expert from Social Affairs P1 wonder what boys would consider as the disadvantages of sexual harassment. One of the independent experts, E1, suggests that, for a boy, one of the negative effects of offensive behaviour is that girls become afraid of him:

(4) SH <7/1/93 2>

1	E1	Girls get afraid of you that is also
2		that gives the
3	E2	[no
4	P1	no but that is just what I do not want in it
5	E2	precisely
6	P1	No, for you do not want to read that, being a girl,
7		and you also should not give boys the impression I think
8		[that girls get afraid of them
9	E2	[that you can scare them
10		Precisely, girls will hate you.

Here the question is whether girls should be portrayed as being afraid of boys who harass them sexually. P1 does not want a frightened girl in the message, not because this image is not true, but because girls do not like reading that, and potential offenders should not be given the impression that they are able to scare girls. The dilemma is between portraying the girl as a victim or scared person, which may be true, and portraying the girl as a strong person, who is not afraid of the offender but rather hates him, an image which is potentially more appealing to girls and more threatening to boys. Irrespective of whether offenders do frighten their victims, the girl's victim identity should not be exaggerated, because girls do not like being considered vulnerable or pitiful human beings.

Now, if we go back to extract 1, we see that this aspect is also emphasized here. The message should "not wipe the floor with women" but respect them and, at the same time, not trivialize the problem but present it as it is. It is difficult to meet both requirements, and not hurt anybody, yet still be effective: either you trivialize the problem by sympathizing with boys, or you do not respect girls by portraying them as easily hurt.

Couched in different terms: getting the message across asks for a decision on the extent to which one can be 'honest' about the message. Communication planners understand the 'truth' of the message in the context of certain expectations and audience criticism. Formulating an effective message means negotiating between what seems to be considered a 'true' policy message, namely, girls are victims of sexual harassment committed by boys, and boys should solve the problem, and what is considered a predominantly appealing message for the respective audiences, namely, that offenders' behaviour is understandable and girls can look after their own interests. Causes of and solutions to sexual harassment and the corresponding identities of 'victims' and 'offenders' are moulded and remoulded in the context of this tension (see Chapter 7).

In the following exchange, in which a crucial scene of the campaign commercial is described in detail, the advertising managers present what they treat as a subtle solution to this dilemma:

(5) SH <23/2/93 5>

1	A2	what- what is, of course, essential and we-
2		we have also been talking about it a long while
3		that the- the, say, the scene in which it happens
4		should not portrait her as a victim,
5		because that- that is precisely what we want to avoid all the time
6		that she sort of, at first we thought something like,
7		perhaps she'd better run away, no, she should
8	A1	he runs away
9	A2	no, she should stay, he walks back into the house
10	A1	he walks away
11	A2	and she has sort of, yes, she is upset
12		but she also thinks sort of uh I did not let it happen to me,
13		I mean, that should be very subtle
14	A1	but it should also be clear that he has that moment of doubt,
15		sort of "I could go on now",
16		and that you literally see sort of uhh
17		he turns around a bit brusquely and and he walks away
18		he does not go on, he- he at the last moment
19		uh uh uh he does not do it,
20		despite the pressure of his friends,
21		despite the feeling that he was actually entitled to it
22		because she, on top of it,
23		asks him to take a breath of fresh air outside,
24		which is nine out of ten cases simply an invitation to kiss and
25		cuddle

There are two points I wish to highlight. The scene of the commercial described here is presented as an ingenious blend of a faithful account and an appealing message. On the one hand, the communication planners try to meet certain expectations of boys and girls, but, on the other hand, they try to put in the necessary policy elements. The result is a complex fabric of elements intended to prevent defensive reactions and elements that represent what is considered the 'core' message. The boy is depicted as a *potential* offender, who, in the end, decides not to harass sexually, whereas the girl is a *potential* victim, upset after the boy's action, but still able to hold her own.

Another interesting feature is the realistic style in which the scene is constructed.

The advertising managers make use of details, such as a running boy instead of a running girl, to characterize the whole scene. As Drew (1992: 494) points out, a gloss with which a scene or someone's behaviour is characterized, can be taken to stand for a collection of particulars of that scene/behaviour. For example, the running boy is taken to refer to the independence of the girl (she does not take flight, he does) and his ultimate innocence (he decides not to do it and walks back into the house) at the same time. The detailed and lifelike presentation of the nearly violent encounter is also part of the solution to the dilemma. The commercial seems to furnish an eyewitness report of the encounter (cf. Atkinson, 1990), thereby suggesting an authentic representation of reality, in which the expectations of different audiences can be mixed with more unsympathetic messages in a subtle way.

We have seen, then, that the message of the campaign is formulated from a rhetorical point of view, namely, by taking into account the potential counter arguments from boys and girls. The message is constructed so as to appeal and reflect the policy message at the same time. In broad outline it comes down to this: girls are victims of sexual harassment (part of policy message) but cannot be portrayed as such (not appealing), and boys are responsible for sexual harassment but cannot be blamed for it. This is not to say that the putative expectations of audiences necessarily conflict with policy ambitions; rather, communication planners *treat* the arguments as opposing arguments, which they have to integrate into their message. This integration takes place through *efficacy* considerations, that is, irrespective of what communication planners regard as true, right or corresponding with particular policies. Getting the message across means the message must be attractive to the audiences in a certain way.

Thus, the communication planners meet the expectations of the different audiences, without aligning themselves with these audiences. Instead, they align themselves with what is (often implicitly) considered the policy message and take expectations from the 'outside world' into account in order to be able to produce an effective message. As we will see, as soon as communication planners have difficulties aligning themselves with the contents of government policies, because

they consider these contents as controversial or even illegitimate, this *efficacy dilemma* is replaced by a *political dilemma.*

5.3 THE POLITICAL DILEMMA

A striking difference between the campaign against sexual harassment on the one hand, and the WAO (Disability Insurance Act)-campaign, the SoFi campaign and the WVG (Disability Facilities Act)-campaign on the other, were the 'audiences' towards which the respective campaigns were oriented. Consider the following extract from the WAO campaign, in which the *double orientation* of one of the sub-campaigns, the so-called thermometer campaign (see Chapter 4), is explicitly identified as the cause of its ineffectiveness:

(6) WAO <10/2/93 1>

1	C1	we have always, that was a bit of a double objective
2		we had, wasn't it,
3		we wanted to generate publicity concerning TAV, TBA [laws]
4		and uh mention them all, but on the other hand,
5		it had to be as quiet as possible
6		because we were certainly not allowed to hurt
7	C2	mm
8	C1	if you want to generate publicity you will have to
9		catch the eye
10	P1	have to hurt
11	C1	have to hurt [P1 laughs]
12	C1	that is exactly the, look,
13		that is what we uh what we were faced with
14	P1	yes
15	C1	and that uh and if you say uh, we want a factual, plain
16		uh way of- of- of visualisation and text,
17		that's what we opted for since
18		they were very painful rules and regulations,
19		then you cannot expect at the same time

20 that you produce much effect uhh for if you ask somebody,
21 do you know any Post-box 51 commercial,
22 they will all call uh "alcohol",
23 but they won't say "that thermometer,
24 I was strongly impressed by it" no [laughter]
25 that is not the case, of course.
26 It is- it is- it is the- the- the immediate consequence
27 that you make use of a- a double objective, on the one hand,
28 you want to generate as much publicity as possible,
29 on the other hand, you don't want to hurt

This extract has a number of interesting features. First, once again the contrast between not hurting on the one hand, and producing an effect on the other, is drawn upon. However, what is particularly interesting here is the way *not hurting* is interpreted. Note that not hurting is presented as a demand from 'others': "we were certainly not *allowed* to hurt" (line 6). The communication planner C_1 orients to 'not hurting' as being an obligation laid on him, rather than being a condition which is functional in the sense that it must be met in order to produce an effective message, as in the campaign against sexual harassment. The thermometer campaign has been designed with a double orientation: it is oriented towards the 'official' target audience that must be informed about the relevant rules and regulations, but also towards an audience that does not allow communication planners to 'hurt'.

Second, 'not hurting' is not only an imposed criterion, but also a criterion which almost forces the communication planners to be *in*effective in a specific sense. Not hurting and generating publicity, that is, making the message known to the public, are presented as mutually exclusive demands: you *have to hurt* in order to generate publicity. And, vice versa, in order to prevent hurting, one should communicate with the public "as quiet as possible" (line 5). Striking a balance between communicating what is considered 'the' message on the one hand, and trying to prevent defensive reactions on the other, is not the issue here. It seems as if defensive reactions must be prevented by all means, even when this means that the

message will not come through. The issue is 'not hurting *or* generating publicity', rather than 'not hurting and *yet* getting the message across'.

This brings us to a third interesting feature of this extract. Generating publicity means that "painful rules and regulations" (line 18) must be made public. It is for this reason that "a factual, plain" way of communicating has been opted for (lines 15-16). Communicating a message in this style means you cannot expect much effect (line 20). Note that factual communication is not associated with telling how it is, but with a "quiet" communication (line 5), which does not generate much publicity. In this case, not hurting is part of a defensive rhetoric (cf. Potter, forthcoming c), a rhetoric which is, in the first and last instance, applied to resist undermining.

In this section, I examine the WAO (Disability Insurance Act)-campaign, the SoFi (Social-Fiscal number)-campaign and the WVG (Disability Facilities Act)-campaign. I show how, in these cases, communication planners make sense of government policies in such a way as to resist the discounting of these policies. They are caught in a *political dilemma*: how to convey the message without compromising the government? Furthermore, this section shows that communication planners have inventive minds as far as the management of this political dilemma is concerned. The most frequently used devices or techniques to solve the dilemma are illustrated here. Successively, I focus on facticity or neutrality (5.3.1), selection (5.3.2) and shared-interest solutions (5.3.3) as ways to deflect criticism.

5.3.1 POLITICAL COMMOTION CALLS FOR FACTUAL INFORMATION

As explained in Chapter 4, and referred to in extract 6, the campaign about the Disability Insurance Act or WAO campaign contained several "painful rules and regulations" for the official target audiences of the campaign: employers and employees, and the (partially) disabled. In the following extract, we see how part of

the political commotion with regard to these rules and regulations was considered to have been decreased. In February 1993, one of the most controversial measures, namely, the new method of calculating WAO- benefits (see Chapter 4), had been announced in the press, and public attention gradually seemed to have faded away. Read the following discussion, in which an interesting link is made between the decreased political commotion and the kind of campaign this situation demands:

(7) WAO <10/2/93 2>

1	C2	hhh the political commotion uh and other commotion is also,
2		the chilly atmosphere has also largely gone.
3		Whether in that case you still have to make such a
4		sharp uh uh distinction between the information part and
5		the persuasion part and
6		if you cannot let them blend much more
7	P1	I think- I think that was clear
8	P2	in terms of time or message?
9	C1	yes
10	P1	that distinction I'd- I'd tell you
11	C1	I should I- I- I
12	C2	eh?
13	P1	I have always thought it was nice and clear that distinction
14	C2	analytically, that is okay
15	P1	and also simply for the
16	C1	yes but you too, also if you
17	P1	also for the creative expressions which
18		[we have seen so far in that respect
19	C1	[and as a receiver of the message?
20	C2	as well

In this extract, the government communicator from Social Affairs, C2, puts forward that the distinction between the campaign's information part and its persuasion part has become redundant, now that "the political commotion and uh other commotion" (line 1) have gone. The other participants, namely, government communicator C1, and the policy expert P1, do not agree, because it was a "nice and clear" distinction

(line 13). What exactly is the issue here? Consider extract 6, in which a similar link between politically sensitive areas and a specific kind of communication is made:

(6) WAO <10/2/93 1>

15 C1 and that uh and if you say uh, we want a factual, plain
16 uh way of- of- of visualisation and text,
17 that's what we opted for since
18 they were very painful rules and regulations,
19 then you cannot expect at the same time
20 that you produce much effect

The rationale for a factual campaign lies in the painful rules and regulations which are likely to receive an unsympathetic hearing. A factual, plain way of communicating had been opted for, since, according to the communication planners, it concerned a delicate subject in the eyes of the official target audience. The argument in extract 7 is the same, but now turned around: the political and other commotion with regard to the policies have gone, thus potentially leaving room for a *blend* of factual and persuasive styles of communication. One may go beyond 'merely' informing people, now that the subject of the campaign is no longer a politically sensitive area.

Officially, it is not allowed to run persuasion campaigns on a so-called controversial policy subject (see Chapter 1). Persuasive communication is not considered appropriate and proper when the policies to be communicated still cause a lot of discussion and argument in society. Although this criterion refers particularly to the situation in which policies are not yet politically accepted, it is also applied in a more general sense. In times of political unrest, people's feelings should not be *hurt*. It could be said that, in the above discussions, this argument is referred to. However, as I suggested before, the question is how this criterion of 'not hurting' is used by communication planners themselves. In extracts 6 and 7, we

have seen how communication planners' concern not to hurt leads them to communicate in a 'factual' way; this they associate with a quiet way of communicating that does not produce much effect. After the storm has passed over, one is allowed to communicate in a less restrictive style. In other words, not hurting comes down to a subdued communication in order to avoid a compromising political situation, rather than an attempt to avoid citizens becoming emotionally upset. Or, more precisely, citizens should not become emotionally upset because this would cause a compromising situation for the government.

The extracts 6 and 7 are also instructive with regard to the communication planners' idea of information versus persuasion campaigns. Information campaigns are not defined in terms of 'telling it how it is', but predominantly in terms of a low-key communication which avoids more political unrest; persuasion campaigns, on the other hand, correspond with a more conspicuous style of communicating, potentially catching the public attention, which is undesirable in politically hectic times.

In this respect, the following extract is interesting. It is taken from the last session of the WVG (Disability Facilities Act)-campaign, in which the advertising managers present their proposal for the design of the campaign. It concerns a recurrent bone of contention in the campaign, namely, one of the proposed campaign slogans: "It is all getting somewhat simpler" (see extract 17). This slogan refers to the relevant law, the Disability Facilities Act (henceforth: WVG), which is considered to make the facilities for the disabled easy of access. However, one of the communicators from Social Affairs C4 doubts whether this is the right slogan:

(8) WVG <4/11/92 1>

1	C4	Just a remark, I wonder if you can say this so explicitly
2		and whether it is true "it is all getting somewhat simpler"
3	A1	that <u>is</u> what this law is aiming at, if I am
4		[if I am the
5	C4	[yes, but I think that we should

6		avoid selling a law uh
7	A1	Yes, but it is also commu- a term for communication
8	C4	but okay, that's just a remark
9	A1	mmm
10	C4	for the rest I think it is a clear and nice story
11		but that's what I have said already, it is in line with uh
12	A1	another remark, it is also a neutral story, isn't it,
13		this law has uh has uh stirred something up and
14		certainly in circles of the disabled,
15		it seems as if we don't uh hurt anybody with this
16	C1	I will continue, do you have any remarks

The government communicator C4 considers the slogan "it is all getting somewhat simpler" as an attempt to sell the law in question, rather than, for example, an attempt to inform about it. Note that the solution to this problem is based on a similar device as the one used in the WAO campaign: the advertising manager describes the proposed strategy as communication rather than merely sale, and stresses that it concerns a "neutral story", which does not hurt anybody. Again, it is implied that 'not hurting' can be achieved by using a factual, neutral story, which in turn serves the task of avoiding commotion: the 'neutral' message will avoid that once more feelings are stirred up in the circles of the disabled (lines 12-15). This suggests that messages which people react to in a strong way, in other words, messages by which publicity is generated, are avoided. Thus, not hurting comes down to a kind and quiet communication, which does not produce much effect in terms of publicity.

As I have illustrated, a 'factual, neutral and plain' style of communicating is used as a way to solve the political dilemma of generating publicity without hurting people's feelings. This style of communicating is not associated with representing reality or merely giving the message, but, in the first place, with a quiet communication that resists the potential undermining of what are considered to be controversial policies. In this sense, the dilemma is managed asymmetrically: one pole of the dilemma is privileged over the other. Not hurting people's feelings is not

so much regarded as a practical condition for effective communication (see the *efficacy dilemma* in 5.2), but predominantly used as an argument to protect the policies against discounting, which means avoiding rather than generating publicity.

'Factual' or information campaigns can be considered an important way to manage a dilemma of stake (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, forthcoming c). Anything communication planners do, and particularly when it concerns politically sensitive areas, may be discounted as a product of stake or interest. For example, a campaign on painful rules and regulations regarding disability insurances (WAO campaign), could be discounted as merely a product of political interest games, an attempt to rob citizens. 'Factual' or 'neutral' communication couches the message in descriptive terms, which make the message seem solid and independent of (the interests of) its sender (cf. Wooffitt, 1992; Woolgar, 1980). The message 'merely' describes how it is. A second important way of taking sensitive concerns away from the sender is selective omission, a subject we now turn to.

5.3.2 POLITICALLY SENSITIVE AREAS CALL FOR SELECTIVE OMISSION

According to the communication planners, the SoFi campaign concerned a tricky affair (see also Chapter 4). In the conversations studied, the participants actively and systematically oriented to the dilemma of making public what the government is doing (checking personal data) without provoking damaging reactions from the public with respect to the invasion of privacy. In this campaign, communication planners did not use the term 'not hurting' people, but explicitly referred to the policy message as potentially compromising. In order to avoid a compromising situation, it was repeatedly suggested that certain parts of the message should be omitted. The next pair of extracts show this aspect. In addition, it shows how the policy expert from Social Affairs, P1, explicitly defends both sides of the dilemma. In extract (9), he wonders why he should make the fraud control message known to

the public (people already know about it), whereas in extract (10), he takes up the Side of the Other (Billig, 1987) in suggesting that the message should *not* be kept silent:

(9) SoFi <10/3/92 2>

1	C$_J$	A somewhat more friendly word for checking is verification.
2		But in the past, if fraud was possibly involved
3		verification was already allowed too.
4	→P$_I$	The campaign is tricky.
5		Why should you tell what is public already?
6	C$_J$	It must be told as plainly as possible.
7		That is what the public nature of the government is all about.
8		This legislation gives the government the right and duty
9		to check and verify data.
10		To check the whole lot.

(10) SoFi <27/2/92 3>

1	P$_I$	The WPR is important, because the government is going
2		to exchange so much data.
3		Why? Because there are basic registrations.
4		The government is going to check data, collect it.
5	A$_I$	Then the image arises from an all-checking government.
6		That you make ever so strong.
7	→P$_I$	You do not want to keep that secret, do you?
8		The government wishes to make it public.

As can be seen in this pair of extracts, the dilemma was not only between participants, but also within participants. Omitting the sensitive parts of the message, that is, the use of data exchange for fraud control, was treated as an attractive option for solving the dilemma. However, as extracts 9 and 10 show, keeping quiet about the message was alternately characterized as a 'safe' solution and as a solution which

was not in accordance with the official nature of government communication (see Chapter 6 for further analysis of these extracts).

In the WVG campaign, a similar omission device was referred to. Here, one of the issues of considerable contention concerned the cutback in facilities for the disabled, to which this law would probably lead. This was thought to be caused by the fact that, from now on, the facilities were not only available for young disabled people, but also for the O.A.P.s, the elderly, whereas the budget was going to stay the same (see Chapter 4). The dilemma was between generating publicity about this subject on the one hand, and resisting the public undermining of this political ambition on the other. In the next extract, it is suggested that the government should not apologize for the cutbacks, because people already know about the problem from other sources. Moreover, the issue should not be mentioned at all. Instead, the message should focus on a rather innocuous aspect at first sight, namely the fact that, from now on, facilities will be available in the municipalities:

(11) WVG <6/10/92 4>

1	C2	You cannot- you cannot that group of handicapped people involved
2		you cannot do an apology thing
3		[all other participants: NO NO NO] in such a commercial.
4		I mean they receive a message from the Industrial Insurance
5		Boards, the municipality will presently address them,
6		The fact is there, there have been cutbacks
7		and they simply know.
8	P1	So that commercial <u>should</u> also appeal to <u>that</u> group
9		but not with regard to the fact that they get less
10		but simply that provisions [are] now [available]
11		in the municipalities uh
12		so in total it should appeal to everybody
13	C2	yes both to young and old
14	C1	yes

In this extract, the dilemma between 'telling it how it is', that is, that there have been cutbacks in facilities, and omitting this (part of the) message, is managed by claiming that the people who are involved already know about these cutbacks: "there have been cutbacks and they simply know" (lines 6-7). The message should appeal to both young and old (line 13), and this implies that the aspect of the cutbacks is discarded from the message.

When indicating that the message should appeal to *both* young and old, C2 refers to the fact that these cutbacks are not relevant for the elderly people, because they are the group that receives extra provisions (see Chapter 4). The WVG only confronts the "young", that is, the handicapped people under 65, with cutbacks in facilities. Indeed, this could be considered a practical reason for the above omission of the cutback message. However, the message on cutbacks is still important to the other half of the official target audience, the young disabled. Even if this audience would receive the message from other organizations, delegating the message to another sender implies that the selection is made in order to avoid political commotion.

As we shall see in extract 17, the substitute message that "provisions [are] now [available] with those municipalities" (lines 10-11), is only innocuous at first sight. Originally, the WVG had been constructed so as to improve the accessibility of facilities for the disabled. The WVG wanted to spare people the trouble of asking for help within the maze of government or semi-goverment departments: "it is all getting somewhat simpler" (see also extract 8). However, as we shall see, the communication planners treated the feasibility of this aim as highly questionable.

The next extract from the WVG shows a second sensitive area for which omissions were proposed. The issue is whether communication planners should stimulate the use of facilities for the disabled, even if their actions may cause financial, and thus political problems in the future. A government researcher, R1, and a government communicator from Social Affairs, C1, discuss the question as to whether the slogan 'make use of it' should be included or omitted:

(12) WVG <4/12/92 3>

1	C1	I have- I have been thinking about about it
2	R1	yes
3	C1	look, apart from the fact that people have to know
4		what there is
5	R1	yes
6	C1	eh what is changing, there are, of course,
7		in your communication,
8		but perhaps you don't have to make that so explicit,
9		you should say "and make use of it"
10	R1	yes
11	C1	"if you have a right to it"
12	R1	yes
13	C1	for if you know that non-use was so great
14	R1	yes
15	C1	and that non-use is probably also due to the fact
16		that people didn't feel like exposing their entire [unclear]
17		to obtain such a provision
18	R1	yes
19	C1	uhhh yes uh would you also say "yes, yes, okay,
20		but you need not expl-", you are right there
21	R1	no uh
22	C1	you could, in that communication [unclear] say something like
23		"that is your right"
24	R1	yes
25	C1	"we think it is important that you keep on living
26		on your own so make use of it"
27	R1	but [first name C1], that is in disagreement with I think
28		with uh the political objective to do it budget neutrally
29	C1	yes
30	R1	am I correct?
31	C1	and then
32	R1	for presently, far more people know about it don't they,
33		also, because it is a new law, people start using it,
34		even apart from the new target group and then political forces
35		[*de politiek*] start yelling again uh "oh my it costs more"
36	C1	and then another important point
		[C1 outlines argument about the practical functioning of the law in different municipalities]

The cautiously formulated proposal of C1 to include the slogan "we think it is important that you keep on living on your own so make use of it" (lines 25-26), is rejected by the researcher R1. He stresses that communication which stimulates the use of facilities may be stimulating to such an extent, that "political forces start yelling" (line 35) that it costs more than expected. The whole operation must be done "budget neutrally" (line 28), that is, the change in law should not cost the government anything.

In other words, the dilemma is between generating publicity about the availability of facilities on the one hand, and preventing political commotion about financial disasters on the other. This is not to say that political forces are necessarily preventing communication planners from generating publicity; communication planners interpret it as such and take the demand into account beforehand.

Thus, communication planners may aim at omitting the sensitive parts of the message in order to resist undermining of them; this could take place either by means of a negative public reaction, which causes political unrest, or by immediate political unrest (which can go together with a positive public reaction, see extract 12).

A specific kind of omission concerns the omission of the *reasons* on which the policies to be communicated are based. This device was used in the SoFi campaign. In extract 13, the policy expert of Social Affairs P1 stresses that the message should be transmitted rather than *justified*, a point which is confirmed in extract 14. Extract 13 starts with a proposal from the advertising manager on how to communicate the message to the public. He points out that the message should include a justification, namely, limited goods must be shared, suggesting that fraud control can be legitimized by referring to the equal share of public goods that fraud control policies ultimately result in:

(13) SoFi <27/2/92 1>

1	A1	That is what is important to the citizen.
2		I mean, we are not allowed to say things which are not true,
3		but what is the philosophy behind it?
4		We have to think what is relevant to the citizen.
5		Not wag the finger at him.
6		Then we thought, how should we package that,
7		no, that's not the word,
8		how should we justify that?
9		One could say, the message is
10		"the goods are limited and must be shared out"
11		The warning finger about the preventive effect of this
12		is hidden then, but still perceptible.
13	P1	For me, it is a form of transmitting knowledge.
14	PH	That is true, but it also must fit in
15		"limited goods must be shared".
16		That this is a good message. The citizen must also accept this.
17	P1	I think it's an old story, sharing limited goods.
18		It's only "the government is entering into a modern era".

(14) SoFi <27/2/92 4>

1	C2	it is about showing what the government is doing,
2		what the government is doing has certain consequences
3	C1	it is not about creating understanding.
4	P1	no, it is just showing what the government is doing,
5		you must only make it visible.

Although, in extract 13, the policy expert of Social Affairs P1 does not reject the opinion of the Advertising manager A1 overtly, his answer can be heard as an alternative view designed to replace the view produced by the advertising manager. By stressing that *for him*, it is a form of transmitting knowledge, he orients to the difference between the views (line 13). In this way, 'transmitting knowledge' works as a contrast to focusing on the 'philosophy behind it'. The campaign message is not about packaging or justifying policies, but 'only' about the government entering into a modern era (line 18).

As, for example, Shapiro (1981; 1988) points out, a so-called normative message, which explicitly tells you why something is done or should be done, implies that the norms referred to are controversial and open to discussion, while a so-called descriptive message is designed to discourage such an evaluation. This can be considered an argument for communication planners to omit the reasons for certain policies: all reasons referred to are open to discussion. It is much safer to merely show what the government is doing. Although this device is related to the one described in 5.3.1, a factual or information campaign does not necessarily work with omissions. Its effect, or, more precisely its non-effect, is attributed to its plain style, rather than to the omission of certain parts of the message. In addition, and most important, participants themselves oriented to the omission of reasons as a specific kind of solution to the political dilemma.

In the SoFi campaign, the contrast between transmitting policies on the one hand, and justifying them on the other, recurrently emerged: it should not create understanding for the message, rather, it should just show what the government is doing. Notice the use of 'just' (extract 14, line 4) and 'only' (extract 13, line 18; extract 14, line 5). These *extreme case formulations* (Pomerantz, 1986) sharpen the contrast between creating understanding and showing what the government is doing. In combination with the extreme case formulations, the contrast serves to imply that, here, the transmission of policies refers not so much to a plain style of communicating, but to *not* justifying policies, that is, omitting the reasons why the policies are being communicated. As Pomerantz (1984) points out, when people perform sensitive actions, the source or basis for these actions comes into play. Turned around, not providing reasons can 'disguise' the controversial character of a message, since people do not recognize its controversiality. That is, the absence of reasons works reflexively to mark the unproblematic character of the statement.

The omission of reasons for certain policies, or the omission of other, delicate, parts of the message was a frequently suggested solution to the political dilemma. In selectively omitting and including certain (potential) parts of the message,

communication planners actively oriented to the aim of avoiding public discussion so as to prevent a compromising situation for the government.

5.3.3. POLITICAL COMMOTION CALLS FOR FORMULATIONS IN TERMS OF SHARED INTEREST

In the WVG campaign and the SoFi campaign, it was suggested to soften the sensitivity of the contents of the campaign by formulating it in terms of a *shared interest* of government and citizens. Consider, for example, the following extract from the WVG campaign. As we observed, the controversial issues concerned the cutbacks in facilities for the disabled, and possible future cutbacks because of a too enthusiastic use of the facilities. In the next extract, we see how the controversial issues are pushed into the background by using a 'positive' slogan, which suggests that facilities are available to keep handicapped people independent as long as possible. However, this slogan is also criticized for its one-dimensional character:

(15) WVG <9/9/92 5>

1	A1	It is of course a very positive thing to say
2		"you need to stay independent as long as possible"
3		nobody refuses it
4	C3	yes uh
5	A1	it is a good umbrella under which everybody wants to gather
6	A3	and there is something else of course
7	A1	but it is very convenient indeed [ironic]
8	C3	you should be very care[unclear]ful
9		that it does not become the reason for your story
10	A1	no no n- no
11	C3	it may be a sort of binding factor
12	A1	exactly
13	C3	but you should uh come up with other reasons I think,
14		more like 'justice demands it', to set up the matter

The government communicator from Social Affairs, C3, suggests that "you need to stay independent as long as possible" is not a reason which is acceptable as *the* reason for the policies to be communicated. To "set up the matter" (line 14), another principle, namely, 'justice demands it' would be more appropriate. C3 refers to the idea that limited goods must be shared. That is, facilities should be available for both young and old (see Chapter 4), and therefore one has to share the available sources.

However, as can be observed from the next extract, the reason that 'justice demands it', that is, the principle that public goods must be shared, is not considered an appealing reason for these politically sensitive policies (see extract 13 for a similar discussion). An expert from the Industrial Insurance Boards, E3, suggests that solidarity is the main reason for the policies and this is how they should be legitimized. From now on, not only the young disabled, but also the elderly are able to take part in the facilities, and this necessarily means that financial resources should be transferred from one group of citizens to another. Unfortunately, this principle is not considered 'communicable':

(16) WVG <6/10/92 2>

1	E3	Of course a group might say that
2		"I uh have a great package of provisions,
3		I am worse off with this package eh,
4		that is uh reducing the number of provisions,
5		flee- just fleecing, let me call it like that"
6	Cv	mmhh
7	E3	but on the other hand,
8		I use those means to let another part of the population,
9		the elderly, make use of them, so you actually,
10		and that is my interpretation just here at the table [unclear],
11		appeal to a bit of solidarity,
12		that the elderly should be allowed to take part
13		in those provisions as well
14	Cv	yes but you should not address people on that point
15	E3	no?
16	Cv	that does not communicate
17	P1	I don't believe it either

As this extract shows, the idea that limited goods must be shared is not considered 'communicable', that is, it is treated by the participants as a message which people do not find appealing. While the idea that 'one needs to stay independent as long as possible' was criticized for its one-sidedness (see extract 15), in the end, a related slogan became the main slogan for the campaign: 'facilities to stay longer independent'.

In the WVG campaign, a number of other proposed legitimations were criticized heavily because of a lack of validity, but still used. Consider the following extract, in which the legitimation that 'it is getting somewhat simpler', referring to an easy access of facilities for the disabled, is made contentious (see also extract 8):

(17) WVG <9/9/92 4>

1	A1	So you should actually say
2		"it has become somewhat more complicated"
3		"getting provisions"
4	C1	[unclear] well [laughs]
5	A2	well not really
6	A1	not that you should say this in that way,
7		but it is actually that you,
8		what it comes down to in practice, doesn't it
9	C1	well
10	A1	disregarding the communication for a moment eh?
11	C1	yes, disregarding the communication, uh the intention
12		has always been precisely to make it
13		more transparent and simpler
14	A1	yes, of course, but it will- but will it happen?
15		[researcher Hedwig and C1 laugh]
16	C1	Hedwig has followed all those-
17		all those discussions about that,
18		but it is, you keep uh [pause] it always remains uh
19	A3	it is, in fact, a contradictio in terminis
20		what we have to deal with

As can be seen in this extract, the communication planners were aware of the possibility that the accessibility of facilities would not be improved by the WVG or, even worse, that it would become more complicated (lines 1-3). Note that C1 manages this problem by referring to the fact that it has, at least, been the *intention* of the law to make things more transparent. While this problem came up time and again, the slogan 'it is getting somewhat simpler' was used nevertheless.

Whereas in the WVG campaign, the independence of the disabled and the easy access to the facilities were used as a way to couch the message in terms of a shared interest of government and citizens, in the SoFi campaign 'efficiency improvement' was opted for. One of the main ways of managing the dilemma between making the fraud control policies known to the public on the one hand, and deflecting potential criticism of these policies on the other, was concerned with pointing out the improvement of *efficiency* that the new exchange of personal data would involve. That is, the electronic system used for exchanging personal data between different government departments could be used to control fraud, but also to make data exchange more efficient for the citizen. In the next extract such an efficiency message is being suggested:

(18) SoFi <10/3/92 4>

1	C1	The data exchange takes place in the framework of
2		SoFi-legislation, not in the framework of the WPR
3		[laws of privacy]. That is democratically determined.
4		The question is "is privacy undermined in this way?"
5		A feeling has been created "there is no problem"
6		But with this law, data can be exchanged,
7		without the person being asked.
8	P1	But the government also propagates data exchange
9	C1	And one of the results is
10	P1	No, the objective is fraud control
11	PH	Now they just check
12	C1	Yes, that is the objective.
13	P1	And besides,
14		you must make a good start with benefit programmes.

15		The right people must get the right benefits
16	C_J	With as few people and means,
17		as many benefits as possible.
18	C_I	So, fraud control
19	P_I	We're talking about an economic principle
20	P_H	It involves an effective and efficient data exchange.
21		You can also control fraud with it.
22	C_I	Yes, I can do something with that.
23	C_J	Automation is a kind of aid, that is progress
24	P_I	It is about avoiding mistakes
25	C_J	For that purpose, you need data

First, the central dilemma of the SoFi campaign is pointed out: the data exchange undermines the privacy of people, but a feeling has been created that there is no problem. Thus, the communicator from the Department of Justice suggests that the government is avoiding publicity about the invasion of privacy issue, whereas it should be made known to the public. However, this is objected to by the policy expert from Social Affairs, P_I, who stresses that the government *propagates* data exchange, and this exchange of data is focused on fraud control.

Note that it is only in the first instance that P_I opts for a fraud control message (line 10), a message which seems to meet with general approval. However, once this point of agreement is reached, P_I rapidly moves to a message which characterizes the new kind of data exchange as a way of improving the efficiency of the exchange "We're talking about an economic principle" (line 19). There is a consensus of opinion with regard to making fraud control public; P_I is invited to make another counter-balancing statement in the name of efficiency, thus avoiding any potential negative implication of a fraud control message. The clean, instrumental terms of the efficiency message allow of an innocuous formulation of the policies, namely data exchange as "progress" and a way of "avoiding mistakes" (line 23-24), rather than data exchange as a way of controlling fraud.

Extract 19 shows a similar discussion. The issue is that a message which focuses on data exchange for the use of fraud control provokes potential criticism from the

general public, or specific parts of the public. In contrast to a message which focuses on fraud control, a message which focuses on modern, efficient data exchange does not hurt anybody. The advertising manager starts by explaining his proposal for the campaign. He points out that the message should focus on the benefits of the social security system, thereby suggesting that exchange of personal data results in a just social security system with which people should be proud. This proposal is rejected and replaced by an efficiency message:

(19) SoFi <27/2/92 2>

1	A1	The idea is,
2		the social security system is a great boon.
3		We appeal to people's feelings
4		"my, we never think of that"
5	C1	Do you appeal to people who get social security?
6		Is it only about social security?
7		I do not represent Social Affairs, but
8	P1	Why do you get this image?
9		Because you subsume it under the label of fraud control.
10		We're talking about data exchange with the aid of modern means.
11		It is about <u>that</u> message.

In constructing the message in such a way that data exchange is related to progress, rather than to controlling fraud practices of people who get social security, the message gets an innocent appearance, which certainly will not hurt anybody. Who is against efficient data exchange?

Communication planners refer to what are considered to be the shared interests of government and citizens, such as easy access to facilities for the disabled, a longer period of independence for handicapped people, or an improvement in efficient exchange of personal data, in order to solve the dilemma between generating publicity about the policies on the one hand, and not hurting people's feelings, or more precisely, deflecting potential criticisms, on the other. In the WVG

campaign, it concerned solutions which were criticized by the communication planners themselves, for example, because they did not correspond with reality, or did not convey the *main* reason why the policies were developed and should be communicated. Nonetheless, solutions, such as the slogan 'it is getting somewhat simpler', were opted for.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This has been a study of how communication planners make sense of government policies. When formulating a campaign message, communication planners couch the message in such a way as to manage the dilemma of generating publicity about the policies without hurting people's feelings. This dilemma, however, has two distinctly different versions. These versions are related to the different audiences with which communication planners have to deal.

In the case of policies that communication planners do *not* treat as politically sensitive, for example, the policies against sexual harassment, the main subject of the discussions concerns an *efficacy dilemma*: how to make the message known to the public without hurting people's feelings. This requires a construction of the message in such a way that it is appealing and a reflection of the policy message at the same time. The message is formulated from a rhetorical point of view, namely, by taking the potential counter arguments from different audiences into account in order to be able to produce an effective message. These audiences, however, were from outside the government domain, for example, the potential offenders and victims in the case of the campaign against sexual harassment. This is certainly not the case with the second version of the dilemma: the political dilemma.

In the case of policies that communication planners treat as politically controversial, such as with the WVG campaign, the WAO campaign, and the SoFi campaign, a different dilemma emerges, namely, a so-called *political dilemma*: how

to convey the message without compromising the government? Not hurting people's feelings is again the central concept in the planners' discourse. However, in this case, 'not hurting' does not refer to audiences from outside but to an inside audience: the government. According to the communication planners, the government does not *allow* them to hurt people. 'Not hurting people's feelings' is interpreted in such as way as to resist discounting of the policies in question by all means. Striking a balance between communicating what is considered 'the' message on the one hand, and trying to prevent defensive reactions on the other, as in the campaign against sexual harassment, is not the issue here. The issue is 'not hurting *or* generating publicity', rather than 'not hurting and *yet* getting the message across'.

This picture of communication planners runs contrary to notions of communication planners who *transmit* their message to *one* specific target audience or segments of a target audience. Government communication that should 'stand for' or represent the views which were politically approved of, presumes a technical, linear relationship between the policy to be communicated and the communication which results from it. However, this chapter suggests that communication planners, while determining the central message of a campaign, put new life into apparently dead material. The policy which is communicated is not directly deducible from policy documents or policy experts' talk, but is the end product of a long process of developing and testing possible 'translations'. As we have seen, communication planners mould and remould their messages in order to be able to satisfy recipients of all parties. In this sense, campaign messages not only tie together facts and policies, but also people (cf. Law and Williams, 1982). In the case of the campaign against sexual harassment, it was not only the official target audience of the campaign, namely, young boys, which was oriented to, but also the potential victims of sexual harassment, girls. The WVG campaign, the WAO campaign, and the SoFi campaign were directed at the official target group and the government. As far as the campaigns on controversial policies were concerned, communication planners were not able to satisfy both audiences: these messages were predominantly constructed to resist discounting. A defensive rhetoric dominated the campaigns.

First, in the case of the WAO campaign and the WVG campaign, 'factual' campaigns were used to avoid rather than generate publicity about the policies (5.3.1). Second, in the case of both the WVG campaign and the SoFi campaign delicate parts of the message were omitted (5.3.2). In the SoFi campaign, this concerned omitting the *reasons* on which the policies were based. Third, in the case of both the SoFi campaign and the WVG campaign, the politically sensitive subject was reformulated so as to serve what was considered a shared interest of government and citizens (5.3.3).

Communication planners spend a lot of time avoiding hurting people's feelings. When this principle is applied to non-controversial policies, it is put at the service of making the message more effective, that is, trying to generate publicity about the subject involved. On the other hand, where it concerns politically sensitive areas, the principle of 'not hurting people's feelings' is put at the service of what are considered the needs of the political audience. Not hurting people's feelings is translated into trying to avoid publicity in a politically sensitive area.

It is important to remember that I am treating the needs of the political audience the way communication planners construct them. As we shall see, these needs were not always considered unambiguous, also not by communication planners themselves. They actively constructed the needs of the political audience in order to serve specific rhetorical tasks. Communication planners play an active part in communicating the message to the public; and even if they feel they serve the political audience with their message, these needs are not simply there, but constructed in a certain way. Communication planners do not act as straw men. However, when the communication concerns a delicate subject, they would much rather be just that. This is the subject of the next chapter.

6

The communication planner as impartial party: constructing personal accountability

In this chapter my aim is to examine the accountability practices of communication planners. Studies of talk-in-interaction have shown in detail that participants may hold each other accountable for the veracity of their reports and further consequences the reports may have (cf. Edwards and Potter, 1992; see Chapter 2). In reporting events, participants also display a concern for this aspect of their talk. For example, they construct their messages in such a way as to allow others to hold them personally accountable for the message or, vice versa, to prevent others from doing so. While I do not mean to say that participants do so intentionally (Heritage, 1990/1991; see 2.2), managing their own accountability is one of the prime actions they accomplish with their discourse. With respect to communication planners, this suggests that planners' reports of government policies are simultaneously a way of dealing with issues of agency and personal responsibility. The main issue of this chapter is how communication planners, in their construction of government policies, attend to their *own* accountability.

The term accountability practices refers to different phenomena when viewed from different perspectives (cf. Buttny, 1993). All perspectives, however, start from the idea that people provide accounts in order to explain their own and other people's behaviour. One of the main issues of contention concerns the question as to whether accounts are cognitive or discursive by nature.

A major *social-cognitive* perspective on accountability is offered by attribution theory (see also 2.2). Attribution theory aims to describe the ways in which people attribute causes to events. In classic as well as more recent examples (Kelley, 1967; Semin and Fiedler, 1988; Hilton, 1990), these causal explanations are considered as cognitive representations of what happened or what people think that happened. In other words, people's accounts can be considered to provide a route to reality or, at least, to perceptions of reality. However, as Edwards and Potter (1992; 1993) point out, this notion of accountability ignores the discursive or action-oriented nature of accounts (see 2.2). Take, for example, the ostensibly neutral account 'John phones Mary'. This account not only formulates what John does or Mary does, but also relates to the current speaker: what is he doing in couching the situation in these terms? Intentionally or not, 'John phones Mary' can be used to blame John and distract the attention from the speaker's own accountability. Accounts which are merely descriptive at first sight can be employed to perform all kinds of interactional work, such as denying potentially blameworthy acts or warranting certain actions. An adequate understanding of accounts demands consideration on both levels of accountability: who is presented as being responsible for the action in the account and how does the speaker attend to his own accountability by presenting the actions precisely in this way?

An important impetus to such a *discursive* perspective on people's accounts derives from the work of Scott and Lymann (1968). In what has become a classic article, Scott and Lymann use the notion of account for explanations of unanticipated or untoward behaviour. People can be held accountable for their conduct and called upon by others to explain it. This approach starts from the idea that accounts are designed in order to perform social actions, for example, to make excuses or justify

one's behaviour. Scott and Lymann also provided a taxonomy of accounts, which has been elaborated and reviewed thoroughly (cf. Semin and Manstead, 1983). Despite the fact that the approach represents a move forward towards a more social perspective on accountability, it does not provide insight into daily conversational practice (for an elaborated argument see Buttny, 1993; Antaki, 1994). The social element of Scott and Lyman's perspective is restricted to a *theoretical* notion of what people do with their accounts. Studies of talk-in-interaction show that accounts are not analytically reducable to individual sentences or words. Accounts normally require larger units than words or sentences, in order to achieve their accomplishment (see Chapter 2). Taxonomies do not provide the kind of structure the study of *action sequences* (see 2.2) would suit. Whereas taxonomies structure accounts according to their gist or general pattern, discourse analysis focuses on how accounts are 'locally' organised. That is, discourse analysis demands the kind of detail which taxonomy ignores.

In this chapter, I shall start from a perspective on accountability practices which takes this 'natural' flexibility into account. As I pointed out in Chapter 2, discourse analysts, inspired by ethnomethodologists (cf. Garfinkel, 1967) and conversation analysts (cf. Sacks, 1992), study accounts in their natural environment. According to these perspectives people continually account for their actions so as to achieve the social goal of producing and demonstrating the practical rationality and normality of their behaviour. In other words, accountability can be considered a quality of all talk. Nonetheless, it is only in some situations that the issue of accountability becomes salient and is actively oriented to by participants.

A major way by which speakers may refer to issues of accountability, is through offering a source for their reports. In this chapter, I shall use Goffman's (1981) notion of *footing* to describe these situations (see also 2.2). By referring to a certain source, the speaker displays a specific accountability for his reports. Goffman describes this process in terms of the different participant roles speakers may embody (see also Levinson, 1988). As he points out, a speaker may perform three different roles or identities. The so-called *principal* is the person whose viewpoint is

being expressed, the *author* is the composer of the message, while the *animator* expresses the viewpoint. Often, these three identities are simultaneously drawn on. In that case, the speaker speaks on her own behalf, thereby presenting herself as fully accountable for the message. Speakers may also share accountability by speaking on behalf of themselves and others jointly. In addition, another speaker's view may be reported by sharply distinguishing between the origin of the viewpoint and the speaker's role as animator. This distinction enables the speaker to pass on views of others without being responsible for the views expressed. In reporting what others have said, speakers are merely held accountable for citing accurately (Pomerantz, 1984). However, it is important not to reify these distinctions (cf. Potter, forthcoming b). Footing is a participants' concern and therefore a potentially contentious matter. Rather than drawing distinctly on one specific role, speakers quite often shift from one role to another, and may do so in subtle ways.

The following analysis focuses on how communication planners orient to issues of accountability by maintaining specific footings in their reports. In particular, I show how, in the case of the policies which were referred to as potentially compromising for the government, communication planners tried to preserve a footing for their reports which secured their *neutral* status. They presented themselves as a mouthpiece or animator, rather than as the origin or the author of the message. In section 6.1, I describe how communication planners tried to secure their neutrality by underlining that they were not the origin of the campaign message. In section 6.2, I show that communication planners attributed the responsibility for veiled messages to the political domain, by which they denied the authorship of the message. Next, I show how communication planners draw on their neutral status after the campaigns have taken place (6.3). Finally, I shall discuss situations in which communication planners did not portray themselves as neutral, that is, passive intermediaries of government policies, but instead as participants who actively tried to prevent political commotion (6.4).

As we shall see in Chapter 7, in the case of the campaign in which the participants were caught in an *efficacy dilemma*, the distinction between the origin of

the reports and the participants' role as animator was blurred. In this way, participants aligned themselves with the message involved.

6.1 I AM NOT THE ORIGIN OF THE MESSAGE

As we have seen in Chapter 5, the *WVG* campaign (Disability Facilities Act), the *WAO* campaign (Disability Insurance Act), and the *SoFi* campaign (Social Fiscal number) were dominated by a so-called *political dilemma*. The issue was how to transmit the message without causing political commotion, that is, compromising the government. In order to manage the dilemma, controversial policies were communicated by means of a factual campaign which was not expected to be effective; contentious parts were omitted or recouched in terms of the assumed interests of citizens. By abandoning or reformulating policy aims which were politically approved of, but treated by communication planners as contentious, the planners actively constructed these policies in such a way as to deal with potential criticism.

However, in those passages in which the contentiousness of the policies was at issue, communication planners tried to secure a footing for their reports which displayed their *neutrality*: they portrayed themselves as participants who merely transmit government policies, thereby preventing others from holding them personally accountable for the content of the policies, or their presentation in a politically safe or 'veiled' way.

In the SoFi (Social Fiscal number)-campaign and the WVG (Disability Facilities Act)-campaign, communication planners treated the policies to be communicated as the mere responsibility of others. While attributing responsibility for these policies to the political domain and the government in general, communication planners simultaneously managed their own responsibility.

Consider the following extract from the WVG (Disability Facilities Act)-campaign (see also Chapter 5). The communication planner from Social Affairs describes how the original aim of the WVG, making facilities for the disabled more accessible by providing one counter for all services, has turned out to be no more than an illusion. In fact, as he points out, the law implies that all the facilities are cut down to such an extent that many disabled will have to appeal to Social Security. This policy of "transferring problems" is subsequently described as "politics":

(20) WVG <4/12/92 1>

1	C1		So the idea of one counter is actually a sort of an illusion
2			but okay, we will not be too loud about that.
3			This law does not include it either
4	R1		has that ⌜uh has it?
5	C1		⌞ever been the intention
6			It <u>was</u> announced once as being the intention, for the idea,
7			that was also included in this info, it was a dispersed system,
8			and to make the whole operation legitimate it has been said,
9			"yes, but we want to get rid of that dispersion. This is a very
10			transparent, clear package of facilities" uhhh but okay,
11			the criticism from the Council for the Disabled [unclear]
12			they uh did not have any problems uhh wiping the floor with it,
13			it has happened several times now uh for, of course,
14			they clearly recognise what is happening, right?
15			It is often the accumulative effect for the handicapped uhh
16			if you are handicapped, you depend on transport facilities,
17			you depend on a wheelchair, you depend on housing adaptations,
18			when everything becomes less, yes, that means that somebody
19			could be several hundreds of guilders worse off per month
20	R1		yes, that is a lot
21	C1		so it also means that probably a lot of people have to appeal
22			for Social Security, you see
23	R1		yes, that is transferring problems according to me
24	C1		mm
25	R1		well
26	C1		yes, that sort of thing
27	R1	→	that is politics, that uh
28	C1	→	yes, politics, exactly
29	R1		can do nothing about it, unfortunately
30	C1		now back to the procedure

Partly, this extract deals with the issue of accountability in a very explicit way. C1 characterizes the WVG as a law which has been developed under the transparent guise of improved access to facilities, whereas the situation for the disabled has only grown worse. In lines 1-26, C1 and R1 come to describe this transference of problems as the "sort of thing" (line 26) that "politics" (lines 27-28) exemplifies, thereby suggesting that, if they were responsible, they would not do it in a 'political' way. In identifying these policies as, typically, politics, they simultaneously remove their own responsibility, which is confirmed in line 29: "can do nothing about it, unfortunately".

A first indication, therefore, that communication planners attended to their own problems of accountability through the formulation of the political dilemma, stems from the fact that the planners attributed responsibility to the political domain at specific points within their talk (cf. Clayman, 1992). As we have seen in extract 20, the planners held the political domain accountable for policies which they treated as disputable. In general, the attribution of responsibility was restricted to passages in which (parts of) the policies to be communicated were identified as unfair, illogical or contradictory to other government policies. Politics was systematically used as a generic term for policies which involved difficulties. So, communication planners only attributed blame to political forces in the case of controversial policies which were likely to bear directly on the accountability of the planners themselves.

Paradoxically, the sheer fact that communication planners confirm their not-being-responsible is a second indication that they feel they may be held responsible. Communication planners are officially not responsible for the content of the policies to be communicated: it is their task to transmit the policies. In other words, there is no need for communication planners to confirm their intermediary status, facing an audience that is familiar with their task, unless there is a risk of being associated with the contents of the policies. The apparently redundant act of attributing responsibility to politics therefore indicates that the planners considered themselves at least potentially accountable.

Finally, the message that they were not accountable was repeated in a persistent manner. It was said time and again. Take, for example, the following extract from the SoFi campaign. The Communicator from the Department of Justice, C_J, has put her finger on a controversial theme in the campaign; i.e. how to control fraud without invading people's privacy (see Chapter 5). This question is answered by identifying it as being partly a political issue:

(21) SoFi <10/3/92 2>

1	C_I		It is about exchange of data and protection.
2			[to C_J] You said "it is not a WPR-story".
3	C_J		Yes, [the Department of] Justice is also responsible for
4			driving back certain situations, but how far can you go
5			before the citizen stops feeling protected?
6	P_I		Here the privacy-story comes in, you see.
7		→	There is a democratic flavour to it. The rest is politics.

By characterizing the "privacy-story" as being the democratic flavour and "the rest" as politics, P_I turns politics into a suspicious phenomenon. Politics seems to correspond with those (parts of the) policies which really matter but which are being hidden beneath a veneer of democracy. In other words, P_I solves the problem of being held potentially accountable for disputable policies by defining precisely these policies as politics, thereby indicating that these policies originate elsewhere.

Communication planners not only distance themselves from controversial policies by explicitly holding political forces accountable for these policies. They also indicated their distance from these policies by systematically describing the task of making these policies known to the public as an instruction or wish of the government or the political domain in particular. Communication planners did not portray themselves as participants who, for example, wanted to make these policies public, or did so as a matter of course. Rather, the act of making these policies public was treated as a necessity, that is, they portrayed themselves as participants

who were instructed to do so and who were not allowed to do otherwise. Take the following two examples from the SoFi campaign (see for further analysis of these extracts Chapter 5):

(22) SoFi <10/3/92 2>

1	CJ	A somewhat more friendly word for checking is verification.
2		But in the past, if fraud was possibly involved
3		verification was already allowed too.
4	PI	The campaign is tricky.
5		Why should you tell what is public already?
6	CJ	It must be told as plainly as possible.
7		That is what the public nature of the government is all about.
8		This legislation gives the government the right and duty
9		to check and verify data.
10		To check the whole lot.

(23) SoFi <27/2/92 3>

1	PI	The WPR is important, because the government is going
2		to exchange so much data.
3		Why? Because there are basic registrations.
4		The government is going to check data, collect it.
5	AI	Then the image arises from an all-checking government.
6		That you make ever so strong.
7	PI	You do not want to keep that secret, do you?
8		The government wishes to make it public.

In these extracts, making the policies public is constructed as a duty or wish of the government. The communicator from the Department of Justice (extract 22, line 8) and the policy expert from Social Affairs (extract 23, line 8) do not act as individuals, but on behalf of the government. In both extracts, one participant corrects the other with respect to the suggestion to omit certain parts of the message. However, the correction is carefully couched in government terms: it is the

government that wants to make these policies known to the public. By suggesting that it is not so much they, but the government who wants to make it public, the communication planners distance themselves from the message in question.

The same pattern, that is, identifying a message as being sensitive or tricky and subsequently suggesting that there is no choice but to transmit it, can be found in the following extract from the WVG. The communicator from Social Affairs, C1, points out that no advantage can be gained by this law, upon which the government researcher, R1, states that they, being civil servants, have to remain firm in their support for government policies:

(24) WVG <4/12/92 2>

1	C1	Look, it is, of course, from a political point of view,
2		and that is, of course, very hypocritical you would say,
3		but look, one can hardly score with this thing
4	R1	mm
5	C1	The only thing one can do as well as possible, is seeing
6		to it that, in any case, the entire supply of information
7		to the people who do have rights, that it is running
8		as smoothly as possible
9	R1	well, hypocritical, no. We have, we have to deal with
10		this kind of project quite often, right, political decisions
11		with which you personally may not really agree
12	C1	but which you nevertheless
13	R1	which you have to carry out loy- loyally, right,
14		being a civil servant
15	C1	those other questions [change of subject]

This extract clearly illustrates the pattern as decribed above: both the communicator from Social Affairs (C1) and the government researcher (R1) treat the policies to be communicated as contentious materials and attribute, directly or indirectly, the policies to the political domain. In addition, it is suggested that, objectionable or not, these policies have to be transmitted to the public. The most interesting feature

of this extract, however, concerns the link the participants make between their own and political accountability. In the first instance, C1 describes the problem of not being able to "score" with this law as being political, that is, a concern one has "from a political point of view". However, in 'confessing' the potentially hypocritical nature of this problem in lines 1-3, "that is very hypocritical you would say", he indicates that he takes it as a problem of his own accountability.

C1 is doing some pre-emptive accounting here (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Buttny, 1993: 153-155). That is, he avoids being branded as hypocritical by R1, by formulating this problem before R1 can do so. Subsequently, R also treats C1's remark about the political problem as a description of C1's own problem of accountability. The question is managed by referring to their institutional identity as civil servants: they might not agree with certain political views, but it is in their quality as civil servants that they are bound to carry it out (see Halkowski, 1990; Wetherell and Potter, 1989, for similar role discourse). In other words, this extract illustrates that the problem of contentious policies is treated by participants themselves as being a problem of their own accountability, and is also managed as such.

In some cases, communicating these policies to the public was treated as a joint responsibility. Communication planners presented themselves as representatives of the government and refrained from marking the distance between the views of the government and their own views. However, although they presented themselves as being able to align themselves with these orders, they still suggested that they acted as they did because they were *under government orders*, and, as government, one should make the law public. In this way, the source of these policies, namely, the government, may be used to impress sceptical recipients; and, in case this authority is not accepted, communication planners may safely distance themselves from the message by presenting it as a government message. Take the following extract from the WVG campaign, in which C1 introduces the policies and the campaign about these policies to the advertising agency:

(25) WVG <9/9/93 1>

1	C1	The field of communication will be very interesting,
2		but also very complicated uhm because of that decentralization.
3		As the government, which makes the law uh or changes
4		the law, uh the task lies with us, uh according to the
5		Wet Openbaarheid van Bestuur [law that gives the public
6		right to information] uh you should make uh the law,
7		the change of law public, it is important in the explanation
8		and in the information, uh you must see that people
9		understand the why and wherefore uh as [name prime minister]
10		once said "it is not the idea in The Hague to change uh
11		laws in backrooms, without making it known to people". That is
12		an absolute necessity and the task rests very clearly
13		with the three departments involved in it.

In this extract, C1 aligns himself with the government, but also systematically refrains from couching the wish to communicate these policies in personal terms. As we shall see in Chapter 7, in the campaign against sexual harassment, communication planners did show this kind of personal alignment with the policies to be communicated, thereby accepting accountability for these policies.

In contrast, C1 describes two *external* sources for his claim that the law should be made public. First, it is according to the Wet Openbaarheid van Bestuur [law that gives citizens the right to information] that the government should make the law known to the public (see also Chapter 1). Second, C1 quotes the prime minister, who once said that laws should not be changed in backrooms. C1 seems to take pre-emptive action here (cf. extract 24). Notice that the emphasis on the obligation to make this law public is preceded by the remark that the campaign will be complicated. In other words, C1 formulates the problem and then proceeds by stressing that the law should be made public. In doing so, he can be seen as anticipating difficult questions about such a complicated campaign and stressing the need and obligation to communicate the law to the public, before these questions are actually raised. It could be argued that, since the statements are made in front of the

advertising managers, C1 is presenting the campaign as a challenge, a complicated but interesting problem which the advertising agency can solve. In that case, however, the lengthy considerations on being obliged to make these laws known the public do not make sense, or, more precisely, seem redundant.

In the light of this redundancy, C1's persistent attempts to remove personal reponsibility by portraying himself as acting under orders may be seen as an attempt to build co-responsibility for communicating policies to the public, which can be considered unfair, illegitimate, or unpopular with the public. As I have pointed out, the fact that communication planners systematically underlined their non-accountability for the policies to be communicated, can be taken as an indication that planners are worried about their own accountability. Correspondingly, holding the government accountable for something the government is well-known to be accountable for, indicates that the planners do not treat their official neutral stance as guaranteeing that they will not be held accountable. The fact that these (indirect) neutrality declarations were regularly repeated, in front of the same audience, indicated that these declarations were something more than mere descriptions of the neutral status of communication planners. Rather than describing their official position, communication planners may be seen as co-implicating the other participants in their own problems of accountability, while 'fishing' (cf. Pomerantz, 1980) for solutions at the same time. That is, the message that they were not accountable for the policies to be communicated at least explicated the problem of their own accountability once again, and made it impossible for others to deny this problem, unless, of course, they could solve the matter. By 'sharing' their accountability problems with each other, communication planners developed co-responsibility for communicating unfair or unpopular policies.

Solutions which were offered in case of accountability problems, showed a similar two-edgedness as the neutrality declarations. In their efforts to solve the problems, communication planners referred to co-responsibility for the policies to be communicated. However, in doing so, they also alluded to non-responsibility. The next example is from the SoFi campaign. In this campaign, the problem of how to

control fraud without invading people's privacy was continuously repeated. The following extract shows how this dilemma, expressed in terms of a personal accountability problem, is managed:

(26) SoFi <27/2/92 4>

1	A1	I just have to get this off my chest. On the one hand,
2		it is said "we code data, so there is privacy".
3		On the other hand, it is said "the government gives
4		a lot of data to a lot of people".
5	CJ	Well, that is the way our legal system is structured.
6	P1	Anyway, a good point is: there is a guarantee of privacy in it.
7		The very existence of the [SoFi] act is already a guarantee.
8		This act is democratically determined.
9	CJ	Therefore, you may know it and have a say in the matter.

In this extract, the communicator from Justice (CJ) advises the advertising manager (A1) to accept the contradictory nature of government policies: that is the way our legal system works (line 5). The policy expert from Social Affairs (P1) points out that the very existence of the SoFi-act guarantees that everything is okay and supplements this latter statement by explaining the democratic nature of the act (lines 7-8). By aligning themselves with the system and its democratic nature, the participants co-implicate each other in the campaign, that is, build co-responsibility for it, and produce a rationale for it. Yet there is a sense in which they are careful. In giving the source of these policies, they confirm their official status as passive intermediaries of government policies, thereby again emphasizing the distance between their own views and the views they report.

As we have seen, when communication planners have to deal with controversial policies, they underline that these policies originate elswhere. They do so either in a direct way, namely, by attributing the policies to the realm of politics, or indirectly, by attributing the wish and necessity to make these policies public to the

government. These attributions allow communication planners to object to the policies for several reasons while remaining officially neutral. At the same time, by systematically repeating these attributions, communication planners express their fear of still being held accountable for the policies in question. One of the functions of these apparently redundant neutrality declarations -redundant because they confirm the status quo- may be, that participants co-implicate the other participants in their own problems of accountability and 'fish' for solutions at the same time. In any case, a formally neutral stance is treated by communication planners as an insufficient guarantee that they will not be held accountable after all. This seems to explain why communication planners, at the same time as they declare their neutrality, formulate the messages in such a way as to prevent political commotion (see Chapter 5). As we shall see now, communication planners also anticipate being held accountable for producing these veiled messages. They commonly attribute the wish to produce these messages to political forces.

6.2 I AM NOT THE AUTHOR OF THIS MESSAGE

In this section, I am going to describe how communication planners not only reduced their own accountability for the policies to be communicated, but also avoided accountability for the production of the 'veiled' messages, that is, the messages which were designed to avoid political commotion.

As Pomerantz (1984) points out, speakers can be cautious or circumspect by attributing sensitive actions to others. In the case of the WAO campaign and the WVG campaign, communication planners systematically characterized the wish to prevent policitical commotion as a political instruction. In this way, they removed responsibility for preventing political unrest and further established their status as a neutral intermediary. Take the following extract from the WAO campaign, in which

the communicator from Social Affairs refers to a higher authority which does not allow them to generate publicity about measures concerning disability and sick leave:

(27) WAO <10/2/93 1>

1	C1	we have always, that was a bit of a double objective we had,
2		wasn't it, we wanted to generate publicity concerning
3		TAV TBA [legislation on disability and sick leave]
4		and uh mention them all,
5		but on the other hand, it had to be as quiet as possible,
6		because we were certainly not allowed to hurt
7	C2	mm
8	C1	if you want to generate publicity you will have to catch the eye
9	P1	have to hurt
10	C1	have to hurt [P1 laughs]
11	C1	that is exactly the, look, that is what we uh
12		what we were faced with
13	P1	yes

In this extract, the planners portray themselves as unwilling communication planners: planners who, willy-nilly, communicate the message in a low-key way (see 5.3.1). In contrast to the examples under 6.1, in which communication planners presented themselves as planners who *had* to communicate the message to the public, as if the message did not deserve to be communicated, these planners present themselves as planners who *wanted* to make these policies known to the public, but were only allowed to do so in a low-key way. Although they do not specify the authority, they seem to refer to their 'boss': the political head of the ministry.

The fact that C1 rejected other versions of the dilemma which indirectly disputed the dominant role of this political head, further indicates that the attribution was organised to protect his own accountability. This is illustrated by the next extract, in which C1 denies that the underminister was very unhappy with the WAO campaign, i.e. the thermometer campaign, as described above:

(28) WAO <3/11/92 1>

1	C_1	with respect to all pieces of information they agreed that
2		there uh say, a thermometer-pattern was going to be used
3	P_1	but you do know how unhappy [first name underminister]
4		was with that, with that thermometer campaign
5	C_1	but not anymore
6	C_2	we don't say that anymore
7	C_1 →	we're not going to bring that up anymore [smiling a bit]
8		it was that campaign we then [talked] about for an hour or so
9	P_1	she [=underminister] does remember it,
10		you don't need to remind her

Notice that the policy expert from Social Affairs, who agrees with the version of C_1 in extract 27, now puts forward a different version of the campaign. It is a version of which he suggests that it is the real truth and C_1 is well aware of that: "you do know how unhappy [ ] was" (lines 3-4). The version suggests that the planners have at least partly acted independently of the political head of the ministry, since the underminister is unhappy with a campaign she was said to have wanted. By rejecting a version of the dilemma which suggests that communication planners have partly acted on their own behalf, C_1, who is supported by other public communicators, indirectly underlines the important defensive function of his own version. As we shall see later, also in retrospective accounts, the communication planners blamed *de politiek* (the political domain) for having instructed them to communicate in misleading forms.

In the case of the WVG campaign, the issue was somewhat more complicated. The communication planners blamed political forces for trying to prevent commotion, but these forces in turn attributed the wish to produce a veiled message to communication planners (see also Chapter 5). The planners blamed the political audience for not underlining the availability of facilities for the disabled. Apart from a cutback in facilities, the WVG introduced the new possibility of the use of facilities by the elderly disabled. In the past, the use of facilities was restricted to

people under 65 (see for details Chapter 4). According to the planners, the strategy of not focusing on the availability of facilities was designed in order to prevent a too enthusiastic use of the facilities, which would cost "politics" too much. In other words, making the cutback in facilities known to the public, or, more precisely, focusing the message on this subject, was treated by commmunication planners as a concealed political strategy to prevent political commotion.

Take the following extracts (see for further analysis of extract 30, Chapter 5), in which communication planners discuss the possibility that politics is purposely withholding or suppressing information about facilities for the disabled. Whereas in extract 29, the planners still have doubts about the seriousness of these intentions, in extract 30, the intention is attributed to political forces [*de politiek*], without any reluctance:

(29) WVG <12/10/93 1>

1	P1	Few people are uh aware of those specific provisions,
2		such as those reimbursements of taxi fares.
3		Well, through special assistance it
4		starts a bit [but
5	C1 →	[mm [pause] yes, you are often reproached that that,
6		uh the ministry is, that we also uh that is also literally said
7		by Consumentencontact [consumers' organization] in their latest
8		research, that it is all on purpose [eh?
9	P1	[yes yes, to cut back
10	C1	yes. [pause] Is that on purpose, what do you think? [sniggering]
11	P1	No, I do not think so because those uh, at least, I think
12		that there might be uh arithmeticians who are happy that uh
13		people don't fully use the special [assistance
14	C1	[those bookkeepers yes
15	P1	but in itself that special assistance is made by [the] policy
16		[department]. It is also up to us that people uh
17	C1	yes
18	P1	can make both ends meet and not live in uh trouble and affliction

(30) WVG <4/12/92 3>

22	C1	you could, in that communication [unclear] say something
23		like "that is your right"
24	R1	yes
25	C1	"we think it is important that you keep on living on your
26		own, so make use of it"
27	R1	but [first name C1], that is in disagreement with I think,
28		with uh the political objective to do it budget neutrally
29	C1	yes
30	R1	am I correct?
31	C1	and then
32	R1	for presently, far more people know about it don't they,
33		also because it is a new law, people start using it,
34		even apart from the new target group and then political forces
35		[*de politiek*] start yelling again uh "oh my it costs more"
36	C1	and then another very important point
		[C1 outlines argument about the practical functioning
		of the law in different municipalities]

The communication planners attribute the wish to withhold information about facilities for the disabled to, respectively, the ministry and the political domain [*de politiek*]. Notice that in extract 29, C1 states that *they* are often reproached that information is being withheld, and subsequently corrects this statement into "uh the ministry is" (line 6). In doing so, he removes accountability for the problem. Although he subsequently continues with "we", thereby suggesting that he is part of the ministry, he externalizes the action of withholding information on purpose, precisely by wondering if it is all on purpose. That is, had it been his own action, he would have never asked his colleague to deliberate on its intention.

In the WVG campaign, attempts to accept accountability for producing a veiled message, were corrected by other participants. The "responsibility" for producing this kind of message was subsequently identified as a typical political one. This is illustrated by the following extract, in which the advertising manager proposes to construct what he calls a sympathetic message:

(31) WVG <6/10/93 5>

1	A1	For I- I think and then I return for a moment to that uh
2		giving people a wink uh, for I think that sympathy is always
3		one of the conditions to uh to uh create some receptivity to,
4		for whatever you do, and I think it is very important
5		certainly with regard to the government, since a lot of
6		information is from the government, and already
7		by definition uh well, meets with a certain degree of
8		resistance, that you, just by bringing in a little bit of
9		sympathy, and I do not mean, that is completely different
10		from uh great fun, certainly concerning this subject,
11		but that getting some sympathy is just what you have
12		to try and you can often, yes, that's what you need that
13		giving a wink for [everybody starts talking]
14	CV →	We should not proclaim a political message .
15		[all participants: NO NO NO]
16	CV	We should explain a change of law
17	A1	yes, yes, but also that
18	CV	I mean [surname underminister] would be very happy
19		with some sympathy but
20	A1	yes
21	CN	a gimmick is almost always being strived for in a commercial
22		[everybody starts talking]
23	CV →	I mean it is nice, but we should not let ourselves be used
24		by political forces [*de politiek*]
25	A1	No, no, no, I understand I- I understand what you mean

By using contrast, the Communicator from the Ministry of Housing, Regional Development and the Environment, CV, underlines his claim that it is not the intention of public communication to arouse sympathetic feelings within the circles of the disabled: they should not proclaim a *political* message, they should explain a change of law. In repeatedly attributing the wish or instruction to political forces [*de politiek*], while implying that their own activities had a neutral character, that is, transmitting the policies - merely for what they are - to the public, communication planners were able to maintain their neutral status.

It is interesting to note how the term *de politiek* (line 24) is used in this respect. Here, the word 'politics' is not so much used as a generic term for contentious

policies (see 6.1), it is portrayed as an independent force that wants communication planners to compose veiled messages. Instead of using the term politicians, communication planners attribute agency to *de politiek*. This allows them to perform an effective blame attribution. The non-specific description *de politiek* refers to a diffuse group of actors whose precise actions cannot be easily tracked down. It therefore works as a sort of garbage can into which all objectionable actions and motives can be put, without speakers running the risk of actually being held accountable.

The communication planners were well aware of the fact that, whereas they blamed political forces for producing messages in a disguised form, they themselves were also suspected of doing so. When we, for example, go back to extract 30 (see for other examples, Chapter 5), we see how communication planners expressed the wish to convey a message about the availability of facilities for the disabled. The communication planners frequently referred to the fact that this message was treated by others as if it had been designed to prevent political commotion. In the following extract, we see how the message about the availability of facilities is indeed treated by the ministry of VROM as an attempt "to make it more beautiful than it is":

(32) WVG <9/9/93.3>

(C1 hands a letter over to the advertising agency, which VROM (Ministry for Housing, Regional Development and the Environment) wrote to the Ministry of Social Affairs. This letter indicates, in C1's opinion, that there is some misunderstanding between Social Affairs and VROM)

1	C1	Uh what VROM is afraid of, is that we uh are inclined
2		to make it more beautiful than it is and mainly aim at
3		the target group O.A.P.s, the elderly, because that is
4		the group we can still tell something nice
5		"You will get something extra", right? And uh what they say
6		is yes [unclear] you should take the whole group of course,
7		also the people for whom you do <u>not</u> have such a nice message,
8		actually, there is also VROM's experience that by good

9 communication as they once did regarding that housing
10 adaptation, you know, that measure went to the dogs
11 because too much use was made of it [both C1 and A1 laugh]
12 and uh so that they felt very hesitant about promoting
13 certain matters too persuasively because you do not achieve
14 anything with it and matters go to the dogs.
15 I give you the letter to show the area of tension in which you are

Notice how C1 inspects the warning of the Ministry of VROM for its motivated nature. He suggests that this warning is not motivated by the wish to convey the policies for what they are, as the ministry states; their actual motive is to prevent a too persuasive promotion of the facilities. By reformulating the ostensibly neutral motive as provided by the ministry into a more suspicious one, C1 rebuts the warning.

As we have seen above, the communication planners attributed the wish to communicate controversial policies in a veiled way to politics or, in some cases, to the ministry, thereby underlining their position as neutral messenger of government policies before this position could be actually disputed. After the campaigns had taken place, the planners were interviewed about them. We found that communication planners, in these interviews, tried to secure their position as animators or mere mouthpieces of government policies. However, whereas during the design process of the campaign, neutrality declarations turned up parallel with attempts to prevent political commotion, the interviews predominantly showed claims of neutrality.

6.3 I HAVE MERELY BEEN AN ANIMATOR

We have seen, then, how communication planners attribute accountability for controversial policies to the political domain and the government, and how they also

tend to attribute the responsibility for the production of 'veiled' messages to these parties. In the next section, I show how communication planners, after the campaigns have taken place, again draw on their neutral status.

Consider the following two extracts from the SoFi campaign, which are taken from interviews with the main participants after the campaign had taken place. This campaign was commonly characterized by participants in terms of the dilemma between making public what the government is doing, namely checking personal data, and defusing any damaging inferences from the public's inspection of this message, in particular the invasion of privacy. However, after the campaign had taken place, this dilemma was attributed to other people, respectively to the advertising agency and unnamed others:

(33) SoFi interview <13/11/92>

C1 [name advert agency] doesn't know anything, really,
of how legislation works.
They thought that SoFi
conflicted with the WPR.
We did try to explain to them [*five lines omitted*].
It has parliamentary approval.
But they consider it a contradiction,
they just don't understand it.
For that, you probably need more insight
into government and politics

(34) SoFi interview <2/10/92>

I Some of the participants found the campaign tricky.
Was it?
P1 To get to grips with fraud, take away benefits from
poor women, that was always the association, right? Typically the
seventies, when they didn't even allow you to,
simply didn't control fraud, and those who still say
that, turn a blind eye on the fact that mentality has changed.

In extract 34, the Policy expert from Social Affairs P1 is confronted with one of his own statements during the campaign. However, he explicitly rejects the view that there was something tricky about the campaign, "and those who still say that turn a blind eye on the fact that mentality has changed" (lines 6-7). This construction works to conceal the constructive work during the design of the campaign. A dominant issue of accountability appears to be "just telling it how it is".

The same orientation to a neutral transmission of government policies was found in the interviews about the WAO campaign. The attribution of veiled communication to politics, which also took place during the design process, was maintained after the campaign had taken place. The following extract is taken from an interview with the campaign leader of the WAO campaign. The interviewer asks the public Communicator from Social Affairs (C1) to describe an important problem of the campaign:

(35) WAO interview <28/4/94 2>

1	I	and what did you consider an important bottleneck, say,
2		when you think of, for example, the P.O.Box 51 brochure?
3	C1	well, I would [pause]
4	I	if you do not, a certain specific uh,
5		that is of course possible, too
6	C1	well, I was just wondering, what it uh uh what particularly
7		uh uh an issue of- of, what was quite an obstacle, is the,
8		say, somewhat veiled way in which the- the, say,
9		all the same the adverse measures for employees
10	I	mmhh
11	C1	uhhh were unfolded. And by that I mean, for employees,
12		there were quite some disadvantages attached to it,
13		mainly financially
14	I	mmhh
15	C1	and uh well, you could not write that down in a
16		straightforward way
17	I	yes
18	C1	you always had to stay somewhat- somewhat non-committal
19		like "it all seems very bad, but it is not that bad"
20	I	mmhh

21	C1 →	and, as a public communicator, uh you still had to deal
22		with the, say, honesty you wanted to realize
23	I	mmhh
24	C1	with respect to your target group, in contrast with the,
25		well, policy considerations and the- the somewhat
26		euphemistic considerations prevalent among policy makers
27		and among uh, say, the administrative political top

In this extract, C1 points out that he wanted to tell the honest truth to the public about the adverse measures being taken. However, the administrative political top and policy makers prevented him from being a neutral messenger; they wanted a veiled presentation of the policies. There are two ways in which C1 underlines his wish to transmit the message in a straightforward way. He presents his honesty not as a mere personal quality but as a quality or duty imposed by his role as public communicator. C1 can be expected to be honest *because* he is a public communicator. Second, C1 emphasizes his honesty by contrasting it with the dishonesty of policy makers and the political top. As opposed to the latter, who support veiled reports of government policies, public communicators are truthful about the message and transmit it without censorship of any kind. Thus, the aim not to cause commotion with respect to controversial policies is being defined as a political aim: it was the political top that had pressured them to be dishonest and, in that way, actively involved them with the content of these policies.

The pattern of portraying oneself as merely having transmitted the policies, or at least, as someone who has tried to do so, was also found in the WVG campaign. During the campaign, the communication planners oriented to the dilemma between generating publicity about the cutback in facilities for the disabled and preventing political commotion by, for example, focusing on the (new) availability of facilities (for the O.A.P.s). The latter ambition, however, was fiercely opposed by political forces. Note how in the following extract, the communication planner indirectly denies his preference for stressing the availability of facilities, or, as the ministry

described it, his preference for "promoting matters too persuasively" (see extract 32). C1 underlines the neutral character of the message:

(36) WVG interview <20/5/94 2>

1	C1	nobody says "my, what a stupid commercial" and uh
2		"what sort of propaganda is that", I have not heard
3		that from anybody
4	I	no, no, and that is an important uh
5	C1	yes
6	I	idea, that it is not, no propaganda or how do you look at it?
7	C1	That, I think, is quite important, Yes, always,
8		but we <u>all</u> do, and what's more, propaganda can also
9		very, very easily be shattered, right?
10	I	mmmhh but what do you mean by that,
11		how could the commercial have looked otherwise, okay
12	C1	yes, if you, uh, yes, I have already, honestly, I have
13		not prepared myself so well, I have forgotten all those
14		examples or all those ideas the advertising agency has provided
15	I	yes, no, but that uh but what do you mean by uh
16	C1 →	well, you might as well uh uhh pretend that
17		something great has been created, right, by this ministry
18	I	mmhh
19	C1	and- and- and that it is quite fantastic that there are
20		facilities uh or- or uh uh yes, I think that there,
21		that you can blunder in all sorts of ways with that commercial
22	I	mmhh
23	C1 →	anyway, it has not happened uh we have not tried to sell
24		a pup, we have not sold anything, we have <u>merely</u> said
25		"collect that leaflet", right?
26	I	yes

First indirectly, and, at the insistence of the interviewer in an explicit way, C1 denies having promoted the facilities for the disabled. He underlines that the message which has been produced is just what a message should be: no propaganda, but a neutral reflection of the policies in question. However, interestingly enough, when we take a closer look at this extract, the stress on neutrality becomes a more complicated

phenomenon. In a more implicit way, C1 orients to the neutral character of the message as a way of preventing commotion (see 5.3.1). Note how C1 stresses that propaganda can easily be shattered, and that one can blunder by stressing that there are facilities. In other words, although, ostensibly, C1 is merely carrying out a pre-emptive action by defending himself against the accusation of having produced propaganda prior to the formulation of this accusation; more implicitly, C1 is also orienting to the fact that they produced a 'neutral' message primarily to prevent political commotion. However, and most important, it is clear from the extract that, in the first place, C1 tries to present himself as a neutral messenger, who has not produced a veiled message ("not tried to sell a pup", lines 23-24), but has done what he should have been doing: transmitting the message.

Although in the interviews, participants tended to stress their passive transmission of government policies, there was one important exception to this. As we shall see, this had to do with the 'other side' of accountability.

6.4 THE OTHER SIDE OF NOT BEING ACCOUNTABLE

In this section, I am going to discuss some extracts in which communication planners, in contrast to the examples from the previous sections, underline their influence in the process of preparing a campaign. In doing so, they were undermining their status as neutral intermediaries of government policies.

Being accountable for a message may be problematic in the sense that one has to defend oneself in case one is actually held accountable. However, accountability also involves making decisions without needing to be watched or controlled by someone else. In other words, once a communication planner states that he is merely transmitting policies, he also loses potential influence. Take the following extract from the interview with the campaign leader from the WVG campaign. Although he has previously stated that they had not promoted the facilities for the disabled in the

campaign, but merely conveyed a neutral message (see extract 36), he now underlines that he has broadened what he calls a limited law, by promoting these facilities:

(37) WVG interview <20/5/94 1>

1	C1	hhh so that is the story, right
2	I	yes
3	C1 →	behind a limited law which you broaden a lot
4		as a public communicator
5	I	mmhh
6	C1	to uhm to- to, yes, perhaps to put something else forward,
7		the fact that there are facilities
8	I	mmhh
9	C1	and well, it <u>has</u> worked out, for [surname under-minister]
10		also inquired into it at the time, I showed him that uh
11		commercial and he was actually surprised by that approach
12		[pause] but then we also said, look, that law, it changes matters,
13		but there <u>were</u> facilities, there are <u>still</u> facilities,
14		that is the issue
15	I	mmhh
16	C1	and that there, that it has become somewhat less, yes, that holds
17		for the people who had facilities then, but at the same time
18		that enormous target group was added to it
19	I	mmhh
20	C1	you know, of those O.A.P.s
21		who can also make use of them now
22	I	and what did [surname under-minister] say about it?
23	C1	well, he then quite understood. Yes, okay, he has only been
24		here for a little while and uh [Interviewer laughs]
25		he has almost left but uh, he thought so uh yes, but anyway,
26		he was therefore prompted by his policy makers, but,
27		in itself, it has been a right approach
28	I	mm
29	C1	with which one also distracted the attention a bit
30		from merely Social Affairs and Employment, right
31	I	mmhh

Note how C1 explicitly relates his action to "broaden" the law to his role as public communicator. In describing his action as bound to his role as public communicator, C1 turns the action into something a public communicator officially and routinely does. C1 describes the public communicator as a relatively independent actor. He underlines this image by stating that he convinced the underminister of the rightness of his approach, although the underminister was not happy with it at first sight. In addition, he "distracted the attention a bit from merely the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment" (lines 29-30), thereby suggesting that he was able to prevent political commotion while acting on his own initiative. This turns the prevention of political commotion into a difficult task, which fulfillment is something to be proud of. While stressing his autonomy as public communicator, C1 undermines his status as neutral messenger. However, the safe, but, in a sense, hollow position is replaced by a position 'which makes a difference'.

In the following extract from an interview with the campaign leader (C1) from the WAO campaign, C1 also indirectly undermines his neutrality, when stressing that they, as communication planners, advised the minister and underminister to postpone the campaign "in view of all the fuss about the issue":

(38) WAO interview <28/04/94 1>

1	I	who had to decide that uh it was postponed all the time,
2		was it something that, say, the steering committee could
3		decide, or was it really something that was determined
4		by the top of the ministry or
5	C1	well, the steering committee has uh about postponement and
6		about uh temporizing and about the approach and the strategy
7		opted for, formulated a uh a piece of advice again and again
8	I	mmhh
9	C1	uh and has uh, say, submitted it to the political top
10	I	mmhh
11	C1	that is, the minister and secretary of state and, uh as far
12		as I can remember, uhm that piece of advice has been taken
13		over time and again
14	I	mmhh

15 C1 so it has been uh said over and over uh indeed, at this moment
16 we cannot uh in view of all the trouble, the- the- the fuss
17 about the issue uh start a public information campaign

By underlining their influence as communication planners in the decision process, C1 indirectly accepts accountability for the attempts to prevent political commotion. Although the politicians at the top of the ministry, that is, minister and underminister, had to decide, the advice of the communication planners has been taken over time and again.

As we have seen then, on the one hand, the communication planners stressed their neutrality in order to dodge accountability for controversial policies, on the other hand, they tried to underline their influence in the process of designing a campaign, thereby undermining their status as a mouthpiece.

6.5 CONCLUSION

When communication planners have to deal with what they treat as controversial policies, they underline that these policies originate elswhere. They portray themselves as being saddled with contradictory or unfair policies by 'political forces', while 'the government' instructs them to make these policies known to the public. In other words, they construct themselves as communication planners who *willy-nilly* have to communicate the policies to the public: they have not been asked whether they want to communicate these policies and are not able to prevent it either. This construction allows communication planners to dispute the policies in question while remaining officially neutral. In some cases, communication planners present themselves as planners who want to make these policies known to the public, but are not allowed to do so, at least not in a conspicuous way.

Ostensibly, attributing responsibility to the political domain and the government merely describes the official task of communication planners, namely, transmitting policies without being involved with their content. However, the fact that communication planners only remove their accountability in the case of what they refer to as controversial policies, that is, policies which make them especially vulnerable to criticism, indicates that they are not so much concerned with the description of a situation but with maintaining their neutrality. This neutralistic posture shields communication planners from having to accept responsibility.

However, the fact that planners repeatedly underline their neutral role while facing an audience that can be expected to be familiar with it, indicates that communication planners concern themselves with their official status not as a matter of course but as a problem. That is, their statement about not being responsible indirectly shows that they feel potentially accountable. I suggested that the attributions to the political domain and the government were also used by communication planners to co-implicate others in their own problems of accountability and 'fish' for solutions at the same time.

The problematic accountability of government communicators helps us to understand why communication planners, together with their attempts to maintain a neutral stance, actively try to prevent political commotion, as we have seen in Chapter 5. Appealing to and maintaining a formally neutral stance is not treated as guaranteeing that they will not be held accountable. Communication planners therefore employ a *double defence* against potential criticism: on the one hand, they try to establish and maintain a neutral footing for their reports of government policies, on the other hand, they formulate the messages in such a way that they can be held accountable if necessary.

As we have seen in this chapter, communication planners also anticipate that they can be held accountable for composing these veiled messages. They attribute any attempt to prevent political commotion to the political domain [*de politiek*]. It is interesting to note the use of the term *de politiek*. Not only is it used as a generic term for contentious policies; it is also portrayed as an autonomous force that makes

communication planners to compose veiled messages. The term refers to an anonymous group of people, to whom unpleasant actions and motives can be attributed effectively.

After the campaign has taken place, communication planners present themselves as neutral messengers, either by attributing the wish to compose veiled messages to other participants or by simply denying attempts to present the policies in a reduced or disguised form. However, while persistently trying to maintain their neutralistic posture in most situations, communication planners sometimes also refrain from this posture. Next to their attempts to portray themselves as merely passing on views of others, they also attend to their own responsibility in the opposite way. Mouthpieces cannot claim to exert an independent influence on the more substantive matters. That is, a mere concern with speaking on behalf of others simultaneously may reduce the importance of one's task. Now and then, communication planners did not present themselves as mouthpieces, but instead underlined their own influence in the process of producing government communication. In doing so, communication planners indirectly denied their neutralistic stance. They, for example, portrayed themselves as having been advising on attempts to prevent political commotion, or they stressed that they somewhat broadened the message.

As appears from the data in this chapter, the so-called political dilemma of producing effect without causing commotion is also rooted in the planners' own problems of accountability. Communication planners restrict their declarations of neutrality to passages in which their own accountability appears to be most problematic, that is, in the case of controversial policies. In general, communication planners seem doomed to be Janus-faced. During the process of trying to formulate the message, communication planners employ their status as mouthpiece of the government in order to fulfill a crucial defensive function. Parallel to their neutrality declarations, they try to prevent what they define as political commotion, most of the times attributing the wish or instruction to do so to political forces. Again, after the campaign has taken place, communication planners tend to present themselves as mere mouthpieces. As we shall see in Chapter 7, when they have to deal with non-

controversial policies, or, more precisely, policies which they treat as such, communication planners stop defining themselves as mouthpieces, but change into planners who try to make these policies acceptable in the eyes of the target group. They do not spend time examining the wishes or instructions of the political domain, but instead deliberate on the attitudes and behaviour of their official target group(s). Now that the messenger is no longer afraid of being killed, there is no longer a need to deflect ownership of the policies away from himself.

7

The communication planner as identity manager: constructing the target group

In this chapter, I deal with the construction of target group identity in the campaign against Sexual Harassment. In this campaign, communication planners were caught in an *efficacy dilemma*: how to convey the message without hurting the target group(s), that is, boys and - indirectly - girls between fourteen and eighteen years old (see Chapter 5). I shall point out how this dilemma, in contrast to the political dilemma (see Chapter 6), is bound up with an acceptance of accountability for the message. This acceptance of accountability allows for a message in which the identity of the target group is constructed so as to make the message more effective. As such, the chapter is complementary to section 5.1. Like section 5.1, it deals with techniques to accomplish the efficacy of the message towards the 'official' target group. However, in contrast to 5.1, this chapter focuses on how communication planners draw on images which boys may have of girls and vice versa, rather than their self-images.

As we have seen in Chapter 5, the campaign against sexual harassment is a deviant case. It is therefore important to call to mind the observations which were

made with respect to the other three campaigns. Three conclusions are relevant here. First, in the case of the SoFi campaign, the WVG (Disability Facilities)-campaign and the WAO (Disability Insurance)-campaign, communication planners treated the policies as politically controversial and constructed the message in such a way as to prevent the government being compromised. Three ways by which political commotion was prevented were distinguished: 'factual' campaigns, selective omissions and formulation in terms of a shared interest. Second, we have seen how planners attended to their own problems of accountability, while formulating the political dilemma. In the case of the three campaigns mentioned above, communication planners underlined that they were not accountable for the policies. However, this ostensibly redundant message was repeated over and over again, by which the planners indicated its problematic character. In repeating it, communication planners co-implicated each other in the dilemma and 'fished' for solutions at the same time. The third observation is, therefore, that no matter their official position, communication planners feel potentially accountable and act accordingly.

The campaign against sexual harassment was a different case. In referring to the problem of sexual harassment as a genuine problem rather than a politically controversial issue, communication planners accepted accountability for the communicated policies. That is, in representing the policies in question as based on an actual state of affairs, they shared accountability with the government for the (correctness of the) policies. This shared accountability also appeared in the communication planners' orientation to the target group. Communication planners treated the message in such a way as to make it acceptable in the eyes of the official target group.

This brings us to the second and main theme of this chapter: the construction of target group identities. As we have seen in Chapter 5, the main method used to produce effect without hurting, was to meet the expectations of the target group to a certain extent. This resulted in a message in which boys were not declared guilty and girls were not depicted as mere victims. In this chapter, I show how

communication planners trade on the known-in-common attributes of the categories girls and boys in order to produce an effective message. In the campaign commercial, the victim is carefully presented as someone who did not invite 'it', thereby preventing her being held accountable for the offence. However, rather than as a matter of course, the identities were an important issue of negotiation for communication planners.

Discourse analysis starts from the assumption that identities are not fixed, clear-cut phenomena that simply exist (Potter, forthcoming c: ch. 5). Instead, they are attributed and denied in order to perform certain actions. Note that these categorizations should not be thought of as underlying cognitive structures which determine people's perception (Edwards, 1991; Potter and Wetherell, 1987: ch. 6). Rather than determining perception, categorizations operate as normative assumptions to which people may hold each other accountable (see Chapter 2).

As Sacks (1979; 1992) points out, people can make sense of each other in terms of categorizations. He distinguishes so-called Membership Categorization Devices (MCDs), or sets of categories of persons, which provide an important resource through which participants can find out how to interpret or place the event, person or thing referred to in the talk. MCDs group together membership categories. For example, the MCD gender may group together the categories male and female. However, while the two categories could be taken as coming from the same MCD, it is not necessarily the case. As Sacks points out, the grouping of categorizations and the creation of an MCD are active accomplishments, that is, they depend on potentially complex negotiation between participants.

In addition, people conventionally make inferences from categories to activities and vice versa. We may expect from a boy that he knows how to play soccer or that he takes the initiative in sexual encounters. Thus, certain activities may be seen as bound to a particular category. Again it is important to underscore that these categorization practices are first and foremost issues of the participants themselves, rather than notions of the analyst. Categorizations are not simply there, they need to be accomplished, constructed, achieved. In other words, being treated as a member

of a certain category, or treating activities as bound to a certain category, involves work.

As we shall see, in the course of the campaign against sexual violence, communication planners constructed 'typical' members of the target group(s) of the campaign. In contrast to the other three campaigns, in which the political audience was the main concern of communication planners, the causes of sexual harassment and the identity of victims and offenders were treated as the dominant issues.

7.1 THE ABSENCE OF POLITICAL CONTROVERSY AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

In the case of a political dilemma, the planners portrayed their 'official' target groups as anti-groups, that is, as (groups of) people who were first and foremost against the message to be communicated. In these campaigns, communication planners primarily constructed their official target group in an indirect way, since the target audience they were directly concerned with was the political audience, and via this audience they attended to their own problematic accountability (see Chapters 5 and 6). Within this framework, communication planners took the official target group as a potential catalyst of political unrest in the first place. They created so-called flat characters (Atkinson, 1990:129), in that members of the target group were treated as having a single character trait which dominated and constrained their part in the conversations. So, these flat characters were against fraud control (SoFi campaign), against the measures concerning sick leave and disability (WAO campaign) and against the cutback in the facilities for the disabled (WVG campaign), respectively. This is not to say that the communication planners did not refer to, for example, the background of committing fraud, but the question of how to convey the message without causing unrest with the members of the target group, and via this unrest, political commotion, was treated as the main issue.

In the campaign against sexual harassment, on the other hand, the policies to be communicated were treated as politically non-controversial. That is, in contrast to the campaigns described in Chapter 6, the campaign message was not characterized as a source of *serious* political unrest. This is not to say that participants did not worry at all about the reception of the campaign message. Take the following extract, in which one of the participants expresses his fear that the government will be "sent to the bottom" because of this campaign:

(39) SH <6/5/93 1>

1	CE	Well, look, you should always, with this kind of things,
2		you- you should not only consider the target group,
3		the target group will understand, but you always have
4		a good bunch of sourpusses and critics who listen in
5		and they are not interested in the message at all
6	P1	no
7	CE	and they just blame us [unclear] and address the youngsters
8		in a silly way
9	P2	I am-I <u>am</u>, say, sensitive to the argument that you should take care
10		that you are not being sent to the bottom because they,
11		there are always sourpusses, indeed,
12		exactly [like you say [unclear]
13	CN	[well, we are, of course, vulnerable as a government
14	P1	What do you say?
15	CN	We are uh I mean, no, that subject about being sent to
16		the bottom you mean
17	P1	yes
18	CN	yes, no, we are rather vulnerable as a government because uh
19		it is an easy target to kick against, isn't it
20	P1	Well, I think what's more that- that there that
21		there might sort of emerge a certain jealousy so that
22		it is much nicer to [[unclear]
23	CN	[yes like Job indeed yes
24	CW	but it can be very refreshing to be sent to the bottom
25		[by a certain source
26	C3	[exactly
27	P2	yes, because the target group [[unclear]
28	C3	[ironic triumph] [EXTRA PUBLICITY

The extract deals with the issue of criticism in a very explicit way. I want to make two observations. First, although the participants refer to the possibility of being blamed for the policies in question (lines 7 and 18-19), they do not back off from the message. Rather, they describe the effects of the message in terms of a joint responsibility: "we are rather vulnerable as a government" (line 18). Second, the communication planners treat this potential criticism rather light-heartedly by characterizing it as a form of jealousy (line 21) and even as a potential benefit: criticism amounts to extra publicity, which is just the thing they need (line 28). Note that the issue of extra publicity is attended to as a kind of 'standard' argument. The irony with which the exclamation EXTRA PUBLICITY is made, indicates that this extra publicity is almost a matter of indifference to C3. Again, this points in the direction of a relaxed handling of criticism. In sum, potential criticism is treated in terms of a joint responsibility of government and communication planners, but, in itself, the criticism seems to leave the participants relatively untroubled. In contrast to the campaigns in which communication planners were caught in a political dilemma, the criticism is not taken as a potential source of political commotion. That is, the government, and indirectly communication planners themselves, are not considered to be compromised by the message. As it was in the case with the political dilemma (see Chapter 6), communication planners feel potentially accountable for the message ("they just blame us", extract 39, line 7). However, the difference is in the acceptance of accountability.

Participants did not only align themselves with the government in an explicit way, namely, by presenting themselves as a part of the government, but also in a more implicit sense. They systematically treated the policies to be communicated as rooted in reality, that is, they oriented to the problem as being a genuine one. Take the following extract, in which the communicator from Social Affairs describes sexual violence, which is the main subject of the campaign:

(40) SH <29/12/92 2>

1	C3	they just want something
2	P2	yes
3	C3	they also want to try once
4	P1	[ironic] they also want to get hold of a woman once
5	C3	exactly, because their friend has also done it, he says
6	P2	yes, if they come to think of it they know
7		that it cannot be true at all, but they just don't want
8		to think it over, they just want to feel excited
9	C3	yes, and it is from this that those excesses subsequently
10		arise and it is that you want to do something about

Although this dialogue about sexual violence is interesting in itself, I shall restrict myself to the way in which the speakers attend to their own accountability while describing these causes of sexual harassment. Note that the participants describe these causes as purportedly *objective* states of affairs (Pomerantz, 1984). That is, they do not present any source or basis for believing what they believe, other than, implicitly, direct experience of reality itself. As Pomerantz (ibid.) points out, in straightforwardly describing a phenomenon as an objective state of affairs, the speaker allows herself to be accountable for the correctness of this representation, whatever else the utterance might be doing. Compare the utterance "John is at the door" with the utterance "Mary says that John is at the door". In the first example, the speaker is accountable for being right, whereas in the latter, the speaker removes accountability for the statement by identifying Mary as its source. Likewise, the statement "they just don't want to think it over, they just want to feel excited", with respect to the causes of sexual harassment, makes the communication planners accountable for the correctness of the statement. In other words, in describing the policies against sexual harassment as rooted in a real problem, communication planners accept accountability for representing this reality and, indirectly, the policies which are based on it, as they actually are.

Consider in this respect the self-ascription of bodily feelings in our language (Harré, 1989). Take, for example, the utterance "I know I am feeling sick". This

utterance is having a role in conversation which is not so much referential, but moral. That is, the utterance is used to perform an *act of commitment* to its content. As Harré, referring back to Wittgenstein, points out, utterances like "I know I am feeling sick" do not make sense if interpreted epistemically. "I know I'm feeling sick" is an emphatic way of saying "I am feeling sick", *not* a commentary on the reliability of the claim. Instead of referring to an inner cognitive state, it is used to express alignment with, and therefore accountability for, the statement made. Analogous to this use of self-ascription, the role of describing a state of affairs as straightforwardly objective, should not be considered in epistemic terms, but in terms of a moral act. Whatever else the utterance might be doing, by using it, the speaker expresses committment to the content of the utterance and makes the speaker accountable for accurately representing the state of affairs it describes.

It may be useful here to call to mind how communication planners described the policies to be communicated in the case of a *political dilemma* (see Chapters 5 and 6):

(23) SoFi <27/2/92 3>

5	A1		Then the image arises from an all-checking government.
6			That you make ever so strong.
7	P1		You do not want to keep that secret, do you?
8		→	The government wishes to make it public.

(24) WVG <4/12/92 2>

9	R1		We have, we have to deal with this kind of project quite often,
10			right, political decisions
11			with which you personally may not really agree
12	C1		but which you nevertheless
13	R1	→	which you have to carry out loy- loyally, right,
14			being a civil servant
15	C1		those other questions [change of subject]

In these extracts from Chapter 6, we see how the speakers indicate the distance between their own views and that of the government or the political domain, thereby removing accountability for the policies to be communicated. Imagine the communication planners saying "And it is from this that those excesses subsequently arise and it is that you want to do something about" (cf. lines 9-10, extract 40), as they did with respect to sexual harassment. A straightforward description of the fraud problem, or the problem of organising facilities for the disabled, as objective states of affairs, would have made them accountable for the correct representation of these phenomena and the policies based on them.

As we have seen, then, in the campaign against sexual harassment, which was handled by communication planners in terms of an efficacy dilemma rather than a political one, communication planners accepted accountability for the policies to be communicated. Notice that the acceptance of accountability for these policies also works *reflexively* to indicate that these policies are politically non-controversial (cf. Clayman, 1992: 170). In other words, the non-contentiousness of the message is partly established by treating it as such, namely, by describing the message as an actual state of affairs for which one dares to take responsibility. As an animator stance (see Chapter 6) works reflexively to mark policies as politically controversial, so describing these policies in terms of 'the way it is' partly established the policies as non-controversial. That is, the nature of the policies also becomes visible in the way they are handled. Rather than in terms of a causal framework, the relation between the absence of political controversy and the acceptance of accountability may better be understood as practices which are mutually constitutive (see also 2.2).

As we have seen in Chapter 5, and shall see in the next section, the acceptance of accountability for the policies was accompanied by an orientation to the message so as to make it more effective towards the 'official' target group. One of the devices which communication planners used to accomplish this goal, was the establishment of 'real' characters in the campaign commercial.

7.2 'SHE SHOULD NOT ASK FOR IT': MAKING THE MESSAGE MORE EFFECTIVE

During the casting session, in which the various principal characters of the TV commercial were chosen, the main aim was to cast a 'typical' sex offender and a 'typical' victim. Apart from being excellent actors, they also had to meet certain personality characteristics. The actors had to establish authentic characters, that is, people from whom one believes or might expect that they are sex offender and victim, respectively. Take the following extract from the casting meeting, in which the personal appearances of both actors are discussed:

(41) SH <16/4/93 1>

1	A1		First we would like to show our two favourites.
2			We also have the casting tape, if you still would like
3			to see others. I have chosen for a girl, for a girl
4			that in principle is not - not too beautiful in the sense of
5			uh uh that she is the queen of the party. It is a nice girl,
6			I have especially chosen a girl that,
7			who acts extremely well, she has played in a few feature
8			films already, she's 18 years old, and I also think
9			[unclear: I'm especially careful with that?]
10		→	for the boy I have chosen, for a boy from whom I felt
11			that he [was] a little uh, it is a rather handsome boy,
12			a boy who thinks uh uh "well, if she asks me to come
13			with her and go outside, it almost can't mean anything else
14			but to kiss and cuddle". I think, he is rather good-looking,
15			but he also has some physical presence, I rather thought so,
16			a boy a- a- a, a little, a slightly American-looking boy,
17			and he is also an excellent actor, he is 21,
18			but he looks younger.
			[casting tape is played]
19	A1		I also thought it was a boy from whom you can expect that,
20			I find him, he is rather handsome, he is not <u>too</u> handsome,
21			he- he also has a nice face, but I also can imagine very well
22			that- that- that such a boy just [goes] too far, in addition,
23			according to [first name director commercial],
24			both are actors who have had a training in acting,
25			there were also some models there, so I prefer to work

26			with people who- who you uh uh can direct
27			and what I also like is that- that, because we have also
28			had other girls, of course, very pretty girls,
29	→		as this girl is a nice girl, but she is not, I also do not
30			believe it at all if it is the queen of the ball,
31			she- she- she wouldn't make the mistake of saying
32			"are you coming outside?"
33	C3		she is not beautiful either, no
34	A1		no, she is nice though
			[half a page omitted: actors look very British, possible disadvantage. Height actors: are they about equal size?]
35	A2		I found that one remark from [first name A] very important,
36			that it is indeed a type of boy from whom you really
37			might expect this kind of thing, I think
38	C3		yes
39	C1		yes
40	A1		also a bit physical, he has something like uhh [smiles]
41			yes, yes, I thought that was nice too

In this extract, the advertising manager A1 presents two eligible candidates for the TV commercial. Note how the appearance of both actors is constructed in order to match the plausibility of their actions as sex offender and victim. A1 for example outlines a range of attributes which he treats as conventionally tied to the category 'sex offender'. The actor adequately represents a sex offender, since he is the kind of boy from whom one might expect such things (line 19); he is the type from whom you can imagine very well that he just goes too far (line 22). He has "some physical presence" (line 15) and he is "rather handsome" but "not too handsome" (line 20). Moreover, he is the kind of boy that is quite self-confident: he knows that if she invites him to come outside, that she definitely wants something (lines 12-14).

Note that my focus is not on whether these constructions represent the personal point of view of the advertising manager, or the views of the target group, or the way things really are, but rather on the ways in which the identities of these actors are constructed as to comply with commonsense knowledge of what sex offenders and victims purportedly 'should be like'. In the case of the victim, the advertising manager opts for a girl that is "not too beautiful" (line 4). A beautiful girl would not

make the "mistake of saying "are you coming outside?"" (lines 32-33). Consider the use of the term mistake here. It attributes a degree of responsibility for the offence to the girl. Inviting the boy to come outside is treated as an incorrect or foolish move of the girl, intended or not. In addition, it suggests that, in contrast to ordinary-looking girls, beautiful girls do not make the mistake of taking the initiative because they do not have to. Rather than having to invite boys, boys invite them.

Summing up, the authenticity of the characters is provided for by drawing on a range of cultural expectations. The characters are '(stereo-)typed' in the sense that they are drawn in accordance with the known-in-common attributes of sex offenders, boys who 'typically' do this kind of thing, and victims, girls who 'typically' are their victims. In other words, the characters are constructed as the emblematic bearers of cultural generalities (cf. Atkinson, 1990: ch.7). Sex offenders are considered to be boys with a certain physical presence, rather handsome and sexually self-confident. Victims, on the other hand, are nice but not too beautiful girls. Beautiful girls generally refrain from inviting boys to come outside. All this trades on the idea that girls do not take the initiative unless they need to, and if they do, that they take a risk. In this sense, tying attributes to the categories sex offender and victim not only categorizes particular men and women as sex offenders and victims, but also provides a frame of reference for the moral assessment of the offence (cf. Wowk, 1984). That is, the categorization or identity construction simultaneously does the groundwork for blame negotiation and allocation.

Throughout the casting discussions, great care was taken to present the girl as someone who did not 'ask for it'. As we saw in the previous extract, the scene is set by a girl who makes the 'error' of taking the initiative. This creates the conditions for a misunderstanding (see Chapter 5), that is, conditions in which the boy infers that he is now entitled to the girl. However, precautions were taken to ensure that the girl did not further 'provoke' the boy, since that would shift part of the blame for the offence on her. Take the following extract, in which the girl's sexy features are made responsible for causing the "wrong discussions" about who is to blame for sexual harassment:

(42) SH <16/4/93 2>

1	A1		I do agree with you, we must not make her too sexy
2			[other participants: no, no]
3	P1		does not fit in with her either, I think [long pause]
4	Cc		she is not the type eh, to
5	P1		and she certainly should not be the only one from the group
6			who wears, say, such a dress
7	A1		no, no, no, no, as far as I'm concerned she may, but I think,
8			I always think you should see it in the situation,
9			also what the others wear, in any case I want her
10			to wear something like a skirt, a dress
11	P1		yes
12	A1		and then she also might, I mean uh, I agree with you
13			that we should not make her too summery and- and-
14			and uh make her too nude, it should- should, that is
15			a little too uh- uh much like the beach
16	P1		[looks at pictures of dresses] well, this one is still okay,
17			but the other one was a little too [pause] revealing,
18			that one from last time
19	C1		it was a blue one, wasn't it?
20	P1		was it? [smiles] I don't remember anymore
21	C2		no but, I think so too, because otherwise you would again
22		→	get the wrong discussions you should just prevent that
23	A1		yes, exactly, and one should guard against that too
			[fifteen lines omitted: actors should wear clothes that suit them, what is usually worn at parties]
24	C2		the attention [is] now above all on the leading lady,
25			so that- that uh
26	A1		yes, she should, she should not uh, she should look nice,
27			but she should absolutely not feel like, it should not be
28			as if "yes, if you wear such a dress, then you ask for it",
29			that must not be so, that's not necessary at all
30	C2		[to C1] that's after all the criterion [first name C1], isn't it?
31	P1		yes
32	A2		yes
33	C1		mmhh
34	A1		it should not uh
35	P1		[laughing scornfully] they say that with any dress, so,
36			but uh [C1 laughs]
37	A1		well no [quasi-indignant]
38			[everybody starts talking]
39	A3		well, for example, like that one there
40			[points to model on photo] a very low back,
41			well that- that- that really invites immediately

42 A2 [yes, exactly uh
43 P1 [yes, that is really
44 A3 that is really short and bad, a low back and bare-backed that uh
45 C1 mm
46 A1 okay, you had a phone-call [other subject]

There are a number of interesting features in this extract. What is plainly at issue, is the sexiness of the girl in relation to the offence. That is, a girl who is "too sexy" would invoke the "wrong discussions" (line 22). What these wrong discussions comprise, becomes clear somewhat further on in the extract: "it should not be as if "yes, if you wear such a dress, then you ask for it"" (lines 27-28). In other words, the girl is to dress in such a way as to prevent the impression that she provoked the boy and 'shares' responsibility for the offence. Note the girl's 'sexiness' is oriented to quite differently from the girl's beauty in the previous extract. In contrast to beauty, sexiness is an attribute for which you may be held responsible. It is something you can 'choose' to be, for example, by wearing certain dresses, rather than something you simply are. The blame can be easily shifted to a girl who 'chooses' to be sexy, for example by wearing a dress "with a very low back" (line 40). The only objection made ("they say that with any dress", line 35) is rejected with the observation that there are dresses which "really invite(s) immediately" (line 41).

Interestingly enough, it was precisely these "wrong discussions" about girls that provoke boys, which were ridiculed in other discussions. That is, the idea that 'girls ask for it' was referred to as being a rejectable or even a laughable argument with which boys or men tend to justify their offence. Consider the following extract, in which the policy expert and public communicator discuss versions of the campaign message. The policy expert P1 starts by proposing a message which should stimulate a boy to focus on a girl's desires rather than on his own:

(43) SH <17/12/92 2>

1	P1	[to imaginary boy] "look, if you want to [pause] court a girl at all
2		[pause] don't be allured into it by the surrounding group"
3	C1	mm
4	P1	"who- who think that you do it in such a way because uh
5		that is not how it works"
6	C1	mm [pause]
7	P1	"you'd better let yourself be led [pause]
8		by the one you want" ┌well be led
9	C1	└by what she wants
10	P1	[laughing] by what she wants [C1 laughs]
11	C1	[ironic] oh oh [P1 laughs] that's quite uh [both laugh]
12	P1	[unclear] I see the flow of letters coming in
13	C1	yes ohhh oh oh [ironic] [P1 laughs]
14		[in fake 'citizen' voice] "what do we have now?
15		Does the government pro [P1 laughs] promote"
16	P1	yes yes [quasi-disapprovingly]
17	C1	"that women take the initiative"
18	P1	yes yes nooo
19	C1	┌and then SGP GPV [small Christian political parties]
20	C1	└yes and then you get [laughing] and then you get
21	P1	once again [laughing] you get another sentence
22		like ┌let's have a look
23	C1	└watch it [to researcher]
24	P1	[reads a letter from a citizen to the government in fake voice]
25		"it is absurd that uh uh a campaign is carried out
25		against sexual harassment and, at the same time,
26		doesn't do anything against sexually biased commercials
27		and provoking clothing which is worn in public.
28		It points in the direction [unclear]
29		of a lack of intellect"
30	C1	[fake voice] "so against sexual violence but let all women
31		wear short skirts, oh oh GIRD YOURSELF" [both laugh]

In this extract, the idea that women 'ask for it' is taken as a ridiculous argument in the most literal sense of the word. That is, it is laughed about. A message which would stimulate boys to focus on the girl's point of view is expected to provoke counter-attacks from people who disapprove of girls taking the initiative in sexual encounters. However, as can be seen from the ironic handling of these arguments,

the reactions are assumed to be marginal, that is, not essential for the construction of the campaign message. In contrast with the extracts 41 and 42, in which the argument that women may present themselves as available and willing, thereby provoking the offence, is seriously taken into account, this extract shows how communication planners attend to the same argument as being a standard reaction, which is not really worth considering. Whereas the argument is criticized and ridiculed in one situation, it is accepted in the other. In order to make the message effective, the argument was taken seriously, but at the same time, it was treated as an old-fashioned criticism, *not* to be taken seriously.

This issue of accountability in the event (of who is to blame for sexual violence) was a central issue of negotiation in the campaign. As other studies in this field have demonstrated (for example Drew, 1992; Wowk, 1984; see also Chapter 2), sex offenders tend to demonstrate that their victim could or should have known about the offender's sexual interest in her, thereby removing accountability for the offence. These techniques draw on 'known-in-common' attributes of boys and girls, in particular, the taken-for-granted assumption that girls should not take the initiative, and if they do, that they 'ask for it'. In this campaign, it is precisely this issue which is the prime issue of negotiation. To what extent should the girl be presented as 'not asking for it', in order to guarantee on the one hand, a recognizable world from the perspective of the offender, and, on the other, the conveyance of the message that 'no matter the situation, the boy is not entitled to it'. Again, the matter is to what extent expectations can be met without inadmissable changes in the policies to be communicated (cf. Chapter 5, extract 4). There is a risk of undermining the core of the message while trying to make it 'effective'. Taken-for-granted assumptions may be confirmed rather than changed. That is, boys may agree with the message in the commercial that 'boys are not entitled to girls', but they may do so precisely because the girl is constructed as someone who did not ask for it. In that case, the message would confirm their implied taken-for-granted assumption that girls who 'ask for it' are (partly) responsible for the offence.

Although the issue of girls that should not 'ask for it' was attended to as an

important issue of negotiation in the conversations, it was not mentioned as such in the interviews which were conducted after the campaigns had taken place. As the following extract shows, the advertising manager identifies taking away the matter of course attitude of boys as the central and indisputable message of the campaign:

(44) SH interview <10/6/94>

1	I		If you have to state briefly what the campaign is about,
2			how would you do that?
3	A1		In the first instance that campaign that- that must
4			not pretend to uh be able really to do something about it,
5			that campaign is only meant uh is only meant
6			to start up a discussion
7	I		mmhh
8	A1		that is what I have said from the beginning, you can't with
9			a few radio commercials, a few TV [commercials], a few posters,
10			the problem, the problem is so essentially a part of
11			human nature that the only thing you can do in such
12			a campaign is, of course, to get a discussion going,
13			that has also happened
14	I		mmhh
15	A1		and uhh
16	I		why-
17	A1		yes, what it really only wants to do is uh people uh uh
18			to take away the matter of course attitude to situations
19	I		mmhh
20	A1	→	therefore to take away the matter of course attitude of
21			"I'm entitled to it" and what the campaign also tries to do
22			is simply to put heart into women something like
23		→	"you can always refuse whatever the situation",
24			that was the basis of the campaign
25	I		mmhh
26	A1		and above all to get the message across to boys and men
27	I		mmhh

Notice that the advertising manager is cautious in his objectives, but that he identifies taking away "the matter of course attitude "I'm entitled to it"" (lines 20-21) as the main aim of the campaign. In addition, the campaign also tries to put

heart into women: "you can always refuse whatever the situation" (line 23). This may be seen as contrastive or even opposite to the simultaneous design of the message in such a way that the girl does not ask for it. Whereas, in the conversations, situations were identified in which the girl "really invited" the boy, the message as it was proposed in the retrospective accounts of communication planners denied this possibility: "you can always refuse whatever the situation".

7.3 CONCLUSION

When communication planners define the campaign in terms of an *efficacy dilemma*, they accept accountability for the policies to be communicated. In contrast to the campaigns which were couched in terms of a political dilemma (see Chapter 6), communication planners do not show the distance between their own views and that of the government by underlining their neutral status, but instead orient to the policy problem as a genuine one. More specifically, in describing sexual harassment as an objective state of affairs, and the policies to be communicated as rooted in this state of affairs, they 'allowed' themselves to be accountable. It is important to note that the non-controversiality of the policies is partly established and maintained by the way planners treat these policies, that is, by taking responsibility for them.

The acceptance of accountability for the message was accompanied by the attempt to design the message in such a way as to make it more effective. In the campaign against sexual harassment, communication planners constructed so-called actual types, that is, typical sex offenders and victims, who had to represent members of the target group in the campaign commercial. As we have seen in Chapter 5, communication planners integrated the putative self-images of sex offenders and victims in the message in order to make it more effective. In this chapter, we have seen how the girl who represented the victim in the campaign commercial, was designed in such a way as to meet the taken-for-granted assumption

that girls do not take the initiative unless they need to, namely, when they are "not too beautiful", and if they do, that they take a risk. This construction reflected the assumption that a girl *should not ask for it*, since that could make her (partly) accountable for the offence. Sexiness, in contrast to beauty, was considered an attribute for which girls are accountable. Thus, while the message was designed to convince boys of the idea that they are not entitled to girls whatever the situation, the construction of the victim in the commercial indirectly suggested that there were situations in which boys are entitled to girls, namely, when girls 'ask for it'.

By drawing on supposed common sense, communication planners tried to meet the expectations of the target group to such an extent that the message was effective. However, the question is what this effectiveness comprises. At the root of the efficacy dilemma is the question: to what extent do I have to *meet* the taken-for-granted assumption which I want to challenge? This is also an important matter of negotiation for communication planners themselves. Meeting the expectation that a girls should not ask for it, in order to produce a credible world from the perspective of the boy, leaves one with the risk that meeting this expectation undermines the very message which has to be conveyed: whatever the situation, girls can refuse. Solving this tension is a practical and ongoing accomplishment, which asks for an active involvement with the policy to be communicated, rather than a passive transmission of it.

It is interesting to note that these typical members of the target group are not officially 'on record'. When not concerned with the effectiveness of the message, participants ridiculed the expectation of boys or men that women in short skirts ask for it, or indirectly denied having met this expectation by stating that the message was precisely directed at *rejecting* boys' expectations that they are entitled to it. As in the case of campaigns with sensitive policies, communication planners are cautious in "confessing" their concessions to the target group (the political domain or a group of citizens), or, in other words, their deviations from what they treat as the 'official' message. Communication planners always present themselves in terms of what they officially are: neutral messengers of government policies.

8

From passive intermediary to active participant: summary and conclusions

This has been a study of how communication planners talk government communication campaigns into being (cf. Heritage, 1984). While government communication, and public communication in general, has increasingly become the topic of methodical precept (Rice and Atkin, 1989), studies on the mundane practice of government communication are rare (Bolle and Van Gunsteren, 1992; Van Woerkum, 1994). Retrospective accounts of government communication planners, in which they look back upon the production of a government communication campaign, are available (cf. De Roon and Middel, 1993), but their reconstructive nature and lack of detail obscure the *in situ* production of campaigns.

The current study attempts to fill this major gap. More specifically, the aim of the study has been to explicate the interactional resources which communication planners use to make sense of government policies and the actions they may accomplish through their reports on these policies. While fundamental in its nature, the study was expected to yield practical insights through this critical reflection on the practice of government communication.

In its method and perspective, the study has been an attempt to forestall the idealization of communication planners' practices which can be found in many of the introductory books on government communication. It draws on the form of discourse analysis which studies talk in its '*natural*' surroundings (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, forthcoming c). Discourse analysts have adopted a research orientation that emphasizes the contextual embeddedness of talk. At the root of this research orientation is the assumption that text and talk are social practice (see 2.1). This assumption goes back to conceptions of language as they can be found with the linguistic philosophers Wittgenstein and Austin, and the ethnomethodologist Garfinkel. Language is no longer considered a passive medium for the transmission of information. Instead, it has come to be seen as a vehicle for action, such as blame, defence and refusal.

Discourse analysts are interested in the actions people accomplish with their language and the ways in which people draw on the context to make sense of each other's talk and enable these actions. The term context is used to refer both to the 'local' surroundings of talk, that is, what has just been said and what participants anticipate might be said later, as well as to the 'broader' cultural resources which people rely on. However, rather than assuming that the context is simply there, discourse analysis focuses on how speakers select out relevant aspects of that context (see 2.2).

The focus on participants' orientation makes discourse analysis of analytic interest for the study of government communication. While government communication may be framed by a historical, institutional or political context, this context is not relevant per se. It is *made* relevant (Boden, 1994; Schegloff, 1992). The current study has examined how communication planners orient to specific contextual features of their work through the details of their talk.

A second reason why discourse analysis may shed new light on government communication is its critique on the notion of representation. In its official appearance, government communication reflects the traditional conception of language as a passive medium for the transmission of information. That is,

government communication assumes the possibility of an unmediated transmission of policies. It implies that political messages can be transmitted without touching upon or 'contaminating' the nature and aims of the policies to be communicated (see 1.2). In this conception, communication planners are passive intermediaries of government policies. Discourse analysis, however, challenges the idea that government communication is representation. From a discourse analytic perspective, government communication is not so much representation as representational *practice* or *discursive* representation. That is, government policies are represented in such a way as to accomplish different actions through these representations. This thesis has shown how and to what purpose communication planners represent policies when producing a government communication campaign.

8.1 THE MESSAGE: MANAGING TWO DILEMMAS

In Chapter 5 I examined how communication planners made sense of the Disability Facilities Act or *WVG*, the Disability Insurance Act or *WAO*, the policies on the Social Fiscal or *SoFi*-number and finally, the policies against *sexual harassment*. More specifically, I examined how communication planners and advertising managers determined the central message of each campaign. It was suggested that communication planners made sense of government policies by juxtaposing and contrasting the needs of what they considered to be their main audiences. Their active orientation to the wishes of several audiences, ranging from politicians to press and public, established a complex picture of often contradictory claims as the starting-point for their message. Depending on the target group under consideration, communication planners were either caught in an *efficacy dilemma* or in a *political dilemma*. These dilemmas were managed by a variety of discursive devices.

First, in the case of the campaign against Sexual Harassment, communication planners made sense of the policies in terms of an *efficacy dilemma*: how to make

the message known to the 'official' target group without hurting its feelings? I showed how they managed this dilemma by formulating it from a rhetorical point of view, namely, by taking potential counterarguments from sex offenders and their victims into account. The message was constructed so as to appeal and reflect the policy message at the same time. The first issue was to what extent the campaign could show understanding for boys' behaviour without changing the policies to be communicated. This resulted in a message in which sexual harassment was depicted as a misunderstanding between boys and girls, that is, as an event for which the boy was not to blame. The second issue was to what extent the girl could be portrayed as a victim. The dilemma was between portraying the girl as a frightened person, which was treated as a plausible image of a victim, and portraying the girl as a strong person who hates the offender in the first place; an image which was considered to be appealing to girls. Communication planners managed the dilemma by producing a commercial in which the boy was depicted as a *potential* offender, who, in the end, decides not to commit sexual violence, whereas the girl was a *potential* victim, upset after the boy's action, but still able to hold her own.

In the other three campaigns, that is, the *WVG* (Disability Facilities Act)-campaign, the *WAO* (Disability Insurance Act)-campaign and the campaign on the Social Fiscal number or *SoFi* campaign, communication planners were caught in a *political dilemma*: how to convey the message without compromising the government. In contrast to the campaign against Sexual Harassment, in which the 'official' target group was treated as the main target group, communication planners predominantly oriented to the political audience. Again, counterarguments from the target group were taken into account, but now it concerned the arguments of political forces. It was the political audience which did not allow them to 'tell it how it is', or which had saddled them with the problem of communicating what they referred to as unfair policies or policies which were unpopular with the public. Whereas, in the campaign against sexual harassment, 'not hurting people's feelings' was thought of as a way to make the message more effective, in these three campaigns the adage 'not hurting people's feelings' was treated as a way to serve the

putative interests of the government. Rather than taking it as a practical condition for effective communication, communication planners used it to protect the policies against being discounted. This defensive rhetoric involved avoiding rather than generating publicity about the sensitive aspects of the policies.

Three discursive devices through which the political dilemma was managed were distinguished: 'factual' campaigns, selective omissions and couching the message in terms of a shared interest. The first device, conducting a 'factual' campaign, was perhaps the most radical. It was used in the WAO (Disability Insurance Act)-campaign and the WVG (Disability Facilties Act)-campaign. This device resisted the discounting of the message by communicating it in such a way as to produce a minimum of effect with the potential receivers of the message. A 'factual, neutral and plain' style of communicating was not associated with representing reality or merely telling the message, but, in the first place, with a *quiet* communication that resisted the undermining of what were treated as politically controversial policies. For example, the WAO campaign on painful rules and regulations regarding disability insurances, could be discounted as merely a product of political interest games, an attempt to rob citizens. However, 'factual' or 'neutral' communication couches the message in descriptive terms, which make the message seem solid and independent of the interests of its sender. The message 'merely' describes how it is.

In this respect, the conversations were instructive with regard to the communication planners' idea of information versus persuasion campaigns. Information campaigns were not defined in terms of 'telling how it is', but predominantly in terms of a subdued communication which avoided more political unrest; persuasion campaigns, on the other hand, corresponded with a more conspicuous style of communicating, potentially catching the public attention, which was undesirable in politically hectic times.

A second way of taking sensitive concerns away from the sender is that of selective omission. This was used in the SoFi campaign and the WVG (Disability Facilities Act)-campaign. In the SoFi campaign, for example, the participants

actively and systematically oriented to the dilemma of making public what the government was doing (checking personal data) without provoking damaging reactions from the public (with respect to the invasion of privacy). In order to avoid a compromising situation, it was suggested repeatedly that certain parts of the message should be omitted. In particular, communication planners referred to the omission of the *reasons* on which these policies were based. As Shapiro (1988) points out, a so-called normative message, which explicitly tells you why something is done or should be done, implies that the norms referred to are controversial and open to discussion, while a so-called descriptive message is designed to discourage such an evaluation. This could be considered an argument for communication planners to omit the reasons for certain policies: all reasons referred to are open to discussion. It is much safer to merely show what the government is doing.

Although this device is related to the use of 'factual' campaigns, a 'factual' or information campaign does not necessarily work with omissions. Its effect, or, more precisely its lack of effect, is attributed to its plain style, rather than to its omission of certain parts of the message. This, of course, is not to say that these devices cannot go together. However, the planners themselves treated the omission of reasons as a specific kind of solution to the political dilemma. Rather than managing the dilemma in terms of a general 'descriptive' campaign, the planners specifically proposed the omission of reasons as a way to create descriptiveness and thus to prevent political commotion. In the SoFi campaign, the contrast between transmitting policies on the one hand, and justifying them on the other hand, emerged recurrently: it should not create understanding for the message, rather, it should <u>just</u> show what the government is doing. In combination with extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) such as 'just' and 'only', the contrast worked to imply that, here, transmitting policies referred not so much to a plain style of communicating, but to *not* justifying policies, that is, omitting the reasons for the policies to be communicated. As Pomerantz (1984) points out, when people perform sensitive actions, the source or basis of these actions comes into play. Turned around, not providing reasons can 'disguise' the controversial character of a message, since

people do not recognize its controversiality. That is, the absence of reasons works reflexively to show the unproblematic character of the statement.

A third device was couching the message in terms of a shared interest of government and citizens. It was used in the SoFi campaign and the WVG campaign. In the WVG campaign, for example, the controversial issues concerned the cutbacks on facilities for the disabled and potential future cutbacks because of a too enthusiastic use of the facilities. These controversial issues were pushed into the background by using a 'positive' slogan which focused on the issue that facilities are available to keep handicapped people independent as long as possible. In the case of the SoFi campaign, it was proposed to couch fraud control in terms of efficient data exchange. That is, the electronic system used for exchanging personal data between different government departments could be used to control fraud, but also to make data exchange more efficient for the citizen.

This picture of communication planners as participants who are actively involved in reformulating policies in order to satisfy political forces and/or their official target groups, runs contrary to notions of communication planners as passive intermediaries who *transmit* their message to one specific target audience. Government communication that should 'stand for' or represent the views which were politically approved of, presumes a technical, linear relationship between the policy to be communicated and the communication which results from it. However, communication planners, while determining the central message of a campaign, put new life into apparently dead material. The policy which is communicated is not directly deducible from policy documents or policy experts' talk, but is the end product of a long process of developing and testing possible 'translations'. Communication planners mould and remould their messages in order to be able to satisfy a multiparty recipiency. In this sense, campaign messages not only tie together facts and policies, but also people (cf. Law and Williams, 1982).

8.2 A PROBLEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE POLITICAL DILEMMA

In Chapter 6, I examined the accountability practices of communication planners. Studies of ordinary language have shown in detail that participants may hold each other accountable for the veracity of their reports and further consequences the reports may have. In reporting events, participants also display a concern for this aspect of their talk. With respect to communication planners, this suggests that planners' reports of government policies are simultaneously a way of dealing with issues of agency and personal responsibility. Chapter 6 explored how communication planners, in their construction of government policies, attend to their *own* accountability. The chapter confined itself to accountability practices in the case of the WVG (Disability Facilities Act)-campaign, the WAO (Disability Insurance Act)-campaign and the campaign on the Social Fiscal number or SoFi campaign, that is, the campaigns in which the communication planners were caught in a *political dilemma.*

Three observations indicated that through the formulation of the political dilemma, planners attended to their own problems of accountability. First, in those passages in which the *contentiousness* of the policies was at issue, communication planners tried to secure their official neutral status. They portrayed themselves as participants who merely transmit government policies, thereby preventing others from holding them personally accountable for the content of the policies, or theit veiled presentation. In the case of the WVG campaign and the SoFi campaign, communication planners underlined that these policies originated elsewhere. They portrayed themselves as being saddled with contradictory or unfair policies by the political domain [*de politiek*], while the government instructed them to make these policies known to the public. In other words, they constructed themselves as communication planners who willy-nilly had to communicate the policies to the public: they had not been asked whether they wanted to communicate these policies and were not able to prevent it either. In the case of the WAO campaign and the WVG campaign, communication planners anticipated that they could be held

accountable for composing veiled messages. They attributed any attempt to prevent political commotion to the political domain. The use of the term *de politiek* allowed them to perform an effective blame attribution: the description refers to a diffuse group of actors whose precise actions cannot be easily tracked down. This means that objectionable actions and motives may be attributed to a group, which is so unspecified that the planners run little risk of actually being held accountable for these attributions.

I noted that the attributions of accountability to the political domain, and, through these attributions, the planners' reference to their own neutrality, could be considered redundant. It is the official task of communication planners to transmit government policies, that is, they are officially not accountable for the policies to be communicated. Therefore, the fact that they confirmed their official status, facing an audience of colleagues that could be expected to be familiar with their task, was a second indication that communication planners considered themselves at least potentially accountable for the policies to be communicated.

Finally, they underlined this neutral status time and again. Summing up, it was the persistent and redundant nature of this denial of accountability for 'controversial' policies, that worked reflexively to mark its problematic character. That is, the constant avoidance of accountability indirectly showed that communication planners dealt with their official status not as a matter of course but as a problem. Despite their official position as neutral intermediaries, communication planners felt potentially accountable for the policies to be communicated. I suggested that, in repeating their non-accountability, communication planners co-implicated each other in their own problems of accountability and 'fished' for solutions at the same time.

The conclusion that, despite their neutral status, communication planners feel accountable for the policies they communicate to the public, helps us to understand why communication planners actively try to prevent political commotion (see Chapter 5). Appealing to a formally neutral stance was not treated as guaranteeing that they would not be held accountable anyway. Communication planners therefore employed a *double defence* against potential criticism: on the one hand, they tried to

establish and maintain their status as a passive intermediary of government policies, on the other hand, they formulated the messages in such a way that they could be held accountable, if necessary.

The interviews showed that, after the campaigns had taken place, communication planners again presented themselves as neutral messengers. Either they attributed the wish to compose veiled messages to other participants or they simply denied having tried to present the policies in a reduced or disguised form. However, while persistently trying to maintain their neutralistic posture in most situations, communication planners sometimes also refrained from this posture. In addition to their attempts to portray themselves as merely passing on views of others, they also attended to their own responsibility in a different way. Mouthpieces cannot claim to exert an independent influence on the more substantive matters. That is, a mere concern with speaking on behalf of others may, at the same time, reduce the importance of one's task. Now and then, communication planners did not present themselves as mouthpieces, but instead underlined their own influence in the process of producing government communications. In doing so, they indirectly denied their neutralistic stance. For example, they portrayed themselves as having been advising on attempts to prevent political commotion, or they stressed that they had somewhat broadened the message.

As appears from the data in Chapter 6, in formulating the so-called political dilemma of producing effect without causing commotion, communication planners also attend to their own problems of accountability. In general, communication planners seem doomed to be Janus-faced. During the process of trying to formulate the message, and after the campaigns have taken place, communication planners employ their status as mouthpiece of the government as a crucial shield against potential criticism of the policies to be communicated. However, despite their official status as passive intermediaries of government policies, communication planners act as if they are accountable for the policies to be communicated. That is, they actively try to prevent political commotion by formulating and reformulating the policies to be communicated accordingly.

8.3 THE ACCEPTANCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE EFFICACY DILEMMA AND THE PROBLEM OF CONSTRUCTING EFFECTIVE TARGET GROUP IDENTITIES

Chapter 7 showed how the efficacy dilemma (how to make the message known to the 'official' target group without hurting its feelings) was rooted in the acceptance of accountability for the message. In contrast to the political dilemma, communication planners not only felt accountable for the policies to be communicated, but also accepted this accountability. Rather than underlining the distance between their own views and that of the government, the planners described sexual harassment as an objective state of affairs. In doing so, they showed their commitment to the content of the policies to be communicated. That is, they oriented to sexual harassment as being a genuine problem, thereby allowing themselves to be held accountable for policies rooted in this problem. It was noted how the non-controversiality of the policies was partly established and maintained by the way planners treated these policies, that is, by taking responsibility for them.

I argued that the acceptation of accountability for the policies resulted in a message which was designed to be effective (see also Chapter 5). That is, the message was designed to convince boys that they were not 'entitled' to girls: no matter the situation, girls can refuse. Chapter 7 showed in detail that the message was made effective by drawing heavily on the known-in-common attributes of sex offenders and their victims, which were precisely the attributes which the message had to undermine. In particular, the identity of the girl who represented the victim in the campaign commercial was designed in such a way as to meet the taken-for-granted assumption that girls do not take the initiative unless they need to, namely, when they are "not too beautiful", and if they do, that they take a risk. This construction reflected the assumption that a girl *should not ask for it*, since that could make her (partly) accountable for the offence. Sexiness, in contrast to beauty, was considered an attribute for which girls are accountable. Thus, while the message was designed to convince boys of the idea that they are not entitled to girls whatever the situation, the construction of the victim in the commercial suggested indirectly

that there were situations in which boys are entitled to girls, namely, when girls 'ask for it'.

By drawing on putative common sense, communication planners tried to meet the expectations of the target group to such an extent that the message was effective. However, the question is of what this effectiveness consists. This was also an important matter of negotiation for communication planners themselves. At the root of the efficacy dilemma is the question: to what extent do I have to *meet* the taken-for-granted assumption which I want to challenge? Solving this tension is a practical and ongoing task, which asks for an active involvement with the policy to be communicated, rather than a passive transmission of it.

It is interesting to note that these typical members of the target group are not officially 'on record'. When not concerned with the effectiveness of the message, participants ridiculed the view that women in short skirts 'ask for it', or they indirectly denied having met this conception by stating that the message was aimed at *rejecting* the idea that boys are entitled to girls. As in the case of campaigns with sensitive policies, communication planners are cautious in 'confessing' their concessions to the target group (the political domain or a group of citizens), or, in other words, their deviations from what they treat as the 'official' message. Communication planners always present themselves in terms of what they officially are: neutral messengers of government policies.

8.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Before outlining some implications of the study, it is important to point out what this study is not. It is not an attempt to measure the effectiveness of government communication campaigns. Rather than having studied the effectiveness of campaigns, one of the aspects of this study has been to analyse how communication planners define effectiveness in their daily practice and how they design the message

as to warrant its (in)effectiveness. Notice that the use of the word 'design' is not meant to identify the planners' actions as intentionally driven (see 2.2).

It is also not an attempt to offer practical advice for the improvement of government communication campaigns in terms of specific policy proposals. First and foremost, the aim of this study has been to describe the representational practices of government communication planners. It is through this construction (see 3.1) of the mundane practice of government communication that I hope to generate new insights. That is, rather than offering clear-cut pieces of advice, this study aims at stimulating debate through a critical reflection on government communication. This is not to say that a list of recommendations could not be based on critical reflection. It is a matter of emphasis, not an either/or issue.

A main conclusion of this study is that communication planners are active participants in the process of formulating and reformulating government policies, rather than passive intermediaries of these policies. We have seen a number of discursive devices through which communication planners design the campaign message in such a way as to guarantee its effectiveness in terms of 'not compromising the government', or to guarantee its effectiveness in terms of conveying the message to the 'official' target group(s). It is inherent in the use of these discursive devices that communication planners are actively involved with the policies to be communicated.

The results of this study suggest, then, that the conception of a government communication planner as a passive intermediary of government policies needs to be altered. All through the book, I have talked about communication planners, that is, policy experts and government communicators, rather than simply about government communicators. As we have seen, as communication planners, they produce the substance of communication projects together. Although they differ in their formal positions and (may) differ in their type of skills, they are both concerned with managing the same dilemmas (see Chapters 5 and 6). This study suggests that, while they may use their official identity as an accounting scheme, there are no practical differences between government communicators and policy experts as far as it

concerns their involvement with policies in the production of a government communication campaign. Communication is policy-making. When producing a government communication campaign, government communicators and policy experts continuously and inevitably (re)construct government policies so as to satisfy the needs of a multiparty recipiency.

Despite their official neutral status, which implies that communication planners are not accountable for the policies to be communicated, communication planners act as if they are accountable for these policies. In the case of policies which they *treat* as politically controversial, this implies that they actively try to prevent political commotion. In the case of policies which they *treat* as politically non-controversial, this means that they *accept* accountability for the message and design it so as to make it effective with respect to the official target group. In either case, but predominantly in the case of what planners treat as politically controversial policies, the neutral identity of the communication planner is no more than a shield to deflect potential criticism. This study has shown in detail that a neutral status is used to perform defensive action.

In this respect, government communicators find themselves in a difficult and even impossible position. They may not be accountable for the policies to be communicated, but they act as if they are. In the case of politically controversial policies, this may result in a campaign which is designed to be *in*effective. Providing communicators with the status of a policy maker would help, because this would bring their official accountability in line with their daily practice.

Recent developments in communication studies (Engel, 1995; Leeuwis, 1993; Röling, 1994b; Van Woerkum, Van de Poel and Aarts, 1995; Vaandrager, 1995) advise communicators to lay aside their neutral role, and become official participants in policy processes (see Chapter 1). In the case of government communication, this would involve stimulating debate among citizens in the early stages of the policy process. The role of the communicator would have to change from a passive intermediary into a facilitator which brings different parties together and provides them with information in order to support the policy process (cf. Frissen, 1993).

This can be considered a step forward. However, the status of facilitator may become be as problematic as the status of a passive intermediary. To a great extent, this depends on the kind of responsibility the facilitator is officially attributed with. This is an important new area of research. In any case, as long as communication planners are not fully and officially accountable for the policies they communicate, the tension will never entirely disappear.

8.5 COMMUNICATION RESEARCH AND DISCOURSE

This study can be situated within a growing field of research on the discursive features of talk. While the current study has focused on the practices of communication planners, I have sketched a range of discourse studies which have proved to be relevant in other fields (see Chapter 2). The applied use of discourse analysis, that is, discourse-analytic research at the service of learning processes, is still at an early stage of development. However, it is particularly its ability to reveal everyday reasoning practices in fine detail which makes discourse analysis into a promising line of research.

Appendix A

Transcription notation

I have adopted a cut-down version of the set of conventions that have been developed by Jefferson (1985) for conversation analysis. I have added commas, full stops and question marks as to improve the readability of the extracts.

[	Start of overlap in talk.
under	Underlined fragments indicate speaker emphasis.
[pause]	Pauses were not timed, but marked as such.
[unclear]	Inaudible sections.
[ironic]	The transcriber's description of intonation, non-verbal activities and other clarificatory information.
[*italic*]	The transcriber's description of sections omitted.
CAPITAL	With the exception of proper nouns, capital letters indicate a section of speech noticeably louder than that surrounding it.
-	A dash indicates the sharp cut-off of the prior word.

In chapter 2, the following additional transcriptions have been used:

(0.8)	The number in parentheses indicates a time gap in tenths of a second.
:	Colons indicate that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound or letter.
hh	Indicates an out-breath. The more h's the longer the out-breath.

Appendix B

Abbreviations

Participants

Communicators

C_1 - C_4	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
C_E	Ministry of Education and Science
C_J	Department of Justice
C_N	National Information Service [Rijksvoorlichtingsdienst]
C_V	Ministry of Housing, Regional Development and the Environment [VROM]
C_W	Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Culture

Policy Experts

P_1 - P_2	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
P_H	Home Office

External participants

E_1 - E_3	External experts
A_1 - A_3	Advertising managers
R_1	Government Researcher
I	Interviewer

Campaigns

SH	Sexual Harassment
SoFi	Social Fiscal Number
WAO	Disability Insurance Act
WVG	Disability Facilities Act

Appendix C

Dutch transcriptions

CHAPTER 5

(1) SH <16/11/92 1>

1	C3		Maar deze spot heeft
2			zo ongelooflijk veel energie gevroten,
3			het was zo moeilijk om te vertalen op een manier
4		1→	zonder dat je vrouwen onderuit haalde, op een manier
5	A	2→	zonder het probleem te bagatelliseren,
6		3→	zonder mensen zo voor het hoofd te stoten
7	B		en toch in één keer binnen te stappen,
8			dat ik denk dat het waanzinnig moeilijk blijft.

(2) SH <29/12/92 4>

1	P2	ik vind het te vriendelijk het plei- het pleit de jongen vrij
2		terwijl ik het dus [ja
3	C3	[ja dat is wat er achter zit en
4	P2	het pleit hem vrij [en dat gaat niet aan
5	C3	[en dat is niet zo
6	P1	maar ik denk dat we hoe gel- hoe gelijk je daar ook in kan hebben
7		dat we uh in een brochure niet die jongen een schuldcomplex aan
8		moeten praten [pauze] 'k bedoel dat is met- met wat we in die
9		huidige spot hebben staan, dat ie opbelt en
10		het weer goed maakt, dat is nou juist
11		om die jongens allemaal geen schuldcomplex aan te praten
		[anderhalve getranscribeerde pagina weggelaten: de campagne tegen sexueel geweld wordt vergeleken met vergelijkbare campagnes]
12	P1	Dus volgens mij kan je met dit soort dingen
13	P2	mm

14 P1 het beste de insteek hebben van "denk eens na, wees bedacht op-
15 wees er bedacht op dat er misverstanden op kunnen treden",
16 want op zo'n moment leg je de de- de schuldvraag
17 of de- de oorzaak van het misverstand in het midden
18 P2 mm
19 P1 de oplossing van het misverstand leg je
20 aan de kant waar wij 'm willen hebben,
21 namelijk, bij de jongens
22 P2 mm [lange pauze] Nou, dat ja, daar kan ik wel in meegaan

(3) SH <15/3/93 1>

1 P2 Wij vinden dat de teksten die er nu zijn, laten we zeggen,
2 qua constructie, erg op een verhaal hangen.
3 Dat verhoudt zich ook niet heel erg goed overigens met de
4 inleiding van het magazine, waar wordt gemeld dat
5 het een magazine is over jongens, liefde en sex, nou,
6 dat pakt toch even iets anders uit,
7 vind ik uh maar het belangrijkste bezwaar
8 van de voorliggende teksten is volgens ons
9 dat het toch wel heel erg ver mee gaat in het soort gedrag uhh
10 waar op afgedongen moet worden.
11 Er komt wel heel erg veel begrip op tafel.
[één getranscribeerde pagina overgeslagen: er wordt bediscussieerd dat het magazine jongens aan zou spreken, juist omdat er begrip wordt getoond. Dit wordt echter verworpen]
12 C3 het is, op zich, aardig om te weten
13 hoe het in de communicatie scoort,
14 maar dat wat zij hebben is, natuurlijk,
15 een beleidsbezwaar tegen de inhoud
16 dus dat moet je dan, dat is
17 P1 [dat kan wel communiceren maar als de boodschap er niet in staat
18 C3 [dan moet je afweging maken hoe zwaar vind je je inhoudelijke
19 boodschap d'r in en hoeveel concessies ben je bereid te doen
20 ten behoeve van de communicatie die misschien goed is?

(4) SH <7/1/93 2>

1	E1	Meiden worden bang voor je dat is ook
2		[dat geeft de
3	E2	[nee
4	P1	nee maar dat wil ik er juist niet in hebben
5	E2	precies
6	P1	Nee, want dat wil je niet lezen, als meisje zijnde,
7		en je moet de jongens ook niet de indruk geven, vind ik,
8		[dat meisjes bang van ze worden
9	E2	[dat je ze bang kunt maken
10		Precies, meisjes krijgen de pest aan je.

(5) SH <23/2/93 5>

1	A2	Wat- wat natuurlijk essentieel is en dat-
2		dat daar hebben we het ook lang over gehad
3		dat de- de zeg maar, de scene waarin het gebeurt
4		haar niet moet portretteren als een slachtoffer,
5		want dat- dat willen we juist alsmaar voorkomen
6		dat zij een beetje, eerst hadden we nog zoiets van,
7		misschien moet ze weglopen, nee, zij moet
8	A1	hij rent weg
9	A2	nee, zij moet blijven staan, hij loopt terug het huis in
10	A1	hij loopt weg
11	A2	en zij heeft iets van, ja, ze is wel ontdaan
12		maar ze heeft ook iets van uh ik heb me dit niet laten gebeuren
13		'k bedoel, dat moet dus heel subtiel
14	A1	maar het moet ook duidelijk zijn dat hij dat moment van
15		twijfel heeft, van "ik kan nu doorgaan",
16		en dat je daarbij ook letterlijk ziet van uhh
17		beetje bruusk draait ie zich om en hij loopt weg
18		hij gaat niet door, hij- hij op het laatste moment
19		uh uh uh doet ie het niet
20		ondanks de druk van zijn vrienden,
21		ondanks het gevoel dat ie er eigenlijk wel recht op had
22		omdat zij nota bene
23		hem vraagt om een luchtje te gaan scheppen buiten,
24		wat in 9 van de 10 gevallen gewoon een uitnodiging tot vrijen is

(6) WAO <10/2/93 1>

1	C1	we hebben altijd, dat was een beetje de dubbele doelstelling
2		die we hadden, hè,
3		we wilden bekendheid genereren rondom TAV TBA [wetten]
4		en uh noem ze allemaal maar op, maar van de andere kant,
5		moest het zo rustig mogelijk
6		want we mochten vooral niet tegen schenen schoppen
7	C2	mm
8	C1	als je bekendheid wilt genereren moet je
9		opvallen
10	P1	moet je tegen schenen schoppen
11	C1	moet je tegen schenen schoppen [P1 lacht]
12	C1	dat is natuurlijk precies het, kijk,
13		dat is waar wij uh waar wij op zijn gestuit
14	P1	ja
15	C1	en dat uh en als je dus zegt van uh we willen zakelijk sober
16		uh manier van- van- van beeld en tekst,
17		daar hebben we voor gekozen omdat
18		het een hele pijnlijke wet- en regelgeving was,
19		dan kun je ook niet tegelijkertijd verwachten
20		dat je daarbij flink aan de weg timmert uhh want als je
21		aan iemand vraagt kent u een Postbus 51 spotje
22		dan roepen ze allemaal uh "alcohol"
23		maar ze zullen niet zeggen van "die thermometer,
24		daar was ik wel flink van onder de indruk" nee [gelach]
25		dat is natuurlijk niet zo.
26		Dat is- dat is- dat is 't- 't-, de rechtstreekse consequentie
27		dat je met een- een dubbele doelstelling werkt,
28		enerzijds wil je de hoogst mogelijke bekendheid genereren,
29		anderzijds wil je niet tegen schenen schoppen

(7) WAO <10/2/93 2>

1	C2	hhh de politieke commotie uh en andere commotie is ook,
2		die kou is ook voor een belangrijk deel uit de lucht
3		Of je dan nog zo'n scherp uh uh onderscheid moet maken
4		tussen het openbaarmakingsdeel
5		en het instrumentele deel en
6		of je dat niet veel meer met elkaar kunt laten versmelten
7	P1	ik vond dat- ik vond dat wel helder
8	P2	in tijd of qua boodschap?
9	C1	ja
10	P1	dat onderscheid moet ik- moet ik je zeggen
11	C1	ik moet ik- ik- ik
12	C2	he?
13	P1	ik vond dat altijd wel lekker helder dat onderscheid
14	C2	analytisch is dat prima
15	P1	en ook gewoon voor de
16	C1	ja maar ook jij, ook als jij
17	P1	ook voor de creatieve uitingen die
18		⌜we tot dusver daarvan gezien hebben
19	C1	⌞en als ontvanger van de boodschap?
20	C2	ook

(8) WVG <4/11/92 1>

1	C4	Even een opmerking, ik vraag me af of of je dat zo expliciet kunt
2		zeggen en of dat waar is "het wordt allemaal wat eenvoudiger"
3	A1	da's wel de bedoeling van de wet, als ik het goed
4		⌜als ik de
5	C4	⌞ja maar ik vind dat wij op
6		moet passen dat wij een wet gaan verkopen uh
7	A1	Ja, maar het is ook commu- een term voor communicatie
8	C4	maar goed, da's even een opmerking
9	A1	mm
10	C4	ik vind het verder een duidelijk en leuk verhaaltje
11		maar dat heb ik al gezegd, het spoort wel met uh
12	A1	nog een opmerking, het is ook een neutraal verhaaltje, hè,
13		deze wet heeft toch wat uh wat uh losgemaakt en
14		zeker in de kringen van gehandicapten,
15		't lijkt me dat we hier niemand mee uh tegen het hoofd stoten
16	C1	Ik ga even verder heb jij nog wat opmerkingen

(9) SoFi <10/3/92 2>

1	C$_J$	Een iets vriendelijker woord voor controle is verificatie.
2		Maar in het verleden, als er mogelijk fraude in het spel was,
3		was verificatie ook al toegestaan.
4	→P$_1$	De campagne is tricky.
5		Waarom zou je vertellen wat toch al openbaar is?
6	C$_J$	Het moet zo sec mogelijk.
7		Dat is de openbaarheid van bestuur.
8		Wetgeving geeft de overheid het recht en
9		de plicht om gegevens te controleren en verifiëren.
10		Om de hele troep te controleren.

(10) SoFi <27/2/92 3>

1	P$_1$	De WPR is belangrijk,
2		want de overheid gaat zo veel gegevens uitwisselen.
3		Waarom? Omdat er basisregistraties zijn.
4		De overheid gaat gegevens controleren, bij elkaar brengen.
5	A$_1$	Dan ontstaat het beeld van een allescontrolerende overheid.
6		Dat ga je versterken.
7	→P$_1$	Je wilt dat toch ook niet verzwijgen, of wel?
8		De overheid wil dat openbaar maken.

(11) WVG <6/10/92 4>

1	C$_2$	Je kan- je kan die groep gehandicapten die het nu betreft
2		je kan geen excuustoestand
3		[alle andere deelnemers: NEE NEE] in zo'n zo'n spot gaan doen.
4		Ik bedoel, ze krijgen bericht van de bedrijfsverenigingen,
5		de gemeenten zal ze straks aanspreken
6		Het gegeven is er, er is bezuinigd
7		en dat weten ze gewoon.
8	P$_1$	Die spot zou dus wel ook <u>die</u> groep moeten aanspreken
9		maar niet op het feit dat ze minder krijgen
10		maar gewoon dat er dus nu die
11		bij gemeenten voorzieningen uh
12		dus in totaal moet het iedereen aanspreken
13	C$_2$	en jong en oud ook
14	C$_1$	ja

(12) WVG <4/12/92 3>

1	C1	ik heb- ik heb er wel over nagedacht
2	R1	ja
3	C1	kijk, behalve het feit dat mensen moeten weten
4		wat er is
5	R1	ja
6	C1	he wat er verandert, zijn er, tuurlijk,
7		in je voorlichting
8		maar dat hoef je misschien niet zo te expliceren
9		zou je wel moeten zeggen "en maak er gebruik van"
10	R1	ja
11	C1	"als je er recht op hebt"
12	R1	ja
13	C1	want als je weet dat het niet-gebruik zo groot was
14	R1	ja
15	C1	en dat het niet-gebruik waarschijnlijk ook wel te wijten is
16		dat mensen helemaal geen zin hadden om hun hele [onduidelijk]
17		bloot te leggen om aan zo'n voorziening te komen
18	R1	ja
19	C1	uhhh ja uh zou je ook zeggen "ja, ja, oké,
20		maar dat hoef je niet expl-", daar heb je wel gelijk in
21	R1	nee uh
22	C1	je zou, in die voorlichting [onduidelijk] wel iets van
23		kunnen zeggen van "het is uw goed recht"
24	R1	ja
25	C1	"we vinden het belangrijk dat u zelfstandig blijft wonen,
26		dus maak er ook gebruik van"
27	R1	maar [voornaam C1] dat staat dan weer op gespannen voet denk ik
28		met uh de politieke doelstelling om het budget neutraal te doen
29	C1	ja
30	R1	klopt dat?
31	C1	en dan
32	R1	want nu, veel meer mensen die weten ervan hè ook omdat
33		het een nieuwe wet is gaan meer mensen er gebruik
34		van maken, zelfs los van de nieuwe doelgroep, en dan begint
35		de politiek weer te schreeuwen van uh "o je, het kost meer"
36	C1	en dan nog een heel belangrijk punt
		[C1 zet het argument uiteen met betrekking tot de praktische toepassing van de wet in verschillende gemeenten]

(13) SoFi <27/2/92 1>

1	A1	De burger legt daar het accent.
2		Ik bedoel, we mogen geen dingen zeggen die niet waar zijn,
3		maar wat is de filosofie erachter?
4		We moeten kijken wat is voor de burger relevant?
5		Niet meer dat vingertje naar hem toe.
6		Toen hebben we gedacht, hoe moeten we dat nu verpakken,
7		nee, dat is het woord niet,
8		hoe moeten we dat rechtvaardigen?
9		Je kunt ook zeggen, de boodschap is
10		"de beperkte middelen moeten verdeeld worden"
11		Het vingertje over de preventieve werking
12		is dan verstopt, maar nog steeds zichtbaar.
13	P1	Voor mij is het een vorm van kennisoverdracht.
14	PH	Dat is waar, maar het moet ook passen in
15		"schaarse middelen moeten verdeeld worden". Dat- dat een goede
16		boodschap is. Het moet ook zo zijn dat de burger dat accepteert.
17	P1	Dat vind ik een oud verhaal, schaarse middelen verdelen.
18		Het is simpelweg "de overheid gaat een modern tijdperk in".

(14) SoFi <27/2/92 4>

1	C2	Het gaat om het uitleggen van wat de overheid doet,
2		wat de overheid doet heeft bepaalde consequenties.
3	C1	Het gaat niet om bijbrengen van begrip.
4	P1	Nee, je laat gewoon zien wat de overheid doet,
5		je moet het alleen zichtbaar maken.

(15) WVG <9/9/92 5>

1	A1	Het is ook natuurlijk een heel positief iets als je het zegt
2		"je moet zo lang mogelijk zelfstandig zijn"
3		niemand zegt er nee tegen
4	C3	ja uh
5	A1	het is een goede paraplu, iedereen wil wel zich d'r onder scharen
6	A3	en nog iets anders is natuurlijk dat
7	A1	maar het komt wel goed uit [ironisch]
8	C3	je moet ontzettend uit[onduidelijk]kijken
9		dat dit niet de reden wordt van je verhaal
10	A1	nee nee n- nee
11	C3	het mag een soort bindmiddel zijn
12	A1	precies
13	C3	maar je moet uh met andere redenen komen denk ik, meer het
14		rechtvaardigheidsprincipe, om de zaak goed op poten te zetten

(16) WVG <6/10/92 2>

1	E3	Je hebt natuurlijk dat een groepering zegt van
2		"ik uh heb nu een flink pakket voorzieningen
3		ik ga terug in dat pakket hè,
4		dat is uh het terugbrengen van het aantal voorzieningen,
5		af- gewoon afknijpen, laat ik het zo noemen"
6	Cv	mmhh
7	E3	maar daarentegen gebruik ik
8		die middelen om een ander deel van je bevolkingsgroep,
9		de bejaarden er wel gebruik van te laten maken, dus je doet
10		eigenlijk, dat is dan mijn interpretatie even hier aan
11		tafel [onduidelijk] een beroep op een stukje solidariteit,
12		dat ouderen ook aan die voorzieningen
13		moeten kunnen deelnemen
14	Cv	ja maar daar moet je mensen niet op aanspreken
15	E3	nee?
16	Cv	dat communiceert niet.
17	P1	geloof ik ook niet

(17) WVG <9/9/92 4>

1	A1	dus je moet eigenlijk zeggen
2		"het is wat ingewikkelder geworden"
3		"het krijgen van voorzieningen"
4	C1	[onduidelijk] nou [lacht]
5	A2	nou ook weer niet
6	A1	niet dat je dat moet zeggen op die manier,
7		maar het is eigenlijk dat je
8		waar het op neer komt in de praktijk of niet
9	C1	nou
10	A1	eventjes los van de communicatie, hè
11	C1	ja, los van de communicatie uhh de bedoeling
12		was altijd om het juist doorzichtiger en eenvoudiger te maken
14	A1	jawel, tuurlijk, maar dat zal- maar dat gebeurt hiermee ook?
15		[onderzoekster Hedwig en C1 lachen]
16	C1	Hedwig heeft al die-
17		al die discussies gevolgd daarover
18		maar het is, je blijft daar uh [pauze] het blijft altijd uh
19	A3	het is, in feite, een contradictio in terminis
20		waar we mee te maken hebben

(18) SoFi <10/3/92 4>

1	CJ	De gegevensuitwisseling vindt plaats in het kader van
2		de SoFi-wetgeving, niet in het kader van de WPR [privacy-wet].
3		Dat is democratisch vastgesteld.
4		De vraag is "wordt de privacy zo uitgehold?"
5		Er is een gevoel gecreëerd van "er is niets aan de hand."
6		Maar nu met de wet kunnen gegevens uitgewisseld worden
7		zonder te vragen.
8	PI	Maar de overheid propageert de gegevensuitwisseling ook.
9	CI	En een van de gevolgen is.
10	PI	Nee, de doelstelling is fraudebestrijding.
11	PH	Nu controleren ze gewoon.
12	CI	Ja, dat is de doelstelling.
13	PI	En daarnaast,
14		je moet het uitkeringstraject goed beginnen.
15		De juiste mensen moeten de juiste uitkeringen krijgen.
16	CJ	Met zo min mogelijk mensen en middelen
17		zoveel mogelijk uitkeringen.
18	CI	Dus, fraudebestrijding.
19	PI	We praten over een economisch principe.
20	PH	Het gaat om effectieve en efficiënte gegevensuitwisseling.
21		Daar kun je ook fraude mee bestrijden.
22	CI	Ja, daar heb ik wat aan.
23	CJ	Automatisering is een soort hulpmiddel, dat is een vooruitgang.
24	PI	Het gaat om het vermijden van fouten.
25	CJ	Voor dat doel heb je gegevens nodig.

(19) SoFi <27/2/92 2>

1	AI	Het idee erachter is.
2		het Sociale Zekerheidsstelsel is een groot goed.
3		we appelleren aan het gevoel van mensen
4		"verhip, daar staan we niet bij stil".
5	CJ	Doe je een beroep op mensen die een uitkering hebben?
6		Gaat dit alleen om uitkeringen?
7		Ik ben niet van Sociale Zaken, maar,
8	PI	Waarom krijg je dit beeld?
9		Omdat je als noemer gebruikt, controle.
10		We praten over gegevensuitwisseling met behulp van moderne
11		voorzieningen. Het gaat om die boodschap.

CHAPTER 6

(20) WVG <4/12/92 1>

1	C1	De een-loket-idee is dus gewoon eigenlijk een beetje een fictie
2		maar goed, daar praten we maar niet te hard over.
3		In deze wet zit het ook niet.
4	R1	is dat wel [uh ja?
5	C1	[ooit opzet geweest
6		het is ooit wel aangekondigd geweest als de bedoeling, want het
7		idee, dat zat ook in deze info het was een verbrokkeld systeem
8		en om deze hele operatie ook te legitimeren is gezegd
9		"ja, maar we willen van die verbrokkeldheid af. Dit is een heel
10		helder, duidelijk pakket voor die voorzieningen uhhh maar goed,
11		de kritiek vanuit de Gehandicaptenraad [onduidelijk]
12		die uh hadden geen enkele moeite om uh dat onderuit te schoffelen
13		dat is ook al meerdere keren gebeurd uh want die zien, natuurlijk,
14		wel heel duidelijk in wat er gebeurd he?Het zijn vaak cumulatieve
15		effecten voor gehandicapten uhh als je een handicap hebt dan ben
16		je aangewezen op vervoersvoorzieningen je bent aangewezen op
17		een rolstoel, je bent aangewezen op woningaanpassingen als alles
18		naar beneden gaat, ja, dan betekent dat voor iemand soms ettelijke
19		honderden guldens per maand die ie er op achteruit gaat
20	R1	ja, da's heel veel
21	C1	dus het betekent ook dat waarschijnlijk een heleboel mensen
22		een beroep moeten doen op de bijstand begrijp je
23	R1	ja, dat is het overhevelen van problemen volgens mij
24	C1	mm
25	R1	maar goed
26	C1	ja, dat soort dingen
27	R1	da's de politiek, dat uh
28	C1	ja, de politiek, precies
29	R1	kunnen wij helaas niets aan doen
30	C1	nu terug naar de procedure

(21) SoFi <10/3/92 2>

1	C1	Het gaat om gegevensuitwisseling en bescherming.
2		[tegen C1] Jij hebt gezegd "het is geen WPR-verhaal".
3	C1	Ja, Justitie heeft ook de verantwoordelijkheid voor
4		het terugdringen van allerlei situaties, maar hoe ver mag je gaan
5		voordat de burger zich niet meer beschermd voelt?
6	P1	Hier past het privacy-verhaal bij, begrijp je.
7		Er zit wel een democratisch sausje over. De rest is politiek.

(22) SoFi <10/3/92 2>

1	C1	Een iets vriendelijker woord voor controle is verificatie.
2		Maar in het verleden, als er mogelijk fraude in het spel was,
3		was verificatie ook al toegestaan.
4	P1	De campagne is tricky.
5		Waarom zou je vertellen wat toch al openbaar is?
6	C1	Het moet zo sec mogelijk.
7		Dat is de openbaarheid van bestuur.
8		Wetgeving geeft de overheid het recht en
9		de plicht om gegevens te controleren en verifiëren.
10		Om de hele troep te controleren.

(23) SoFi <27/2/92 3>

1	P1	De WPR is belangrijk,
2		want de overheid gaat zo veel gegevens uitwisselen.
3		Waarom? Omdat er basisregistraties zijn.
4		De overheid gaat gegevens controleren, bij elkaar brengen.
5	A1	Dan ontstaat het beeld van een allescontrolerende overheid.
6		Dat ga je versterken.
7	P1	Je wilt dat toch ook niet verzwijgen, of wel?
8		De overheid wil dat openbaar maken.

(24) WVG <4/12/92 2>

1	C1	Kijk het is, natuurlijk, vanuit politiek oogpunt,
2		en dat is wel, natuurlijk wel, heel hypocriet zou jij zeggen,
3		maar kijk, je kunt bijna niet scoren met dit geheel
4	R1	mm
5	C1	Het enige wat je wel nog zo goed mogelijk kan doen is
6		in ieder geval zorgen dat die hele informatieverstrekking

7		aan mensen die dus rechten hebben dat die ook
8		zo goed mogelijk loopt
9	R1	nou, hypocriet nee. We hebben we hebben wel vaker met
10		dit soort projecten te maken, Hij, politieke besluiten
11		waar je je persoonlijk toch misschien niet zo in kunt vinden
12	C1	maar waar je dan toch
13	R1	die je loy-loyaal moet uitvoeren, Hij,
14		als ambtenaar
15	C1	die andere vragen die wijzen ook voor zich
		[verandering van onderwerp]

(25) WVG <9/9/93 1>

1	C1	Het terrein van voorlichting wordt heel interessant,
2		maar ook heel ingewikkeld uhm door die decentralisatie.
3		Als rijksoverheid, die de wet maakt uh of de wet verandert
4		uh rust er een taak uh op onze schouders uh volgens de
5		Wet Openbaarheid van Bestuur [wet die het publiek recht
6		op informatie geeft] uh je moet uh de wet,
7		de wetswijziging openbaar maken, het is van belang in de
8		verklaring en in de toelichting, uh je moet mensen duidelijk
9		maken het hoe en het waarom uh zoals [naam Premier]
10		dat ook eens zei "het is niet de bedoeling in Den Haag in
11		achterkamertjes uh wetten te veranderen, zonder mensen daarvan
12		op de hoogte te stellen". Die keiharde noodzaak is er en die taak
13		ligt heel duidelijk bij de 3 departementen die erbij betrokken zijn

(26) SoFi <27/2/92 4>

1	A1	Er moet me gewoon iets van het hart. Enerzijds wordt gezegd
2		"we coderen gegevens, dus er is privacy".
3		Anderzijds wordt er gezegd "de overheid geeft
4		heel veel gegevens aan veel mensen".
5	CJ	Zo zit ons wettelijke systeem nu eenmaal in elkaar.
6	P1	Een goed ding is wel: er zit een privacy-garantie in.
7		Dat de [SoFi]-wet bestaat is al een garantie.
8		Die is democratisch vastgesteld.
9	CJ	Daarom mag je het weten en erover meepraten.

(27) WAO <10/2/93 1>

1	C1	we hebben altijd, dat was een beetje de dubbele doelstelling
2		die we hadden, hè, we wilden bekendheid genereren rondom

3		TAV TBA [wet inzake arbeidsongeschiktheid en ziekteverlof]
4		en uh noem ze allemaal maar op,
5		maar van de andere kant moest het zo <u>rustig</u> mogelijk,
6		want we mochten vooral niet tegen <u>schenen</u> schoppen
7	C2	mm
8	C1	als je bekendheid wilt genereren moet je <u>opvallen</u>
9	P1	moet je tegen schenen schoppen
10	C1	<u>moet</u> je tegen schenen schoppen [P1 lacht]
11	C1	dat is natuurlijk precies het, kijk, dat is waar wij uh waar wij
12		op zijn gestuit
13	P1	ja

(28) WAO <3/11/92 1>

1	C1	voor alle openbaarmakingsdelen hebben ze geaccordeerd, dat
2		er een uh, zeg maar, thermometer-stramien zou worden gehanteerd
3	P1	maar je <u>weet</u> hoe ongelukkig [voornaam staatssecretaris]
4		was met die, met die thermometer-campagne
5	C1	maar nu niet meer
6	C2	dat zeggen we niet meer
7	C1	dat gaan we toch niet meer ophalen [lacherig]
8		dat was die campagne waar we toen nog een uurtje over
9	P1	dat weet zij [= staatssecretaris] nog wel,
10		daar hoef je haar niet meer aan te herinneren

(29) WVG <12/10/93 1>

1	P1	<u>Weinig</u> mensen zijn van die specifieke voorzieningen uh op
2		de hoogte, zoals die taxikostenvergoedingen.
3		Nou, via de bijstand begint dat dan
4		een beetje ⌜maar
5	C1	⌞mm [pauze] ja, je krijgt vaak het verwijt dat-dat, uh
6		dat krijgen we als ministerie, dat wij ook uh dat is ook letterlijk
7		zo uitgesproken door consumentencontact in hun laatste onderzoek
8		dat het allemaal expres is ⌜he
9	P1	⌞ja ja, om te bezuinigen
10	C1	ja. [pauze] Is dat expres wat denk jij? [besmuikte grinnik]
11	P1	Nee, ik denk het niet, want die uh, tenminste, ik denk dat er
12		misschien wel uh rekenmeesters blij zijn dat er niet uh honderd
13		procent gebruikt is van de bijzondere ⌜bijstand
14	C1	⌞die boekhouders, ja
15	P1	maar op zich wordt die bijzondere bijstand toch gemaakt
16		hier door beleid gemaakt. Het is ook ook onze zorg dat mensen uh

17 C1 ja
18 P1 beter rond kunnen komen en niet uh verkommeren in kwel

(30) WVG <4/12/93 3>

22 C1 je zou, in die voorlichting [onduidelijk] wel iets van
23 kunnen zeggen van "het is uw goed recht"
24 R1 ja
25 C1 "we vinden het belangrijk dat u zelfstandig blijft wonen,
26 dus maak er ook gebruik van"
27 R1 maar [voornaam C1] dat staat dan weer op gespannen voet denk ik
28 met uh de politieke doelstelling om het budget neutraal te doen
29 C1 ja
30 R1 klopt dat?
31 C1 en dan
32 R1 want nu, veel meer mensen die weten ervan hè ook omdat
33 het een nieuwe wet is gaan meer mensen er gebruik
34 van maken, zelfs los van de nieuwe doelgroep, en dan begint
35 de politiek weer te schreeuwen van uh "o je, het kost meer"
36 C1 en dan nog een heel belangrijk punt
[C1 zet het argument uiteen met betrekking tot de praktische
toepassing van de wet in verschillende gemeenten]

(31) WVG <6/10/93 5>

1 A1 Want ik- ik vind namelijk en dan kom ik toch nog heel eventjes
2 terug op dat uh knipoogje uh, want ik vind namelijk dat sympathie
3 altijd een van de voorwaarden is om uh om uh een stukje
4 ontvankelijkheid te creëren bij, want wat je ook doet,
5 en zeker voor de overheid vind ik het heel erg belangrijk,
6 omdat een heleboel informatie vaak van de overheid is
7 en per definitie al uh ja, op een zekere mate van weerstand
8 stuit, dat je, juist door een stukje sympathie erin te brengen, en ik
9 zeg niet, dat is iets heel anders dan uh dikke pret,
10 zeker waar het dit onderwerp betreft,
11 maar dat je juist moet proberen om een stukje sympathie
12 te krijgen en daar kun je vaak, ja, daar heb je dat
13 knipoogje voor nodig [iedereen begint door elkaar te praten]
14 Cv We moeten geen politieke boodschap gaan verkondigen
15 [iedereen: NEE NEE NEE]
16 Cv We moeten een wetswijziging uitleggen
17 A1 ja, ja, maar ook dat
18 Cv ik bedoel [achternaam staatssecretaris] zou wel heel blij zijn

19		met een stukje sympathie maar
20	A1	ja
21	CN	er wordt bijna altijd gestreefd naar een gimmick in een spot
22		[iedereen begint door elkaar te praten]
23	CV	Ik bedoel, het is aardig, maar we moeten ons niet voor het karretje
24		van de politiek laten spannen
25	A1	Nee, nee, nee, ik begrijp ik- ik begrijp wat u bedoelt

(32) WVG < 9/9/93.3 >

[C1 geeft een brief aan het reclame bureau, die VROM schreef aan het Ministerie van Sociale Zaken. Deze brief geeft, volgens C1, aan dat er tussen SZ en VROM toch nog iets is blijven hangen van een misverstand]

1	C1	Uh waar VROM bang voor is, is dat wij uh geneigd zijn
2		om het mooier te maken dan het is en ons met name te
3		richten op de doelgroep de ouderen 65+, omdat dat de groep
4		is aan wie wij nog iets leuks kunnen vertellen.
5		'Jullie krijgen er iets bij' Hè. En uh wat zij zeggen
6		is ja [onduidelijk] je moet de hele groep nemen natuurlijk
7		ook de mensen voor wie je niet zo'n leuke boodschap hebt, en
8		daarbij zit hier achter eigenlijk ook nog de ervaring van VROM
9		dat door goede voorlichting zoals zij dat ooit hebben gedaan rond
10		die woningaanpassing, hè, die regeling ging al heel snel op de fles
11		omdat er teveel gebruik van gemaakt werd [C1 en A1 lachen]
12		en uh waardoor men heel huiverig is geworden voor het al
13		te wervend aanprijzen van bepaalde zaken omdat je daar ook niets
14		mee bereikt en de zaak op de fles gaat. Ik geef de brief mee om
15		het spanningsveld te laten zien waar je dan inzit.

(33) SoFi interview met C1 <13/11/92 1>

1	CJ	[naam reclamebureau] heeft eigenlijk totaal geen kennis
2		van hoe wetgeving in elkaar zit.
3		Zij dachten dat
4		de Sofi de WPR weer afbrak.
5		We probeerden ze het wel uit te leggen [*vijf regels weggelaten*]
6		Het is een parlementair gecontroleerd gebeuren.
7		Maar zij zien dat als iets tegenstrijdigs,

ze begrijpen het gewoon niet.
En misschien moet je daar ook iets meer inzicht voor hebben
in de overheid en de politiek.

(34) SoFi interview <2/10/92 1>

I Sommige van de deelnemers vonden het een tricky campagne.
Was het dat ook?
P1 Fraude aanpakken, arme vrouwtjes hun uitkering ontnemen, dat
gevoel heeft het altijd gehad, hè. Typisch de jaren zeventig,
waarin ze je niet eens toestonden, simpelweg geen fraude
bestreden, en degenen die dat nog steeds zeggen,
sluiten de ogen voor de veranderingen in mentaliteit.

(35) WAO interview <28/4/94 2>

I en wat zag je als een belangrijk knelpunt, zeg maar,
als je bijvoorbeeld aan die Postbus 51 brochure denkt?
C1 nou, ik zou [pauze]
I als je niet een bepaald, specifiek uh,
dat kan natuurlijk ook
C1 nou, ik zit even te denken, waar het zich uh uh, wat vooral
uh uh een punt van- van, waar nogal over is gestruikeld, is de,
zeg maar de wat omfloerste manier waarop de- de, zeg maar,
toch de nadelige maatregelen voor werknemers
I mmhh
C1 uhhh uit de doeken werd gedaan. En dan bedoel ik, er kleefden
voor werknemers nogal wat nadelen,
vooral in de portemonnee, aan
I mmhh
C1 en uh nou, dat kon je niet zo
rechtstreeks opschrijven
I ja
C1 daar moest altijd wat, met wat slagen om de arm van ja,
"het lijkt allemaal wel erg, maar het valt allemaal wel mee"
I mmhh
C1 en daar had je als voorlichter uh had je dan toch te maken
met de, zeg maar, de eerlijkheid die je wenste te betrachten
I mmhh
C1 naar je doelgroep toe, ten opzichte van de ja, de
beleidsmatige overwegingen en de- de wat
eufemistische overwegingen bij beleidsmakers en bij uh

27 zeg maar, de ambtelijke, politieke top.

(36) WVG interview <20/5/94 2>

1 C1 niemand zegt "goh, wat een rare spot" en uh
2 "wat is dat voor propaganda"
3 dat heb ik van niemand gehoord
4 I nee, nee, en dat is een belangrijk uh
5 C1 ja
6 I idee dat het niet, geen propaganda is of hoe zie je dat dan?
7 C1 dat vind ik wel heel belangrijk, ja altijd,
8 maar dat vinden wij allemaal heel belangrijk, en bovendien is
9 propaganda ook heel, heel makkelijk door te prikken, hè?
10 I mmhh maar hoe bedoel je dat,
11 hoe had de spot er dan uit kunnen zien, of
12 C1 ja, als je, uh, ja, ik ben al, ik heb me eerlijk gezegd
13 niet zo goed voorbereid, ik ben al die voorbeelden kwijt
14 of al die ideeën kwijt die het reclamebureau heeft aangedragen
15 I ja, nee, maar dat uh maar wat bedoel je met uh
16 C1 nou, je zou ook best uh uhh kunnen doen of er iets
17 heel moois is gecreëerd, hè, door dit ministerie
18 I mmhh
19 C1 en- en- en dat het toch wel fantastisch is dat er
20 voorzieningen zijn uh of- of uh uh ja, ik denk
21 dat er dat je op een heleboel manieren kan uitglijden met die spot
22 I mmhh
23 C1 maar ja, 't is niet gebeurd uh we hebben geen knollen voor
24 citroenen, we hebben überhaupt niets verkocht, we hebben alleen
25 maar gezegd "haal die folder maar", hè?
26 I ja

(37) WVG interview <20/5/94 1>

C1 hhh dus dat is eigenlijk het verhaal hè
I ja
C1 achter een beperkte wet die je als voorlichter
veel breder maakt
I mmhh
C1 om iets om- om, ja, misschien om wel iets anders aan de orde
te stellen, het feit dat er voorzieningen zijn
I mmhh
C1 en nou, dat heeft ook wel gewerkt, want [achternaam
staatssecretaris] die vroeg er toen ook naar,
die heb ik toen die uh spot laten zien en die was eigenlijk
verbaasd door die aanpak [pauze] maar toen hebben we ook
gezegd, kijk, die wet; die verandert wel dingen, maar er waren
voorzieningen, er zijn nog steeds voorzieningen, daar gaat het om
I mmhh
C1 en dat er, dat het wat minder is geworden, ja, dat is waar
voor de mensen die dan voorzieningen hadden,
maar het is tegelijkertijd ook uitgebreid
I mmhh
C1 met die enorme doelgroep, hè, van die ouderen
die er nu ook gebruik van kunnen maken
I en wat zei [achternaam staatssecretaris] d'r van?
C1 nou, dat zag ie toen wel. Ja goed, hij zit hier ook maar kort en
uh [interviewster lacht] is al bijna weer vertrokken maar uh,
dat vond ie dus uh ja, maar goed, hij was dus gesouffleerd
door z'n beleidsmedewerkers, maar
het is op zich wel een goede aanpak geweest
I mm
C1 waarmee je ook de aandacht een beetje afleidde
van alleen maar Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, hè
I mmhh

(38) WAO interview <28/4/94 1>

I bij wie lag die beslissing dat uh telkens werd uitgesteld,
was dat iets wat, zeg maar, de stuurgroep kon
beslissen, of was dat echt iets wat bepaald werd
door de top van het ministerie of
C1 nou, de stuurgroep heeft uh over uitstel en
over uh temporiseren en over de aanpak en de gekozen
strategie, telkens een uh een advies geformuleerd
I mmhh

9 C1 uh en dat uh, zeg maar, voorgelegd aan de politieke top
10 I mmhh
11 C1 dus, de minister en de staatssecretaris en, uhm dat advies is,
12 uh voor zover ik me kan herinneren, telkens overgenomen
14 I mmhh
15 C1 dus er is telkens uh gezegd uh inderdaad, we kunnen op dit
16 moment, uh gezien de perikelen, de- de- de heisa rondom het
17 onderwerp niet een uh een voorlichtingscampagne starten.

CHAPTER 7

(39) SH <6/5/93 1>

1 CE Nou, kijk, je moet altijd, bij dat soort dingen
2 je je moet niet alleen naar de doelgroep kijken,
3 de doelgroep die zal het wel oppikken, maar je hebt ook
4 altijd een hele bende zuurpruimen en critici die meeluisteren
5 en die zijn helemaal niet geïnteresseerd in de boodschap
6 P1 nee
7 CE en die gaan ons gewoon [onduidelijk] dat verwijten
8 en op een idiote manier de jeugd toespreken
9 P2 ik ben- ben wel, zeg maar, voor het argument dat je moet
10 oppassen dat je niet wordt afgezeken
11 omdat men d'r zijn inderdaad altijd zuurpruimen
12 precies [zoals je zegt [onduidelijk]
13 CN [nou we zijn natuurlijk kwetsbaar als overheid
14 P2 Wat zeg je?
15 CN We zijn uh nee ik bedoel, nee, dat onderwerp over
16 het afzeiken bedoel je
17 P2 ja
18 CN ja, nee, we zijn toch vrij kwetsbaar als overheid want uh
19 het is makkelijk schoppen tegen dat glazen huis, hè
20 P2 nou ja, ik denk dat er bijkomt dat- dat er dat er ook een zekere
21 jaloezie, zeg maar, kan ontstaan waardoor het des te meer
22 prettiger wordt om als een [[onduidelijk]
23 CN [ja als Job inderdaad ja
24 CC maar het kan heel louterend werken
25 om afgezeken te worden [door een bepaalde bron
26 C3 [precies
27 P2 ja, omdat de doelgroep [[onduidelijk]
28 C3 [ironisch, triomfantelijk] [EXTRA PUBLICITEIT

(40) SH <29/12/92 2>

1	C3	ze willen gewoon wat
2	P2	ja
3	C3	ze willen het ook een keer proberen
4	P2	[ironisch] ze willen ook wel eens een keer een wijf pakken
5	C3	precies, want hun vriendje heeft het ook gedaan, zegt ie
6	P2	ja, als ze goed nadenken weten ze dat het helemaal niet
7		waar kan zijn, maar ze willen helemaal niet goed nadenken,
8		ze willen gewoon opgewonden zijn
9	C3	ja, en daar komen vervolgens die excessen uit voort
10		en daar wil je wat aan doen

(41) SH <16/4/93 1>

1	A1	We willen eerst onze twee favorieten laten zien.
2		We hebben ook de castingband als jullie nog anderen zouden
3		willen zien. Ik heb voor een meisje gekozen, voor een meisje
4		wat in principe niet- niet te mooi is in de geest van
5		uh uh dat het de koningin van het feest is. Het is een leuk meisje,
6		ik heb vooral gekozen voor een meisje wat,
7		die vreselijk goed kan acteren, ze heeft ook in een paar
8		speelfilms gezeten al, is 18 jaar, en ik vind ook
9		[onduidelijk: daar ben ik expliciet voorzichtig mee?]
10		voor de jongen heb ik gekozen, voor een jongen waarvan ik
11		het gevoel had dat ie een beetje uh, het is een redelijk knappe
12		jongen, een jongen die wel denkt van uh uh "nou ja, als ze mee
13		naar buiten vraagt, kan het bijna niets anders zijn, dan om effe te
14		vrijen". Ik vind, hij ziet er wel leuk uit, maar hij heeft vooral ook
15		een beetje een fysieke uitstraling, dat vond ik ook wel, een jongen,
16		een- een- een, zo'n beetje een licht Amerikaans aandoende jongen,
17		en het is ook een voortreffelijk acteur, hij is 21,
18		maar hij ziet er jonger uit
		[castingband wordt gedraaid]
19	A1	Ik vond dit ook wel een jongen van wie je dat verwacht,
20		ik vind hem, hij is wel knap, hij is niet te knap,
21		hij- hij heeft ook een aardig gezicht maar ik kan me ook heel goed
22		voorstellen dat- dat- dat zo'n jongen gewoon te ver, bovendien,
23		volgens [regisseur],
24		zijn het alletwee acteurs die een acteurs opleiding gehad hebben,
25		d'r waren ook een paar modellen tussen, dus ik werk het liefst
26		met mensen die- die je uh uh kunt regisseren
27		en wat ik ook leuk vind is dat- dat, want we hebben ook
28		andere meisjes gehad, uiteraard hele knappe meisjes,

29		dit meisje is 'n leuk meisje, maar het is niet,
30		ik geloof het ook absoluut niet als het de koningin van het bal is
31		zij- zij- zij maakt niet de fout dat ze zegt
32		"ga je mee naar buiten"
33	C3	ze is niet mooi ook, nee
34	A1	nee, ze is wel leuk
		[halve pagina weggelaten: acteurs zien er zeer Engels uit, mogelijk nadeel. Lengte acteurs: zijn ze allebei ongeveer even groot?]
35	A2	Ik vond die ene opmerking van [voornaam A1] heel belangrijk,
36		dat het toch een type jongen is van wie je inderdaad
37		dit soort dingen verwacht, denk ik
38	C3	ja
39	C1	ja
40	A1	ook wel fysiek, heeft ie wel iets van uhh [lacht]
41		ja, ja, vond ik ook wel leuk

(42) SH <16/4/93 2>

1	A1	Ik ben het wel met je eens, we moeten haar niet te sexy maken
2		[andere participanten: nee, nee]
3	P1	past volgens mij ook weer niet bij haar [lange pauze]
4	CC	het is geen type hè om
5	P1	en ze moet zeker niet de enige zijn van het gezelschap
6		die zeg maar zo'n jurk aanheeft
7	A1	nee, nee, nee, nee, ze kan ook van mij wat mij betreft maar
8		ik vind, ik vind altijd dat moet je ter plekke zien,
9		ook wat de anderen aan hebben, in ieder geval wil ik haar
10		wel iets van een rokje, jurk aangeven
11	P1	ja
12	A1	en dan kan ze ook, 'k bedoel uh, ik ben het met je eens
13		dat we haar niet te zomers moeten maken en- en-
14		en uh te veel bloot moeten geven, het moet- moet dat is
15		iets te uh uh strandachtig
16	P1	[kijkt naar foto's van jurken] nou, deze gaat nog wel,
17		maar die andere was een beetje te [pauze] bloot,
18		die van de vorige keer
19	C1	was een blauwe hè
20	P1	ja? [lacht] dat weet ik niet meer
21	C2	nee maar, denk ik ook, want anders zou je weer verkeerde
22		discussies kunnen krijgen dat moet je gewoon voorkomen
23	A1	ja, precies, en daar moet je ook weer voor oppassen
		[15 regels overgeslagen: acteurs moeten kleding dragen die bij ze past; wat wordt op feestjes zoal gedragen]
24	C2	de aandacht dan nu vooral op de hoofdrolspeelster, dus dat dat uh

26 A1 ja, die moet, die moet niet uh, ze moet er leuk uitzien,
27 maar ze mag absoluut niet het gevoel hebben van, het moet niet
28 meetellen "ja, als je zo'n jurk draagt, dan vraag je er ook om",
29 dat mag niet, dat is nergens voor nodig
30 C2 [naar C1 toe] dat is toch het criterium, [voornaam C1]?
31 P1 ja
32 A2 ja
33 C1 mmhh
34 A1 dat hoeft niet uh
35 P1 [schamper lachend] dat zeggen ze bij elke jurk, dus,
36 maar uh [C1 lacht]
37 A1 nou nee [licht quasi verontwaardigd]
38 [iedereen praat door elkaar]
39 A3 nou, bijvoorbeeld, zoals nu die daar
40 [wijst naar model op foto], een hele lage rug,
41 nou dat- dat- dat nodigt wel erg snel uit
42 A2 ja precies uh
43 P1 ja, dat is wel erg
44 A3 dat is wel erg kort en een lage rug en een blote rug dat uh
45 C1 mm
46 A1 goed, jij had telefoon gehad [ander onderwerp]

(43) SH <17/12/92 2>

[tegen denkbeeldige jongen]
1 P1 "Kijk als je dat al wil [pauze] een meisje versieren [pauze]
laat je dan niet gek maken door de groep erom heen"
3 C1 mm
4 P1 "die- die denkt dat je dat op zo'n manier doet want uh
5 zo werkt dat helemaal niet"
6 C1 mm [pauze]
7 P1 "Kan je beter laten leiden [pauze]
8 door degene die je wil ⌜ nou laten leiden
9 C1 ⌞ door wat zij wil
10 P1 [glimlacht] door wat zij wil [C1 lacht]
11 C1 oei oei [P1 lacht] da's ook wel uh [lachen samen]
12 P1 [onduidelijk] ik zie de stroom brieven al weer aankomen
13 C1 ja ohhh oh oh [P1 lacht]
14 [C1 met namaak 'burger' stem] "Wat is dit nu?
15 Gaat de overheid pro [P1 lacht] promoten"
16 P1 ja ja
17 C1 "dat vrouwen het initiatief nemen"
18 P1 ja ja neee
19 C1 ⌜ en dan SGP GPV [kleine christelijke politieke partijen]

20 P1 └ ja en dan krijg je haha en dan krijg je weer
21 [lacht] krijg je weer een zin als uh
22 als deze ┌ even kijken hoor
23 C1 └ let op [tegen onderzoeker]
24 P1 [leest een brief van een burger aan de regering met namaak-stem]
25 "het is absurd dat uh uh een campagne gevoerd wordt tegen
26 ongewenste intimiteiten en tegelijkertijd niets ondernemen
27 tegen sexueel getinte reclames en uitdagende kleding die
28 in het openbaar gedragen wordt. Dat wijst in de richting
29 [onduidelijk] van een tekort aan redelijk denkvermogen"
30 C1 [namaak-stem] "dus tegen sexueel geweld maar alle vrouwen in
31 korte rokken laten lopen. Oh oh HARNASSEN AAN [lachen]

(44) SH interview met A1 <10/6/94 1>

1 I Als je nou kort moet aangeven waar die campagne over gaat,
2 hoe zou je dat doen?
3 A1 Op de eerste plaats die campagne die- die moet
4 niet de pretentie hebben om uh om echt er iets aan te kunnen
5 doen, die campagne moet alleen maar uh die moet alleen maar
6 een discussie op gang brengen
7 I mmhh
8 A1 dat heb ik vanaf begin af aan gezegd, je kunt niet met
9 een paar radiocommercials, een paar TV [commercials], een paar
10 posters, het probleem, het probleem ligt zo wezenlijk
11 in de aard van de mensen dat het enige wat je met zo'n
12 campagne kan doen is natuurlijk een discussie op gang brengen,
13 dat is ook gebeurd
14 I mmhh
15 A1 en uhh
16 I waaro-
17 A1 ja, wat ie eigenlijk alleen maar wil doen is uh mensen
18 uh uh de vanzelfsprekendheid van situaties wegnemen
19 I mmhh
20 A1 dus de vanzelfsprekendheid, het "ik heb er recht op"
21 wegnemen en wat de campagne ook wil doen is gewoon uh uh
22 vrouwen een hart onder de riem steken van
23 "je kunt altijd weigeren, je hebt recht om te weigeren
24 in welke situatie dan ook" dat was de basis van de campagne
25 I mmhh
26 A1 en dat vooral aan jongens en mannen te vertellen
27 I mmhh

Appendix D

Government communication in figures

Ministerie [Ministry]	**1968**	**1984**	**1991**
Algemene Zaken [General Affairs]	2.1	7.0	8.7
Buitenlandse Zaken [Foreign Affairs]	1.2	6.9	21.4
Binnenlandse Zaken [Home Office]	0.0	1.3	17.8
Economische Zaken [Economic Affairs]	0.0	6.4	69.5
Sociale Zaken [Social Affairs]	0.7	10.8	11.9
Onderwijs en Wetenschappen [Education and Science]	0.5	9.2	27.5
Financiën [Treasury]	0.1	3.8	23.5
Defensie [Defence]	0.1	3.1	6.4
Justitie [Justice]	0.1	1.4	4.8
VROM [Housing, Regional Development and the Environment]	0.0	10.0	30.3
Verkeer en Waterstaat [Transport and Public Works]	0.1	6.6	12.5
Landbouw [Agriculture]	0.1	2.3	95.7
WVC [Welfare, Health and Culture]	0.0	3.6	18.7
Total	4.9	72.4	353.2

Table 2: *Programme expenses for communication per ministry in millions of guilders (De Roon, 1993: 43). Original sources: 1968: Dekker (1969); 1984: Werkgroep Heroverweging Voorlichting Rijksoverheid (1984); 1991: Algemene Rekenkamer (1992).*

Appendix E

Interviews

Topic List

Course of Campaign

1. Could you describe what the campaign was about?
2. The campaign has taken a preparation of several months. Could you describe the most important stages in that process? Looking back, what do you see as the most important problems?
3. Looking back, how would you describe your own role? The role of the communicators? of policy experts? of external experts? etcetera.
4. How do you appreciate the final products? What do you think of the TV-commercial (radio-commercial, Post-box 51 brochure)? Does it represent the objectives of the campaign?

Nature and effect of the campaign and government communication in general

1. Could you describe the nature of the topic the campaigns dealt with? Was it a topic that was sensitive in a political sense or otherwise?
2. Could you indicate what you consider to be the most important task of a government communicator (policy expert)?
3. How do you judge the present government communication in general?
4. How do you estimate the campaign will be perceived by citizens?

Participants

Campaign against sexual harassment

1 Communicator from the Ministry of Social Affairs

2 Policy experts from the Ministry of Social Affairs

1 Advertising manager

WAO campaign

2 Communicators from the Ministry of Social Affairs

1 Policy expert from the Ministry of Social Affairs

WVG campaign

1 Communicator from the Ministry of Social Affairs

1 Policy expert from the Ministry of Social Affairs

1 External expert

1 Advertising manager

SoFi campaign

1 Communicator from the Department of Justice

1 Policy expert from the Ministry of Social Affairs

1 Policy expert from the Home Office

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Abstract

This is a study of government communication planners' talk. While government communication has increasingly become the topic of methodical precept, studies on the mundane practice of government communication are rare. The current study attempts to fill this major gap. More specifically, the aim of the study is to explain the interactional resources which communication planners use to make sense of government policies and the actions they may accomplish through their reports on these policies.

In its method and perspective, the study is an attempt to forestall the idealization of communication planners' practices which can be found in many of the introductory books on government communication. It draws on a form of discourse analysis which studies talk in its '*natural*' surroundings. Rather than considering language as a neutral medium for the description of reality, discourse analysis as developed by the British social psychologists Potter, Edwards and Wetherell, focuses on the social and constructive nature of language. Informed by such diverse sources as linguistic philosophy, ethnomethodology, post-structuralism and social studies of

science, its concern is with the things people *do* with their language and the contextual resources they deploy for these actions.

Discourse analysis sheds new light on the nature of government communication. In its official appearance, government communication reflects the traditional conception of language as a passive medium for the transmission of information. It implies that communication planners, that is, government communicators and policy experts, can transmit political messages without touching upon or 'contaminating' the nature and aims of the policies to be communicated. From a discourse-analytic perspective, however, government communication is not so much representation as representational *practice* or *discursive* representation. This thesis shows how and to what purpose communication planners represent policies when producing a government communication campaign.

The data on which this study is based, has been collected at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment in the Netherlands. It concerns detailed transcriptions of 'natural' conversations between government communicators, policy makers and advertising managers. Four government communication campaigns were chosen for this study: the Disability Facilities Act or *WVG* campaign, the Disability Insurance Act or *WAO* campaign, the campaign on the Social Fiscal number or *SoFi* campaign and, finally, the campaign against *Sexual Harassment*.

Chapter 5 is the first analytical chapter. It explores in detail how communication planners formulate the central message of the campaign. In particular, I focus on how communication planners make sense of government policies by juxtaposing and contrasting the needs of what they consider to be their main audiences. Their active orientation to the wishes of varying audiences, ranging from politicians to press and public, establishes a complex picture of often contradictory claims as the starting-point for their message. Depending on the target group they orient to, communication planners are either caught in an *efficacy dilemma* or in a *political dilemma*. These dilemmas are managed by a variety of discursive devices.

First, in the case of the campaign against Sexual Harassment, communication planners make sense of the policies in terms of an *efficacy dilemma*: how to make the message known to the 'official' target group without hurting its feelings? I show how they manage this dilemma by formulating it from a rhetorical point of view, namely, by taking potential counterarguments from sex offenders and their victims into account. The problem is how to meet these counterarguments without changing the policies to be communicated.

In the other three campaigns, that is, the *WVG* (Disability Facilities Act)-campaign, the *WAO* (Disability Insurance Act)-campaign and the campaign on the Social Fiscal number or *SoFi* campaign, communication planners are caught in a *political dilemma*: how to convey the message without compromising the government? In contrast to the campaign against Sexual Harassment, in which the 'official' target group is oriented to, communication planners predominantly attend to the political domain as being their target audience. Whereas, in the campaign against sexual harassment, 'not hurting people's feelings' is used as a way to make the message more effective, in these three other campaigns the adage 'not hurting people's feelings' is treated as a way to serve the putative interests of the government. In practice, this means avoiding rather than generating publicity about the sensitive aspects of the policies in question. Three discursive devices through which the political dilemma is managed, are distinguished: 'factual' or information campaigns, selective omissions and couching the message in terms of a shared interest of government and citizens.

This picture of communication planners as participants who are actively involved in reformulating policies in order to satisfy the political audience and/or their official target groups, runs contrary to notions of communication planners as passive intermediaries who *transmit* their message to one specific target audience. Government communication that should 'stand for' or represent the views which are politically approved of, presumes a technical, linear relationship between the policy to be communicated and the communication which results from it. However, communication planners, while determining the central message of a campaign, put

new life into apparently dead material. Communication planners mould and remould their messages in order to be able to satisfy a multiparty recipiency.

In *Chapter 6*, I examine how communication planners, in their construction of government policies, attend to their *own* accountability. The chapter confines itself to accountability practices in the case of the WVG campaign, the WAO campaign and the SoFi campaign, that is, the campaigns in which the communication planners are caught in a *political dilemma*. Three observations indicate that through formulating the political dilemma, planners attend to their own problems of accountability. First, in those passages in which the *contentiousness* of the policies is at issue, communication planners try to secure their official neutral status: they portray themselves as participants who merely transmit government policies, thereby preventing others from holding them personally accountable for the content of the policies or their veiled presentation. I note that the attributions of accountability to the political domain, and, through these attributions, the planners' reference to their own neutrality, can be considered redundant. The fact that they confirm their official status, facing an audience of colleagues that can be expected to be familiar with their task, is a second indication that communication planners consider themselves at least potentially accountable for the policies to be communicated. Third, they underline this neutral status time and again. It is the persistent nature of this denial of accountability for 'controversial' policies, that works reflexively to mark its problematic character. I suggest that, in repeating their non-accountability, communication planners co-implicate each other in their own problems of accountability and 'fish' for solutions at the same time.

The conclusion that, despite their neutral status, communication planners feel accountable for the policies they communicate to the public, helps us to understand why communication planners actively try to prevent political commotion. Appealing to a formally neutral stance is not treated by communication planners as a guarantee that they will not be held accountable anyway. Communication planners therefore employ a *double defence* against potential criticism. On the one hand, they try to establish and maintain their status as passive intermediaries of government policies,

on the other, they formulate the message in such a way that they can be held accountable, if necessary. After the campaigns had taken place, communication planners again presented themselves as neutral messengers. Either they attributed the wish to compose veiled messages to other participants or they simply denied having tried to present the policies in a reduced or disguised form.

Chapter 7 shows how the efficacy dilemma (how to make the message known to the 'official' target group without hurting its feelings) is rooted in the acceptance of accountability for the message. In contrast to the political dilemma, communication planners not only feel accountable for the policies to be communicated, but also accept this accountability. That is, they orient to sexual harassment as being a genuine problem, thereby allowing themselves to be held accountable for policies rooted in this problem. I argue that the acceptance of accountability for the policies results in a message which is designed to be effective. In the campaign against sexual harassment, the message is designed to convince boys that they are not 'entitled' to girls: no matter what the situation is, girls can refuse. Chapter 7 shows in detail that the message is made effective by heavily drawing on the known-in-common characteristics of sex offenders and their victims, which are precisely those which the message has to undermine.

By drawing on putative common sense, communication planners try to meet the expectations of the target group to such an extent that the message is effective. However, the question is what this effectiveness comprises. This is also an important matter of negotiation for communication planners themselves. At the root of the efficacy dilemma is the question: to what extent do I have to *meet* the taken-for-granted assumption which I want to challenge? Solving this tension is a practical and ongoing task, which asks for an active involvement with the policy to be communicated, rather than a passive transmission of it. As in the case of campaigns with sensitive policies, communication planners are cautious in 'confessing' their concessions to the target group (the political audience or a group of citizens), or, in other words, their deviations from what they treat as the 'official' message.

Communication planners always present themselves in terms of what they officially are: neutral messengers of government policies.

In *Chapter 8*, I draw together the conclusions and provide some insight into the implications of the study. A main conclusion of this study is that communication planners are active participants in the process of formulating and reformulating government policies, rather than passive intermediaries of these policies. The neutral status of communication planners is used to perform defensive actions with. It is proposed to provide government communicators with the status of a policy maker. This status would bring their official accountability in line with their daily practice. Recent developments in communication studies advise communicators to lay aside their neutral role, and become official participants in policy processes. The role of the communicator would have to change from a passive intermediary into a facilitator. This can be considered a step forward. However, the status of facilitator may become be as problematic as the status of a passive intermediary. To a great extent, this depends on the kind of responsibility the facilitator is officially attributed with. This is an important new area of research. In any case, as long as communication planners are not fully and officially accountable for the policies they communicate, the tension will never entirely disappear.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift gaat over overheidsvoorlichting in de praktijk. Alhoewel overheidsvoorlichters veelvuldig adviezen krijgen aangereikt voor een effectieve voorlichting, weten we weinig over de dagelijkse praktijk van overheidsvoorlichters. Het doel van dit proefschrift is om deze dagelijkse praktijk in kaart te brengen. In het bijzonder is bestudeerd welke contextuele bronnen voorlichters gebruiken om betekenis te geven aan overheidsbeleid en welke doelen zij met deze representaties nastreven.

In dit onderzoek wordt gebruikt gemaakt van een specifieke vorm van discourse analyse. Dit perspectief, dat is ontwikkeld door de Britse psychologen Potter, Edwards en Wetherell, stelt het alledaagse taalgebruik centraal. Het uitgangspunt is dat taal geen neutraal medium voor de overdracht van informatie is, maar een sociale activiteit. Mensen *doen* dingen met hun taal, zoals beschuldigingen uiten, excuses aanbieden of complimenten geven. De uitgangspunten van discourse analyse zijn gebaseerd op inzichten uit onder meer de taalfilosofie, de conversatie analyse en de wetenschapssociologie.

Discourse analyse biedt ons een nieuwe visie op overheidsvoorlichting. Overheidsvoorlichting is gebaseerd op het traditionele idee dat overheidsvoorlichters passieve media voor de overdracht van informatie zijn. Overheidsvoorlichters worden geacht beleid over te dragen, zonder de aard van dit beleid te veranderen. Vanuit een discourse-analytisch perspectief is overheidsvoorlichting echter geen representatie, maar *discursieve* representatie. Dat wil zeggen: overheidsvoorlichters representeren beleid met het oog op bepaalde doelen. Dit proefschrift laat zien hoe en met het oog op welke doelen voorlichters beleid representeren.

De gegevens voor het onderzoek bestaan uit gedetailleerde transcripties van conversaties tussen overheidsvoorlichters, beleidsmakers en reclamemakers. Op het ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid is de totstandkoming van vier grote publiekscampagnes bestudeerd: de campagne over de Wet Voorzieningen Gehandicapten of WVG-campagne, de campagne over de wijzigingen in de Wet Arbeidsongeschiktheid of WAO-campagne, de campagne over het sociaal-fiscaal nummer of SoFi-campagne en, ten slotte, de campagne tegen sexueel geweld. In hoofdstuk 5 tot en met 7 worden de resultaten van dit onderzoek beschreven.

Hoofdstuk 5 beschrijft in detail hoe de centrale boodschap van een campagne wordt geformuleerd. Het laat zien hoe voorlichters en beleidsmakers betekenis geven aan overheidsbeleid door de wensen van verschillende doelgroepen tegen elkaar af te zetten. Afhankelijk van de doelgroep die ze voor ogen hebben, verkeren voorlichters in wat ik, respectievelijk, een *effectiviteitsdilemma* en een *politiek dilemma* heb genoemd. In de campagne tegen sexueel geweld, formuleren voorlichters en beleidsmakers de boodschap in termen van een effectiviteitsdilemma: hoe moeten we de boodschap overdragen zonder de doelgroep voor het hoofd te stoten? Dit dilemma wordt opgelost door de potentiële tegenargumenten van zowel daders als slachtoffers van sexueel geweld in ogenschouw te nemen. Vrouwen willen zich niet louter zien afgebeeld als slachtoffer, terwijl mannen niet beschuldigd willen worden. Het blijkt een probleem om deze argumenten in de boodschap te integreren, zonder de boodschap zelf aan te tasten.

In de WVG-campagne, de WAO-campagne en de SoFi-campagne verkeren overheidsvoorlichters en beleidsmakers in een politiek dilemma: hoe moeten we de boodschap overdragen zonder de overheid te compromitteren? In deze campagnes zijn de voorlichters en beleidsmakers gericht op de politiek, in plaats van op de officiële doelgroep. Het adagium 'zonder mensen voor het hoofd te stoten' wordt niet aangewend om de boodschap effectief te maken, maar om de vermeende belangen van overheid en politiek te dienen. Deze vorm van defensieve retoriek leidt tot het vermijden van publiciteit met betrekking tot die aspecten van het beleid die door overheidsvoorlichters als politiek gevoelig worden gekenschetst. In hoofdstuk 5 worden drie manieren uiteengezet om het politiek dilemma op te lossen: het geven van 'zakelijke' voorlichting, selectieve omissies en het zodanig formuleren van de boodschap dat zowel de belangen van burger als overheid worden gediend.

Dit beeld van overheidsvoorlichters als actieve participanten in het formuleren en herformuleren van beleid, gaat in tegen de officiële opvatting van overheidsvoorlichters als passieve intermediairen. Overheidsvoorlichters en beleidsmakers trachten de campagneboodschap op een zodanige wijze te kneden, dat tegemoet wordt gekomen aan wat zij als de tegenstrijdige wensen van verschillende doelgroepen beschouwen. In het geval van een politiek dilemma, achten zij zich niet in staat deze wensen te verenigen.

In *hoofdstuk 6* beschrijf ik hoe voorlichters en beleidsmakers bij het formuleren van een campagneboodschap naar hun eigen verantwoordelijkheid verwijzen. Het hoofdstuk beperkt zich tot de campagnes die door een politiek dilemma worden getekend. Drie observaties leiden tot de vaststelling dat door de formulering van het politiek dilemma, overheidsvoorlichters en beleidsmakers refereren aan hun eigen problematische verantwoordelijkheid. Ten eerste, beroepen ze zich slechts op hun neutrale status, wanneer het gaat om beleid dat zij als politiek controversieel behandelen. Om te voorkomen dat anderen hen persoonlijk verantwoordelijk stellen voor de inhoud van het beleid of de verhulde presentatie ervan, presenteren zij zich als passieve intermediairen van overheidsbeleid. Het feit dat zij hun neutrale status bevestigen tegenover collega's die deze status geacht

worden te kennen, is een tweede indicatie dat deze neutrale status voor de voorlichters en beleidsmakers een probleem vormt. Een derde indicatie vormt de voortdurende herhaling van deze neutraliteitsverklaringen. Het overbodige karakter van deze verklaringen, alsmede het feit dat ze voortdurend worden herhaald, geeft op reflexieve wijze aan dat overheidsvoorlichters zich, ondanks hun officiële neutrale status, aansprakelijk voelen voor het beleid dat wordt overgedragen. Een mogelijke verklaring voor het voortdurend bevestigen van de neutrale status is, dat voorlichters en beleidsmakers elkaar op deze wijze trachten te betrekken bij hun eigen verantwoordelijkheidsproblemen en tegelijkertijd proberen te 'vissen' naar oplossingen. De conclusie dat voorlichters zich, ondanks hun neutrale status, aansprakelijk voelen voor het beleid dat zij overdragen, vormt een verklaring voor hun actieve betrokkenheid bij het zodanig formuleren van beleid dat politieke commotie wordt voorkomen. De officiële neutrale status van voorlichters vormt in de ogen van de voorlichters geen garantie dat ze niet verantwoordelijk zullen worden gehouden voor het beleid dat ze overdragen. Het is hierom dat zij een zogenoemde *dubbele verdediging* hanteren: enerzijds onderstrepen zij dat ze geen verantwoordelijkheid dragen voor het beleid of de verhulde overdracht ervan, anderzijds formuleren ze het beleid op een zodanige wijze dat ze erop kunnen worden aangesproken, mocht dat gebeuren. Nadat de campagnes hadden plaatsgevonden, bleken de voorlichters opnieuw terug te grijpen op hun neutrale status. De wens om verhullende boodschappen te formuleren, werd ontkend of aan andere participanten toegeschreven.

In *hoofdstuk 7* toon ik aan, dat een effectiviteitsdilemma (hoe moeten we de boodschap overdragen zonder de doelgroep voor het hoofd te stoten?) is gebaseerd op de acceptatie van verantwoordelijkheid voor het beleid dat wordt overgedragen. In tegenstelling tot het politiek dilemma, voelen overheidsvoorlichters en beleidsmakers zich niet alleen verantwoordelijk, maar accepteren die verantwoordelijkheid ook. Deze acceptatie van verantwoordelijkheid leidt tot het formuleren van een boodschap die wordt geacht effectief te zijn. Hoofdstuk 7 toont aan dat, ten behoeve van deze effectiviteit, de campagne tegen sexueel geweld

gebruik maakt van precies die stereotypen over de identiteit van daders en slachtoffers van sexueel geweld, waartegen zij ageert.

Door in te spelen op vermeende *common sense*, proberen overheidsvoorlichters en beleidsmakers de boodschap effectief te maken. De vraag is echter wat deze effectiviteit inhoudt. Dit is ook een belangrijk discussiepunt voor de voorlichters en beleidsmakers zelf. De kern van het effectiviteitsdilemma wordt gevormd door de kwestie: in welke mate moet ik tegemoetkomen aan de vanzelfsprekendheden die ik tegelijkertijd onderuit wil halen? Het oplossen van deze kwestie vraagt niet om een passieve overdracht van beleid, maar om een actieve inbreng. Net als in de campagnes met een politiek dilemma, presenteren voorlichters en beleidsmakers zich achteraf als passieve intermediairen van beleid. Ze tonen zich uiterst voorzichtig in het blootgeven van hun overtuigingsstrategieën. Voorlichters presenteren zich in termen van wat ze officieel zijn: passieve media voor het doorgeven van beleid.

Hoofdstuk 8 vat de resultaten van deze studie samen. Een belangrijke conclusie is dat het beeld van de voorlichter als passieve intermediair dient te worden bijgesteld. Aan deze conclusie wordt de aanbeveling verbonden om voorlichters de status van beleidsmaker te geven. Echter, dit betekent niet dat de geconstateerde dilemma's zullen verdwijnen. Zolang overheidsvoorlichters geen volledige verantwoordelijkheid dragen voor het beleid dat ze moeten overbrengen, zullen ze in één of andere vorm blijven bestaan.

Curriculum Vitae

Hedwig te Molder werd geboren op 17 juni 1967 te Terheijden. In 1985 behaalde zij haar vwo diploma aan het Liemers College te Zevenaar. In september van dat jaar begon zij de studie Pedagogische en Andragogische Wetenschappen aan de Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen. Na de propaedeuse in de Pedagogische en Andragogische Wetenschappen (cum laude), vervolgde zij haar studie met een Vrij Doctoraal Sociale Wetenschappen. In 1990 behaalde zij het doctoraal examen en werd zij aangesteld als Assistent-in-Opleiding bij de vakgroep Voorlichtingskunde van de Landbouwuniversiteit Wageningen. Sinds juli 1994 werkt zij bij deze vakgroep als universitair docent.