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Discourses of community and conflict: The organization of social categories in accounts of a 'riot'

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This paper illustrates a novel approach to social psychological phenomena, namely the systematic analysis of participants' discourse. Specifically it examines the production of social categories and their organization in discourse through a detailed analysis of the use of the category 'community' and the notion of 'community relations' in accounts of the 'St Paul's riot' of 1980. In the first stage of analysis, the linguistic repertoire making up the category community is outlined, concentrating on variations in accounts of (*a*) the existence of community over time, (*b*) its racial composition, (*c*) the role of metaphors such as harmony and growth. The second stage of analysis shows the way this repertoire is deployed in the achievement of highly contrasting versions of events, concentrating on depictions of the role of the police and the way appropriate responses are specified.

This paper has three main goals. First, it is intended to illustrate a novel analytic and theoretical approach based on the systematic analysis of participants' discourse. Second, it will provide a detailed picture of the way the category 'community' is used in a body of discourse which relates to a serious social conflict, the so-called 'St Paul's riot' of 1980. Third, it will extend the boundaries of theorizing about social categorization by focusing on the constitution of categories in everyday discourse. The paper is also novel in its concern with the detailed content of social categories (common-sense equivalence classes for the identification of persons) rather than their social psychological consequences, on the one hand, or the procedural issues addressed by conversation analysts, on the other.

Much social psychological research has been devoted to the consequences of social categorization. It has been shown that individuals may identify themselves with any one of a range of categories and that such identifications underlie processes of both inter- and intragroup behaviour. Whereas conflict will tend to characterize the relationship between members of different categories (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Forgas, 1981), within a single category the behaviour of individuals shares a common basis in the ideological definition of that group (Turner, 1982).

In contrast to this, research in the ethnomethodological/conversation analytic tradition has concentrated on the detailed explication of the way categories work as descriptions. The most central concept here is Sacks' (1972) notion of a membership categorization device (MCD), which is a collection of categories which can be applied to a population of individuals through the use of certain rules. For example, the MCD 'family' consists of a number of categories—'baby', 'mummy', 'sister', etc.—which have specifiable rules for their application. From this basic beginning Sacks derives a number of maxims for the way hearers will understand talk using MCD's (Sacks, 1974, 1979), and other workers have applied these ideas to elucidate conversational phenomena such as accusations and blamings (Drew, 1978; Watson, 1978; Wowk, 1984—see also related papers on categorization by Smith, 1978; Shenkein, 1978, and see Jayyusi, 1984, for an extended account of such work).

The analysis conducted in this paper falls somewhere in between these two approaches, although it inevitably shares some features with each. Like conversation analysts, we are concerned with the way social categories are deployed in ordinary language; however, the focus is not so much on the interpretative procedures through which categorizations are achieved (although this is part of our concern) as with the content of specific categories and

the way this is varied in different kinds of account. Conversation analysts have looked systematically at the detail of procedures of categorization, and we are not attempting to repeat this exercise in this paper. Like social psychologists, we are interested in the relations between categorization and social influence; however, the concern here is with the way specific categorizations are drawn upon in discourse to buttress particular versions of conflict and influence rather than in the psychological consequences of categorization.

The analytic perspective adopted has been termed discourse analysis (Mulkay & Gilbert, 1982; Mulkay *et al.*, 1983; Potter *et al.*, 1984; Potter & Wetherell, in press). In part, this term signals affinities with other research adopting this rubric (see, for example, van Dijk, 1985, on the one hand, and Barthes, 1978, on the other) and in part it stresses that the focus is on discourse in all its varieties: conversational materials as well as documents; scientific and literary as well as media texts. Discourse analysis is concerned specifically with questions about the organization of discourse and the consequences of this organization. For instance: how are accounts constructed?; what effects do particular accounts have?; and, most generally, how do people construct a coherent social world for the occasion at hand given a particular set of linguistic resources?

There are good reasons for taking discourse analysis as a startpoint to a study of social categories and the 'St Paul's riot'. On the one hand, the principal manner in which conflicts over the nature of events such as St Paul's are carried out is through discourse; both verbal debate and written texts. Insofar as this discourse is all that is available to commentators and those concerned with responding to the events it will, for all intents and purposes, come to *constitute* the events. Or, put another way, the nature of the events will not be *analytically* separable from the nature of the discourse. On the other hand, discourse is readily available to the analyst; it can be transcribed, copied and repeatedly examined, and in this it is in marked contrast to the activities and social processes which are the common currency of social psychological research (see Heritage & Atkinson, 1984).

Our particular concern is with the way conflict is represented. Since much of the time the discourse of conflict will be addressed to defining the nature of the protagonists it will be a particularly rich source for analysing the organization of categories in discourse. Moreover, in starting with situations where radically divergent versions are available, we hope to lay bare some of the functions of specific categories. Thus, our analysis deals with the deployment of notions of community in accounts of the street disturbances which occurred in St Paul's, Bristol, on 2 April 1980. Its central argument is that 'community' should be conceptualized as a 'linguistic repertoire' (or perhaps part of a repertoire—we will not be concerned with boundaries in the first instance) which is used for description, evaluation and explanation.

The notion of 'linguistic repertoires' has been developed in a number of studies of the discourse of scientists and other groups (e.g. Potter & Mulkay, 1982; Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Wetherell, 1985; Yearley, 1985) to account for organized features of the way participants use their language. Linguistic repertoires are constituted through a limited number of lexical items, particular stylistic constructions and use of a range of metaphors and tropes. This notion has affinities with Halliday's (1978) concept of 'register' in that it conceives of relatively discrete subareas of language which are moulded to facilitate the achievement of particular aims. Unlike the idea of register, however, it does not presuppose a causal relationship between context and register use (p. 32) and it places more emphasis on the central role of figurative language (Derrida, 1974). Linguistic repertoires also have affinities with Moscovici's (1984) concept of 'social representations' in that they can be seen as interpretative systems which may be used for formulating the nature of phenomena. However, it avoids the ambiguity over whether representations are constituted linguistically or cognitively (opting firmly for the former as an analytically more productive option) and emphasizes flexibility: instead of thinking of an entire representation as either present or

absent, the suggestion is that selections are made from the available repertoire to best suit the function to which the discourse is put (Litton & Potter, 1985; Potter & Litton, 1985).

Our aim in the analytic sections of this paper is to illustrate the empirical value of this notion and to show how the features of such repertoires facilitate manipulations in the way in which social categorizations are managed. We will attempt, first, to document some of the varying facets of the community repertoire and, second, to show how the distinctive features of this repertoire are used in the construction of versions of events. It has been widely noted that contrasting accounts of the 'St Paul's riot' have been offered, particularly with respect to the motives of the various parties involved and the role of the police. Our aim is to describe the details of linguistic usage which go to make up these divergent versions.

Method

Materials

Radio and television programmes which referred to the 'St Paul's riot' were recorded and fully transcribed. A wide range of newspaper reports and editorials were collected. Six subjects who were involved in, or at least present during the disturbance, were interviewed about the events. These interviews were taped and transcribed. The transcription conventions used emphasize readability at some expense of detailed nuances of stress, pronunciation and timing.

Given our theoretical position, no attempt will be made to give a description of the event referred to as 'the St Paul's riot' (but see Joshua *et al.*, 1983; Reicher, 1984). This event dominated the next day's news media and resulted in newspaper headlines such as: '19 POLICE HURT IN BLACK RIOT' (*Telegraph*, 3/4/80) or 'HUNDREDS OF BLACK YOUTHS BATTLE WITH POLICE IN BRISTOL RIOT' (*The Times*, 3/4/80). In one of a number of varying descriptions of the consequences of the 'riot' the official police report named 22 officers injured, 21 premises damaged by fire, six vehicles destroyed and 132 arrests. All the incidents appeared to be confined to a small area of Bristol known as St Paul's.

Procedure

The transcribed materials were approached using a systematic analysis of discourse (Potter & Mulkay, 1985; Potter & Wetherell, in press). The entire body of transcript and copies of newspaper articles were read and all instances of the terms community, communities, and communal were noted. In further readings, all these instances (totalling 322) were coded as being relevant to one or more of a set of themes. Extracts under each theme were recopied and placed in separate document files for ease of reference.

It is important to stress that we are not claiming that the use of this coding scheme will have identified *all* the relevant instances in these materials. Our claim is that there is a repertoire of terms which are used with stylistic and grammatical regularities, often combined with certain metaphors—by starting with instances which draw upon the term itself we hope to begin to elucidate this repertoire. At the same time, we do not want to suggest that the community repertoire might not be part of some broader linguistic system which might be revealed through further research.

In the analysis that follows we make no sustained attempt at quantification. Instead, our aim is to indicate some of the varying ways in which the category 'community' is constituted and applied, and to suggest some of the functions which these uses serve. We consider this type of analysis to be an essential preliminary to statistical investigation. Where numbers are given, they should only be considered an approximate guide to the prevalence of certain constructions in the transcript. The extracts which are included are meant to indicate the range of uses of 'community' occurring within a particular theme and, in some cases, concentrate on 'important' texts such as Home Office reports and parliamentary debates. In this way we hope to minimize the extent to which the reader has to take our analytic interpretations on trust, for, as far as possible given the available space, they are available for inspection. The source of all extracts discussed is identified in the appendix.

Reflexive considerations

In a paper of this kind it is important to draw attention to our own use of discourse. In the first place, the very language we use to depict the events of St Paul's is highly charged. To name it 'the St Paul's riot' has become commonplace; yet it already leads towards a particular evaluation, one very different

from, say, 'police attack residents' (Kress & Hodge, 1979; Trew, 1979; Kress, 1983, 1985). Even the use of a seemingly neutral term such as 'event' is potentially misleading, for it implies a distinction between 'what went on in the streets' and 'commentary in the media', rather than, for instance, seeing the media and parliamentary response as a constitutive part of what we conventionally know as 'the St Paul's riot'. In the absence of satisfactory alternative forms of description we would encourage the reader to be vigilant. More specifically, in our discussion of 'community' we must emphasize that we are concerned solely with this term's usage in discourse; and are making absolutely no claims about the social organization of people living in St Paul's. Thus the term 'community' and its synonyms should be read as if in quotation marks throughout.

It should also be noted that we have used the standard narrative form of social psychology journal articles: introduction, method, analysis, discussion. The advantage of this is that it is a familiar and easily readable format in which to present a relatively unusual style of analysis. Nevertheless, it is worth stressing that we have deliberately avoided the hypothetico-deductive approach common in social psychology, adopting instead a more inductive stance based on repeated and systematic reading of texts, and it may be that, in the longer term, new kinds of literary form will turn out to be more suitable for such an enterprise (Mulkay, 1985; Stringer, 1985).

Analysis

1. *The community repertoire*

This analytic section has two central goals. In the first place it starts to identify the different facets of what we have termed the community repertoire. To facilitate this it concentrates on accounts which make more or less direct reference to the nature, boundaries or make-up of community. In each case, the way in which the term is deployed is made as explicit as possible. In the second place, this section starts to document the variability in the use of the notion of community. Accounts are examined which present highly inconsistent versions of the existence, scope and make-up of community.

(a) The temporal existence of community. We will examine in turn three accounts which formulate the existence of community over time. The following extract is taken from a newspaper report on the day following the 'riot'. It describes the owners of a nylon shop in St Paul's who claim to be moving out as a response to the previous night's disturbance.

1. (1) The Billingtons began trading in St Paul's about 22 years ago—but last night has driven them away. (2) 'We are packing up—this community is finished. (3) We won't be coming back', said Brian Billington.

In this extract the shop keeper is depicted as moving because the 'community is finished'. This construction implies an important distinction between the physical presence of people in the St Paul's area of Bristol, which will clearly continue, and some aspect of their life-style or social organization—'community'— which will not. This sort of distinction in uses of 'community' has been noted by Williams (1976). He suggests that 'community' can, first, refer to the physical group of people living in a particular area or district. Second, it can refer to something held in common by a group of people: certain interests, characteristics or identity. The Billingtons clearly express this second usage. They are alluding to some quality of community over and above physical presence, although its exact nature is not made explicit.

In the next extract, the notion of time is also implied, although in a rather different way.

2. (1) I say it doesn't matter how much money you spend within our community if you are not going to let us take an active part in it ourself. (2) And at the end of the day we own what we have, and it is ours, and we can use it for the best ethnic . . . in our culture there. (3) Then we can live alongside in a community.

The extract starts with a reference to spending money 'within our community'. Although this seems to presuppose the existence of a community, in the final sentence its existence is made dependent on the local people being able to determine the way resources are allocated to fit cultural needs best. This quote thus embodies two main uses of 'community'—first, as a local group of people (Extract 2, sentence 1 = 2·1) and later as some (largely unspecified) feature that can arise given certain conditions (2·3).

The next extract is from an interview with one of the participants in the events at St Paul's.

3. *Interviewer:* (1) Can you describe what the community is like around here? (2) Is it very close? (3) Are there divisions in it or is it closely integrated?
Respondent: (4) Let's say better than Stoke Bishop and (inaudible).
Interviewer: (5) They don't have communities.
Respondent: (6) Well, there you are. (7) There is a community down here. (8) It is not that apparent, it is not that structured, but people recognize other people. (9) They say hello in the streets.

The interviewer's question suggested certain dimensions on which communities can be assessed—'closeness' and 'integration'. The respondent answers by favourably comparing St Paul's to two other nearby areas of Bristol. The interviewer reinforces the reply by claiming these areas do not have communities, again using a distinction between the inhabitants of an area and some special set of relationships between them which make up 'community'. The respondent takes up this idea (3·6) and states unequivocally that there is a community at St Paul's (3·8)—a claim which would not make sense if just the local inhabitants were being referred to. The notion is then elaborated—what constitutes the community is not 'structure' and not something clearly visible (3·8). Rather it has to do with recognition and an implied intimacy—people say 'hello in the streets'.

In these passages, then, we are offered three different versions of the temporal existence of community: (i) that it used to exist but does no longer; (ii) that it might exist at some time in the future; (iii) that the community exists at the present time. In addition, each of the extracts expresses the contrast between 'community' as a physical presence and 'community' as a social attribute. What is interesting is that, while each of the passages involves a usage which treats community as an extra quality, not implied by the mere presence of people in an area, this does not necessarily involve outright rejection of a 'physical presence' usage. Indeed, we have seen, in Extract 2, that the two usages can coexist, side by side.

For the analyst, then, there is thus an ambiguity in the referent of 'community' which relates to what it is, when it exists and, as we will show next, what categories it subsumes. This is not, however, to say that participants necessarily find such accounts ambiguous: often the pragmatic context will fix the sense of the term. Yet, as we will show in part 2 of the analysis, the wide range of potential meanings of community allows considerable flexibility in the application of the term which is exploited in the construction of differing versions of events.

(b) Race and community. The discussion of accounts with a temporal dimension starts to flesh out the repertoire of terms which make up the idea of community and some of its uses. By far the largest body of instances (23 out of 32) coded in relation to the general constitution of community were concerned, in one way or another, with its racial basis. This is not surprising because, in the debates conducted in the media and the British parliament after 'the riot', a recurrent theme was whether 'it' should be understood as having racial causes. In the following four extracts we indicate some of the alternative forms of discourse through which 'the community' can be racially constituted.

The following extract draws on the notion of time, as in the previous section; yet here what is to be achieved is specifically a 'multiracial community'.

4. (1) Much hard work has gone into promoting good race relations but the lesson has yet to be learned that you cannot engender a multiracial community by spending a lot of money, and appointing a lot of social workers. (2) A community has to grow at its own pace with a balance of interests preserved.

Extract 4 has a lot of similarities with Extract 2. It suggests that a community cannot be achieved by spending money and by input from outside agencies. In this case, however, it is a '*multiracial* community' that is not produced by outside intervention. The alternative offered draws upon the organic metaphor of 'the community' growing 'at its own pace', thus preserving the balance of interests (4·2). As we will show, such organic metaphors, which are a common way of characterizing community in the present data, can have important consequences.

The next extract gives a different formulation of race and community.

5. *Radio commentary:* (1) The Duke, as he likes to be known, said that any trouble there was in St Paul's wasn't due to racial hatred.
Duke: (2) After all, the community, the black and white, is very good. (3) The police ought to be a bit more shall we say, less aggressive, in attitude towards black people. (4) This community is black and white—it is no problem.

The speaker equates 'the community' with 'the black and white' and suggests that, looked at in these terms, it is very good. This is glossed in the radio commentary as showing the riot did not have its cause in racial hatred. The gloss seems to cover sentences 2 and 4 adequately. It is interesting to note, however, that the speaker's discourse is organized around a contrast between a racially integrated community (5·2 and 5·4) and an aggressive attitude from the police towards blacks (5·3), a feature *not* formulated in the radio commentary. This theme will be examined in more detail in Section 2.

These two extracts differ on both the temporal dimension and in the external agency to which 'the community' is contrasted. The first uses a putative failure to achieve 'a community' to criticize the manner in which the State in general intervenes in order to achieve social solutions. It proposes, as an alternative, 'natural' processes of growth at the community's own rate (4·2). The second talks of a 'very good' community in the present (5·2) which is contrasted with relations between blacks and the police. Despite these differences, the two extracts concur in formulating a community (whether actual or to be achieved) made up of both blacks and whites.

Other accounts speak of '*the* black community' (31 occurrences) or '*the* West Indian community' (6 occurrences). Given that 'community' is recurrently used to mean something distinct from a mere collective of individual inhabitants in an area, there is, from an analytic perspective, a considerable ambiguity in such accounts. Should they be taken to mean that there is *only* a black community or that there are more communities from which they are selecting the black one for comment? Take the following two extracts.

6. (1) I think we are a very close-knit community. (2) We have good relationship with the white people.
7. (1) We are going to take up some of those underlying grievances with members of the local community. (2) At first I would like to ask you, Councillor Abraham. (3) Do you understand the resentment of so many of the black community, especially young blacks of St Paul's?

Both these extracts imply an identity between the 'black' and 'local community'. In the first, 'black community' is contrasted with 'white people'; in the second, 'black community' is used interchangeably with 'local community'. While these accounts, and others like them, would not directly *contradict* accounts speaking of a 'white community' in St Paul's the recurrent use of 'black community' sharpens the racial focus of discussion of the riot. 'Black community' is formulated as the entity relevant for discussion.

There is one final complexity here. It is that 'black community' need not necessarily refer only to 'black' people (even if one accepts the dubious assumption that there is a neutral definition of who should be included in the category black—Banton, 1977; Reeves, 1983). This term could also refer to people who are 'black defined' either by themselves or others, as in an interviewee's description of St Paul's: 'politically they are all black'.

(c) Positivity and harmony. Thus far, we have been concerned with the make-up and variability of the community repertoire. We have shown differences in descriptions with respect to *what* the relevant community is, *when* it exists, and *what* sorts of people the category covers. Alongside this variability, there is a third dimension over which there is broad agreement: a community should be positively evaluated, it is a good thing.

Williams has noted that historically 'community' has been used with powerful evaluative connotations: 'it can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships' (1976, p. 66). This sense of positivity is reflected in our data. It is overwhelmingly the case that where 'community' is used in constructions of an evaluative nature the evaluation is positive.

Rather than use a new set of extracts to illustrate this, we can refer back to those reproduced above. In Extracts 3, 5 and 6 'community' is used to characterize a positive state of affairs which currently exists. In Extracts 2 and 4 it is used to depict a desirable goal which should be strived towards. While in Extract 1 'community' is something whose loss is to be mourned. In each of these cases 'community' is the term used to describe the positive pole of a contrast.

These extracts also go some way towards indicating what it is that is positive: they elaborate the community repertoire. One central feature is a set of words describing a certain style of social relationships. For example, in Extract 3 we see notions which, in traditional social psychological terms, would be glossed as social cohesion: 'closeness', 'integration', 'friendliness' and sufficient knowledge and intimacy to allow recognition and greetings. The use of spatial metaphors is common throughout the transcript. Extract 6—which predicates 'community' with 'close-knit'—is typical of this. Elsewhere 'community' is used to refer to a particular 'level' of social organization. Another form of imagery which is frequently deployed draws on organic metaphors. For instance, in Extract 4 a community is something which has a natural pace of growth. A third form of metaphor which recurs in the transcript is of 'the community' as an agent, with both cognitive powers (knowledge, feeling, etc.) and powers of agency: the 'community' can 'act' or, as in Extract 18 below, 'hit back'. The main features of the community repertoire derived from the St Paul's materials are summarized in Table 1.

In the next section we will go on to examine the way this repertoire is used in accounts of conflict, and in particular in attributions of responsibility and suggestions for remedial action.

2. *Community relations and the explanation of conflict*

In the entire body of transcript and documents we have examined two topics are recurrent: the first concerns the question of who or what was responsible for the riot/disturbance; the second focused on the question of what the proper response or solution is. A variety of different answers are given to these questions, but amongst these we will concentrate on two general positions. Broadly speaking, the first of these puts the blame on the 'rioters' and sees 'solutions' at the level of police strategy. The second blames discriminatory state practices (in policing and finance) and proposes positive intervention, in terms of policy and provision for St Paul's. Our goal is not to document the existence of these positions—which should be familiar to most non-hermit readers!—nor will we try to give a complete characterization of

Table 1. The community repertoire

Paradigmatic alternatives
Local residents *or* Local residents with specific social organization
Black community *or* White community *or* Mixed community.
Currently exists *or* Existed in past *or* May exist in future

Sample predicates	Metaphors (where relevant)
Friendly Warm Happy Harmonious	
Close-knit Integrated Tight	Spatial
Mature Grows Evolves	Organic
Acts Knows Feels	Agency

each—there is not the space for that. Instead we will look in detail at one central facet of each position: namely the way the notion of community is deployed in formulations concerning the role of the police.

(a) 'Community relations' accounts. We will start by examining a set of accounts which draw upon the notion of 'community relations'. 'Community relations' is interesting because unlike 'community' which has a reasonably straightforward noun status it is a *nominalization*. That is, it is a description of action turned into a noun. For instance, Kress & Hodge (1979) give the the example 'strikers picket factory' which is transformed into the *nominal* 'picketing'. The effect of nominalization is to obscure agency and activity, to eliminate any information about tense, and to transform processes into objects. These authors suggest that when dealing with such terms the reader is forced to treat them either as a kind of abstract noun or perform the sometimes difficult task of recovering the expanded form. However, in the case of 'community relations', as we will illustrate, the 'proper' expanded form is far from clear, and this lack of clarity appears to serve particular functions in the discourse.

The notion of 'community relations' is deployed in a number of ways in the corpus and in some form or other makes up for the largest subset of coded accounts—72 in all. Within this subset there are important variations in reference and in evaluations of the nature and quality of relations.

In the following extract Arthur Palmer, MP for the area, is questioned about the causes of the riot.

8. (1) There involved community relations, but I don't think this was a white, between white on the one hand and black on the other. (2) It mustn't be interpreted as not in human terms. (3) It is a crisis of authority, where the police have got themselves very much on the wrong side of the local community which is primarily black.

The speaker starts by formulating 'community relations' as a cause of the 'riot'—but immediately dismisses one possible interpretation of this: conflict between blacks and whites. Instead he proffers an alternative version in which the basic cause is conflict between the police and the 'local (black) community'. Here, then, we see two basic expansions of the notion of 'community relations'. On the one hand, the term involves conflict of a possibly racial nature between groups of local people; on the other, the 'relations' alluded to are between the 'local community' and the police. Both appear repeatedly in the transcript.

We see, then, that as well as 'community relations' being used to imply a variety of different social groups, it can also be applied to both inter- or intragroup relations. That is, it can depict relations between 'the community' and another group or relations 'within the community'.

Take, for instance, the following extracts which are drawn chronologically from the parliamentary debate which occurred on the day after the 'riot' (they include all uses of 'community relations' in the debate).

9. *Rees*: (1) My recollection is that there is a good record of community relations in Bristol.
10. *Whitelaw*: (1) I would also like to agree with what the Right Honourable Gentleman says about the good record in community relations in Bristol. (2) It so happens that my other Minister of State, the Honourable Mr Leon Brittan, was recently down in Bristol and he found it, as did one of my most senior officials who also went to Bristol recently to study this particular event.
11. *Whitelaw*: (1) As to what the Right Honourable Gentleman says about the community relations work of the police, it does so happen that a police officer in this particular area of Bristol, as I understand, has been very active indeed in the area of Community Council. (2) He has been one of the most highly respected members of that council who have done a great deal of the sort of work that the Right Honourable Gentleman has in mind.
12. *Waldegrave*: (1) [We] now have to rebuild community relations, rebuild trust between the police and the West Indian community.
13. *Powell*: (1) Was Mr Whitelaw surprised by these events and if not, why not?
    Whitelaw: (2) I was because I was told that the relations in this particular area of Bristol from a community relations point of view [were good].

The idea that there is a 'good record of community relations' is reiterated on three occasions in almost exactly the same form of words (9·1, 10·1, 13·2). And although it is introduced merely as a recollection (9·1) in Extract 10, an attempt is made to give it objective status by citing inspection of the area by supposedly independent observers (a powerful technique of factual accounting—see Smith, 1978; Woolgar, 1980).

In Extract 11, the speaker is responding to a question about 'community policing'; but he starts his reply by formulating the topic as 'community relations work of the police'—a construction not used in the question. He goes on to claim that such work already occurs in St Paul's to some extent. The police member of the 'Community Council' is described as 'very active indeed' (11·1) and to have done 'a great deal' (11·2) of relevant work. Moreover, his position is characterized as 'highly respected' (11·2). The effect of this is to include problems of policing under the topic of 'community relations'—which have already been characterized as good—and this characterization is supported with strongly positive, but at the same time very vague, allusions to the work of a 'community police officer'. Furthermore, when problems between the police and 'community' are implied, in the next extract (12·1), the suggestion is that they have been disturbed by the riot itself, rather than being something which preceded it or led to it.

In general, then, the parliamentary debate is positive about 'community relations' and the passages which expand the notion (11, 12) do so in terms of the work of the police or trust between police and locals. Yet, as we have indicated above, this is by no means the only available meaning of 'community relations'. Elsewhere in the transcript 'community relations'

is recurrently formulated in terms of conflicts or absence of conflicts between local blacks and whites within St Paul's.

Given that 'community relations' is used in the nominal form in extracts 9–13, rather than any of the seemingly more precise expanded forms, we can ask what consequences follow. The most basic is that it allows slippage from talking about the police as set over '*against* the community' to depicting them as '*part* of the community'. Thus William Whitelaw is able to build on a statement about 'community relations' (9·1) by stressing the work of 'community police' who act in the community (11·1) and are 'respected members of community bodies' (11·2). The significance of this is that, first, if the police are a constituent of 'the community' then, linguistically, any conflict will have been an intragroup phenomenon; it will have taken place between constituent parts of the same social category. Second, drawing the police into the scope of the nominal 'community relations' paves the way for characterizing the police and their actions using the community repertoire. The suggested ways for avoiding further conflict reflect both of these points. Thus police representation on community bodies (Extract 11) and the development of personal relationships and trust between police and locals (Extract 12) are emphasized. In Extract 8, also, a plea is made that the conflict be seen in 'human terms'.

This pattern of proposed solution reappears in official statements from the police and Home Secretary made a few weeks after the events. The Chief Constable of the area describes a number of policy decisions at the end of this final report to the Home Office.

14. The Chief Constable says that the problem with policing a multiracial community requires understanding, coupled with reasonable firmness, and that his officers possess such qualities. (2) He is arranging for the area to be policed on mainly a community basis by officers on foot. (3) It is his policy to institute community units in each Division of the force under the command of an Inspector, and embracing community Sergeants and Constables, schools liaison officers, women police and crime/accident prevention officers. (4) He also intends to strength[sic] his Community Relations Department with greater emphasis on the Bristol area. (5) He is examining with BCRE [Bristol Community Relations Executive] the question of instruction in the background and culture of those who live in the area. (6) The new measures will, he hopes, result in an improved police/black relationship in the area.

In sentence 1 the report identifies necessary positive qualities which, it suggests, are already possessed by Bristol Police. These are 'understanding' and 'reasonable firmness'—terms which have an irrefutable quality; reasonable firmness is, almost by definition, appropriate and correct, and any action lacking understanding is plainly flawed. The suggestion that local police already have these qualities implies that proposed changes will improve an already good situation rather than remedy serious pre-existing problems.

The report goes on to suggest that St Paul's be policed on 'a community basis by officers on foot'. For readers of the report, this leaves it ambiguous whether 'community policing' is done by police on foot or whether 'community policing' simply *means* policing on foot. This ambiguity is not resolved in the next sentences where 'community' is predicated by 'units', 'sergeants', 'constables' (14·3) and used in the title of the Community Relations Department (14·4), which will be strengthened. The reader is not told what these units will do that is different from their normal role or how their make-up is especially suited to preventing 'riots', as the police consider St Paul's to be. Instead, much of the sense of the passage (particularly 14·2–4) arises from the renaming which implies that the appropriate tool for evaluating police behaviour will be the community repertoire. Thus the recipe for improved police/black relationships is not specified (except for a possibility of educational input to the police and the suggestion of police on foot). Rather, the proposals are legitimated through couching them in the strongly positive terms of the community repertoire.

So far we have shown how the term 'community relations' may be expanded to cover different groups and how the relationships between these groups can be formulated in inter- or

intragroup terms. At times accounts may be inexplicit in both of these ways. Thus the Home Secretary's statement to the House of Commons picks out 'community relations' as an area where initiative is needed.

15. (1) But action at local level is also essential. (2) I welcome the decision of the Avon Council and the Bristol City Council to come together to examine how best they can further help in strengthening good community relations in the area. (3) Experts from all the Government Departments concerned will play a full part in this examination.

This passage, describing one part of a 'three-fold approach', centres on the promotion of 'community relations'. It is this which is the 'essential' action at local level (15·1). The nominal 'community relations' appears in a sentence buoyed up with positive terms: 'welcome', 'come together', 'best', 'strengthen', 'help' and 'good'. And of course 'community relations' has itself strongly positive connotations. However, the content of 'community relations' is left unspecified; no potential subcategories—'police', 'black', 'white', etc.—are explicitly mentioned. The only forms that are used are 'local' and 'in the area' which, as we have seen, can potentially encompass each or all of the groups mentioned above. Moreover, the level of 'community relations' is unclear. It could equally well refer to relations between members of any two social categories or of a single category.

Thus the unexpected form 'community relations' allows a range of meanings to be achieved using the same term. At times, as in Extract 15, the expression is used in an indeterminate manner, serving only to assert the positivity of its application. This flexibility allows the inclusion of the police under its umbrella and hence police actions to benefit from the positive evaluation. Put another way, the very flexibility of 'community relations' allows attention to be deflected from accounts which specifically formulate a conflict between 'community' and police. Overall, then, 'community relations' can be used, first, to categorize conflict with the police as an intragroup phenomenon and, second, to enable alternative expansions which shift the focus of depicted conflict.

(b) Accounts using the expanded form of 'community relations'. So far we have considered accounts from parliamentarians and police and in the case of 14 and 15 particularly they are the 'official' establishment statements—the Home Secretary and Chief Constable's summing up. There are, however, markedly divergent accounts of the 'community' and conflict—and the availability of these helps explain the organization of the above accounts. That is, accounts 8 to 15 can be seen as organized in such a manner as to exclude or undermine alternative competing versions (Burten & Carlen, 1979; Mulkay, 1985). In this section we will concentrate on accounts of police/community relations which do not adopt the nominalized form. Take for example the next two extracts.

16. (1) There has never been a lot of friendly relations between the police and the black community.
17. (1) Mr Wilkes said 'There has always been pretty bad relations between the black community and the police'.

In these two examples, attention is focused specifically and explicitly on the relation between police and 'black community'. Furthermore, this relation is described as one that was poor *before* the riot rather than disrupted *by* the riot, as suggested by Extract 12 for instance. These accounts conflict with those stressing good relations (9–13). Yet, because of the nominal form of the term 'community relations', the contradiction is not a sharp one—it can only be formulated by recovering 'relations between police and community'. If 'community relations' is read as 'relations between blacks and whites' no contradiction is produced. Such an achievement can be very important in a body of discourse where the clash of versions is endemic. Used in this way 'community relations' can have the effect of softening potential conflict between versions of events.

Another feature of accounts 16 and 17 is they distinguish 'the community' from the police, who are depicted as a separate agency acting on 'the community' rather than a perhaps wayward part of 'the community' itself. That is, the conflict is depicted in intergroup rather than intragroup terms. This makes it harder to apply the community repertoire to promote solutions involving the police in cooperation, friendship and understanding. In fact, this particular combination is extremely rare in our data. Instead, such accounts pave the way for the identification of more structural problems such as 'police racism' or 'state repression'.

At their strongest, accounts formulate a 'black community' rebelling against a systematic and continuing repression.

18. (1) BRISTOL BLACK COMMUNITY REBELS
 (2) The St Paul's area of Bristol suddenly became famous on April 2nd when the black community hit back at police repression and many whites supported them.
19. (1) ON WEDNESDAY 2nd April, the mainly black population of St Paul's, a Bristol inner-city district, responded to police harassment by mounting a counter-attack. (2) The police are the most visible instrument of state repression of the black minority in Britain today. (3) Almost exactly a year after the police riot in Southall, the black community of St Paul's fought back against police brutality and won.

These two similar accounts starkly contradict those extracts which formulate conflict in terms of 'community relations'. They depict not a riot but an open conflict between police and black people. Indeed, here the 'black community' acts in response, and moreover in legitimate response, to police repression and harassment. By providing a cause they take away the enigmatic quality of the riot as formulated in the parliamentary accounts (9–13). The events formulated in passages 18 and 19 are a *natural* part of an ongoing *inter*group conflict. Yet there is an asymmetry in this construction of the conflict; for it is not between two 'communities', or parts of a single 'community', but between a (black) 'community' and a non-community (the police). In contrast to the official accounts, the police are here an external agent.

In both of these extracts, the positive connotations of 'community' contribute to three consequences. First, the police are implicitly blamed; for 'communities' are groups who should not be attacked by the police. Of course, blame is assigned much more explicitly in other parts of these extracts, but the community repertoire contributes both to the coherence and strength of the blamings. Second, actions against the police are legitimated; 'communities' are sources of harmonious personal relationships, not mindless violence. If the 'community' is involved in attacking something it will be justifiable or externally caused. This again meshes with the more explicit blame in the extracts. Third, any potential dismissal of people fighting with the police as marginal or pathological is undermined. As we have shown elsewhere (Reicher & Potter, 1985), other kinds of accounts commonly portray 'rioters' as 'youths' (impetuous, not yet responsible?) or even 'a criminal fringe of immigrants' (*Telegraph*, 5/4/80). While such accounts represent those involved as marginal, and explain their behaviour as criminal or deviant, the notion of 'community' makes them representative and indeed central to the area. The police can legitimately attack 'thugs' and 'troublemakers' (Trew, 1979) but not the 'local community' of an area.

This version also conflicts sharply with other accounts (e.g. Extract 12) which treat the 'community' as a *victim* of the riot and as an entity which must be healed or restored in some way. Such passages characterize the events in entirely negative terms and, given the make-up of the community repertoire, would become virtually self-contradictory if 'community' is the *agent* of the riot. In fact Extracts 18 and 19 formulate the event positively, not as a riot, but as a response to prior attacks from the police, as a victory over 'police oppression'. Such versions also point the way to a distinct set of solutions involving the curbing of a repressive and racist police force rather than binding them into the area. Here the community repertoire, in the area of solutions as well as actions, excludes rather than integrates the State in general and the police in particular.

Discussion

In the first section of our analysis we documented a number of facets of the community repertoire. It can encompass the local residents of an area or the local residents with a specific social organization or set of relationships. It can formulate ethnic categories such as 'black community' or 'mixed community'. It can formulate a condition currently existing in a group of people, a condition which existed in the past or will do so in the future. When community is used to refer to residents with a specific social organization this can be further characterized by notions such as friendliness and warmth; by way of spatial metaphors (close-knit, tight), organic metaphors (growing, mature), and by metaphors of agency (acting, feeling). Crucially, where the term 'community' is used in formulations of an evaluative nature the evaluation is overwhelmingly positive.

In the second section we examined the use of this repertoire in two divergent kinds of extract which both characterize the role of the police in the events in St Paul's and specify the appropriate response which should be made to the events. In one set of accounts the nominal form 'community relations' is used. We showed that this could be expanded in two different ways: to refer to conflict between subcategories within the superordinate 'community'; to refer to conflict between the 'community' and an outside agency, namely the police. Thus in this body of discourse 'community relations' can be flexibly deployed to specify different categories and to imply inter- or intragroup relations.

The use of 'community relations' has a number of consequences. On the one hand, attributions of a cause for the conflict are vague and ambiguous (because of the alternative expansions) and the role of the police will be, in terms of the discourse, less focal (because the reader/hearer is forced to infer it—see Kress & Hodge, 1979). Moreover, the police are depicted as a constituent of 'the community' rather than a group set over against it and, as 'communities' are, linguistically speaking, sources of harmony rather than conflict, are less likely to have initiated any conflict. On the other hand, formulations using 'community relations' go with solutions constructed from the community repertoire. Thus pleas are made to develop trust and personal relationships between police and locals, to see things in human terms and, of course, to introduce 'community policing': the perfect solution to 'community relations problems'!

The other set of accounts we examined eschewed the notion of 'community relations' and instead explicitly formulated conflict between police and 'the community'. The relevant categories are identified and the conflict is specified as an intergroup one. In terms of the attribution of causes, the events are depicted as a consequence of *pre-existing* problems which, in the weaker accounts, are not spelt out, but in the stronger accounts are specified as police repression/harassment. This alternative causal version goes with a change in the formulation of the event from 'riot' to 'fighting back'; a legitimate and rational action against the police rather than a blind irrational conflagration. In terms of solutions, instead of trading on the suggestion that there is a disturbed community that needs healing, the focus is squarely on the police. If their actions are the cause then their power must be curbed or problems dealt with.

Overall, then, two opposing ways of representing and evaluating the role of the police and the nature of the conflict have been described. In each case, the same linguistic repertoire is drawn upon—that of community. But the repertoire is deployed in such a manner that the evaluative implications are markedly different. That is, different selections are made from the various lexical items and tropes in the repertoire to formulate actions and events in contrasting ways. It is important to emphasize again that the repertoire is a set of *available* resources—we are not suggesting that the entire repertoire will be somehow present in every use of 'community'. At the same time we must stress that no claim is being made about the individual goals of the various participants. Our concern is purely with the consequences of various uses of the community repertoire.

Clearly, these results are at present tentative and although our analysis is rather more fine grained than is common in social psychology they are based on an analysis of only a single body of discourse. They will therefore need to be backed up by studies of the use of the community repertoire in other areas of discourse and supplemented by research on its scope (see Halliday & Potter, 1986, for a preliminary step in this direction). Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that the special features of community discourse can be effective in a variety of different circumstances.

To take just one example, there has been a strong emphasis in the last two decades on the 'community care' of mental patients. It has been repeatedly argued that patients would be better off 'integrated into the community' and not 'isolated in hospitals'. However, while the large movement out of hospitals and into other forms of care has not had the success hoped for (see e.g. Jones, 1979) criticisms have only been slowly accepted. It seems likely that one cause of this delay is the rhetorical difficulty of undermining the positivity of the community repertoire (particularly when it is buttressed by economic interests). The 'community', conceptualized as an organic structure of harmonious personal relationships appears, at the discursive level, highly suited to providing support for the disturbed and handicapped. Attempts to suggest that some alternative view is more accurate are faced with a seemingly persuasive version of the problem constituted with the aid of the community repertoire.

Our aim in this paper was to argue that any study of social categorization ought to take into account the way in which categories are constituted in discourse. We have demonstrated that a central feature of the discourse of conflict analysed above has to do with the constitution of social categories. In this case the nature of social categorizations which are available to people in order to give meaning to their social world will be at least partially a function of characteristics of discourse. On the one hand, the community repertoire can be seen as an organized set of terms and metaphors available as a pre-existing interpretative resource. On the other, the repertoire is selectively and flexibly deployed in particular contexts with some facets emphasized and others ignored. Thus our analysis takes a position which is neither one of linguistic determinism nor one where speakers can make of discourse anything they like. The concept of repertoire is an initial attempt at characterizing certain pre-existing organizations of discourse, although we have no doubt that it will undergo modification and refinement as it is used in new areas of discourse and novel theoretical issues come to the fore. More generally, we have attempted to show the potential importance to social psychology of a systematic analysis of discourse (Potter & Wetherell, in press).

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Appendix

Sources of extracts quoted in paper.

1. *Western Daily Press,* 4/4/80.
2. Desmond Pierre, interviewed at a public meeting for *TV Eye,* 4/4/80.
3. Interviewee 2, transcript p. 7.
4. *Western Daily Press,* 9/4/80.
5. *BBC Radio Bristol,* 3/4/80.
6. Anonymous interviewee on *BBC Radio Bristol,* 4/4/80.
7. *BBC Radio Bristol,* 3/4/80.
8. *BBC Radio Bristol,* 3/4/80.
9. *The Times,* 3/4/80.
10. *The Times,* 3/4/80.
11. *The Times,* 3/4/80.
12. *The Times,* 3/4/80.
13. *The Times,* 3/4/80.
14. Memorandum placed in the Library of the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, following the report made to him by the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset Constabulary, 28/4/80.
15. Home Secretary's statement on the disturbances in Bristol on 2 April 1980.
16. Owen Hendry, cited on BBC *Nine O'Clock News,* 3/4/80.
17. Bertrand Wilkes, cited in *The Sun,* 5/4/80.
18. *Class Struggle,* 17/4/80.
19. *Socialist Challenge,* 10/4/80.