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Re-Inventing the *Cosmo Girl*

How a Magazine Neutralizes
Competing Discourses

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Julkaisun nimike <i>Cosmo</i> -nainen, uudelleen syntynyt! Miten aikakauslehti torjuu kilpailevat diskurssit		
Tiivistelmä <p>Naistenlehtien palstoilla kuvaukset ihanteellisesta nykynaisesta ja naisten tosimaailman kokemukset kohtaavat toisensa. <i>Cosmopolitanin</i> palstoilla pääkirjoitukset ja artikkelit käyvät vuoropuhelua toinen toistensa kanssa. Lehden päädiskurssin avulla pääkirjoitukset mainostavat elämäntyyliä, jossa <i>fun, fearless females</i>, villit ja vapaat naiset, uskaltavat nauttia elämästä. Toisaalta artikkelit kertovat naisten elämässä vastaantulleista ongelmista, jopa katastrofeista.</p> <p>Kummassakin tekstityypissä lukijaa puhutellaan mainoskielen keinoin, joilla tähdätään keinotekoisen ystävyysuhteen luomiseen. ”Lukijaystävä” eli <i>Cosmopolitanin</i> lehden <i>Cosmo girl</i>, <i>Cosmo</i>-nainen, on markkinatutkimusten luoma käsite, näköiskuva henkilöstä, johon sekä kustantaja että mainostaja haluaa vaikuttaa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli selvittää, millä tavalla lehti neutralisoi diskursseja, jotka kyseenalaistavat sen luomaansa ihannekuvaa villistä, vapaasta, ja pelottomasta nykynaisesta. Materiaali koostuu 12:sta <i>Cosmopolitan UK</i>:n pääkirjoituksesta vuodelta 2004, ja 48:sta saman aikakauslehden artikkelista vuosilta 2004 ja 2006. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys on kriittinen diskurssianalyysi ja metodi repertuaarianalyysi. Diskurssi ymmärretään identiteettien luojana, ja repertuaarit koostuvat luotuja identiteettejä kuvailevista teemoista.</p> <p>Tutkimus osoittaa, että <i>Cosmopolitan UK</i> sisältää kilpailevia diskursseja, jotka kuvailevat elämäntilanteita, joissa ihannainen voi menettää elämänsä hallinnan (control). Kilpailevien diskurssien rinnalle lehti tarjoaa kuitenkin ratkaisuja, täten neutralisoiden kilpailevat diskurssit.</p>		
Asiasanat naistenlehdet, pääkirjoitukset, artikkelit, kriittinen diskurssianalyysi, repertuaarianalyysi, <i>Cosmo girl</i> , <i>Cosmo</i> -nainen		

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Abstract <p>A woman’s magazine is a forum where descriptions of the ideal modern woman meet with the experiences of real-life women readers. In the forum that is <i>Cosmopolitan</i>, the genres of editorials and feature stories enter a dialogue with each other. The editorials promote the dominant discourse of <i>fun, fearless females</i>, inviting the reader to join the party. The feature stories, then, start from the opposite end of the spectrum: lives out of control. These discourses are made up of narratives of possible problems, even disasters.</p> <p>In both text genres the reader is addressed as a reader and a friend in the manner of advertising. In the case of <i>Cosmopolitan</i>, the reader/friend is epitomized as the <i>Cosmo girl</i>. She is a construction derived from market research; the consumer targeted by both the publisher and the advertisers.</p> <p>The purpose of the study is to investigate how the magazine deals with discourses which challenge the discourse of the ideal performance of the <i>Cosmo girl</i> femininity. The material consists of the 12 editorials of <i>Cosmopolitan</i> UK 2004 and 48 feature stories in <i>Cosmopolitan</i> UK 2004 and 2006. This study is set within Critical Discourse Analysis and regards discourse as a creation of identities. The method is repertoire analysis, where the repertoires are seen as descriptions of the performance characterizing these identities. The repertoires are formed by recurring themes referring to the behaviour of the <i>Cosmo girl</i>.</p> <p>The results suggest that the magazine chooses to allow certain competing discourses describing trouble in the life of the <i>Cosmo girl</i>. By doing so, it is able to produce new discourses of its own which neutralize the competing discourses.</p>		
Keywords women’s magazines, editorials, feature stories, critical discourse analysis; repertoire analysis, the ideal <i>Cosmo girl</i>		

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Sammandrag <p>En damtidning kan utgöra det forum där idealbilden av den moderna kvinnan konfronteras med kvinnors erfarenheter ur det verkliga livet. I det forum som det internationella månadsmagasinet <i>Cosmopolitan</i> erbjuder upprätthåller två genrer, ledarna och reportagen, en ömsesidig dialog med varandra. Ledarna målar med hjälp av den dominanta diskursen upp bilden av de <i>fun, fearless females</i> som kan ta för sig och njuta av livet. Reportagen utgör den andra ytterligheten: berättelser om kvinnor som förlorat kontrollen över sina liv.</p> <p>I bägge genrerna tilltalas läsaren som i reklamen, med direkt tilltal och som en vän. I <i>Cosmopolitan</i> sammanfattas hon i uttrycket <i>Cosmo girl</i>. Hon är en konstruktion som bygger på marknadsundersökningar, hon är sinnebilden för den målgrupp som förläggare och annonsörer vill nå.</p> <p>Avsikten med denna undersökning är att klargöra på vilket sätt tidningen hanterar diskurser som kullkastar bilden av den moderna <i>Cosmo</i>-kvinnan. Materialet består av 12 ledare i den brittiska utgåvan av <i>Cosmopolitan</i> 2004 och 48 reportage från brittiska <i>Cosmopolitan</i> 2004 och 2006. Denna undersökning använder kritisk diskursanalys och metoden är repertoaranalys. I undersökningen ses diskursen som skapare av identiteter, vilka beskrivs i repertoarer, vars minsta byggstenar är återkommande temata.</p> <p>Analysen visar att <i>Cosmopolitan</i> UK tillåter vissa konkurrerande diskurser som den kan neutralisera genom att producera egna diskurser som stöder tidningens ursprungliga beskrivning av <i>Cosmo</i>-kvinnan.</p>			
Nyckelord damtidningar, ledare, reportage, kritisk diskursanalys, repertoaranalys, <i>Cosmo girl</i> , <i>Cosmo</i> -kvinnan			

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Little did I know what I was letting myself in for. I had spent 25 years of professional life as a journalist and an editor, producing text for newspapers, writing news stories, interviews, feature stories, book and film reviews, and editorials on a variety of subjects. I had the most rewarding job one can hope for which allowed me to use language to construct the images I wanted to convey to the readers.

The transfer to researching media texts forced me to face quite different demands. My background in journalism was not necessarily an advantage since it made me regard a number of journalistic practices as given, blinding me to what needs to be explained to researchers and readers outside the newspaper business. I also found myself going through a twofold process, unlearning how to write like a journalist while learning how to write as a researcher. The curiosity of a journalist is, however, related to that of the researcher. Both ask questions, both want to find answers and both need to work systematically.

During these past years I have incurred many debts. First I would like to name and express my gratitude towards my supervisors, Professor Sirkku Aaltonen and Dr. Marinella Rodi-Risberg. Sirkku Aaltonen has patiently given me the support, time and space I needed to pursue this project. She has allowed me to explore my options, guided me to recognize cul-de-sacs and re-evaluate my ideas. Marinella Rodi-Risberg has commented on details in individual chapters and, above all, supported me with unfaltering faith in my abilities. This, I have felt, has been an undeserved privilege, and it has filled me (and still fills me) with amazement and gratitude.

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Oravais, April 2016

Maj-Britt Höglund

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1 INTRODUCTION

Women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* are part of the daily lives and routines of many women. A great variety of titles are published regularly all over the world, and they influence the lives and lifestyle choices of their readers. The magazines are easily accessible at newsstands and in supermarkets where they are presented to the consumers like any other daily commodity. They are also available in such places as waiting rooms at hairdressers' or dentists', where they offer undemanding pastime reading.

Femininity in postmodern everyday life is realized in performances which are premeditated, planned, tried out for suitability and rehearsed. The individual has a choice of femininities which she can perform within her own life. For instance, Butler (1999: 177) argues that femininity (that is gender) is not essential but reveals itself as performance and in the actions of the individual.

The performances of femininity in female dominated professions, such as nursing, are likely to differ considerably from those in male dominated professions. A policewoman is likely to perform her femininity without the traditional stereotypical traits of femininity, as McElhinny (1995: 238) has shown. In doing so, she will adapt to the requirements of her profession and adopt the norms of her institution.

Discourses describing different ways of being a woman circulate in society. A discourse in the present study is understood to construct and be constructed of a particular kind of femininity. Discourses of femininity, that is, the way women can perform their gender, mirror the times and the immediate context such as their job, home life, etc., and also change with them. For example, in the 1950's, a maternal discourse would construct the home-maker, that is, the mother and the housewife, and also be constructed by the dominant role imposed on women in society. By comparison, the discourses of motherhood in contemporary society may construct a variety of options such as being a single, self-supporting mother, a mother staying at home or a career woman/mother, and also be constructed by these. Discourse constructs a social object, a particular performance in a specific context; conversely, objects and performances are constructed by their contexts.

A magazine such as *Cosmopolitan* suggests to women a discourse of an ideal performance of her femininity, or being a woman. This discourse includes advice on looks, solutions to practical or personal problems, and ways of meeting the challenges of personal and professional life and guide women to adopt ways of behaviour and other "tips" for achieving the ideal. Sutton (1999: 163) describes female identity as a "mosaic made up of bits and pieces stolen from the media". Thus, the contents of the magazine construct behaviour patterns and instruct women to

adopt (un)realistic (sometimes even harmful) models of “performances” as described by Bordo (2003: 253–254). Indeed, women’s magazines mould the dispositions and actions of their readers in the same way that literature does. The translation scholar Itamar Even-Zohar (1990: 40–44) describes this moulding as one of the functions of literature. Texts function as models for producing a given behaviour. The media and literature are important agents in shaping, for example, our performance of a particular femininity of our choice.

Reading women’s magazines may offer readers “a temporary fantasy of an ideal self” as Hermes has shown (1995: 39), and this ideal self is pragmatic, solution-oriented and in control. Magazines allow readers to imagine themselves with skills and characteristics as well as living a life which differs from the one they are leading. Although they lead their lives in their own particular social world, that is, their “situated world”, they also unavoidably become members of the world created by the media, the “mediated world”. The mediated world has become part of the modern cultural life as suggested by, among others, Tolson (1996: x-xi).

A magazine such as *Cosmopolitan* promotes a discourse of femininity focused largely on superficial traits and appearance. Their importance is emphasized through many channels: in the text, by the magazine’s visual presentation of flawless young women on the cover and in advertisements. The dividing line between the editorial text and advertisements is not always clear, as for example Talbot (1995) has shown. Moreover, the discourse in all these channels includes advice on, and suggestions of, possible ways of achieving the desired performance. Talbot (1995: 144) showed how such a femininity is promoted in “advertorials”, that is, editorial texts which are, in fact, advertisements.

The discourse the magazine promotes of the performance of an ideal femininity is not a random construction. Through market research the publishers have identified doing being an attractive woman as the main interest of the readers, and this group they have been able to sell to the potential advertisers. Superficial traits and appearance are, namely, firmly set in the ideology of consumption and commercialism. According to the publicity statement of National Magazines Company (Hearst magazines UK. Brands 2012), the brand proposition of *Cosmopolitan* is to be “the magazine that celebrates fun, glamour, men and a passion for life and inspires young women to be the best they can be”. Naturally, such a performance (to be the best you can) requires certain skills, tools and props which are the central concern for the advertisers. Attractiveness can only be achieved with the right products. The performance of an ideal femininity promoted by *Cosmopolitan* rests on consumption in a way which fuses the contents of the magazine (feature stories, advertisements, advertorials, advice columns, etc.) with the commercial

interests of its advertisers. Success in performance is related to personal appearance, which, in turn, is related to the use of the products of the advertisers and the advice provided by its editorial contents.

The magazine is the forum where advice about the skills and the necessary toolkit are described for the reader to perform her femininity in a desirable way. Indirectly, therefore, the advertisers are the suppliers of this advice. In order to gain trust, which is important if the readers are to accept the advice of the magazine (and, through it, the “advice” of the advertisers), *Cosmopolitan* constructs its readers as a community where ideas of femininity, lifestyle and interests are shared. The community of the magazine is prescribed in its marketing slogans, the *fun, fearless females* and the *Cosmo girl*, which are echoed throughout the contents of the magazine both to address the reader and, simultaneously, describe her. It is also repeated often on the cover.

However, to preserve its credibility as a journalistic product the magazine needs to construct itself as relevant to the reader. It has to show that it is aware of the existence of the problems in the situated world of its readers. For the sake of authenticity, the magazine selectively introduces some competing discourses from the situated world such as trouble of the kind the *Cosmo girl* might encounter in that world. To make the competing discourses and its own discourse of the *Cosmo girl* compatible, it needs to provide advice on how to deal with trouble, thus maintaining its promotion of the ideal performance of a *Cosmo Girl* – without losing the authenticity.

The magazine is very selective of the competing discourses it wants to introduce. Only those that can be brought into line with the dominant discourse will be included. For example, a rejected discourse may be a non-consumerist discourse (this would scare the advertisers off), while others might be the problems of ethnic and sexual minorities, which consumerism could not solve (and which might also scare off some of the *fun, fearless females*).

In what follows, this chapter will introduce the hypothesis and research questions as well as the material and method of the present study, followed by an overview of relevant previous research.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The focus of this study will be on the discursive construction of a contemporary femininity, developed in the sense of publishing a magazine, *Cosmopolitan*, and epitomized worldwide as the *Cosmo girl*. The description of this femininity will

be analyzed from the point of view of the dominant reading suggested by *Cosmopolitan*, leaving possible negotiable readings (e.g. a resistant reading) outside the scope of the study. My investigation will be concerned with two journalistic genres, the editorial and the feature story, in the UK edition of *Cosmopolitan*. The texts of the two genres are, as it appears, engaged in a dialogue with each other. The editorials present some of the contents of each issue in a nutshell and draw attention to feature stories that are seen as significant to the readers (a selling line). Some of these feature stories are also referred to on the cover as the selling line of a particular issue. They may provide more space for a widened perspective on the behaviour and the life of the *Cosmo girl*. This wider perspective includes, naturally, support for the dominant discourse, but it may also suggest contradictions, even contestation.

If, or when, this struggle between the dominant discourse and a competing discourse occurs, the magazine needs to deal with problems in such a way that they do not form a threat to the dominant discourse. I will work on the assumptive hypothesis that there is a 'division of labour' between the two genres, so that the editorials introduce the discourses of the *Cosmo girl*, while in the feature stories the situated world meets the mediated world. On the macro-level, *Cosmopolitan* reduces the conflict between its dominant discourse, that of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity, and competing discourses, to a 'problem-solution' frame. First of all, the introduction of competing discourses is done selectively from among the ones of interest to the readership of *Cosmopolitan*, but, secondly, also in such a way that they can be dealt with. Their inclusion in the magazine is motivated by the need of authentication, but they also need to be solved, assuring the reader that "we know what your life can be like", and your life can finally be brought into line with the ideal performance of a *Cosmo girl*. If the competing discourse is left without refutation, and the problems remain unsolved, the dominant discourse would be deconstructed.

In my study, I will investigate, how *Cosmopolitan* on the macro-level (that of the overall picture) reduces the conflict between the dominant discourse and competing discourses to a 'problem-solution' frame. I base the assumptive hypothesis of the present study on an earlier study concerning advice in magazine articles. Machin and van Leeuwen (2003) discovered this frame and called it the 'problem-solution' schema appearing in advice columns as well as in articles. They also found, that the problem-solution schemata take cultural factors into account (Machin & van Leeuwen 2003: 501). Their investigation of representations of women at work in 44 international versions of *Cosmopolitan* showed that the solutions, which take the form of actions or skills, to solve the same problem vary in different cultures. Surprisingly, their study showed that all *Cosmo girls* shared

one feature regardless of the culture they came from: there was no solidarity between women and no room for female friendship. The current study will investigate, whether a balance between the discourse of the magazine and competing discourses can be achieved through the magazine's selective choice of competing discourses set within the 'problem-solution' schema of *Cosmopolitan*. It will approach the two genres with the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA), and look at "problems" as statements which indicate competing discourses. The term statements in the terminology of CDA refers to the concept of discourse as consisting of groups of interrelated statements (Foucault 1972: 117). As indicated above, the statements have already been selected according to the interest of the magazine's target readership, and the task of the magazine to bring them into line with the ideal performance.

The editorials and feature stories of *Cosmopolitan* provide two perspectives on the discourse of an ideal performance of doing being a woman in the 21st century. The editorials focus, mostly, on constructing the "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) of reader-friends who share the dominant discourse of the magazine of an ideal femininity, whereas the feature stories also introduce trouble threatening the members of this community, thereby pointing to the existence of competing discourses of femininity. The *Cosmo girl* of the editorials is more explicitly the personification of the designated target group of the advertisers although there might already be hidden suggestions of adversities awaiting the *Cosmo girl* on her life journey where she might need advice. These references to the topics point to what will be described in some of the feature stories that will follow later. If we simplify the difference between the two genres, we could say that the editorials focus on the ideal performance, while the feature stories bring in competing discourses. Part of the function of the feature stories is, therefore, also to authenticate the *Cosmo girl* of the editorials, by testing her and providing a solution.

In general, the feature stories may support, contradict or expand the discourse of the performance of the *Cosmo girl* as established in the editorials (and covers, advertisements, advertorials etc.). While the editorials give a shorthand description of the *Cosmo girl*, the structure of the feature stories allows for a narrative development which may also show cracks or faultlines (competing discourses) looming under the surface of an otherwise carefree life. By introducing competing discourses of femininity and giving advice on how to neutralize those discourses, the magazine acknowledges the existence of a situated world outside its own constructed community and, through that, it authenticates its own mediated world. Hypothetically, the problem-solving will stop unwanted discourses from intruding into the life of the *Cosmo girl* through cracks between the mediated world of the

magazine and the situated world (also, to a great extent, mediated by the magazine) of her life. These can be solved, and the dominant discourse retained.

In order to test the assumptive hypothesis of conflict between the dominant discourse of an ideal performance and the magazine's way of reducing this to a problem-solution schema, the following research questions have been posed:

- 1) What discourses of performances of the *Cosmo girl* are introduced in the editorials and what is their function (dominant, competing)?
- 2) What discourses of performances are introduced in the feature stories? How have they been selected with reference to the dominant discourse (for example, can they be brought into line with the dominant discourse) and also the situated world of the readership?
- 3) How does the magazine deal with competing discourses? Are they made compatible with the dominant discourse? Can the set-up of a competing discourse and its neutralization be reduced to the problem-solution pattern?

The texts from two journalistic genres, editorials and feature stories, are chosen from the British edition of *Cosmopolitan* UK in 2004 and 2006.

1.2 The Material: Editorials and Feature Stories

The data of this study consisted of two different genres: twelve editorials from *Cosmopolitan* UK 2004 and 48 feature stories from *Cosmopolitan* UK 2004 and 2006. The editorials represented each monthly issue from one whole calendar year only, since the editorials were found not to vary much in content. The feature stories included in the data needed to meet the following criteria: the story had to be an account of a personal experience, and it had to be told by an ordinary woman, not a celebrity, using her own words. The required format was that of a human-interest story which, according to McLuhan (1964: 204), has a "private confessional form" and represents a "private voice", inviting communal participation. To avoid a biased selection, the decision was taken to include the first two human-interest stories of each issue meeting the criteria.

Editorials and feature stories are regarded as genres of non-fictional, written journalism. In this study *genre* is understood as a way of talking about a specific activity. This is what Martin (1984: 25) calls a "goal-oriented, purposeful activity" and Martin & Rose (2003: 7) a "staged, goal-oriented social process" performed

by speakers with a purpose and awareness of its cultural context. It is a “socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity” as Fairclough (1995a: 14) describes it, In other words, a genre is a socially accepted way of using language for a certain purpose.

Genres are, thus, identifiable as a staged, specific activity, recognized in their context by the participants. For instance, a television interview with a politician will be identified as a particular genre, the political interview, while a television cook delivering recipes will be identified as another genre, the lifestyle programme. The politician may draw on a number of discourses (the party’s view) on a variety of issues, such as those concerned with the level of taxation, the health care system, or the development of the educational system. The cook in talking about her work may draw on a discourse related to topics such as ecologically produced food, the cost of prefabricated meals compared to home-cooked ones, or the courage to experiment with new ingredients.

The two genres, editorials and first-person feature stories, were chosen as the material for the present study because they seemed to differ in a number of respects. While both could be regarded as genres of non-fictional, written journalism, within media texts, the genres of editorials and feature stories serve different purposes. The *editorial* expresses the ideological position of the newspaper or the magazine. It comments on the current issues (topical for the magazine) and takes a stance on them, thus profiling the publication. This is very much in line with what has been found about newspapers. In her research into the editorials of *Le Monde*, Elisabeth Le (2010: 29) shows how the newspaper presents itself through its editorials as a social actor in its own name. The newspaper points out the direction it wants the social world to take, while at the same time taking up a position from which it “looks at the social world and interprets it meaningfully” (Le 2010: 186). The editorial of a magazine has the same opportunity of persuading its readers ideologically; *Cosmopolitan* has also chosen to use its editorial to promote its dominant discourse and, thus, point out the direction it wants the social world of the readers to go.

The editorial of a newspaper and a magazine carries a subjective stance which the readers recognize as the expression of the ideological position of that publication. In a newspaper, the editorial generally expresses the official stance of that newspaper, not that of the writer. In a magazine, the editorial can be (and usually is) a forum where the editor can be more open about her personal opinions, (unlike in the editorial of a newspaper), that is, her stance, which, of course, needs to be in line with the stance of the magazine. This means that the writer in a newspaper editorial is only implicitly present (the voice is that of the newspaper), whereas in a magazine, the person is/can be foregrounded, while the stance of the magazine

is more implicitly present. In magazines, the editorial is sometimes even called the *editor's letter* to underline that it is, indeed, (similar to) a personal contact with an individual reader. Often, the writers of the newspaper editorials are unidentified and unsigned. In such a case, the writer is most likely to be the editor-in-chief, the head of the magazine's staff of commentators, or another senior editor. To sum up, the editorials of newspapers are impersonal comments on current affairs, promoting simultaneously the newspaper's ideological stance, whereas the editorials in magazines foreground the personal, but also, of course, promote the values of the magazine. Both need to work on keeping their readership and also strengthen their ties to their target group of advertisers.

Unlike the feature stories, where the format can vary considerably, the editorial has a fixed format as to the lay-out and the length of the text. Each publisher makes her/his own decisions about the format of the editorial. In *Cosmopolitan*, the format of the editorials is preset. The editorial consists of some 500 words (computer word count performed on the editorials in the data of this study) in which the editor addresses her reader directly using either a narrative or a commentary. It takes column form, a photo by-line (either portrait or full body picture) and the editor's signature – handwritten to flag friendship. The editorial is always placed at the beginning of the magazine soon after the list of contents. Its place may, however, vary from an odd number-page to an even number-page, depending on how many pages the brand advertisements at the front of the magazine cover.

The editor's voice is an institutionalized¹ one. Her voice and that of the magazine are one and the same. The task of the editor is to draw attention to the ideological stance promoted by the magazine and its advertisers. S/he catches the reader's attention by using "her/his private voice" and by simulating friendship. For example, in *Cosmopolitan* the editor supports her status as an individual by referring to the statements of people close to her, such as her colleagues, friends or celebrities. The editorials in the current study bear the signature of three different editors. One editor was responsible for the editorials of January and February and her successor, the acting editor, was responsible for the seven editorials from March to September. A new editor was appointed from October, and she was responsible for the last three editorials.

¹ See Feez, Iedema and White (2008: 201) and the *Media Literacy* report concerning authorial voice in the media. They distinguish between the "objective" reporter (as in news and feature stories) voice and the "subjective" writer voice (as in columns, commentary and editorials).

In the editorials of *Cosmopolitan* UK 2004, the topics vary. The editor may decide to refer to current social issues of importance: a support line for rape victims (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial of Feb. 2004) or prevention of STIs (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial of Nov. 2004). She may also choose to promote the contents of that particular issue: a new shopping section called *Cosmo Shops* (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial of March 2004), a feature story about a British women serving time in an American prison (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial of Nov. 2004), and the annual Naked Centrefold featuring male celebrities posing naked for charity (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial of June 2004). The editor may also refer to a recent experience such as having been on a radio show with Germaine Greer (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial of Jan. 2004), having participated in the biannual international *Cosmo* editors' conference (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial of Aug. 2004), and having met an old friend who reminded her of "the power of the advice given in *Cosmo*" (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial of March 2004). Invariably, however, the editorials end with a general wish that the reader will enjoy the issue or a direct suggestion: "turn to p213 for the ultimate *Cosmo* Girl's Guide To Getting It On – 100 unique tips for seduction success from *Cosmo*'s panel of experts" (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial of Dec. 2004).

The *feature story* in a magazine is a piece of journalistic reporting which appears to be more objective than the editorial. Readers expect facts and events to be reported in an unbiased manner without too much explicit personal commentary or opinions from the journalist. The opinions and comments can appear in the choice of descriptive words related to the facts and emotions of the interviewee. The feature story can be based on an interview with one person (thus featuring the personal story of that person) or several people. When dealing with a conflict, the feature story should, of course, allow all parties involved to be heard, but this is hardly ever the case. The feature is always her or his story. Alternatively, a feature story can be constructed around the topic of the editors' choice and supported by information acquired from several sources. The feature story also, of course, communicates the values of the magazine, although it does not necessarily do so overtly. The stance of the magazine/newspaper is implicitly present in journalistic choices such as the story itself (not just any story will be included), the angle of the story, that is, the emphasis on and evaluation of information and interviewees (Höglund 2008). Therefore, the feature story also, for its part, upholds and supports the mediated world (and the (implicit) dominant discourse there) constructed in the editorial of the magazine.

The choice of a feature story in a magazine starts with the editors' (editorial board's) decision to pursue a particular issue. It is based on a combination of the editors' professional training concerning what is topical for the readers and com-

patible with the ideological position of the magazine. The ideology sets the angle of the story, and it will be in line with the dominant discourse of the magazine. The angle, agreed on by the editors involved, functions as the ruler against which competing discourses are measured. It guides reporters, copy-editors and editors through the production process. For example, the topicality of the contents in *Cosmopolitan*, would not include topics like disability, same-sex relationships, difficulties of ethnic minorities, and these could not, according to my assumptive hypothesis, be brought in line with the dominant discourse of the *Cosmo* girl.

The contents of a feature story are reconstructed (and mediated) several times. The writing process consists of several stages, such as the interview between the journalist and the interviewee (face-to-face, over the telephone, with the help of e-mail messages) followed by a text editing process and a layout process involving both text and images. All these stages allow for several constructions and reconstructions of the events. For instance, first the interviewee will construct one version of events for the benefit of her listener/reader the journalist, and then the journalist may (in fact, s/he will) reconstruct the meaning of the events during the writing process. A second reconstruction, and, occasionally a re-evaluating of meaning, occurs in the editing process, and finally during the layout process the events may once again be reconstructed. In other words, the process transforms the situated world into a mediated one. The production process ensures that the way in which magazine addresses its readers is consistent.

The format of the feature stories varies, in *Cosmopolitan* as in other magazines, according to decisions about importance of story, placement of advertisements, and number of pages available. The decisions about format influence the form of the feature stories, but do not necessarily dictate it; they can have the form of a narrative, self-narrative, diary entries, testimonials, or any combination of these. They can also be written as interviews in question – answer form. The feature stories appear under headings of their own, although they may also appear under a section label, which is indicated on each page. They are invariably provided with a ‘lead’, an introductory paragraph which introduces the topic and/or the informants.

The feature stories included in the data of the current study deal with the first-hand personal experiences of ordinary women, whose experience might be useful to know for the *Cosmo* girl. The magazine flags its human-interest stories with banners such as “real life” to indicate that they are based on recounted personal experiences which the readers might share. The stories were either a person’s life story or the magazine’s report on a current issue influencing the lives of women. They were based on the stories of one or several interviewee(s) and accompanied either by short testimonials to illustrate the issue or by short items of expert ad-

vice. Some of the stories are advertised also as selling lines on the cover, and in the magazine's list of contents these appear under the section "on the cover". Other stories, though also of the human-interest type, do not appear as a selling line on the cover but are instead listed in the section "news² feature" or "news & real life". The "news feature" section had its heading changed in November 2004 to "news & real life", and the new heading was still in use in 2006. Some feature stories are highlighted as interesting in the editorial.

The feature stories of a magazine such as *Cosmopolitan* offered a wide array of choices for the research material. One option would have been to follow the permanent sections headings (e.g. "on the cover"). However, such an approach might have proved to be problematic for the purpose of the present study since the magazine frequently combines material on various topics in one section heading. For instance, the "news & real life" section in February 2006 features one interview with a woman whose sister had been killed by a stalker (an account of personal experience) and a text about how to safeguard one's identity (resembling an advice column). Another option would have been to select the material by the topic of the story such as violence, betrayal, or illness regardless of section. This too, might have proved to be confusing, since the magazine may choose to deal with similar topics under different headings. Consequently, advice about sex may appear early in the magazine under the heading "youniverse" (Jan. 2006; page indications from 15 to 58) or, alternatively, late under the heading "love, sex & success" (Sept. 2006; page indications from 101 to 256). Whether the feature story is referred to in an editorial or not was not a criterion for the inclusion in the research data either. The editorials refer to a wide range of texts depending on what the editorial body have wanted to highlight in the content. These could include, for example, references to advice columns or fashion reports and not suitable for my research purposes. Since the criterion for inclusion was that the feature story recounted a personal experience, I included a story such as "My Sister Doesn't Deserve to Be in Jail" (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Nov. 2004: 105), to which a reference was made in the editorial of that issue. By contrast, a text with the heading "How To Bounce Back From Everything" (*Cosmopolitan* UK, March 2004: 89), which was referred to in an editorial, was excluded since the advice given was based entirely on a book and; therefore, did not represent first-hand personal experience. Moreover, feature stories with names such as "celebrity real life" were excluded as they were not representative of "ordinary" women, i.e. like the readers. One such story was "*Eastenders* Little Mo Rape Exclusive: Why I'm Proud to Give Rape Victims a Face" (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Jan. 2004: 64). Similarly, stories re-

² In the magazine context "news" is, naturally, not daily news, but recent events.

sembling advice columns or labelled “*Cosmo* campaign” were excluded from the material. For example, there were advice columns/campaign stories, often labelled “*Cosmo* puts you in the know”, which were illustrated with short testimonials by named persons, giving them the appearance of feature stories. Thus one such feature story called “When Beauty Treatments Turn Lethal” (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Jan. 2006: 78) was excluded because it was built up on short testimonials only, which placed it halfway between an advice column and a feature story.

Firstly, the stories of the women interviewed contradicted (or “differed” from) those of the institutionalized voice of the editorials. Albeit that the topics of the feature stories were chosen by editorial decision to suit the values of the magazine, the women drew upon experiences from the situated world – one possibly not in line with that of the magazine. Their accounts were understood to draw the reader’s attention to the situated world where women’s lives might differ a great deal from those of the *Cosmo girls*. In my data, the accounts of the interviewees in the feature stories appeared to challenge the ideological stance of the institutionalized voice of the editorial, which offered the possibility to investigate how *Cosmopolitan* deals with this contradiction and whether it manages to bring the competing discourses in line with the dominant one of the *fun, fearless women*.

1.3 The Method

The theoretical framework of the present study is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the method is repertoire analysis. The current study is interdisciplinary in the sense that it is informed by media studies, gender studies, and sociologist research into discourse. CDA distinguishes itself from discourse analysis (DA) in that it deals with power structures such as the unequal relationship between the media and the media consumer. It is therefore a suitable tool for the deconstruction of a dominant discourse such as that of *Cosmopolitan*: the magazine is in a position of power, from which it constructs a lifestyle to suit its commercial purpose and that of its advertisers. From that position of power, it suggests the performance of a particular femininity to its readers, who cannot influence the discourse of the magazine; they can only accept or reject it.

There is a diversity of terminology in the fields of CDA and DA, depending on the orientation of the scholars either to linguistics, social sciences, philosophy or even communication studies. The most important concepts in my research are *discourse*, *repertoire* and *theme*. The philosopher Michel Foucault (1972: 117) regards a *discourse* as consisting of a group of *statements* belonging to the same *discursive formation*. These formations are the *repertoires* according to the DA

scholars Wetherell & Potter (1988: 172). Discourse in the present study is defined as a construction of reality. This is in line with the way it has been defined by Foucault (1972: 49) as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak”. The way we talk about a soap opera shapes our ideas about the show, and the way we talk about an earthquake constructs this phenomenon for us. For example, the way *Cosmopolitan* describes women as *fun, fearless females* and shows them to its readers influences their conception of the modern woman. In the magazine, the dominant discourse describes a particular kind of femininity, the *Cosmo girl*. Other discourses of femininity may come up in feature stories, and these are competing with the dominant one. For example, a woman who has contracted a serious illness which controls her life, preventing her from being a *fun fearless female*, would form a competing discourse. The main purpose of my study is to investigate how the competing discourses are neutralized in such a way that they do not threaten the dominant discourse.

As stated above, “discourse” consists of “groups of statements” constituting a “discursive formation”: in the current study the central concepts used to denote the three levels are *discourse*, *themes*, and *repertoires*. *Discourse* in this study is understood to construct identities by systems of meaning interacting in and with social context (Foucault 2004: 93; Mills 2004: 45–46). So *Cosmopolitan* is seen to construct the femininity of the *Cosmo girl* by drawing on some discourses of femininity circulating in society and, simultaneously, adding to them. From the CDA perspective, constructing meaning in discourse is just one *social practice* (e.g. Fairclough & Wodak 1997: 278–279; Wodak 2001a: 1). Other *social practices* are, for instance, actions and events, which in addition to discourse are ways of constructing social phenomena in their context. For instance, a discourse of the performance of femininity in the industrialized world differs from a discourse of a woman’s performance in a developing country. In the former context, discourse may construct the performances of a career woman, a mother and a housewife respectively through repertoires. In the latter context, a development project in Africa focusing on the woman as the key actor in the growth of village prosperity may use woman as an able farmer as one of the repertoires. The discourses circulating in a specific context can mirror as well as create the social practices of that context: the career woman follows one social practice, the mother another, the housewife a third, and the female farmer a fourth.

Discourses of different kinds of femininities are constantly being constructed within, for example, women’s magazines and advertising. Women’s magazines are targeted at different kinds of readerships and construct their discourses accordingly. The discourses and their “performances” are then suggested to women, as Bordo (1993) has shown when linking, for example, women’s performance of

their femininity to modern consumer culture. In their discourse, women's magazines and advertising treat the female body as text where "freedom and self-determination [are] celebrated" (Bordo 1993: 38) to the extent that the body no longer exists; it is only materialized as meanings.

Discourses, say constructing femininities or masculinities, can interact to support each other, but they may also contradict and even subvert each other. This struggle between discourses can be understood as the competition for dominance grounded in relations of power and ideology (Fairclough 2001: 45; Mills 2004: 38) where ideology is a construction upheld by those who benefit from it. Discourses are one way in which ideologies negotiate positions of power. At the time of democratic elections, for instance, the political parties in competition for votes will strive to establish their positions through discourses (concerning politically topical concepts such as the EU membership) in which their ideological stance is made clear in relation to that of other parties. Another example can be found in discourses such as those of femininities which circulate in society. For instance, the popular discourse of woman as the "dumb blonde" is contested by the discourse of films such as *Legally Blonde*³ which describe how a woman discovers that, besides wealth and beauty, she also has an intellectual capacity which she can draw on.

Identities constructed by discourse are not fixed but can be manipulated. Women may choose to vary their performances for different audiences and contexts, as Coates (1996) points out. For example, a police officer at work performs another kind of femininity from the one at home with her children and family, and, maybe, a third one when she spends an evening with her friends in her spare time.

Discourse, such as the dominant discourse of the *Cosmo girl*, is constructed of *repertoires*. Repertoires have been identified by Wetherell & Potter (1988: 172) as "the building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena". For example, in the old *Cosmopolitan* where the dominant discourse was that of a homemaker, the descriptions of how she cooks excellent dinners for the family, looks after her children and husband and never puts her own needs first could be such repertoires.

Repertoires are the recognisable patterns formed by recurring themes. Recognisable patterns in discourse were first identified within the social sciences by sociologists Gilbert and Mulkey (1984) who named them *interpretative repertoires*.

³ *Legally Blonde 1* starring Reese Witherspoon as the blond law student was released by MGM in 2001, *Legally Blonde 2* in 2003.

They found that scientists *organized* their accounts to describe and give their interpretation of actions and beliefs in a way suitable to a specific context (Gilbert & Mulkay 1984: 14). Within social psychology, Wetherell and Potter (1988) have followed Gilbert and Mulkay and used the same concept of the repertoire: the term interpretative repertoires. Within sociolinguistics, Sunderland (2004: 47), for example, refers to repertoires as countable discourses and calls them *descriptive*, understanding their function as being to describe. Also within sociolinguistics, Mills (2004: 44) uses the concept of countable discourses and describe their constituents as “web[s] of practices”, that is, ways of talking about a specific topic, an event or an object, thus constructing it.

The third important element in the conceptual framework of this study is the *theme*. *Themes* are individual statements about an event or an object and they recur to form repertoires. My definition of the theme follows that by Mills (2004: 54) who has described themes as linguistic elements which vary in length from a word and an expression to a whole sentence. Also (Foucault 1972: 32) described them as occurring irregularly over time. When they construct one and the same object they form groups which are the discursive formations of Foucault (1972: 38), that is, a traceable thematic regularity. For example, a repertoire of excellent dinners could consist of themes such as delicious meals at bargain prices, making most foods at home, etc. Also, if a repertoire of friendship is part of the discourse of the femininity of the *Cosmo girl*, themes of friendship might refer to the strength of friendship, the importance of it, and preserving friendship. The themes can occur in different editorial texts and refer to various contexts, such as a school reunion, in an advice column, or in a personal letter. Together they form a group constructing the performance of friendships: a repertoire of friendship.

The groups of recurring themes in the editorials and feature stories can thus be identified as repertoires. When identified, repertoires can be classified according to their themes, and named. The principal repertoires are expected to form the discourse of the *Cosmo girl* (*a fun, fearless female*), while others are expected to form a subverting (or competing) discourse. The point of interest will be the interface where repertoires meet and how the magazine dealt with those from a discourse challenging the dominant one.

The assumptive hypothesis will be tested in this study by answering the three questions set above concerning the discourses of the performances of the *Cosmo girl* in the editorials and feature stories respectively, and how the magazine deals with competing discourses. This is done by conducting the stages of repertoire analysis described by Potter and Wetherell (1987). Wetherell and Potter describe repertoires as suitable basic analytic units (1988: 169) consisting of a “limited

range of terms” deriving from certain metaphors, and signalled by certain expressions or “figures of speech” (1988: 172).

The ten stages of the process of Potter and Wetherell’s (1987) repertoire analysis are as follows. The first stage is setting the research questions, stage two consists of selecting the data, and stage three is the collections of records and documents. Stages four and five consist of the interviews with respondents and transcription of the material. The purpose of stage six, the coding, is to identify possible themes and decide on the groups to which they might belong. In stage seven, the actual analysis, the groups of recurring themes are identified as repertoires. The validation of the findings is stage eight, and the writing of the report is stage nine. The tenth and final stage is the application of the findings according to the research conventions of social research. (Potter & Wetherell 1987: 160-176)

To suit the purpose of the current study, the analysis process has been modified from the one outlined by Potter and Wetherell (1987). The analysis thus consists of the following stages: Stage one, the setting of the research question; stage two selecting the data; stage three, the collections of records and documents, which in the current study meant background information and statistics concerning *Cosmopolitan*, its circulation, financial development, and the principles behind the work of the editors. Stages four and five, interviews with respondents and transcription of the material, were omitted. By contrast, stage six, the coding of the themes, was undertaken with great care, as was stage seven, the analysis where repertoires were identified. The findings were validated in stage eight, and the writing of the report was undertaken in stage nine. The tenth and final stage was the drawing of conclusions.

The coding at stage six provides the foundation for the ensuing analysis. This is where the recurring themes are identified and those related to each other sorted into groups. At stage seven, these groups may, or may not, be found to form repertoires. The example below illustrates how two themes referring to the behaviour of the *Cosmo girl* recur to form a repertoire which ultimately, may be part of the magazine’s dominant discourse of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. The themes that can be identified in Example (1) are self- confidence and individuality.

(1) I have always been a *Cosmo* (italics in the original) girl [...]

It was *Cosmo* [...] that made me believe I COULD (capitals in the original).

I could leave that boyfriend, who had reduced my self-esteem to the size of a pea. I could learn to love (well, like) my ginger hair!

I could learn to type, move to London and con someone into actually employing me. (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial, Oct. 2004)

The themes belong to the same repertoire; one which could be named a repertoire of independence. As the themes recur and are supported by other related themes, the pattern they form will become clearer and the repertoire can be properly named. In this example, the recurring themes of courage to do something (*I could* repeated three times) and acceptance, and even love of oneself, suggests the repertoire of regaining lost self-confidence and determination. Self-confidence and individuality are supported by her determination; she will rid herself of dead weight (the boyfriend), move, acquire skills and find a job. Such is the behaviour of an independent *Cosmo girl*!

In the analysis process the recurring themes forming the repertoires of the editorials and the feature stories will be identified. The emerging repertoires will be named, both those forming the magazine's dominant discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity, and those forming a competing discourse undermining that of her ideal performance. For example, in an editorial, one theme may be *freedom* as in "freedom to travel the world" (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial, Jan. 2004); another might be *choice* as in the "many choices available" to women (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial, Aug. 2004). Together these themes indicate the possible existence of a repertoire which describes the *Cosmo girl's* performance of her *independence*. In a feature story, by contrast, a theme could be that of debts, such as loans accumulated while at university (*Cosmopolitan* UK, April 2006: 94). The theme may point to the existence of a repertoire of *financial trouble* which in turn indicates the existence of a competing discourse limiting the *Cosmo girl's* choices and her performance of her independence.

1.4 Previous Research

The last two decades or so have witnessed a number of studies into discourses of femininity and their production as part of the quest to define the various roles of women in contemporary society. The field of research most relevant to the current study consists of studies of these discourses in women's magazines. Some scholars have investigated the development of women's magazines as a commercial product, including the branding of a magazine through its contents, particularly the case of the *Cosmo girl* of *Cosmopolitan*. Others have studied reader reception and readers' use of repertoires to describe (or justify/explain) their relationship with the magazine. Some have explored how women use repertoires to construct their own femininity in biographical narratives within the media and outside it.

An example of research into women's magazines as a commercial product is the study carried out by Gough-Yates (2003), who examined the production of dis-

courses by women's magazines in relation to the commercial demands, focusing on the connection between publishing, markets and readerships and the way this connection dictates the contents of the women's magazines. Gough-Yates points out that the discourse of the "new woman" and her lifestyle was the construction of media professionals, such as publishers, journalists and advertisers, who jointly constructed her. The "new woman" was tailored to suit the young, middle-class (and mainly white) women who were identified as having an increased purchasing power to buy the products advertised in the magazine and through that attract the sponsorship of the advertisers to the magazines (Gough-Yates 2003: 38). Gough-Yates places the birth of the *Cosmopolitan* epitome the *Cosmo girl* in the early 1970's against the background of the emerging discourse of the *new woman* whose femininity was grounded in the commercial interests of women's magazines. The emerging discourse of the new woman was a result of the magazine industry's need to create new markets and new readerships for itself.

The findings of Gough-Yates (2003) are important for the present study as well. The *Cosmo girl* and her performance are constructed as the target group of the advertisers and their products. The advertisers expect the magazine to be a commercially successful product which will also sell their products, or they will withhold their (financial) support.

Studies of lifestyle branding as an aspect of commercialism have also been undertaken with a focus on some women's magazines with global scope. A commercial brand of today does not need to be a physical product. It can also be an intangible value such as the membership in the community created by *Cosmo* for its readers, or a lifestyle such as that of the *Cosmo girl*. Machin and Thornborrow (2003) show how the core values of *Cosmopolitan*, "independence, power, and fun", are used for the purpose of branding: to sell a lifestyle and connected products on a global scale. Analyzing the production of the dominant discourse of *Cosmopolitan* from the point of view of branding and applying multimodal discourse analysis, Machin and Thornborrow (2003) looked at texts describing female agency, women at work and women's sexuality in 44 language versions of *Cosmopolitan*. They found that the brand consisted of a "set of representations and values" (Machin & Thornborrow 2003: 454). The branding of the world of the magazine takes place through discursive practices (which the current study sees as repertoires) which show that these connect the core values of the magazine such as the "specific range of social practices in which women take part" (2003: 454). The discursive practices describe how a woman who is a member of the *Cosmo* community is agentive in her professional and personal life. However, according to Machin and Thornborrow (2003: 468), these models are not presented as realistic but rather as "playful fantasies". The reader is not expected to understand them as

descriptions of reality, but more as an invitation to take part in an entertainment provided by the magazine. Machin and van Leeuwen (2005) found that the magazine makes conscious stylistic choices to construct the *Cosmo girl* lifestyle. Fusing the concept of style from sociology and CDA, Machin and van Leeuwen regard style as the expression of identity and values (2005: 577). They show that the magazine has a choice of linguistic styles to construct lifestyle and the styles are linked to the magazine's commercial purposes. It may use advertising style which includes direct address, the use of evaluative adjectives and poetic devices. It can also draw on the descriptive qualities of the fashion caption, the reliability of the expert's opinion, aim for the trendiness of the current street style, or the conversational tone of friends chatting (Machin & van Leeuwen 2005: 588, 593–596). All these function both as pointers to a particular (youthful) lifestyle and stimuli to buy products advertised in the magazine.

Some studies of branding have examined the use of a specific structure to construct women's lives in the texts of *Cosmopolitan* on a global level. Machin and van Leeuwen (2003) show that the magazine constructs the *Cosmopolitan* femininity on a global scale through a specific *problem-solution discourse schema* which functions as a model for constructing texts. Applying CDA and focusing on two domains of female agency, work and sexuality, they (2003; 2004). In their 2003 study they show that the magazine constructs the *Cosmopolitan* femininity on a global scale through a specific *problem-solution discourse schema* which functions as a model for constructing texts. Applying CDA and focusing on two domains of female agency, work and sexuality, Machin and van Leeuwen (2003: 496) identify the three key genres in 40 articles in seven languages of *Cosmopolitan* as being problem-solution genres, case stories and expert discourses. Equally, the problem-solution schema underlies texts in other genres than those of problem-solution. The model is global and it is adapted to conform to local discourses in the respective language and national culture. The magazine constructs woman's life metaphorically as a struggle in an unfriendly world. Women adhering to the *Cosmopolitan* community share certain values; they have the same goals in life, that is, to gain independence, professional success, and sexual satisfaction. Nevertheless, solidarity is not among the values shared within the community. Machin and van Leeuwen (2003: 510) found that *Cosmopolitan* uses the problem-solution schema to construct women's social life as a struggle for survival in a precarious world of unstable relationships where she has nothing to rely on except her own resources. The magazine's advice takes the form of simple, strategic suggestion for how to overcome obstacles and achieve these goals. Applying genre analysis and modality analysis, Machin and van Leeuwen (2004) also investigated the *Cosmopolitan* representation of women at work. They show that, while the formats such as the problem-solution schema are increasingly homogeneous,

the discursive construction of their content is increasingly differentiated and localized. The discourses are presented as practical solutions, not ideologies, and naturalized into global truths about human nature (Machin & van Leeuwen 2004: 118).

Finally, Machin and Thornborrow's (2006) study on the use of sexuality for branding shows that a discourse of women's sexuality is used to signify the brands of magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour*. The discourse conveys the core values of the two magazines, power and freedom. With CDA as the theoretical framework and using Wodak's discourse historical method (see, for instance, Wodak 2001a; 2001b), Machin and Thornborrow found that the two magazines create a fantasy space where women define themselves through the values they hold and the consumer products they use (2006: 173). The magazines' discourse constructs empowering sexual activities as social practices which require a particular lifestyle based in consumption. However, there exists a contradiction in that these empowering practices are possible only in the fantasy spaces (in "staged scenarios" such as the nightclub activities described by the magazine), and not in the everyday, social domain (Machin & Thornborrow 2006: 184). Consequently, the discourse of sexual empowerment in the mediated space of a magazine such as *Glamour* is threatened by discourses from the situated world. It may be challenged by a discourse which constructs the woman as, for instance, submissive, or alternatively, a victim. The mediated performance of female sexuality described in the magazine cannot be realized as a social practice in the situated world; such an enactment of sexual power might put them at risk of being abused. There are also other constraints; the performance of sexual empowerment appears to be reserved only for those who conform to the physical requirements, as illustrated in the researchers' comment (below) about the women in a nightclub story included in their data:

The larger woman, however, wears a draped silk robe, while all the other images show slim young women either dancing together, or on tables, all dressed in a similar style. This is power, then, but only for slimmer women. (Machin & Thornborrow 2006: 182)

Thus, the woman's physical appearance (she is "larger") undermines the discourse of sexual empowerment. Empowerment is, after all, clearly not for all women.

One example of studies into reader response is the study by the communication scholar Joke Hermes (1995), who, using the concept of *interpretive repertoires* that is, the "recurrently used system of terms" of Wetherell and Potter (1988: 171), found that readers construct ways of talking about reading women's maga-

zines. She conducted interviews with readers and approached her material using grounded theory, by first posing an open ended research question (1995: 176–208). Since her informants referred to “common or shared knowledge”, she assumed that the number of shared sources of cultural knowledge is limited. Once she had identified a repertoire, which was built by recurrent themes, she went through the material again from the particular perspective of those themes (Hermes 1995: 204). She found that the readers use specific repertoires to explain why they read women’s magazines (Hermes 1995: 31). They construct their own repertoires about the magazine to explain *how* and *why* its contents make sense to them. They employ two descriptive repertoires to explain why they read the magazine and two other repertoires, which Hermes calls main repertoires, to explain how the magazines are relevant to them. The two descriptive repertoires 1) refer to the relaxation the magazine offers and 2) how easily they fit into the women’s everyday lives. The readers find them easy to pick up and just as easy to put down when other chores present themselves. The two main repertoires identified by Hermes (1995: 31, 41, 45) explain how women’s magazines offer advice which may be relevant to readers in various life situations. These repertoires are those of connected knowing and practical knowledge. The repertoire of connected knowing deals with trouble which befalls other people and offers the reader the possibility of vicarious suffering, which helps her (or him) to deal with insecurities and prepare her for possible future crises. The repertoire of practical knowledge serves two purposes. It rationalizes reading and buying the magazines in terms of their practical use, but it also allows the reader to indulge in a “temporary fantasy of an ideal self” (Hermes 1995: 39). The advice given covers fields from cooking recipes to knitting pattern and suggestions about books and cultural outings. It gives the reader the opportunity to imagine herself as skilful in various fields of life. The reader also constructs the advice as benefiting the house-maker and, through her, the whole family. A study of *Cosmopolitan* may show that it offers its readers a similar temporary fantasy, that of being able to control one’s appearances.

A different approach to repertoires was adopted by Siivonen (1999; 2007), who focused on how women constructed themselves when interviewed for a newspaper or a magazine. There the women themselves produced a particular discourse of femininity. Siivonen’s two studies are qualitative studies from a perspective connected to critical text analysis. The interviewees were women at a turning point in their lives or careers. In her 1999 study, Siivonen found that women interviewees consistently describe their experiences through linguistic choices and topical motifs/themes. In her expanded study in 2007, which combined critical text analysis with journalistic gender studies, Siivonen found that women interviewees in two newspapers and four weekly magazines construct their lives in

terms of inner conflicts (Siivonen 2007: 17–18, 262–263). These result from the ambiguous “double bind” created by contradictions between private life and work life, between mother/housewife and the professional role; a kind of conflict not referred to by men. The women in her research material were in a process of change (which was one of the reasons why they were interviewed) and the turning points, whether factual or mental, were narrated metaphorically as life journeys. In the portraits, the interviewees construct themselves as successful, and Siivonen provides two different explanations to their success; direct success and reflective success. The women of direct success are life travellers who do not encounter problems or adversities, whereas those of reflective success reach their destination through hardship and choices (Siivonen 1999: 97–98; 2007: 297). In *Cosmopolitan*, the *Cosmo girl* can be understood to represent direct success, while the reader in need of advice represents reflective success.

One example of the construction of women as successful is the study of Wagner and Wodak (2006) of biographical narratives outside the media. They concentrated on the discursive construction of identities, describing discursive self-presentation and performance of success, and found that modern successful women have a choice of discursive strategies to represent themselves and their success in life. Their study, set within linguistic gender studies, shows that women use metaphoric frames to represent themselves as to desires, identities and values. Their data consist of the biographical narratives of eight professional women in the fields of, for example, multimedia companies, and firms providing software accounting services and architectural planning. The women describe themselves as creating space and life, doing team-work, being a main actor on the stage and a mover, and enjoying good life, but also being in the right place at the right time. The researchers are able to identify event-based sources influencing the progress of the lives of these women. The events may be negative such as a problem finding a balance in life, and experiences of anxiety and defeat. They may also be positive such as receiving support from mentors who guide the women through difficult times, and experiences that help them form a strong sense of self. (Wagner & Wodak 2006: 402–407.)

Although important background for the present study, none of the above investigations have focused on competing discourses introduced by *Cosmopolitan* itself. This study explores how *Cosmopolitan* UK includes competing discourses to the dominant one of the *Cosmo girl* and how it remedies the gap between the two. While Hermes (1995) concentrates on how the readers understand the purpose of the advice of a magazine, this study investigates in which context and what advice *Cosmopolitan* UK produces to bring the competing discourses in line with the dominant one. As opposed to Machin and van Leeuwen (2003), who have empha-

sized the problem-solution schemas as a recurring structure in articles in women's magazines, the present study regards advice to the reader as a strategic move to return the reader back to the *Cosmo* world. Competing discourses will, thus, be left with only one function to serve, that is, the means of authenticating the imaginary *Cosmo* world without disruption.

1.5 Sequence of the Study

This thesis is divided into six chapters and will proceed as follows. Chapter 1 has provided a general introduction to the area of research. Chapter 2 has two foci. One is the history of *Cosmopolitan* which started in the US as the family magazine *The Cosmopolitan* in 1886. The other is the developments in the field of market research resulting in the creation of the *Cosmo girl* as a marketing device to target prospective readers and advertisers worldwide in a large number of languages. Chapter 3 will deal with the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. It will discuss the central concepts of the study, that is, discourse, themes, and repertoires. It will outline the method of repertoire analysis to identify themes which form the repertoires of the discourse constructing the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. Chapter 4 will deal with the findings from the editorials. Chapter 5 will deal with the findings from the feature stories and discuss whether and how they differ from the findings presented in Chapter 4. In Chapter 6 the findings will be discussed with reference to the assumptive hypothesis and the contribution of the study will be evaluated in relation to earlier studies. In what follows, the development of *Cosmopolitan* magazine will be outlined, and the identification of the *fun, fearless females* as a target group discussed.

2 THE *COSMO GIRL* AND THE *FUN, FEARLESS FEMALES*

Without modern market research, a concept such as the *Cosmo girl* would not exist. Today, publishers of women's magazines as well as those of other magazines commission market research to identify their target group reader. Once the information has been obtained, the publisher can make decisions about how to reach and engage that reader. The *Cosmo girl* is the result of such a process and her purpose is to serve as a marketing device for the magazine (Gough-Yates 2003: 111-112). Her existence must also be seen against the commercial background of the extremely competitive market for women's magazines.

Some 300 years before the construction of the modern *Cosmo girl*, women readers were identified as a target group with interests of their own. A magazine called *The Ladies' Mercury* was launched in 1693, and although it had a short lifespan of four weeks only, it featured what was to become a staple ingredient in women's magazines: relationship problems (Hughes 2008). For about 150 years, the ladies' magazines were written and read by the elite. The appearance of the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* in 1852 marked a change as to the target audience and the content of the magazine. The new target group consisted of middle-class wives and mothers who did their own household work. The content featured columns about crafts, pets, cookery, how to make daily life easier, and a problem page. On a stroke of genius, the magazine introduced fashion coverage, and published colour plates of young ladies wearing the latest from Paris. The readers were provided with paper patterns and advice how to make the fashionable garment themselves; the format of women's magazine as we know them had been born. Incidentally, another characteristic of early women's magazine publishing was that the publisher/editor was a man. (Hughes 2008)

There were also early voices for women's rights to an identity of their own in society. The *Englishwoman's Journal* advocated legal and economic independence for women (Hughes 2008). It was published 1858-1864 and its target group consisted of upper middle-class women, with money of their own, who wanted to detach themselves from possible economic disasters brought about by fathers, brothers, and husbands. The magazine emphasized professional education for girls, for them to avoid the traditional fate of the destitute gentlewoman: finding a position as a governess. (Hughes 2008)

Thus, the interests of the reader who in the 20th century was to become the *Cosmo girl* had already been identified in traditional women's magazines. This chapter will deal with the development of *Cosmopolitan* and its epitome, the *Cosmo girl*.

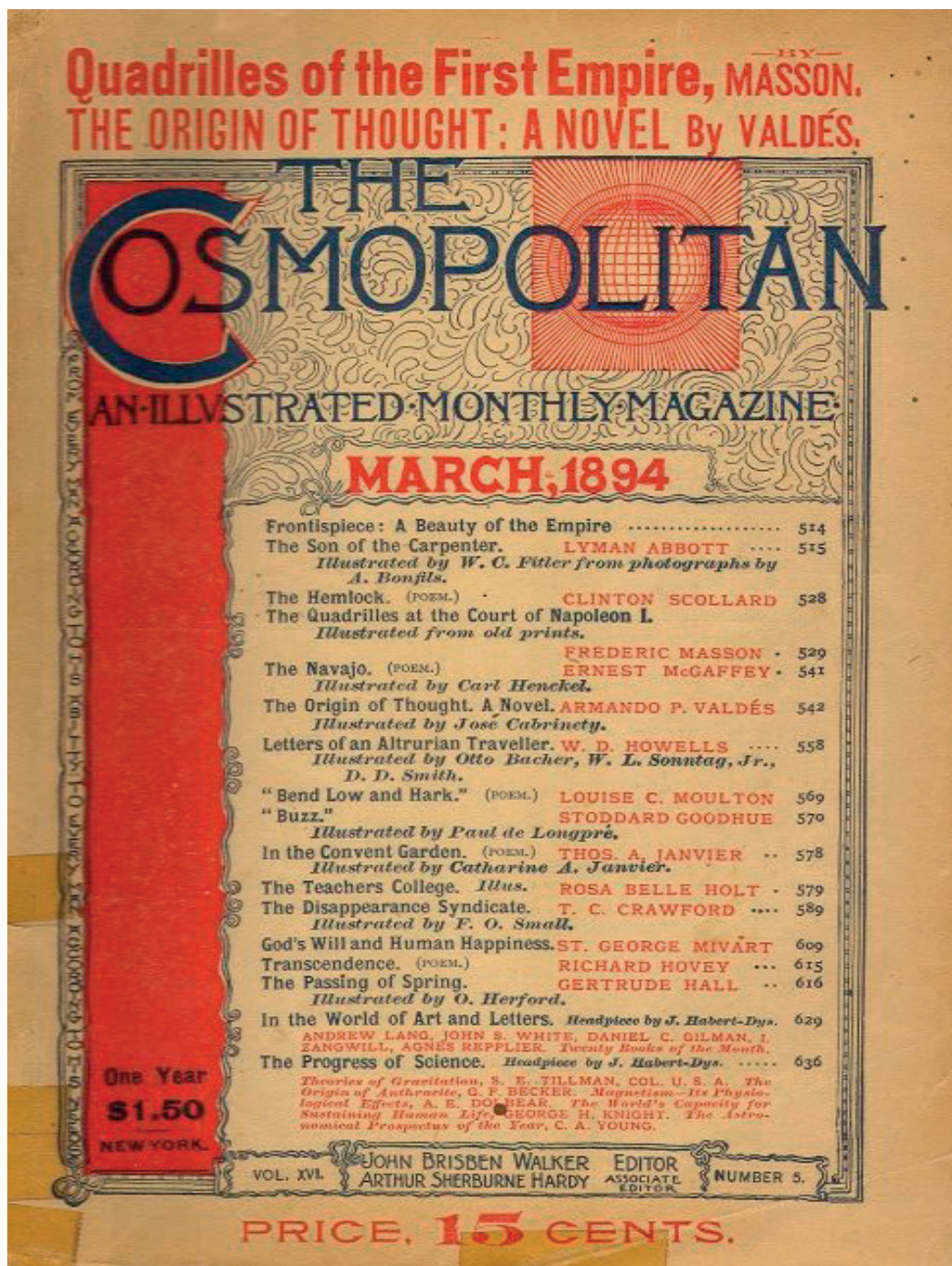
First, it will briefly outline the development of its predecessor *The Cosmopolitan* from a family magazine in the late 19th century to what it is today in the middle of the 20th century. Then the discussion will move to the magazine as a marketing enterprise and illustrate the economics of the women's magazine market in the UK in the early years of the 21st century.

2.1 *Cosmopolitan* Across Time

The Cosmopolitan was first launched in the US in 1886. Paul Schlicht, of the publishers Schlicht & Field of New York, announced that it was a “first-class family magazine”. He declared that, among the general interest issues, it would also have “a department devoted exclusively to the interests of women, with articles on fashion, interior decoration, cooking, and the care and management of children” (*Cosmopolitan* (magazine) 2013)⁴. With these themes, *The Cosmopolitan* reached a circulation of 25.000 copies in 1888 (Vandelay 2009); at the time, this was considered a moderate success. The following year the magazine was, nevertheless, taken over by John Brisben Walker, with E.D. Walker as the editor. The new editor made some changes to the contents of the magazine and identified its target group as both men and women who would be interested in contemporary fiction (Vandelay 2009). The magazine was turned into what was to become a leading forum for fiction. It featured authors including Annie Besant, Ambrose Bierce, Theodore Dreiser, W.D. Howells, Rudyard Kipling, Jack London and Edith Wharton (McGuire 2010). The publisher's redefinition of the magazine's target group as fiction readers proved to be successful, and by 1892 the circulation had climbed to 75.000 copies (Vandelay 2009) and would later expand to 200.000 (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2016).

The Cosmopolitan of the 1890s featured illustrated articles on American life, travels and popular science, as well as literature and poetry. For instance, the contents of its March issue 1894 were listed on the cover page (Picture 1). The issue featured stories with enticing titles such as “A Beauty of the Empire”, “Letters of an Altrurian Traveller” and “The Disappearance Syndicate”. There were several poems such as “The Navajo” and “Transcendence”, as well as a novel, “The Origin of Thought”. There were also sections such as “In the World of Arts and Letters” and “The Progress of Science” where the latter dealt with various phe-

⁴ Paul Schlicht's statement has one occurrence on a Wikipedia page describing the history of the magazine from 1886 to the present day.



Picture 1. Cover page of *The Cosmopolitan*, March 1894. The magazine was then in its first decade.

nomena such as gravitation, magnetism, and the capacity for sustaining human life from the natural sciences.

The titles suggest a variety of interests. Some titles construct a reader who is interested in the technological developments and geographical explorations of the era. Stories about scientific progress offer knowledge and stories from faraway places tickle the reader's imagination. Others assume that the reader enjoys fiction as well as poetry and that s/he takes an interest in American issues such as that of the native Navajo.

A decade later, in 1905, W. Randolph Hearst bought *The Cosmopolitan*. He then identified a target group of readers who were interested in investigative journalism. These readers were men and women with an interest in American society but also those with money to spend, not only on a daily newspaper, but also on a magazine. Hearst's first measure was to add Charles Edward Russell, an investigative journalist, to the magazine's staff (Vandelay 2009). Still, the target group of fiction readers was still regarded as important, and, therefore, alongside investigative reporting, the magazine retained its focus on fiction, as evidenced by the publication of writings by authors by among others Sinclair Lewis, David Graham Phillips, George Bernard Shaw, Upton Sinclair, and Ida Tarbell. The editorial mix of investigating journalism and fiction was successful for decades, and in the 1930s the magazine had achieved a circulation of 1,700,000 copies. The publisher had succeeded in identifying the readers who had the means to consume the products of the advertisers of modern commodities. At this point the magazine's advertising revenue rose to \$5m. During World War II the magazine's circulation reached 2 million copies.

Nevertheless, in the 1950s, the readership had started to decline, and new target groups had to be found. It was clear that the contents of the magazine had to be developed according to changes in society. The mixture of journalism and fiction was about to change and less attention was to be put on fiction⁵.

In 1965, Helen Gurley Brown was called in to re-invent *Cosmopolitan* (Vandelay 2009). With a background in advertising and an informed sense of what was happening in society, she identified the magazine's target group: the young, single woman who prepared herself to catch the man she wanted and who needed advice about how to improve herself, and sales increased (McGuire 2010). Helen Gurley Brown was able to build on her own previous work, and develop her experiences.

⁵ Ernest Hemingway, nevertheless, was one of the authors whose fiction was still published in *Cosmopolitan* in 1950. His novel *Across the River and Into the Trees* was published as a serial story from the February to the June issues before it was published as a book in September 1950 (Forsgård 2011: 286).

In her book *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) Helen Gurley Brown had already identified the basic ingredients for the future concept of the *Cosmo girl*. These included men, careers, body work and beauty work, fashion, an apartment and money, which were all listed in the subheading of her book; *The Unmarried Woman's Guide to Men, Careers, the Apartment, Diet, Fashion, Money and Men* [sic]. Helen Gurley Brown used her own life as an example and in the book she describes her own development: "I think I deserved him [the man she married]! For seventeen years I worked hard to become the kind of woman who might interest him." (Gurley Brown 1962: 4)

Indeed, Helen Gurley Brown has influenced the magazine to such an extent that editors still today refer to her as "the legendary *Cosmo* founder" (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial, August 2004). Given the history of the magazine as described above, this is not quite correct. She did not start the magazine, but she reinvented it in its modern form. She should, therefore, be regarded not as the founder, but the innovator who made the magazine into what it is today; also, she was to be its editor for 32 years. In 1967, with her as the editor, *The Cosmopolitan* dropped the article and became *Cosmopolitan*.

A decade later, by the UK launch of *Cosmopolitan* in 1972, the target reader of *Cosmopolitan* had been identified and the reader was a woman doing "domestic work, beauty work, sex work" (Gough-Yates 2003: 110, 112). In the vocabulary of the time, "sex work" simply meant an active sex life. She was a woman with an education, a job outside the home and money of her own to spend. This was, according to the marketing jargon, "the new 'liberated' woman" (Magforum 2001-12). By the end of the decade, the target group had been epitomized into the *Cosmo girl* and *Cosmopolitan's* transition from a family magazine into a women's magazine had been completed. Yet another decade, and the 1987 market research specified the reader as more educated and with more money to spend, and her main interests had shifted in less than two decades from domestic work to career issues. With Helen Gurley Brown, *Cosmopolitan* introduced the close-up cover photo of a woman who appeared to be aware of fashion, but also of her performance and her sexual appeal; mostly "a model in minimal clothing", according to McGuire (2010). She was the *Cosmo girl* who was both the reader and a description of the femininity to which the reader would aspire (Picture 2).



Picture 2. Cover of *Cosmopolitan* UK December 2011.

For the past 40 years, the only changes on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* cover have been the clothes, the make-up and the hairstyle following the changes in fashion and part of how the magazine has constructed the ideal performance at any given point in time. The cover has regularly featured a single woman, a reference to individuality or occasionally a few women together. The woman for the cover (usually a model or a celebrity) has been chosen, as Whitehorne (2007: 41) puts it, “to portray the mood and aims of the magazine” and her function is to be a “stylized, idealized mirror” of what the reader “could be like”. For instance, the

cover of December 2011 shows how beach fashion (the strapless top, the shorts) has invaded the domain of party outfits (the selling line calls it “fierce fashion” and promises “482 super-glam looks to steal the spotlight”). Moreover, the hair one wants in 2011 is “sexy”, while in previous decades it would have been described to fit the trends of that period. Otherwise, the cover has featured a woman in a self-confident pose and, possibly, looking a bit cheeky. The *girl* of the cover of December 2011 looks at the reader in a mock salute with the caricature of a wink added.

Cosmopolitan has continued to develop to appeal to new groups of readers who require new perspectives on what it is to be a woman in their time. These groups consist of young women who want to enjoy themselves: family duties, domestic chores and job issues are excluded, and a salary is a prerequisite for a woman to put on the performance of the party girl. Social changes and the introduction of the birth control pill gave rise to the feminist movement of the 1970s and, subsequently, created a large group of single, self-supporting women. The contemporary single career woman may want to invest in herself and in becoming attractive, just as her sister in the 1960s. Although today, their first aspiration may be not to marry but to pursue their careers. In many places all over the world, marriage has been replaced by relationships and a woman may want to build a relationship on choices she can make for herself. This view is shared by a number of women in the global sisterhood of *Cosmo*.

Magazines and their target groups have become global. The launching of individual magazine titles worldwide has been made possible by the globalization of enterprises, among them the media companies. Indeed, the foundation for the globalization of the magazine industry was laid as early as 1910, when Hearst set up his National Magazine Company (Magforum, Hearst UK 2001-2012) as a tool for controlling and marketing his diversified magazines to their separate target groups, one of them being *The Cosmopolitan*. It would, as described above, take six decades and a remodelling of the magazine to establish it on the domestic American market for women’s magazines. To launch *Cosmopolitan* abroad would take further domestication of the content according to the target culture.

The launching of the first international edition of *Cosmopolitan*, *Cosmopolitan* UK, was a result of and made possible by multinational media ownership. It was also one of the first examples of the globalization of an individual women’s magazine title. The launch took place in the UK in 1972, and the publisher was ACP-Nat Mags, which was a joint venture between Australian ACP and Hearst’s National Magazine Company. The founding of Hearst Magazines International in 1989 heralded the continued launching of *Cosmopolitan* worldwide.

Towards the end of the 20th century the pace of media globalization accelerated. The strategy of the US parent company was to publish titles internationally through the new company and thus attract brand advertising worldwide. The strategy has been successful and today *Cosmopolitan* is published in 34 languages and 58 editions which are distributed in over 100 countries (Vandelay 2009). In addition to the US and UK editions, *Cosmopolitan* now publishes in, for instance, Australia, Brazil, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hong Kong, Japan, Sweden and South Africa, as well as in countries in Latin America. The launching of the 60th international edition of *Cosmopolitan* took place in April 2010, in Vietnam (AmCham Vietnam in News 2002-2015). Thus, *Cosmopolitan*'s description of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity is being made available across cultures and languages. The *fun, fearless females* worldwide are invited to adopt her performance and join her community although in a locally modified form.

This subchapter has dealt briefly with the development of *Cosmopolitan* over time from a family magazine to a women's magazine. In what follows, the importance of market research for the development of the concept of the *Cosmo girl* will be discussed, and the economic importance of the women's magazine market in the UK in the early years of the 21st century will be illustrated through some key figures.

2.2 Market Research and the *Cosmo Girl*

The *Cosmo girl* is a product of market research, which provides information of how the magazine should structure its contents in order to appeal to a *fun, fearless female* and attract her as a reader and consumer. Publishers, editors and market research construct the magazine's discourse of her performance, leaving scant margin for a competing discourse.

Market research originates in quantitative demographics (Brierley 1998: 39), which developed towards the end of the 1800s. Demographics classified the subjects according to their occupation, income, sex and age and combined these to anticipate spending habits. Lifestyle research, as it developed (Gough-Yates 2003: 62–63), began to classify people according to their subjective beliefs and attitudes. The magazines themselves reflect this change and their contents and discourse are tailor-made accordingly. Today readers of magazines are defined with accuracy, and the reader of a magazine can even be epitomized, as is the case with *Cosmopolitan*'s *Cosmo girl*. The publishers know who the *Cosmo girl* is, her age and what her hobbies and interests are. She and her lifestyle and, most im-

portantly, her spending habits, remain the same regardless of the country, language or culture (Machin & van Leeuwen 2003: 510).

Today's *Cosmo girl* is a young professional woman with an interest in her health, beauty, career and relationships. In 2007, the median age of the reader of *Cosmopolitan* UK edition was given as 28 (National Magazines, Median Age of *Cosmo Girl* 2006⁶). However, parental concern has been expressed in the media and on the Internet that the actual reader is in fact younger, perhaps a teenager who would like to find out more about adult life and her own sexuality. By 2010, the publisher gives the median age as 27 (National Magazines, Median Age of *Cosmo Girl* 2010⁷), although by 27 a significant number of readers can be expected to be in a relationship, married or with children.

A women's magazine is a marketing and advertising enterprise with two sources of revenue: circulation and advertising. It competes with similar products for its share of the readership market and the advertising market. *Cosmopolitan* UK, as an English-language magazine has both a national and international market where it competes with other titles for sales and advertising revenue. The entire brand *Cosmopolitan* in various languages is, above all, an important market place for international brand advertising. Western, and specifically American, consumer culture is spreading, and there is a move towards this "common global culture" (Allen 1995: 114) in which audiences are addressed as if they were homogeneous. If the spending habits are spreading, they are, in fact, becoming homogenous. The English-language *Cosmopolitan* (both the UK and US edition) competes on the international market and advertisers are well aware of this. They are competing in other countries both with domestic titles and also with other English-language editions of, say, the French titles (*Elle*).

For its revenue, thus, a magazine depends on the successful combination of the interest of its advertisers and readers. The advertisers' interest is in the number of readers and their buying power, while the readers' interest is mainly in the contents of the magazine. For instance, according to the National Readership Survey (NRS) 85% of UK adults read a consumer magazine, and, in 2008, consumers spent more than £2bn and advertisers nearly £750m on consumer magazines (Consumer Magazine Facts & Figures 2009). If the interest of one of the groups

⁶ The site is no longer available and access to NatMags statistics has been restricted. The printout from the 2006 webpage is given as Appendix 1 to this current thesis.

⁷ The NatMags Rate Card for 2010 claims that *Cosmopolitan* reaches "1 in 3 ABC1 women aged 18-30 every year". ABC1 is a term used in demographic classification indicating the three highest social grades. The site is no longer available, and the Rate Card 2010 is given as Appendix 2.

fades, then the interest of the other diminishes as well. The result is a downward movement, that is, the circulation spiral. The opposite is also true: an increasing number of readers results in increased advertising and a positive circulation spiral. Ideally, to keep the interest of both groups, the lifestyle promoted by the magazine needs to attract and retain the attention of the readers and also support and, hopefully even enhance, the consumption and sales of the products of the advertisers.

The launching of a magazine begins with the publisher's business plan. In order to transfer their proposal into a successful business venture, they need to know who the readers of the magazine could be. The target group of readers is identified through market research based on the publisher's idea of who the future advertisers could possibly be. The target groups will, according to magazine industry customs, be reviewed at regular intervals, and redefined.

As economic and social structures change, new market research methods are required to identify (new) consumer groups. The development of the western industrial economy in the mid-1900s increased the number of people with money to spend on consumer goods leisure, while industrial mass production interacting with social and cultural changes resulted in the growth of a commodity culture. These changes created new target groups which advertisers needed to identify. To this end, different methods of market research were needed to define and redefine consumers and readers. By the late 1970s, market research had moved from the traditional post-war quantitative market research based on demographics to a qualitative lifestyle research using first segmentation by 'attitude' and then by 'lifestyle' (Gough-Yates 2003: 2, quoting Winship 1987: 46-47; Gough-Yates 2003: 62, Brierley 1998: 40). The reader of women's magazines was no longer identified statistically or geographically but according to interests. She was no longer one in a group of women aged 25–35 living in Yorkshire; she was now a single woman in Yorkshire who was interested in her looks and had money to spend on cosmetics, clothes and travels. The publisher of *Cosmopolitan* UK commissioned a survey of shifts in spending, work and childbearing trends in the UK in 1987 whose findings were compared with those of the 1971 survey, preceding the launch of the UK edition of *Cosmopolitan*. It became clear that an increasing number of young women went into higher education, and the earning potential of women under 35 had increased by nearly a quarter. Also, the number of children in childcare had increased by 76 per cent, indicating a higher percentage of women in working life. Focusing on the number of women with an income, the magazine was consequently calibrated to target the specific group of young, independent women with money to spend. (Gough-Yates 2003: 111-112)

If the target group of a magazine needs to be redefined, the contents of the magazine need to be revised accordingly. Redefinition is necessary and new target groups need to be found if the readers, their life situation and interests change. This, in turn, is both the cause and the result of the social change and economic development. A growing economy will, on the one hand, increase power and the number of people with money to spend on magazines. A recession will, on the other hand, restrict spending, and thus reverse the process. Another reason for changes in the target groups can be found in the shifting focus in the fields of cultural values and social or political agendas. Tougher competition, such as between *Cosmopolitan* and *Elle*, may also cause changes.

Magazines can adjust to changes in consumer habits in society either by taking into account the new interests of their original target group, or by finding new readers. Competition in the magazine market is tough, and calibration to the needs of a target group and the demands of the advertisers has become an on-going process. The spiral needs to remain positive and both readers and advertisers kept satisfied with the magazine. Still a change in the ideology of the magazine does not always guarantee success. While this may be the case, the change can also result in dwindling interest from the readers and/or advertisers and, in the worst scenario, in the death of a magazine.

Indeed, some calibration processes have succeeded while others have not. One unsuccessful enterprise was the re-launch of *Honey* in the UK in 1980. Since the magazine had first been launched in 1960, it had been “a glossy shop window for the latest in fashion and beauty products” (Winship 1987: 44 in Gough-Yates 2003: 83). In the late 1970s its circulation had started to fall, and the magazine was losing advertisers. In the following decade the sales were dwindling. New readers and advertisers had to be found, and in 1980, the magazine was re-designed and re-launched in an expensive marketing campaign. The re-launch was intended to keep the old readers as well as to attract new ones.

The new magazine featured material such as career issues which went beyond fashion and beauty and were, supposedly, of interest to the new woman. The new *Honey* was targeting a specialist audience with its ‘more thinking’ editorial, and by adding political and feminist issues to its familiar lifestyle identity. However, readers as well as advertisers rejected the new identity profile. Old readers could not recognize themselves in the redefined woman and the magazine failed to attract new groups of readers as well. The new editorial mix of lifestyle and feminism made important advertisers uncomfortable and insecure about how to address the reader-consumer. The lifestyle promoted by *Honey* appeared to work against the brand image of the products of the advertisers. *Honey* sales and adver-

tising revenue continued to fall, and the magazine was discontinued in 1986, six years after its re-launch. (Gough-Yates 2003: 83-84)

To secure the support of its advertisers and its advertising revenue, the magazine needs to design its contents to support the marketing propositions of the advertisers. Moreover, the case of *Honey* illustrates that for a magazine to be financially successful, the promoted type of femininity needs to be in line with its target group. Simultaneously, its contents need to be in line with the brand image of the advertisers. In *Honey*, some advertisers were comfortable with the changed image while others were not, and Gough-Yates (2003: 84) points out that “individual advertisements could, indeed, work against the grain of the magazines’ lifestyle image. The non-traditional lifestyles promoted [...] could also work against the brand image of the advertised product”.

The failure to correctly identify the ideology and lifestyle of women consumers will result in the withdrawal of advertisers from a women’s magazine. This was the case of *Ms. Magazine*, as Gloria Steinem (1990) has shown. Steinem was the co-founder and editor of the feminist *Ms. Magazine*, and she attempted to attract advertisers that would not normally be interested in women’s magazines and simultaneously develop advertising to respect women. The magazine did not, at first, have any advertising, but later invited producers of merchandise used by both men and women (cars, insurance policies) to advertise in *Ms.* However, the majority of advertisers were not prepared to advertise in a magazine that appeared to work against their idea of the lifestyle of their target group and, indeed, against the commercial goals which are behind advertising as such. One instance illustrates this issue: an effort was made to persuade an advertiser of cosmetics to invest in the magazine on the assumption that the target group of the magazine *Ms.* constituted an interesting market for their products. The magazine’s argument was that the readers were active professionals and potential consumers of cosmetics both for leisure activities and in work-related activities. The male representative of the cosmetics advertiser was not convinced but argued that “*Ms.* readers are not *our* women.” (Steinem 1990: 175). He identified the readers of *Ms.* as self-sustaining professional women, while his target group traditionally was the woman of leisure without money concerns. Because of the perceived difference in the lifestyles of the target groups, this advertiser and others withdrew their support and the magazine was discontinued.

By contrast *Cosmopolitan*, for instance, has a successful history of redefining and reinventing the reader, and refocusing its content when needed. Accordingly, in the 1980s, ‘sex’ was substituted for the concept ‘relationships’, and the magazine emphasized individuality in its editorial material. A new field of interest for readers was identified; that of popular psychology which offered support in all areas

of life and, especially, in career questions. Some aspects of the old profile were, however, still seen as valid and the focus of the reader on her body, health and fitness were retained as part of the new (Gough-Yates 2003: 112). As a result of the redesign of *Cosmopolitan* UK in the late 1980s, sales started to increase.

As the case of *Cosmopolitan* UK shows, today's women's magazines are marketing and advertising enterprises acting on the national and international markets. In the past decades, media ownership has been globalized, which has facilitated the globalization of individual titles. On the one hand, this has made the competition tougher: the magazines have to compete not only in the domestic market, but on the international market as well. One and the same magazine has to attract a geographically, and also culturally, wider readership.

In the women's monthly lifestyle magazine market in the UK domestic market, competition for readers and advertisers is fierce. A range of magazines target different groups of readers, while competing to keep their existing readers or find new readers within their segment of the existing market. The support of advertisers depends not only on the circulation of the magazine, but on the overall numbers of its estimated readers in the target group. This is why reader surveys are carried out in order to calculate whether one copy is read by two, three, or four persons. Publishers stay alert to a possible decline in sales, which is, if it continues, monitored carefully to spot a possible decline in the number of readers. The publication of a magazine is subject to the same mechanisms as those which rule advertising, as Barwise & Gordon (1998: 195) noted. In order for the magazine to keep its share of the advertising market, or even expand its share, it needs to keep its readers or increase their numbers. Competition exists, not only between established titles striving to keep their market share but also between new titles entering to claim a place on the market as changes over time in the interests of a target group may open up possibilities for new titles to move in. Publishers' view of a possible new target group, together with market research, may identify a new market segment for the launching of a new title. This may target specialized interests such as computers and other electronics, health issues or areas of sports. If publishers launch a new title in order to preserve their share of the magazine market, or because they have been able to identify a new target group which will expand the market. New titles will target a specific new group of readers or compete with existing titles for a target group. For instance, in the UK in 2005⁸, the circulation of women's monthlies increased by one fifth during January to June, which

⁸ I chose the year 2005 because it was in the middle of the time period during which my data were collected.

was, in fact, due to the launch of two new titles, *Easy Living* and *Grazia*, which had managed to target new groups of readers (Magforum, Women's Monthlies in the UK, Circulation 2005).

The changes in the UK market in 2005 were, on the one hand, the result of expansion because of more leisure time and money to spend and, on the other, partly due to a redistribution of the market shares of existing magazines. Changes in magazine circulation are official figures, published annually, which give a basis for year-to-year comparison. *Cosmopolitan*, for instance, saw a decline in circulation during the second half of 2005. Its circulation in July to December 2005 stopped at 461,610 copies. The magazine's adult readership during that same period was calculated as 1,921,000 and women readership separately as 1,719,000. A quick mathematical calculation shows that, on average, four people read each copy of the *Cosmopolitan* UK edition in the latter half of 2005, and nearly all of them were women. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that other magazines were expanding at the expense of *Cosmopolitan*. The magazine's ability to reach its target group had changed due to shifts in the interests of its target group, or because other titles had managed to attract segments of the *Cosmopolitan* target group. In spite of this, the magazine still featured as number three on the UK list of top five women's monthlies. The first on the list, *Glamour*, saw a decline of 5.5 % during the second half of the year, stopping at 585,984 copies. The second largest circulation was that of *Good Housekeeping*, with 468,579 copies and on the increase. *Cosmopolitan* was followed by *Yours* (421,438) and *Marie Claire* (371,444) of which the latter also suffered a decline. The changes meant that the existing magazines aimed at young adult female target groups suffered losses in readership because of the appearance of the new titles. At the same time magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*, targeting the age group of over 35, were more successful in offering content that helped them retain, and even increase, their readership. (Magforum, Women's Monthlies: details and sales 2006-2012)

The recession commencing in 2008 has since influenced also the market for women's magazines. The National Readership Survey for January to December 2009 calculates 1,769,000 readers altogether for *Cosmopolitan* UK, and out of these 1,570,000 were female. From April 2009 to March 2010 the figures were down to 1,716,000 and 1,525,000 respectively. The recent survey for July 2009 to June 2010 gives the magazine's overall readership as 1,687,000 and female readership as 1,504,000 (National Readership Survey 2009). The latest circulation figures from the National Readership Survey show that *Cosmopolitan* UK peaked at 470,000 copies in January to June 2008. During the second half of the same year, July to December 2008, circulation had fallen sharply to 450,836 (National Magazine Company, Monthly Circulation Figures 2008). The decline continues.

In the National Magazine Company Rate Card for 2010 (see Appendix 2), the overall circulation is given as 430,353 for July to December 2009 and the magazine's readership as 1,804,000. Female readership is calculated at 88 % or 1,587,520, and male readership at 12 % or 216,480 readers.

The competition for revenue in the women's monthly lifestyle sector is best illustrated by the figures for consumer expenditure and advertising expenditure in the UK in 2005. During that year, consumer expenditure on magazines increased to pass £ 2.157m. By comparison, consumers were expected to spend £ 2.5 billion on magazines in 2010. (PPA Marketing 2006⁹)

The increase in consumer expenditure in 2005 occurred parallel to increased advertising expenditure. An example of the amount of money flowing through magazine advertising is that advertising expenditure in consumer magazines as a group in the UK in 2005 was £827m (€1.225m), while advertising expenditure in all main media together reached £13.446m (€19.920m). Furthermore, the value of display advertising is especially interesting to women's lifestyle magazines where brand advertising can be connected to the contents offered to the reader-consumer. Display advertising, including brand advertising, formed the largest part of the expenditure in consumer magazines in 2005, £661m (some €979m), while £166m (some €245m) were spent on classified advertising. Consequently, in the UK in 2005, advertising expenditure represented 27.7 per cent of the revenue of consumer magazines, while consumer expenditure, that is copy sales, represented just over two thirds. (PPA Marketing 2006)

This subchapter has dealt with the women's magazine as a marketing enterprise and given brief examples of the competitiveness of the women's magazine market. In what follows, the way in which *Cosmopolitan* magazine calls on its reader to identify herself as the *Cosmo girl* of its target group will be discussed.

This chapter has dealt with the emergence of the *Cosmo girl* as a result of *Cosmopolitan's* transformation from a family magazine into a women's magazine. The focus of the magazine's contents shifted from contemporary literature in the early years of its existence, followed by investigative journalism, to the promotion of a lifestyle built on consumption. Then market research as a means of identify the right target group was discussed. In what follows, a discourse analytical model for deconstructing the image of the *Cosmo girl* will be discussed and placed within the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis.

⁹ PPA Marketing has been converted into Magnetic – The Marketing Agency for Magazine Media in the UK.

3 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: FROM THEMES TO REPERTOIRES

This thesis is set within the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis and it regards discourse as a construction of reality. The approach combines discourse analysis with media studies and investigates the discourse of women's magazines and their ability to construct and suggest female identities. CDA offers one way of looking at the use of language in society from a critical perspective, especially in relation to power and ideology. It provides the social context which is not necessarily present in, for instance, Systemic Functional Linguistics with its focus on grammatical tools to identify meaning.

The origins of CDA can be traced back to both linguistics and social sciences. For example, Chilton and Wodak (2005: xi) place its origins with Critical Linguists such as Fowler, Hodge, and Kress of the University of East Anglia of the 1970s who introduced the analysis of social and political perspectives in the use of language. This had its foundation in the Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth SFL) and Social-Semiotic Linguistics, both developed by Michael Halliday. The development of CDA was further influenced through British Cultural Studies, pioneered by Stuart Hall at the University of Birmingham. The researchers also included in the analysis French post-structuralist theory which, as Blommaert (2005: 23) points out, added to the pool of theories which was later to be adopted by, among others, Norman Fairclough.

Among the leading scholars of CDA, Norman Fairclough was the one who, in a decisive way, contributed to the development of the profile of CDA as we know it today. His background is in SFL and his field of inquiry is language use in connection with political ideology. His *Language and Power* (1989, reprinted 2001) has its focus on how language upholds and changes power relations and how the analysis of language can make such processes more transparent. The purpose of CDA was to function as a tool for (political) change, by making people aware of the fact that language use was ideological, thus enabling them to resist and ultimately bring about ideological change.

The aspect of power relations on which CDA has its focus is inequality in resources and human rights. Some of the basic assumptions of CDA were present already in its early development, among them the assumptions that language is a social phenomenon, that institutions and groups, as well as individuals, have values which they express through language and that readers/listeners have the option to resist texts (Wodak 2001a: 5–6). These values are textual manifestations of an ideology which is based on, for instance, politics, culture, and economics. The

texts express an ideological point of view which serves the interest of the institution or individual producing them. In consequence, the aim of CDA is to investigate whose purpose the texts serve and how they uphold the power of their producer. The main areas of inquiry in CDA are, therefore, texts set in public and institutional contexts, such as political and ideological contexts in the media as well as in advertisements.

CDA is not a methodology in itself but rather a critical perspective of looking at language in society. For example, Blommaert (2005: 21) prefers to call it a 'school' with political, media, advertising, racist, and institutional discourse as its main areas of inquiry. Seen this way, the diversity of research fields requires interdisciplinary research methods.

In the past two decades, two milestones have served to develop CDA further. In 1991, a workshop was held in Amsterdam which Chilton and Wodak (2005: xi–xii) describe as the beginning of a “stimulating and rapidly expanding debate” between scholars about approaches and methodologies. The second meeting was held in 2003, in Vienna, and it also marked the end of a six-year research project led by Ruth Wodak into discourse, politics and identity. The Amsterdam and Vienna workshops were milestones in the sense that among the participants were those who were/would become the leading scholars of CDA. For example, Teun van Dijk had already in the late 1970s taken an interest in texts and discourse as a social practice, and in the 1980s, focused on media discourse (Wodak 2001a: 7). Other prominent CDA scholars in the workshops included Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, and Theo van Leeuwen. They represented various fields of study and also their respective background was different. Ruth Wodak had a background in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics and the focus of her research was on the development of theoretical approaches to the study of discourse. She developed the discourse-historical approach (Wodak 2001b: 64), which follows the socio-philosophical orientation of critical theory. This approach is influenced by British discourse analysis and Halliday’s SFL as well as rhetoric and argumentation theory (Wodak 2001b: 94). Wodak’s main field of inquiry includes discourse in the public and political domain, especially discriminatory discourse such as racism and anti-semitism (in, for instance, Germany and Austria), but also gender studies and organizational discourse.

While Wodak’s discourse-historical approach is informed by critical theory and specifically its socio-philosophical orientation, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen draw on communication theory. They have a shared focus on the investigation of multimodality in the visual public sphere and in media texts (for example, Kress & van Leeuwen 2001). Their respective backgrounds, however, differ. Kress came from applied linguistics and visual communication before turn-

ing to social semiotics. He makes inquiries into the use of language in educational situations and in the media. Theo van Leeuwen has his background in linguistics and communication theory, and he has been instrumental in developing the field of social semiotics. His main area of interest is media discourse, particularly the form of multimodal and visual communication, and his recent work deals with, for example, models of interdisciplinarity in (C)DA (van Leeuwen 2005).

The interdisciplinary nature of CDA is also present in the work of Teun A. van Dijk and Ron Scollon. While the work of van Dijk is set in the theory of discourse, Scollon's work with discourse is also informed by socio-cultural psychology. van Dijk has a background in text grammars and generative poetics and his work is focused on discourse in society. His fields of inquiry are cognitive and include racism, ideology, knowledge and context, particularly in print news. Here knowledge means shared beliefs in an epistemic community and context means the relationship between text and context (van Dijk 2005: 77, 74). His recent work includes studies of contextual knowledge management in discourse production, seen from the perspective of CDA (van Dijk 2005). Ron Scollon, on the other hand, is a linguistic anthropologist. His theoretical background is in sociolinguistics, specifically multimodal discourse and mediated discourse. His particular fields of interest include visual discourse and the communication processes between institutions and individuals. These processes range from issues of local interest in relation to global social concern and resource development to issues of the relationship between action and discourse. However, Scollon also emphasizes shared knowledge as a prerequisite for the production and comprehension of discourse. The transformation of discourse into action can be illustrated with a simple example of the lighting of a camping stove (Scollon & Wong Scollon 2005: 102–106). They describe how the instructions for lighting the camping stove are given on the box and on the stove itself: the user follows them. Thus, the instructions mediate the ensuing action.

The concept of interdisciplinarity is further developed by Fairclough (2005) who advocates a “transdisciplinary” point of view. Instead of an assembly of theories and methods from various disciplines, he suggests a transdisciplinary dialogue between CDA and “the new sociology of capitalism” (Fairclough 2005: 53) which might enrich the analysis in, for instance, a research project on governance. His focus is consistently on discourse as a social phenomenon and he builds on theories of power and ideology derived from, among others, Althusser and Foucault (Fairclough 2001: 14). Fairclough (2001: 84–86) too, in theorizing the social and political *subject* and subject positions in discourse, builds on Althusser's notions (which are based on Marxism) of *social identity* and interpellation, a process in which society addresses an abstract individual, thus producing her as a subject.

Although originally used to describe how the state apparatus positions the individual, the concept has been adopted by scholars of CDA and Cultural Studies and transferred into other areas, such as research into marketing. It can be seen in how, for example, advertisers address people as their customers with the help of the often-used slogan “for you”. The reader/listener is constructed in the subject position of a customer and, thereby, denied the option of not being one. In theorizing the function of discourse Fairclough (1995: 10) in his *Critical Discourse Analysis* builds on Foucault’s concepts of genre and the *order of discourse*. The order of discourse is the notion that objects are given meaning through discourse and that this ordering of objects takes place according to systematic rules.

CDA as outlined by Fairclough (1992) conceives discourse as a three-dimensional phenomenon. At the centre, there is *discourse-as-text*, while *discourse-as-discursive practice* is the second dimension, and *discourse-as-social practice* the third. The dimension of discourse-as-text contains the formal elements of the text, grammar being one of them. The concept discourse-as-text indicates the difference between the two concepts of *discourse* and *text*. According to Fairclough (2001: 20), *text* as a product is only one element in the process of social interaction, *discourse*. The second dimension that of discourse-as-discursive practice, contains processes such as the production of discourse, its distribution through various means (in spoken or written form, in visual form; directly between individuals or by means of mass communication) and its consumption. Thus, this dimension involves both the producers and the receivers (listeners/readers) of discourse. The dimension of discourse-as-social practice places discursive practices in their social context, as one form of social practice. This dimension takes ideology and the workings of power structures into account.

The three dimensional model suggests three stages for analysing discourse. The dimensions correspond to three stages of analysis, that is, *description*, *interpretation*, and *explanation* (Fairclough 2001: 21–22). The first stage, the analysis, refers to the description of texts in terms of grammar, vocabulary, cohesion and structure. The second stage, interpretation, includes the analysis of the interaction, that is, the processes of production and interpretation¹⁰, which form discursive practices and involve both producers and receivers. The third stage, explanation, is concerned with context and the relationship between discursive practices and their social contexts.

¹⁰ Fairclough uses the concept *interpretation* both for this second stage of the analysis, and to denote how participants in a discourse understand the texts (Fairclough 2001: 117–118).

In the manner of all frameworks, CDA has both advantages and limitations. For example, the interdisciplinary approach can function both as an asset and a drawback. It offers the possibility of combining research traditions but can also be perceived as too unstable. Still, its interdisciplinarity stems from the fact that CDA is problem oriented, thus making it possible to integrate theories and methods which help to interpret and explain the object investigated (Wodak 2001b: 69). Given its history and the network of scholars most of whom come from very different backgrounds, CDA is, by definition, interdisciplinary (Wodak 2001a; 2005). Its interdisciplinarity also stems from the fact that CDA is problem oriented, and prepared to integrate theories and methods which help to interpret and explain the object that is being investigated (Wodak 2001b: 69). This gives the researcher the freedom to choose the tools which she estimates will suit her material and each particular project. This freedom of choice can also be understood as problematic. Although the purpose of CDA is clear, that is, to investigate how power manifests itself through language, its diversity of methodologies is complicated.

Another aspect, ideology, may also both deter and encourage scholars to choose CDA as their research methodology. The emphasis within CDA on ideology derives from, among other things, the fact that it is concerned with investigating power relations. Discourses which create, uphold or challenge power relations are set in ideological agendas about how human interaction should be organized. The concept of ideology as used within CDA suggested a political ideology ever since its beginnings in the 1970s, a heritage from the social and political awareness of that era. To some scholars this may be problematic, to others, self-evident (de Beaugrande 2006: 42–45). Ideology can, however, be understood as a comprehensive vision of a desirable state of affairs in any field of human activity. Thus, ideology penetrates our ways of looking at issues in everyday life and underlies the actions we undertake to bring about the desired effects. By this definition, the texts of a magazine such as *Cosmopolitan* can be understood as ideological.

The awareness within CDA of ideological implications does not only have bearing on the research material, but it also concerns the researchers (Wodak 2001a: 9). Moreover, they are expected to declare their position in relation to the domain being investigated. They are expected to be clear about the purpose of their study when explaining their results about the workings of discourse-as-social practice. These expectations are based on the understanding that discourse is never neutral, it always serves somebody's purpose – also that of the researcher.

CDA is, for example, a suitable tool for the deconstruction of media discourse and its descriptions of femininities. This is in line with Wodak (2001a: 1–2), who describes CDA as a method of approaching institutional discourse in contexts such as the media where conflict is explicitly reported or implicitly present in

commentary. CDA has been applied by, for instance, Reisigl and Wodak (2001) who, in their research into racism as a social practice and an ideology, show how it manifests itself discursively in political discourse and media discourse in Austria. Similarly, Sunderland (2004), in her research into magazine and newspaper discourse, shows how gendered discourse is upheld and reproduced.

This current study regards discourse in the media, such as that of *Cosmopolitan*, as a realization of institutionalized discourse in the way described above (Wodak 2001a). The discourse of *Cosmopolitan* is a tool by which the magazine upholds its ideology of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* and asserts its position of power in relation to the reader/consumer such as the power relations described by, among others, Wodak and Fairclough. The relationship between editors/magazine and readers/consumers is an unequal one where the magazine alone holds the right to produce discourse. The assumptive hypothesis of the current study is that *Cosmopolitan* uses its position of power to reduce any discourse which competes with its own discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* to the 'problem-solution' frame similar to that of advice columns. The magazine describes a performance which the reader is encouraged to adopt; this is the discourse-into-action described by Scollon and Wong Scollon (2005). This study also understands the discourse of *Cosmopolitan* to be multimodal as it is realized in written texts, images and layout in a way described by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001). In addition, it is informed by the concept of shared knowledge and understanding of context in the way described by van Dijk (2005). Understanding the context of reading a women's magazine and sharing the knowledge it offers is a prerequisite for readers to make meaning of the discourse of the magazine.

Interdisciplinary CDA, then, offers tools for the deconstruction of discourse while simultaneously allowing for the introduction of methods deemed suitable for the purpose at hand. In choosing CDA, rather than, for example, gender studies or cultural studies, as the methodology for the study of the discourse of *Cosmopolitan*, attention can be focused on the identification of the elements forming its discourse of ideal femininity: the individual repertoires and the themes which give rise to them in the two genres, editorials and feature stories.

In what follows, discourse as a construction of reality will be discussed first, and this will be followed by the description of repertoires as systems of meaning, and, finally, the method of repertoire analysis, which is needed for the deconstruction of the discourse.

3.1 Discourse as a Construction of Reality

In our everyday life, we use language to make meaning of the world around us and to convey to others our understanding of that world. We make meaning of it by describing it or naming its details to people we meet, whether events in our daily lives or global developments and disasters. Our world is both situated and mediated to the point where the separation of the two may no longer be possible. Our descriptions are very personal because they are firmly set in our own experiences and frameworks. For instance, if we describe an event we have witnessed together with a colleague, our constructions of what happened are likely to differ, at least to some extent. One of us may include details which the other chooses to omit and our interpretation of the meaning of the details may differ. When we describe the world around us and convey this understanding to others we also construct our selves. In what follows, the concept of discourse will be discussed.

“Discourse” is an abstract concept used to refer to the production of meaning through language. Discourse consists of groups of “discursive statements” (Foucault 1972) which are gathered around specific themes. This study refers to the discursive statements as repertoires. The word “discourse” is not unproblematic, as Foucault (1972) acknowledges:

Lastly, instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word ‘discourse’, I believe that I have in fact added to its meaning: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements; and have I not allowed this same word ‘discourse’, which should have served as a boundary around the term ‘statement’, to vary as I shifted my analysis or its point of application, as the statement itself faded from view? (Foucault 1972: 80)

Foucault thus widens the meaning of the word ‘discourse’ instead of narrowing it down. Sometimes he uses discourse to refer to the abstract concept of discourse, at other times to countable discourses, and still at other times to practices which give rise to statements. He thus uses discourse in three different senses, although his starting point is that ‘discourse’ functions as the frame for groups of (related) statements and single statements. By comparison, Fairclough (2005: 58) describes discourse more simply as consisting of concrete (countable) discourses.

Specific (or individualizable) discourses create multiple versions of reality (Kress & van Leeuwen 2001: 4). An individual discourse can be seen as one, but not the only, version of reality. From this follows, that there is not one reality, but several possible subjective realities. For instance, in an industrialized country, descrip-

tions of different femininities (discourses of how to be a woman) will compete with and dispute each other. A woman may identify herself both as a mother (the discourse of being a mother) and a career woman (the discourse of being a career woman) where the performance of one role clashes with the demands of the other. These are some of the competing discourses describing various ways of performing one's femininity which contribute to the discourse of womanhood in the early 21st century. Other contributing discourses may support or subvert these and each other.

Discourse constructs reality and communicates knowledge of it in a social context. It calls events and objects into existence by speaking of them. Reality does not have meaning before it is organized and given meaning through discourse. Discourse, in turn, consists of discursive practices which are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 2004: 96). We use these discursive practices to construct ourselves and our performances (Sunderland 2004: 174) and to make meaning of the world in which we live. Equally, we can use discursive practices to describe desirable performances in others and suggest these as models. Individualizable groups of statements are spoken and written "utterances and sentences" (Mills 2004: 10) grouped around themes in a specific social context. One such context is, for instance, a women's magazine such as *Cosmopolitan*. The process of reading allows the reader in her own context to enter also the parallel context of the community created by the magazine.

A discourse can be understood as a discursive practice which is also a social practice. Discourses are "linguistic social practices [which] can be seen as constituting non-discursive and discursive social practices and, at the same time, as being constituted by them" (Wodak 2001b: 66). Thus, a discourse and its social context construct each other and develop in interaction. However, a discursive practice may also collide with other social practices. Such a collision between practices may occur in a workplace which takes pride in its policy of gender equality (discursively constructed and set in writing) but still pay smaller wages to female employees (a social, non-discursive practice). Naturally, practices within a social context are always discursively constructed and made available to parties concerned in writing or as word-of-mouth instructions, but the point of interest in this example is the discrepancy between what is *done* (the non-discursive social practice), as opposed to what is *said* (the discursive social practice), i.e. the difference between the action realized according to unwritten praxis (lower pay for women) as opposed to the description of what that action should be (equal pay for male and female employees).

Discourse is produced not only in written or spoken texts, but also through other semiotic practices such as photography and other forms of visual or audiovisual

practices. Fairclough (1995a: 131), for instance, includes non-verbal communication in his definition of texts. In the case of *Cosmopolitan*, the photographic illustrations are important texts and contribute to the discourses of the magazine. Equally, the page layout, the type and size of the font used and the advertisements are understood to be texts. In this thesis, however, only the written texts of the editorials and the feature stories will be the object of study, while the other elements are regarded as supporting them. The editorials are texts communicating knowledge made significant by how the editors have chosen to organize them. In the same way the feature stories are texts communicating knowledge which has been sifted through the editorial sieve and organized to comply with the magazine's discourse.

In addition to social context, the development of a discourse is influenced by the previous discursive practices. Producers of discourse use knowledge of previous discourses and their social contexts to develop new discourses. Indeed, discourse in itself is knowledge (Fairclough 1995b: 18) which producers of a discourse can apply to construct new discourses. For instance, the producers of the discourse describing the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity are able to draw on earlier discourses such as the 1970s marketing jargon of "the new 'liberated' woman" and Helen Gurley Brown's 1960s description of the young, single woman who needs advice about how to improve herself to catch the man she wants.

Discourse is both knowledge of reality (the mediated and situated worlds) and the communication of it by those who have access to it. Discourse draws on knowledge to construct reality in different ways, and it produces meaning by organizing reality into individual repertoires. Thus, producers of discourse with access to particular knowledge can use that knowledge to create discourses which confirm and reproduce their own position of power (see e.g. van Dijk 2003: 355). For instance, a travel agency provides its client with a mediated description of the holiday destination of her choice; a discourse of an ideal holiday. The purpose of this discourse produced by the travel agency is to promote travelling, and thus sales. On arrival at the destination, the traveller will reproduce the statements of that discourse only if her personal experience of the holiday destination coincides with it. However, she may experience the opposite; the mediated discourse does not describe her experiences in the situated world. As a result, she will produce quite different statements about her destination after her journey; at worst, she will use the statements of her travel agency only to contest them.

As knowledge is communicated through discourse, human beings also communicate their recognition of the nature of the discourse (Fairclough 2001: 40). They identify the meaning of a particular discourse and the themes belonging to it. For instance, travellers reading a brochure about a holiday destination identify the

contents as (possibly) valuable information and correctly recognize the discourse as that of a travel brochure. They expect the discourse of the brochure to be built around certain themes, among them places of interest to visit, the level of service at the hotel and the knowledge of the attitude of the locals towards visitors. Additional themes might refer to a repertoire of the sustainability of tourism in general and on that destination in particular, among them themes such as garbage disposal and water resources. However, people would recognize themes referring to issues such as local politics or, at the other extreme, space travel as not being part of the repertoires of tourism. People also understand whether discourses and the themes belonging to them support or subvert each other. For instance, themes constructing a disastrous holiday at a particular destination are obviously in conflict with those constructing a fabulous one at that same destination. People can, thus, identify individual discourses as compatible or non-compatible with their construction of their identity, events and objects. They also have the ability to use discourse to construct themselves as belonging to a specific group or being outside it.

Discourse can also communicate knowledge of belonging and group identity. This is illustrated by, for example, the research of Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1995: 470, 474) on how high school students employ group specific discourses to define themselves as “jocks” or “burnouts”. Through the discourses the students construct their attitudes towards school and their future, their activities in school and society outside school, and their participation in social practices in school and outside. Similarly, the readers of a magazine may or may not identify the discourse of the magazine as compatible with the identity they have constructed for themselves.

The creation of discourse presupposes legitimacy or the right to speak. Only when the producer of discourse has established her/his legitimacy can a discourse be activated and an object called into existence (Mills 2004: 46). Legitimacy is established through authority, through reference to previously accepted authority, by one’s use of a social or contextual position and, sometimes, by simply claiming the floor in a display of power. Authority can be, for instance, that of a teacher in class, or a designated speaker, whose task it is to speak, thus producing or circulating discourse. A dinner table speaker gets her/his authority from the social situation, and an editor’s authority derives from the context of the magazine. The magazines have this legitimacy from the readers and advertisers. If they withdraw from a magazine, it loses its support and subsequently its right to speak and produce discourse is meaningless. Finally, a person who is upset may claim the floor spontaneously and unpredictably to protest as in the previously mentioned example of a discontented holiday-maker contesting the travel agency’s construction of her destination.

Once the right to speak has been established, the producer of discourse defines the field in which the discourse is set. That field is defined by the producer's decision about which discourses to include and which to exclude. The purpose of exclusion is to gain control over the production of discourse (Foucault 1981: 52) by procedures that regulate what is said when, and by whom. For example, *Cosmopolitan* produces a discourse of different ways of being a woman, while a discourse of being an elderly woman – or a disabled one – is rarely, if at all, included. What is excluded from the discourse is equally important to what is included – it may even be more significant. Exclusion is one of the most powerful methods of producing discourse, and this, as Mills (2004: 60) has pointed out, is a paradox. The paradox is that a discourse may be shaped by that which is not present. She claims that exclusion defines the boundaries of a field of discourse, while inclusion describes it. What is excluded does not exist within the parameters of the discourse, but its absence is also significant. So, a discourse promoting consumption may exclude a discourse of sustainable economy. It may also exclude themes of overspending or accumulating debts, since these would refer to the existence of a competing discourse.

The creation of a new discourse to support and verify a previously produced discourse requires knowledge of the existing discourse. This process is, as Foucault (1981: 59) calls it, the “principle of commentary” whose function is to ensure that the original discourse is not distorted in repetition. The commentary repeats a discourse and preserves it. Thus, a new discourse circulates an existing one by commenting on it (Mills 2004: 60). For example, to produce (and re-produce) the discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl*, the editor needs knowledge of how that performance has been described previously. The production process also requires knowledge of the discursive field which is made up of descriptions of how to be a woman today, and its non-discursive social context, the production process of the magazine.

The creation of a new discourse presupposes that the boundaries of a field of discourse be defined. Only then will the production of a new discourse be possible. Defining the boundaries of a field of discourse in a process of Foucaultian delimitation is, according to Mills (2004: 46), the first step towards establishing a new discourse. Delimitation is, in fact, the decision about what belongs in a particular field of discourse. This process is the starting point of subsequent decisions about which individualizable groups of statements to include in a discourse belonging to that field and also which ones to exclude. The delimitation of a discursive field also opens up the possibility for competing discourses to enter that field and struggle for dominance there.

A new discourse may support, verify or contest existing discursive practices. Discourses that support and verify each other belong to the same field of discourse. For example, *Cosmopolitan's* discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity constitutes one such field. In it, the discourse of the *Cosmo girl* as a professional career woman supports the discourse of her as a consumer. However, if a discourse from another field is introduced, an ideological struggle for dominance will begin (Fairclough 2001: 45). This would happen, for instance, if a discourse of sustainable development were to be introduced into the discursive field of the *Cosmo girl*. Such a discourse, featuring themes such as recycling and public transport over private cars, contests the descriptions of the consumerism of the *Cosmo girl* which is part of her lifestyle.

The ability of a discourse to name and organize constructs reality in a way which makes sense to those using the discourse. Objects exist *per se* but cannot be understood until they are named, and thus called into existence through discourse (Foucault 2004: 96). Similarly, events and sequences take place, but they cannot be understood until they are organized in a discourse. Whether a discourse will be recognized as "truthful" depends on its cultural context. A particular culture will, according to Mills (2004: 48), recognize certain sets of discourses as real and significant. For instance, a discourse produced by a magazine such as *Cosmopolitan* is constructed as "true" in its context of magazine reading as part of popular culture activities. This is because the discourse has a clearly defined institutionalized *author* (Foucault 1981: 58), that is, the magazine. This is the case also when the magazine refers to information gained from outside sources or persons interviewed and featured in the magazine. These sources and persons receive their legitimacy through the magazine.

Discourse constructs not only reality, but also identities which fluctuate according to that particular reality. Discourse describes the behaviour and characteristics of a person, thus endowing her with a particular identity. A person can construct herself both discursively and through the way in which she performs her perceived identity (Sunderland 2004: 174). However, identities are not stable but can fluctuate depending on the choices people make about a temporary subject position. In fact, a person may have several sets of performances to suit different social contexts. Performances can vary depending on the audience and context, as pointed out by Coates (1996: 289, 291). This is why one may perform a relaxed "self" in the company of friends, but a more formal and strict "self" when making a public speech. Both identities may be just as true to that one person.

The identities created through discourse serve as proposals of subject positions in their specific context. The discourse of a magazine is one such context where gendered identities are created and suggested to the readers as subject positions

they can occupy. A magazine has the power to position its readers in certain subject positions, thus constructing subjectivity (McRobbie 1994: 180). The reader is interpellated as a particular subject, and her identity as a subject is called into existence through interpellation. For instance, the reader of a magazine is called upon to recognize herself as the career woman and consumer described in the magazine.

Alternatively, however, the reader may choose to resist the discourses constructed and offered by the magazine and choose, instead, to actively construct her own meaning through individualizable groups of statements. These resistant and negotiated readings are not to be confused with competing discourses allowed by the magazine; they may exist within the readership of a magazine. The reader may not be prepared to accept the editor's propositions of a sisterhood or the proposed subject position of a consumer of certain products, as Santhakumaran (2004: 15) has shown in her research. Even if the reader may be prepared to share the membership in a social group proposed by the editor, she will not unquestioningly accept the mediated world in all its detail, nor the identity constructed for her. Instead, she will actively make her own interpretations by constructing a discourse of her own, with repertoires which are relevant to her.

3.2 Repertoires as Systems of Meaning

Discourse consists of repertoires which, in turn, are formed by recurring themes (Foucault 1972, 2004; Wetherell & Potter 1988; Hermes 1995; Mills 2004). Repertoires are (Foucault's) discursive statements grouped around recurring themes and governed by internal rules. Repertoires describe the *Cosmo girl* in the editorials of *Cosmopolitan* UK and the repertoires also combine to form the discourse constructing the modern (*Cosmo*) woman. Also, in the feature stories of *Cosmopolitan* UK, the women interviewed can choose to draw on repertoires provided in the editorials – and the magazine in general – to contribute to the magazine's discourse of a desirable femininity. Equally, they can choose to resist that discourse and introduce a competing discourse. This subchapter will deal with the repertoires as systems of meaning.

The organization of knowledge of events and sequences and their meaning into sets of discursive structures is governed by formative rules. It is only through the regularity of the formative rules that objects can be ordered and called into existence in a discourse (Foucault 2004: 94). These rules of formation are conditions under which the sets of discursive structures exist and coexist, prevail, change and disappear. The discursive structures become discursive practices, or a “web of

practices” (Mills 2004: 44), which are ways of talking about an event; they are established in a specific context in such a way that the event is given meaning and sense in its context. For example, the practice of speaking about death in connection with personal bereavement differs from that of constructing death in, say, absurd drama. To elaborate: if absurdity is seen as the regular formative rule within a particular kind of drama, while bereavement is the formative rule in a funeral context, then consequently death cannot be called into existence as an absurdity in a discourse of bereavement, but only on stage.

The conditions governing the formation of discourses in a discursive field change with alterations in that field (in society) and, as a result of the interaction, with other discourses. Changes in the social or cultural context affect discursive structures, as does the competition between discourses. For example, the discourse of a working woman has changed over time from a discourse of cotton mill workers during the industrial revolution to women moving into secretarial jobs in the 1920s and to a contemporary discourse of women in top jobs. Moreover, the discursive rules are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated (Mills 2004: 88) by the producers of a particular discourse. The discourse of the modern successful woman no longer accommodates the idea of factory work. As the discursive rules are renegotiated, the reality and the identities constructed by the discourses are subject to change.

One such discursive field is, for instance, a women’s magazine such as *Cosmopolitan*, where its editors have the power to produce discourse. The magazine uses that power to produce, first and foremost, the discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. This discourse may consist of repertoires describing her appearance and behaviour. One repertoire may in turn be constructed from recurring themes such as trust, devotion, and support between friends. The internal rules of such a repertoire would exclude themes which would be construed as undermining trust and support, such as betrayal between friends. These themes might belong to a repertoire from another, competing discourse.

Repertoires serve the function of producing meanings to construct a reality and/or confirm a version of reality. They have the power to organize experience and memory and to structure life events into meaningful sequences, which can also be called “narratives” (Bruner 1987: 15). Narratives draw on particular discourses to construct a meaningful sequence of events such as a person’s life story. They tell a story where events cause the occurrence of other events, and the sequence of events has a beginning, a middle where events unfold, and an end. In narratives, human beings interpret and reinterpret their experiences and see their identities confirmed. Narratives are recognized as relevant and significant (Mills 2004: 48) when they confirm existing knowledge which has previously been recognized as

“real” or relevant. For instance, an interviewee featured in a magazine story will draw on knowledge she finds relevant to structure her experiences, which she then recounts in the form of a self-narrative. One such self-narrative is that of a woman who located her long-lost father, who later wanted to marry her half-sister (“My sister became my stepmother”, *Cosmopolitan* Feature Story, July 2006: 109). Narratives do not only recount lives lived; they also construct “possible lives” (Bruner 1987: 15). One of the possible lives is that of the *Cosmo girl* as narrated through the magazine’s discourse of an ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity.

Discourse, then, consist of groups of interrelated repertoires formed by recurring themes. On the linguistic level, recurring statements grouped around a theme form “webs of practices” which Mills (2004: 44) calls the constituents of discourse. On the cognitive level, these structures are underlying systems of meaning, which also the Media scholar Hermes (1995: 31) calls repertoires, to which the themes refer. In her study of the reception of women’s magazines, she found that readers created a repertoire of connected knowing from themes of problems and their solutions to explain why they read women’s magazines (Hermes 1995: 67). This repertoire, thus, consisted of suggestions of how the readers could handle possible future difficulties in their own lives.

Repertoires are practices which can be drawn on and referred to in the production of discourse and recognized by other participants in the discourse. For instance, Hermes (1995: 203) found that her readers of women’s magazines referred to “common or shared knowledge”, and she therefore assumes that there are shared sources of cultural knowledge, which the participants in a discourse can draw on within a culture. The number of these sources is, however, limited. The readers identified the way in which certain topics were spoken of in everyday life and recognized these as discursive practices connected to a particular field. They could locate these practices in their respective domains and refer to them. Nevertheless, the repertoires people use would become unidentifiable to other participants in the discourse if the number of shared sources were unlimited. For instance, the reader of a women’s magazine is expected to be familiar with the discourse of that magazine, and, based on that familiarity, she is expected to make meaning of it.

Repertoires help readers make meaning of knowledge offered in texts. The women interviewed in the feature stories of *Cosmopolitan* UK are expected to choose to draw on the repertoires already existing in the content of the magazine to describe their own life experiences. On the basis of these, they may – (un)consciously – construct themselves as the modern woman of the dominant discourse of the magazine. They may also construct themselves as lacking some

of her qualities in which case they may relate to that discourse in several ways. Still, they will regard the characteristics of the *Cosmo girl* (as, for instance, in a repertoire of success) as desirable, and thus a goal to be attained. On the other hand, they may also find that they are lacking in some of the prescribed qualities, and reject the repertoires describing the *Cosmo girl* as irrelevant in relation to their own life situation and experiences.

Repertoires, as well as discourse, may refer to other repertoires and thus provide examples of intertextuality at work. The term intertextuality, originally coined by Julia Kristeva (Moi 1985: 156; Mills 2004: 137), has come to denote the manner in which texts relate to other existing texts. As repertoires constitute texts, they relate to each other in the same way as texts relate to each other. One repertoire can refer directly to another existing repertoire and the discourse to which it belongs, and even mention it explicitly. So a repertoire of career choices may refer to a repertoire of being a student (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial, Oct. 2004). Reference can also be implicit or indirect and function by association. One way of referring to another repertoire by association is through the use of metaphors and similes, which import meaning from one discourse to another. For instance, the simile “like modern day *Charlie’s Angels*” (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial, April 2004) is imported from a repertoire of agentive performance on television and film into a repertoire of professional performance in the *Cosmopolitan* editors. The metaphor functions as a theme which refers to an established repertoire of professionalism and beauty and, in doing so, validates the repertoire into which it is imported.

Repertoires, which are built around recurring “themes”, accumulate knowledge and build on it as they are repeated. In a study of, say, discourse in a written text, the repertoires and their underlying themes arise out of the material as regularities or patterns after repeated readings (Hermes 1995: 46). Mills (2004: 10) supports the notion of themes forming patterns and describes discourses as spoken or written statements grouped around themes in a specific social context. A theme can be identified as, for instance, a single word, an expression or a metaphor in a statement. The themes refer to other statements with similar themes and when these statements with related themes form a group of statements, they become a repertoire. Thus, in *Cosmopolitan* UK, themes form a mosaic pointing to different aspects of the *Cosmo girl’s* performance. Certain patterns, then, arise out of this mosaic. These are repertoires which provide information about the characteristics of the *Cosmo girl* and they are built on themes such as her education (or lack of it), her profession and earnings, her attitudes, and her behaviour in the social group to which she belongs. Themes give rise to the repertoires which form the discourse constructing the modern *Cosmo girl*.

Discourses, finally, can be *descriptive* or *interpretive* (Sunderland 2004: 46-47) and named accordingly. A descriptive discourse is given a descriptive name such as *a classroom discourse*. An interpretive discourse is named according to “what it [the discourse] is seen to *do*” (italics in original; *ibid.*). Thus, the *function* of interpretative repertoires (and discourses) is not only to describe but to explain and interpret the phenomenon they are dealing with. Their names are also interpretive such as a “dominant” discourse or “a liberating discourse” (*ibid.*). In the case of the discourse of *Cosmopolitan*, the naming goes beyond describing the *Cosmo girl* – it is, in fact, constructing her. Consequently, an appropriate label could be “the discourse *constructing* the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity” instead of the short form “discourse of the *Cosmo girl*”, which will, however, be used for convenience in reporting the findings of the current study.

3.3 Deconstructing Discourse

Discourse, then, is realized through repertoires which are organized round specific themes (Gilbert & Mulkay 1984). One such discourse circulating in society is that of being a modern woman which in *Cosmopolitan* is realized as the discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. That discourse consists of repertoires concerning various aspects of that femininity, such as her personal and professional life, her pleasures and her friendships. So the *Cosmo girl* does beauty work and body work (theme) in order to present herself as an attractive woman (possibly a repertoire of her pleasures) which is all part of the *Cosmopolitan* discourse of the ideal performance of her femininity.

In discourse analysis, the repertoires as they rise out of the research material used for qualitative research are not self-evident. They can be constructed through, for instance, the linguistic themes which recur to form them. Such themes may be the *Cosmo girl* doing beauty work and body work, and presenting herself as an attractive woman; the themes are related and together suggest the existence of a repertoire. The nature of that repertoire will become evident only when more themes are available and they form an identifiable group. It may be a repertoire of the public performance of one’s identity, of contentment with one’s body – or one of sexual pleasures. Repertoires are ways of *organizing* socially generated accounts in order to portray actions and beliefs (Gilbert & Mulkay 1984: 14). Gilbert and Mulkay (1984: 40) found, for instance, that scientists used an *empiricist* repertoire (referring to data and knowledge) in formal accounts and a *contingent* one (allowing for uncertainties) in informal interviews. Both repertoires were *interpretative* in the sense that scientists used them to convey their understanding of how to repeat certain actions or beliefs appropriate to a specific context. Gilbert and Mul-

kay (1984: 39) regarded repertoires as observable patterns which form linguistic registers which can be attributed to a context and drawn upon when reproducing one's understanding of that context.

To some researchers, for instance Wetherell and Potter, the smallest hierarchical unit of discourse is the repertoire. They are "the building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena" (Wetherell & Potter 1988: 169, 172) and therefore suitable basic analytical units. Wetherell and Potter (1988: 172) argue that certain figures of speech usually signal the existence of a repertoire, and any repertoire is constructed from "a restricted range of terms" which have a specific stylistic and grammatical use, enabling researchers to trace the terms to certain key metaphors. The current study, however, understands the themes to provide clues for the identification of repertoires. A theme may be a single word or an expression which indicate the existence of a repertoire. For instance, the expression "the joy of motherhood" is a theme with the potential to evoke several systems of meaning. It might refer to a repertoire of interaction between mother and child, or the physical pleasure of holding and caring for the baby. Equally, a discourse of motherhood may consist of repertoires of caring and responsibility, formed by themes such as those of practical chores, or protecting the child from dangers respectively. Albeit that the focus of a researcher is on the level of the repertoires, the repertoires are not a given element in the data of a study but findings of a discourse analysis (Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen 1993: 28). They are analytical constructions and a way for the researcher to organize her findings. They represent the researcher's reading of the recurring themes in the data and the systems of meaning to which they refer (Hermes 1995: 46).

Conclusions are not drawn from individual instances of words or expressions. It is only when individual examples can be linked together as recurring themes, that these can be interpreted as building blocks of repertoires, as explained by Hermes (1995: 149). For instance, in one of the editorials of *Cosmopolitan*, the metaphor *heart-rending* (theme) in "the heart-rending story of Chantal McCorkle, incarcerated in a US jail for 24 years, for a crime that isn't even a crime in the UK" (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial, Nov. 2004; Appendix 4) clearly shows the editor's stance and functions to evoke sympathy in the reader, constructing Ms McCorkle as innocent (theme) within the British legal system. Also in another editorial there is a mode of expression such as "a massive *girls'* night out" (theme) (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial, Aug. 2004; Appendix 5) referring to a repertoire of homosexuality.

A theme may refer to more than one repertoire. A reference may be found in the form of an expression or a concept which, by association, simultaneously refers to

the possible existence of another repertoire. For instance, in one editorial the expression “a flip-flop-induced one-month stand” (theme) (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial, Oct. 2004; Appendix 6) refers to two other possible repertoires. First, the mention of the summer footwear serves to refer to a repertoire of pleasure: the *Cosmo girl* enjoying her holiday. Secondly, the editor refers to a repertoire of relationships in order to describe the kind of long-lasting friendship she would like to have with her reader; “a meaningful relationship” (theme) in contrast to “a flip-flop-induced one-month stand” (theme). Themes through which the nature of the relationship is described may refer, thus, to conflicting repertoires: one meaningful (possible long-term?), one random.

In the identification of repertoires, the boundaries between individual repertoires in the research material are not self-evident, especially when they intermingle to support each other. They may be intertwined and interacting in the course of one text. A magazine editorial is written as a commentary on the issue or topics it is attached to and, at the same time, it promotes the values of the magazine. Repertoires in an editorial may illustrate the magazine’s stance on the issues in its feature stories and they can only be identified as thematic references to discourses in hindsight. In the case of the editorials of *Cosmopolitan* UK 2004, the editors may be found to move between several repertoires in the space of one short text. The discourse of one editorial describing the *Cosmo girl*’s performance may start with themes referring to the pleasure of shopping (repertoire). It may continue with themes referring to the importance of friends (repertoire), before ending with themes referring to the pleasure of success (repertoire) (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial, March 2004; Appendix 8).

The identification of the boundaries between conflicting repertoires is not always clear-cut. The repertoires may compete or even contest each other in spite of the fact that they are tightly intertwined. For instance, in one of the editorials (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial, Nov. 2004; Appendix 4), themes referring to at least three possible repertoires interact. One set of themes describes a group of “nice, ordinary women, with good jobs and fashionable jobs”. This refers to a repertoire of women’s professional success. Another set describes the same women having lived a life involving a great number of sexual partners; they had “notched up more than a football team between them”. These themes can be understood as part of a repertoire of (sexual) pleasure and the *Cosmo girl*’s right to enjoy her life (which may also be one of the repertoire in the magazine’s discourse of the ideal performance of her femininity). These two repertoires support each other. However, they are contested by a third set of themes referring to the risk of contracting sexually transmitted illnesses (STIs). This theme can be understood to refer to repertoires in a discourse of trouble of which the *Cosmo girl* needs to be aware.

Such a repertoire would, possibly and simultaneously, be one of a number of repertoires constituting a discourse of the *Cosmo girl* learning to deal with trouble. Indeed, when she deals with trouble, the conflicting discourse of trouble is brought into line with the dominant discourse of her performance.

This subchapter has dealt with the deconstruction of discourse through its repertoires. Repertoires are systems of meaning which rise out of the research material. Different researchers use various descriptive expressions to explain the concept of discourses: “discursive structures or systems of meaning” (Foucault 2004), “webs of practices” and discursive structures (Mills 2004), “repertoires” (Gilbert & Mulkay 1984, Potter & Wetherell 1987, Wetherell & Potter 1988). Discourses interacting in the course of one text may nevertheless compete with or even contest each other.

The building blocks of discourse are repertoires (Wetherell & Potter 1988) and repertoires are organized around specific, related themes which recur (Hermes 1995). A theme can be, for instance, a single word, an expression, or a metaphor of varying length (Mills 2004: 54), and they may occur irregularly over time (Foucault 1972: 32). It is only when individual examples can be linked together as recurring themes that these can be interpreted as the building blocks of a repertoire. The individual themes may refer to one or several repertoires. They may refer to repertoires which support each other or, alternatively, refer to a repertoire from a competing discourse. When repertoires contest one of the repertoires of *Cosmopolitan*, and through it the magazine’s dominant discourse, the magazine needs to authenticate its repertoires. In what follows, the ways in which the magazine authenticates its repertoires, thereby authorizing its discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity, will be discussed.

This chapter has dealt with the abstract concept of discourse as a construction of reality and Critical Discourse Analysis as a critical approach for analyzing the ways of talking about a specific topic, an event or an object, thereby constructing it. It has dealt with repertoires as the basic building blocks of discourse and described them as systems of meaning which are formed around recurring, identifiable themes. The chapter has described repertoire analysis a method for deconstructing discourse in the text samples from the *Cosmopolitan* editorials and feature stories constituting the data of the current thesis.

We are all familiar with the nursery rhyme “What are little girls made of?” (*Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* 1969: 100)¹¹. In what follows, we will see what modern *Cosmo Girls* are made of. Using grounded theory, themes recurring in the texts will be identified and related themes brought together and labeled as a repertoire. The repertoires found will then be named according to their themes and classified as belonging to a particular discourse.

¹¹ I cannot resist making this reference, since my very first academic paper dealt with nursery rhymes: it was presented once upon a time in a pro-seminar at the University of Helsinki. Already then, in the early 1970s, I was fascinated by the representation in text of an event or a situation, and the relationship between text and event. In nursery rhymes, this relationship appears to be open to interpretation; equally, the frequently ambiguous meaning of the nursery rhymes offers conflicting evidence for an analysis.

4 EDITORIALS: THE INTRODUCTION OF DISCOURSES OF THE *COSMO GIRL*

In the pages of *Cosmopolitan* UK, the editor conducts a dialogue with her reader/friend. Equally, on the level of content, the two genres of the editorials and the feature stories enter a dialogue with each other. In the editorials, the dominant discourse of the magazine, that of the *fun, fearless females* is promoted and the reader/friend invited to join the party. However, already here, the existence of competing discourses is briefly acknowledged. By contrast, the feature stories have their focus on lives out of control, providing narratives of possible (but still “repairable”) problems. These are problems that the magazine needs to solve; otherwise, the dominant discourse of the magazine would be undermined.

The assumptive hypothesis of this thesis is that there is a ‘division of labour’ between the two genres, so that the editorials introduce the discourses of the *Cosmo girl*, while in the feature stories the situated world meets the mediated world. On the macro-level, *Cosmopolitan* reduces the conflict between its dominant discourse, that of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity, and competing discourses to a ‘problem-solution’ frame. In addition to the commercially driven dominant discourse of the *Cosmo girl*, the magazine offers a competing discourse in the form of ‘authentic’ trouble that may be encountered in the situated world which challenges the former and, hence, the credibility of the dominant discourse of the magazine. Bringing such competing discourses into line with the dominant discourse of the magazine by neutralizing them will strengthen the dominant discourse further and, accordingly, also the magazine as business venture.

In order to test the assumptive hypothesis the following set of research questions were posed: 1) What discourses of the performances of the *Cosmo girl* are introduced in the editorials and what is their function (dominant, competing)? 2) What discourses of performances are introduced in the feature stories? How have they been selected with reference to the dominant discourse (for example, can they be brought into line with the dominant discourse) and also the situated world of the readership (are they feasible within the target age group)? 3) How does the magazine deal with competing discourses? Are they made compatible with the dominant discourse? Can the set-up of a competing discourse and its neutralization be reduced to the problem-solution pattern?

This chapter will deal with the editorials and the repertoires which form the discourse of the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity in answer to research question 1. It will pave the way to feature articles and their topics, and, indirectly,

also the authentication of the situated world in which the *Cosmo girls* live. These will lay the foundation for answering the questions 2 and 3.

The data consisted of twelve editorials from *Cosmopolitan* UK 2004 and 48 feature stories from *Cosmopolitan* UK 2004 and 2006. The purpose of the editorials appeared to be predominantly to establish and continue to strengthen the dominant discourse of the “fun, fearless females”.

In answering the research questions, the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis was used by carrying out a repertoire analysis. The repertoires were identified applying grounded theory where the repertoires rose out of the material after repeated readings. Then the repertoires were classified and named after their themes.

The descriptions of the *Cosmo girl* in the editorials fell into five repertoires. The first one was the *repertoire of independence* formed by the themes of choice and control. It characterized the *Cosmo girl* through her ability to make choices and the control she has over her life. The second one was the *repertoire of pleasure*. This repertoire was formed by the themes of personal and sexual pleasure, and pleasure in looks and success. It described how *Cosmo girls* find pleasure in professional success as well as activities outside the workplace, and how they derive it from investing in looking good. The third repertoire was that of *consumerism*, which covered the themes of shopping and styling. The fourth repertoire was that of *friendship* formed of the themes of support and sharing. It described how the *Cosmo girl* is involved with friends and relatives and asserts that female friendships may last a lifetime. A fifth repertoire, *trouble*, was also identified briefly¹².

In the editorials, the repertoire of pleasure with its three themes, those of personal pleasure, pleasure in looks and pleasure in success, was the most prominent one. These themes appeared eleven times in eight editorials. In three of the editorials there were two references to one or the other of the themes. The May 2004 editorial was built entirely around the repertoire of pleasure and the theme of personal contentment, which was also an important topic in the feature stories of that issue. Also prominent was the repertoire of independence in that two editorials, those of

¹² Three of these five repertoires found in the present study, those of independence, pleasure and friendship, were already identified and named in my licentiate thesis (Höglund 2007), which investigated the editorials of *Cosmopolitan* UK 2004. The repertoire of shopping was not dealt with at the time, although the evidence of its existence was there. The possible existence of a repertoire of trouble was, however, identified already in my 2007 study, where it was called the repertoire of connected knowledge since it appeared to fill the same function as the repertoire of connected knowing found by Hermes (1995).

January 2004 and October 2004, were built exclusively around it. Altogether, the repertoire appeared five times. The repertoire of friendship appeared five times and the September 2004 editorial dealt mainly with friendship, and also with love. In addition to the cases where one repertoire dominated one editorial, there were also cases of two or more repertoires appearing in one single editorial. For instance, three repertoires (independence, friendship and trouble) appeared in the March 2004, April 2004 and November 2004 editorials.

The fifth repertoire the existence of which was indicated in the editorials was that of *trouble*. It appeared six times, and half of the February 2004 editorial was built around the danger of rape and violence to the young modern woman. (Appendix 9). Trouble was, however, only hinted at in the editorials as if the magazine wanted to make it clear that they did recognize that the world was not always “fun” and “pleasure”. The mention of trouble suggested, though, that trouble could be neutralized and the *Cosmo girl* just needed advice – which the magazine would, needless to say, provide.

In what follows, each of the repertoires will be discussed in order of importance starting with the repertoire of independence. The next most prominent repertoire is that of the pleasures of the *Cosmo girl* derived from the themes of personal pleasure, pleasure in looks and pleasure in success will be discussed next. Following these two first repertoires, the repertoire of consumerism inserts itself into the other repertoires so that it is always present in the editorials, indirectly in the mention of the *Cosmo girl* lifestyle, or directly in references to beauty and fashion products. The repertoire of friendship which emphasizes the importance of having both intimate friends and friends and colleagues came as number four as to importance, and finally, the fifth repertoire, that of trouble, was suggested and it served as an introduction to the feature articles that involved the competing discourses.

4.1 The Independence of the *Cosmo Girl*

One of the two most prominent repertoires employed to describe the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity is that of *independence* formed of the themes of *choice* and *control*. In that repertoire, the themes of choice and control, with ensuing independence, are central to the magazine’s discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. Indeed, one can argue that this repertoire revolves round the *Cosmo girl* herself: she has choice and control, and thus independence. Having choice also means having control. This subchapter will discuss the three themes and how they recur to describe independence.

4.1.1 Choice

The main theme of choice is that of the *Cosmo girl* having the option to invest in her professional or personal life. Also, once she has made her (correct) choice, she will have control of her life. The theme of choice ascribes to the *Cosmo girl* the right to focus on herself. The theme of choice as one element in the repertoire of independence is found in the following passage where the choice of professional life is placed in contrast to that of family life.

- (2) I'd always wanted the things that my first ever copy of Cosmo made me believe I could have – not some success-crazed, unattainable version of life, but to live life on your own terms – whether that featured a career, a man, marriage, babies, or not. Whatever felt right for you. (Oct. 2004).
- (3) However, I believe a decade ago, many of us may have felt guilty to admit that, actually, all we really wanted to do was travel the world or perhaps stay at home and bring up a family - we may have felt we'd let the feminists down by choosing either as a career option. Today, feminism means 'choice'. (Jan. 2004).

The theme of choice suggests a young woman enjoying her freedom. Choice is referred to in the expressions *to live life on your own terms, whatever felt right for you*. (Example 2), and the mention of *choosing* as well as the statement *Today, feminism means 'choice'* (Example 3). It appears that the options available to the *Cosmo girl* are in the traditional choice between family and work. Her choice is constructed as either a career or the responsibilities of a mother and housewife as in *whether that [which I could have] featured a career, a man, marriage, babies, or not*. (Example 2). The *Cosmo girl* does not see the option of combining the two. She may want to be a working girl but she will not be a “working Mum” who struggles to combine children, the household and a job. For instance, the latter example connects feminism to a substantial change in women’s life. It also excludes “husbands” who do not have to take care of the bringing up of a family. Does this mean that if you choose a career, you give up a possible family? Also, this clearly concerns only “some” women (those who can have a career); others are excluded. This, of course, evokes the question of whether society has changed much – or not at all. The same question can be posed concerning women’s attitudes.

The options in themselves represent limitations. First, the *Cosmo girl* may not be able to make the choice that might be her favourite option, carefree travelling, as in *all we really wanted to do was travel the world* (Example 3). Her economy, her

relationship, or work responsibilities, may serve to constrain her. Secondly, both the options mentioned, travelling the world or bringing up babies, are constructed as opposed to *feminism*, thus, choosing either might *let the feminists down* (Example 3). Thus, feminism becomes a constraint to stop you from living *life on your own terms* (Example 2). However, it is also constructed as a concept which needs to be included among the values of the *Cosmo girl* if she wants to be politically correct. The magazine gives the reader its own interpretation of feminism. (Example 3).

The possibility of a conflict between the professional sphere and the personal sphere is part of the theme of having choice. Women struggle in their everyday life to combine the two. The theme of choice sees all alternatives as equally valuable. Regardless of which choice a woman makes, the important thing is that she will be allowed to *live life on her own terms* (Example 2). The passages help to underline that the *Cosmo girl* is allowed to (even expected to) focus on herself. The conclusion that can be drawn from these passages that there is no right or wrong in choices, but the choice should be whatever *feels right* for oneself (Example 2). Her independence is self-centred.

The theme of having a choice in life is restricted to the focus on oneself, one's own feelings and aspirations. Unlike her sister of the 1990s, the *Cosmo girl* of the 21 century does not need to feel guilty if she chooses to fulfil her own dreams instead of taking into account solidarity with other women. For example, *we may have felt we'd let the feminists down by choosing either as a career option* (Example 3). Previously, she might have felt guilty about making choices that were not in line with a feminist agenda. Now she has an argument with which to defend her choices: *today feminism means 'choice'* (Example 3).

4.1.2 *Control*

In the repertoire of independence, the theme of choice is closely interlinked with the theme of control. This theme, and the importance of having control over a situation of choice, is found in the following passages.

- (4) But the advice - which said there was lots to be gained from jumping into a situation and taking risks - left a big impression on her [a friend of the editor]. "It actually helped me make my mind up," she told me, before revealing she had taken up the offer - and kept her man, too, since the relationship survived the six-month parting. (March 2004).

- (5) That it [feminism; the topic of the editorial] meant we should strive to be at the top of our careers and that more women should be in the big, decision-making jobs. But today, more and more women are in those jobs. Few of you would be surprised if we had another female prime minister, or a female president elected in the US. (Jan. 2004).

The theme of control describes how a young woman can assert herself in her personal and professional life. The reference to *jumping into a situation and taking risks* (Example 4) establishes what she needs to do to gain control. Control over the personal and the professional areas of one's life do not need to be in opposition to each other as, for instance, in the statement *she had taken up the offer - and kept her man, too*, (Example 4). Thus, for the *Cosmo girl*, control is possible on more than one level. The examples raise questions concerning the characteristics of the target group as to ethnicity, level of education, age, etc.

The possibility for women (some) to be in control professionally in high-ranking positions is also specifically referred to. For example, the statement about women being *at the top of our careers* suggests not only control but also the skills necessary to advance (and not just modestly) in one's career. Women will be *in the big, decision-making jobs* and they will be elected to the highest possible office as in *another female prime minister, or a female president elected in the US*. (Example 5)

The themes of choice and control also interact to suggest that the *Cosmo girl* must be prepared to struggle to pursue her choices in order to gain control, and thus her independence. The process is described, for example, in the October 2004 editorial. The capital letters within square brackets were added for easy identification of the item commented on.

- (6) I have always been a *Cosmo girl*, ever since I picked up my first copy of *Cosmopolitan* as an 18-year-old student in Birmingham – [A] away from home for the first time, terrified and loving it all at the same time. [...]

From the moment I first picked up a copy (or should I say fought over a copy with my flatmates) something clicked, and I began to believe [B] my dream of becoming a journalist on a glossy magazine could come true. That dream had been shattered by a London journalism college [C], who told me I didn't have what it took to make it in magazine journalism (not tough enough, apparently) and sent me packing with tears in my eyes. I didn't know that this very rejection would motivate me for years to come!

It was *Cosmo* (and the many subsequent glossy magazines that have since emulated it) that made me believe I COULD (capitals in the original).

I could leave that boyfriend, who had reduced my self-esteem to the size of a pea [C]. I could learn to love (well, like) my [C] ginger hair!

I could [E] learn to type, [E] move to London and con someone into actually employing me. Better still, I could summon the courage to throw in that job and [E] join a temping agency, in the vain hope of [F] landing a job – any job – on a magazine. And when I got lucky – which by some miracle, I did – I could [F] persuade the Editor to let me write the shopping page, just once, to [F] show her I could do it. (Oct. 2004; given *in extenso* as Appendix 6)

This editorial has the form of a self-narrative (as defined by Bruner 1987: 13) where the narrator (in this case, *I*), narrates her life as a struggle against hardships, only to succeed in the end. The self-narrative of the girl who was to be the editor-in-chief highlights the theme of control. Unlike men, women seldom cast themselves as heroines of their own stories (Coates 2003: 136) but this one does. In the example above, the editor imitates male control and claims equal control for herself in her struggle to make her dream come true.

The self-narrative first introduces the theme of choice to underline the importance of that theme for the theme of control, with which it interacts. It starts at a point where the narrator has very little (if any) control and moves through a process of decision-making to a situation where she is able to make a bid for control. At the start of the self-narrative, the editor is a young *girl* without a clear idea of her future; the statement marked with [A]. She is *away from home for the first time, terrified and loving it all at the same time*. The introduction of the copy of *Cosmopolitan* serves as a first turning point to the self-narrative: she recognizes her dream and finds her goal in life [B]. However, there are obstacles [C] in her way both in the form of a rejection by a college of journalism, the blow to her self-esteem caused by a boyfriend, and body issues such as her *ginger hair*.

Towards the end of the self-narrative the theme of control is introduced to interact with the theme of choice. It describes the possibility of claiming control by making the right choices and how the insecure young *girl* is transformed into a would-be journalist. Her choices [E] are listed in the statement *I could learn to type, move to London* [where the jobs are] and also in her decision to *join a temping agency*. These choices place her in a position where she begins to grasp control (f) as in *landing a job, persuade the editor* and, finally, *show her I could do it*.

The editor's self-narrative is a modern day fairy tale of obstacles to be overcome and problems to be solved. One of the dangers is her own insecurity, which illustrates a point made by Machin and van Leeuwen (2003:503) about insecurity being one of the problems *Cosmo* women have to face. Furthermore, the adversities of modern urban professional life have replaced the dangers of the forest threatening Snow White in the story by the Grimm brothers. In the manner of Snow White (and other fairy tale heroines) the *Cosmo girl* has only her own resourcefulness to rely on in order to survive and find a new life for herself. This is, once more, in line with Machin and van Leeuwen (2003: 503), who describe how the world of *Cosmopolitan* is "fraught with risk and insecurity". It is a world where women have only themselves to rely on if they want to achieve their goals, among which are independence and control.

The editorial above (Example 6) can be seen to serve two purposes. One is to promote the importance of *Cosmopolitan* magazine in a young woman's life. The other is to assure the reader that she, too, can achieve the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity. The *Cosmo girl* gains control after making the right decisions. She makes up her mind about a career and manages to take control of her personal life, as in the editor's self-narrative. This assures the reader that she will be successful when performing as a *Cosmo girl*. It is a fairy tale for the modern, liberated Cinderella in an individualistic world, she who strives to gain control in life through her own qualities; with or without the help of, for instance, professional training. While in the traditional fairy-tale the prize to be won is the prince, in the *Cosmopolitan* fairy tale it is professional success. In the end, the outcome may be according to tradition: she may win her prince, as well.

The second purpose of the editorial is to underline that in order to successfully perform the *Cosmo girl*, the reader needs to recognize the importance of the magazine and its advice. Therefore, the editor constructs the reader as being a part of the synthetic sisterhood of *Cosmo*; she chats to her reader and shows her own vulnerability as one would dare to do with a friend such as in *away from home for the first time, terrified and loving it all at the same time*. (Example 6). The editor recreates the atmosphere of female friends talking as described by Coates (1996: 72). The editor's dreams of the future are presented as options for the reader as well. Indeed, in this editorial she interpellates the reader in the same way which she herself, says she, was interpellated by the articulation of the ideal performance of a femininity in *Cosmopolitan*. The editor encourages the reader to think that she, too, can be successful, regardless of training or background. She reassures her that the *fun, fearless and unashamedly female approach* of the magazine can give an aspiring girl *more than any number of exam passes ever could* (Oct. 2004). Moreover, the advice and the attitude of the magazine are constructed as

more important than education. This, traditionally, is a proposition that most teachers would be prepared to contest.

Furthermore, the editorial suggests that the control of the *Cosmo girl* is not limited to one aspect of life only. Control can be exerted in one's professional life as well as in one's personal life. In this respect she does not comply with the problem-solution schema of Machin and van Leeuwen (2003: 505), who noted that, in the *Cosmo girl*, taking control or taking the initiative is "almost invariably" related to sexual problems.

In short: the editorial tells the reader that when she makes the choice to be a reader of *Cosmopolitan*, she will benefit from the advice of the magazine and learn how to be a *Cosmo girl*. The *Cosmo girl* makes the right choices which give her control. With this position of control comes success, and the income which will enable her to perform the *Cosmo girl* femininity. She is, at last, independent.

This subchapter has dealt with the repertoire of independence and the themes that recur to form it: choice and control. It showed that the purpose of this repertoire, which was frequent in the editorials, was to describe the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. It also showed that the repertoire had two functions: it constructed and promoted the magazine's icon, the *Cosmo girl*, and it provided the reader with instructions for how to claim the same manner of performance for herself, while at the same time reassuring her that she has the ability to do so. From this repertoire we learn that achieving independence is mainly about making the correct choices and finding the right solution for how to be in control.

4.2 The Pleasures of the *Cosmo Girl*

Apart from the repertoire of independence, there was another prominent repertoire in the editorials describing the pleasures which are part of the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity. This repertoire of *pleasure* supports that of independence in that it legitimizes the right of the *Cosmo girl* to focus on herself. It justifies a lifestyle where selfishness is acceptable and describes her enjoyment of her life situation, the pleasure she derives from looking good and working to achieve self-confidence, and the pleasure she can derive from success. The repertoire deals with the sources from which the *Cosmo girl* can derive pleasure: a combination of immaterial and material ones. Some immaterial sources of personal pleasure are her activities, enjoyment from her appearance and, thirdly, pleasure from success. Some material sources are found in the accessories associated with her presentation of herself, or tangible tokens of success. This subchapter will deal with the themes which form the repertoire of pleasure: the right to enjoy what you

are doing, the right to invest in making yourself look good, and, finally, the right to cherish success.

All three themes forming the repertoire of pleasure are references to emotion and, indirectly, also descriptions of states and objects that will give you, or are vehicles towards, achieving pleasure. These references include emotional clichés such as *you love* (Example 7; introduced below), *happiness*, *balance in life that makes them truly content* (Example 8), *hurrah!* (Example 9), *enjoy, feel healthier* (Example 10) and *great experience* (Example 11). Also, pleasure is referred to through the descriptions of events or objects, endowing them with certain characteristics such as *flattering party outfits* [and] *tricks for getting red carpet ready* (Example 7). The former expression assesses the dress: it is “flattering”. The latter is used in a comparative sense to strengthen “ready” referring to the image of celebrities walking the “red carpet” to a reception or an opening night. Even a diet can be a source of pleasure and not a hardship, like *our Happy Diet* (Example 10). Indeed, the diet labelled “happy” will not – unlike other diets, of course – be a hardship.

4.2.1 *Personal Pleasure*

The theme of personal pleasure refers to the *Cosmo girl* finding enjoyment in focusing on herself and her own satisfaction. The theme of personal pleasure evolves around partying, preparations for partying, and consumerism but also around happiness and balance in life. Themes of personal pleasure are found, for instance, in the following passage.

- (7) [...] all the things you love about the party season, without a ‘pull a cracker’ in sight! There are no turkeys or tinsel here – just the very best of the things you love *Cosmo* for. Sexy, affordable and, most of all, flattering party outfits for every budget and body shape; five-minute after-work makeovers you can do at your desk and celebrity tips and tricks for getting red-carpet ready [...] (Dec. 2004).

The theme is found in the descriptions of how the *Cosmo girl* enjoys the (Christmas) party season and the anticipation of it; she *loves* Christmas time. It promotes the usefulness of the magazine. However, the theme also evokes a will to avoid traditional season’s attributes as in *no turkeys or tinsel here*. Nobody wants to be old-fashioned; we live in modern times. Moreover, those traditional ingredients of Christmas were very much family-centred, usually prepared by the housewife or “mum”. This passage might also be read as a hint of the *Cosmo girl* being individualistic; she does no longer have to accept the mass-produced (and cheap?)

attributes of Christmas; "she is allowed to leave home and take her own decisions", go partying which is so far from the old times and customs. Moreover, enjoyment is evoked in a reference to consumption; *party outfits* are [s]exy and *flattering*. She is allowed to dress in a way which would have traditionally meant raised eye-brows and spend money in a way that makes her look and feel good. In spite of the individualism of the *Cosmo girl*, her salary may not allow for an expensive version of individualism; the *party outfits* are also *affordable*. This encourages the all young women, regardless of salary level, to see themselves as included in the circle of *Cosmo girls*; money will not be an obstacle. Finally, the theme of enjoyment is found in the reference to party preparations as in *five-minute after-work makeovers you can do at your desk and celebrity tips and tricks for getting red-carpet ready*. This suggests that after a long day at work (in an office, by your desk; not at the check-out of a supermarket), you do not need to be a professional cosmetologist, nor do you need much time, to transform yourself into a film star (supposedly your idols, although they may use more expensive brands of cosmetics). The theme of pleasure suggests, thus, self-indulgence. It is constructed as the right to do what pleases you and makes you look your best, taking distance from traditional customs and not being too constrained by money and time problems.

Another theme running parallel to the theme of personal pleasure is that of sexual pleasure, or at least the anticipation of it. The references to *sexy* and *flattering* clothes indicate a purpose of the *Cosmo girl*'s aspirations, which is finding a partner. Still, as a modern woman, she may be aiming for a long-term relationship or just somebody with whom to party and have sex with. Nevertheless, it all needs preparations for the ideal performance of the femininity of her choice (or, at least, she is made to believe it is a choice).

The context of the theme of personal pleasure is a lifestyle which presupposes consumerism. The necessity of consuming, regardless of one's (low) level of income, is referred to in the expression *party outfits for every budget*. The *Cosmo girl* needs to consume beauty products, clothes and accessories in order to feel good about herself. As suggested by the magazine, these products are within everybody's reach, and, everybody is supposed to need and want them. Those, aspiring to "natural looks" or worried about harmful substances in cosmetics or the use of child labour in factories where the fashionable (affordable) outfits are made are excluded from the sisterhood of *Cosmo girls*.

There is, however, also a theme of personal pleasure through happiness. There are times when the *Cosmo girl* will pause to ask herself if she is making the best of her life, as for instance, in the following passage.

- (8) [...] I have listened to friends, family, even people I've only just met, talking about happiness. Or, more specifically, finding a balance in life that makes them truly content. Don't worry, I'm not heading for the nearest forest to go and hug a tree, but I do think there's currently a mood around that makes us stop and think about life and wonder whether we are getting the best out of it that we possibly can. (May 2004).

The theme is found in expressions such as *happiness* and *balance in life* which leads to a feeling of being *truly content*. It refers to the *Cosmo girl* feeling the need to find a balance also in her in life and the magazine assures her that she is not alone in this; *there's currently a mood around*. In short, looking for happiness is a trend. Naturally, the *Cosmo girl* wants follow trends. Through the theme she is also provided with a suggestion about how to achieve happiness. The theme is present in the instruction encouraging her to *stop and think about life and wonder whether we are getting the best out of it that we possibly can*. Indeed, when she pauses to scrutinize herself, she may find that she derives pleasure from other things than elaborating on her performance; there may be even more profound pleasure waiting for her after a change in her attitude to life. Needless to say, the magazine authorizes change as long as it does not infringe on the performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity – or her consumption. The above passage refers also, interestingly, to cost-free alternative sources of happiness, represented here by the “hugging of trees” which is almost like believing in black magic. The balance and happiness are outside the not-so-fashionable, cost-free ways of life, for example, in spending money on your looks (you are still young) and your appearance (you can make yourself look good even on a low budget). What you want from life does not include problems that cannot be solved, such as poor education and unemployment, homelessness, racism, disabilities etc.

4.2.2 Looks

Themes of pleasure also evoke the image of the *Cosmo girl* finding pleasure in looking good and having body confidence. The theme of pleasure in looks revolves around body work and beauty work, which are themselves sources of pleasure. This theme is closely intertwined with the theme of personal pleasure. The theme of pleasure in looks is found, for instance, in the following passage.

- (9) Finally, it's holiday time (hurrah!) so now's the chance to relax and enjoy one of the highlights of the year. Read our advice on getting beach body confidence, so you can enjoy your best summer. Plus, our

fashion team has tried on just about every swimsuit and bikini on the high street, so there WILL be one to suit you - promise. (June 2004).

The theme is found in the expressions *relax and enjoy*, *getting beach body confidence* and *enjoy your best summer*. The *Cosmo girl* enjoys working to achieve beach body confidence and anticipates the pleasure of having reached her goal. Only when she has achieved beach body confidence can she relax and enjoy her holiday. *Relax and enjoy* and *enjoy your best summer* could also be used to illustrate the theme of personal pleasure. However, in this context, it is understood to mean enjoyment once body confidence has been achieved.

The reader is given specific instructions about the means of achieving the above goals. The theme of pleasure in looks is also present in the expression *every swimsuit and bikini [...], so there WILL be one to suit you - promise*. The *Cosmo girl* can imagine herself with beach body confidence and looking good in a particular bathing suit. Indeed, this is what Hermes (1995: 39) in her research into reader response called “a temporary fantasy of an ideal self”; a reader imagining herself as the perfect person with looks or skills described in a magazine. Here the editors create the fantasy and offer it ready-made to the reader. Then her body, dressed only in a swimsuit or a bikini, will be able to live up to very close scrutiny indeed. Alternatively, there is a condition attached to her enjoyment of her holiday, which she greets with a cheer, as in the example above. The condition is, that she will not be able to relax and enjoy her summer before she has performed the necessary work on her body and in this problem, the magazine promises to help her.

Achieving pleasure in looks and body confidence does not only require accessories but also a perfect body, which means dieting. This is referred to in the following passage.

- (10) I hope you enjoy the exclusive 28-day diet we've tailored to meet your individual needs (p69) with help from Champneys Health Resorts. You wrote and told us you needed a quick, simple diet to help you either lose weight or just feel healthier, so we came up with our Happy Diet. This easy eating plan should take you through the year without so much as having to count a single calorie and will give you loads more energy. I think we can guarantee a happier and sexier new you in time for Valentine's Day [...] (Feb. 2004).

The *Cosmo girl* needs help with attaining an ideal body, which will give her confidence in the way her body looks. She has a problem and the magazine offers a solution, a diet which works like a miracle: she will lose weight without any ef-

fort on her part. To the magazine, giving advice about dieting may be a controversial issue at a time and in society where weight consciousness has been polarized between, on the one hand, obesity and, on the other hand, eating problems such as anorexia and bulimia. Thus, the magazine carefully places the theme of dieting in the context of self-confidence. It does, however, also support the ideological combination of self-confidence and a slim body, and additionally makes it implicitly clear throughout the visual images (starting from the cover) that the starting point for dieting is not obesity. It also promotes dieting (effortless weight loss) over, for example, healthier eating habits (unless trendy) and exercise (unless trendy). There will be no running in the woods in an old tracksuit.

The theme of pleasure in looks is further elaborated on in the expressions which evoke the pleasurable results of dieting; *This easy eating plan [...] will give you loads more energy* and the result will be *a happier and sexier new you*. The *Cosmo girl* may not be prepared to commit to a serious long-term scheme of losing weight. Therefore, the magazine encourages her to try a quick and, supposedly, tailor-made diet which is labelled *Happy*. The name suggests that she will not feel that this particular diet is hard to follow and as a result she will feel healthier and *sexier*. Once again, a woman's performance is linked to the shape of her body, as Machin & Thornborrow (2006: 182) point out. Moreover, there is again the suggestion that she will attract the gaze of men as she is unlikely to want to feel sexier in the company of other women. The sexuality of the *Cosmo girl* is tied to the opposite sex only, and heterosexuality in her world is an absolute norm.

4.2.3 Success

The themes of success and the immaterial and material pleasures derived from success are prominent in the repertoire of pleasure. The *Cosmo girl* finds great pleasure in experiencing success. Success is perceived as exuberant and energizing and luxuriously intoxicating, it is the pleasure of a dream fulfilled. The theme of success revolves around professional competence and the visual performance which displays the attributes of the theme. The theme is found in the following passage.

- (11) And our girls did a super-impressive job, each of them turned out in sexy pinstripe suits, looking like modern day *Charlie's Angels* delivering great advice for the whole of the US to hear. "It was a great experience, especially being picked up from the airport in the stretchiest limo ever!" Rachel (a *Cosmo* girl if ever I knew one) told me [...] (April 2004).

The theme of professional competence is found in the expressions *a super-impressive job* and *delivering great advice*. The ability to do one's work in an impressive (even "super-impressive") way is constructed as a prerequisite for success. Professional competence (including your looks) will enable the *Cosmo girl* to deliver *great advice*. This is, of course, a stylistic overstatement. To be successful, it is also necessary to grasp the possibility to do one's job in public (which is where the *Cosmo girl* performs) and with the greatest possible audience; *for the whole of the US to hear*. In our time there is, of course, no more reliable confirmation of professional success than being allowed to perform on an American television channel with high ratings.

The theme of successful visual performance of success is found in the expressions *sexy pinstripe suits* and *the stretchiest limo ever!* is important, while in the above example, the clothes and the limousine function as the visual tokens of it. The mention of the pinstripe suits suggests power dressing as the pinstripe suit is a male attire, traditionally associated with business and, perhaps, more specifically with banking. It has later been imported into female fashion as well where it is now established not only for business use but also for festive occasions. Wearing a pinstripe suit does not diminish a woman's performance of her femininity and she is not a man in disguise. She does, however, claim control in the way a man would. The limousine is associated with wealth and transporting celebrities between events. The tinted glass windows serve to prevent spectators from identifying whoever is in the car. At the same time, they also signal that there may be something of interest behind those windows.

Indeed, the *Cosmo girl* knows that she is successful when she can point to established, material tokens of success. The pinstripe suit is such a token, since it is often associated with high-level banking and corporate businessmen. The over-long limousine is another, although its credibility as a symbol of success may have been diminished through its use in too many divergent contexts, from politics to show-biz. The editors' presentations of themselves *looking like modern day Charlie's Angels*, points to a third token of success: the money and the skills to acquire and use the beauty products and beauty services which produce a well-groomed visual effect.

Finally, it can be argued that success is epitomized in the simile of the *modern day Charlie's Angels*. This comparison draws on shared cultural knowledge about the television series or films *Charlie's Angels* (*Charlie's Angels* 2006, 2007)¹³.

¹³ The television series was broadcast on ABC Television Network from 1976 to 1981. The film *Charlie's Angels* was released in 2000, and its sequel *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle* in 2003.

The “angels” perform their tasks while maintaining their female characteristics in dress, attitude and speech manners. Originally, some television critics labelled the show “Tits and Ass Television”, since the three actresses were dressed in a provocative way, performing their sexuality while carrying out their assignments. In the more recent films, the three *Charlie’s Angels* personify female competence and agency by displaying their capacity for violent action in a way established by the genre of (male) action films.

However, although the theme of success is evoked, success itself is not necessarily taken for granted. This is suggested by the expression *It was a great experience*. In other words, it was not an everyday experience: it was something out of the ordinary. The *Cosmo girl* greets the experience of success with youthful self-confidence and amazement. Nevertheless, she thinks she has earned the success she has worked for so hard and one can imagine her claiming her right to it in the words of the hair and body cosmetics advertising slogan¹⁴ “Because I’m worth it!”.

This subchapter has dealt with the themes forming the repertoire of pleasure: personal pleasure, pleasure in looks and pleasure in success. In the editorials, it was one of the prominent repertoires describing the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. It provided a detailed script for how to perform and described the skills and accessories necessary to do so. From this repertoire we learn that creating pleasure in our lives is about finding the right solution for how to look good and become successful.

4.3 Consumerism: Shopping and Styling

The discourse of the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity interacts with and is supported by a repertoire of *consumerism* imported from another discourse existing in contemporary society: the discourse of consumerism. This repertoire describes and supports the lifestyle of the *Cosmo girl* which is associated with the products advertised in the magazine. The repertoire is formed by themes such as shopping, awareness of fashion trends, and styling using clothes, accessories and make-up. This subchapter will discuss the repertoire of consumerism which per-

¹⁴ The slogan of the cosmetics company l’Oréal started out as “Because I’m worth it”. The pronoun has undergone a series of quick changes in the early 21st century from “I” to “you” to “we” so that the television advertisement slogan in 2011 was “Because we’re worth it”. The official l’Oréal website, however, in July 2011 still featured “Because you’re worth it”.

meates most of the other repertoires forming the discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl*. This repertoire provides a description of the circumstances under which the ideal performance can be attained and acted out.

The repertoire of consumerism is a given in the magazine's discourse of the *Cosmo girl*. The reader performing the *Cosmo girl* cannot choose not to be a consumer, and the magazine addresses her as a consumer. The foundation for the mediated world around her is consumption. Indeed, she is consuming for success. Themes challenging the repertoire of consumerism are not allowed. Nevertheless, some non-commercial themes such as balance in life (through tree-hugging; Ed, May 2004) are allowed since they do not compete with the performance of a femininity built on consumption. Indeed, the theme of balance in life functions to support repertoires such as those of independence and pleasure. To illustrate the repertoire of consumerism and its interaction with the other repertoires, this subchapter will include in the discussion two examples already used to point to themes in the previously discussed repertoire of pleasure.

In the repertoire, the themes of shopping, awareness of fashion trends and styling intertwine with the theme of choice, evoking the repertoires of independence and pleasure. In this context, however, choice is only possible within the given framework of consumerism. Ironically, consumerism therefore serves to rob the *Cosmo girl* of some of her independence. Through its suggestions, the magazine claims control over her choices. The magazine becomes a shopping guide whose services she has already paid for. It makes the choices for her, and those choices are naturally based on the commercial interests of the magazine and its advertisers; interests which are not (necessarily) those of the consumer-reader. The themes of consumerism are found in the following passage where the editor promotes her magazine.

- (12) [...] 'just a magazine' – full of fantastic advice that really works on all areas of your life, must-have shopping ideas, gorgeous beauty, and far more must-read features than any other women's glossy. But, I love *Cosmo* and I hope that over the coming months, you will too. (Oct. 2004).

The three themes of the repertoire are found in the reference to *fantastic advice* [on shopping and the reader's presentation of herself] *must-have shopping ideas*, and *gorgeous beauty* where they evoke shopping as obligatory and awareness of fashion trends as a prerequisite for the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. In addition, the role of the magazine is emphasized through the references to *fantastic advice* and *far more must-read features*: the magazine has the expert knowledge to advise her on how and what to choose. Although *just a magazine*, it

can guide her because it knows what the reader wants. Moreover, it has the resources to produce *fantastic advice* and *shopping ideas*. It tells her how to make the right choices when surrounded by the temptations and encouragements to consume. Drawing on the repertoire of pleasure, it knows that her goal is *gorgeous beauty*, and to attain such a state she needs to identify the items which are *must-have[s]*. However, it also restricts her choice by indicating what is *must-have* and *must-read*. She is invited to think that she needs the beauty products and the clothes to enable her to perform the femininity promoted by *Cosmopolitan*.

The themes of the repertoire of consumerism appear eleven times in eight editorials. In the editorials included in the data of this study, only four of them (January, August, September, and October 2004) do not contain a reference to pleasure. The themes are closely integrated into the repertoire of pleasure as well. The themes of the repertoire of consumerism appear in, for instance, the following example (to illustrate how the themes from consumerism insert themselves into other repertoires, this is the example given previously as Example 7 in the discussion of the repertoire of pleasure in 4.2.1).

- (7) [...] all the things you love about the party season, without a ‘pull a cracker’ in sight! There are no turkeys or tinsel here – just the very best of the things you love *Cosmo* for. Sexy, affordable and, most of all, flattering party outfits for every budget and body shape; five-minute after-work makeovers you can do at your desk and celebrity tips and tricks for getting red-carpet ready; (Dec. 2004).

The three themes are found in the reference to fashion, shopping and favourable presentation of oneself in *Sexy, affordable and [...] flattering party outfits for every budget*. The new clothes suggested will benefit how the *Cosmo girl* looks because they are *sexy* and *flattering*. She will need them when performing her *Cosmo* femininity; therefore, it is essential that she acquires them. However, the clothes are also *affordable* and the *Cosmo girl* will be able to squeeze them into her budget – whatever its volume. Also, the *five-minute after-work makeovers* and *celebrity tips and tricks* presuppose the purchase of make-up and make-up accessories. Along with the magazine’s advice of what to do and how to do it comes the advice about what is needed. The advice brings to mind media descriptions of celebrities and advertisements in the glossies or on television, and this intertextuality is not lost on the *Cosmo girl*. She is prepared to consume to feel beautiful and successful in the way of the characters in the mediated world of consumerism.

In this world there is no room for themes and repertoires evoking a discourse which might contest consumption. The magazine does not allow them. Instead, it

locks the *Cosmo girl* in time in that world, as if she were on a never-ending shopping spree. She is constructed with the conviction that she will want the beauty, success and attention associated with celebrities, and her proverbial fifteen minutes of fame, as well. She is deprived of her own powers of decision when it comes to consuming.

However, in the editorials there are also some references to non-commercial values such as balance in life, which cannot be purchased. The magazine allows these references since it can limit them, making sure they do not collide with its themes of consumption. One such theme of balance is found in the following passage (given previously as Example 8 in the discussion of the repertoire of pleasure in 4.2.1).

- (8) [...] I have listened to friends, family, even people I've only just met, talking about happiness. Or, more specifically, finding a balance in life that makes them truly content. Don't worry, I'm not heading for the nearest forest to go and hug a tree, but I do think there's currently a mood around that makes us stop and think about life and wonder whether we are getting the best out of it that we possibly can. (May 2004).

The theme of non-commercial values is found in the references to *balance in life*, being *truly content*, and the need to *stop and think about life and wonder whether we are getting the best out of it*. The theme is set in the context of *friends, family*. This context may possibly entice the *Cosmo girl* to focus on issues outside herself and her own interests. The theme indicates that she can look for non-commercial values inside herself by searching her own mind and also by focusing on issues surrounding her. She may choose to *stop and think about life and wonder* to find her balance in life. In addition, she may develop a concern for the environment, albeit this will not necessarily lead to a decision *to go and hug a tree*. However, there is no suggestion that the *Cosmo girl's* possible awareness of non-commercial values might extend to an awareness of issues such as sustainable development and, therefore, help her to position herself more sceptically towards the carousel of consumption promoted in the magazine and in society. Also, the references to non-commercial values are infrequent and only hint at the existence of such values. The references are vague in comparison to the specific advice given concerning body work and accessories, as in *five-minute after-work makeovers you can do at your desk* (Dec. 2004).

This subchapter has discussed how the repertoire of consumerism appeared in the repertoires of independence and pleasure to support them. Themes from this repertoire recurred throughout the editorials to state the conditions under which the

Cosmo girl can obtain independence and success. From this repertoire we learn that consumerism is a solution for those of us who want independence as well as pleasure.

4.4 The Friendships of the *Cosmo Girl*

A fourth repertoire describing the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity was that of *friendship*. This subchapter will deal with the themes of friends supporting, sharing and showing mutual understanding, which form the repertoire of friendship. The theme referring to support is concerned with personal friends while the theme referring to the sharing of information, joy and concern, can mention both personal friends and colleague-friends. It describes how the *Cosmo girl* is involved with friends and relatives and how she nurtures her personal and professional relationships. She enjoys the simple things of life such as having family and friends around her. Her personal friendships are meaningful and long lasting. She is young and she still treasures the memories of her school friends. Nevertheless, at this time of her life she is in a transitory stage where she will make new friends with whom she shares new interests. She has moved away from her parents to live on her own, although she has not yet formed a lasting relationship with a partner or started a family of her own. At this stage, her intimate friends are almost like a family to her. She knows some of them from school, and if she loses contact with them for a while she will still be able to reconnect with them when they meet. Her friendships with colleagues, on the other hand, are built on shared interests and a common code of behaviour. She experiences a feeling of professional togetherness with the women who are her colleagues.

4.4.1 *Support*

The theme of friends supporting each other is found in expressions of affection and emotion. The editorials refer to friendship as *one of the great things about being a woman* (Example 13, below) and constructs women's friendship as the mesh which binds them together in their everyday life as in the following passage.

- (13) I think one of the great things about being a woman is our friendships. I don't know what I'd do without my own friends, who I think are the most understanding women in the world, even when I don't call often enough and forget the occasional birthday (well, quite a few actually!). But I was so moved by the stories of against-the-odds friendships that have survived illness and huge tragedy that it's only right *Cosmo*

pay tribute to those special women who play such a big part in all our lives. (April 2004).

The theme of friends supporting is found in the statements [friends] *are the most understanding women in the world, stories of against-the-odds friendships and those special women who play such a big part in all our lives*. The theme refers to how the *Cosmo girl* cherishes her friends because they understand that she is not perfect and they do not expect her to be. The theme also allows for imperfection in an otherwise ideal performance; *I don't call often enough and forget the occasional birthday (well, quite a few actually!)*. They are her friends, regardless of her shortcomings. Thus, friends understand and forgive and expect her to do the same. In this respect they function like a family, because support and forgiveness is what a family gives unreservedly.

The theme of friends supporting suggests that friendship which will survive hardship and difficult times. It survives although the odds are unfavourable because of *illness and huge tragedy*. The theme refers to friends as *special women who play such a big part in all our lives*. The theme is understood to refer to personal friends rather than colleague-friends in the workplace. In the workplace, friendship or at least a sense of togetherness may develop between colleagues for the duration of one's stay in that particular position. Such a relationship may be unstable as it depends on the circumstances at work and ultimately one's status in the organization.

4.4.2 *Sharing*

The theme of friends sharing is found in references to shared memories, joy and concern as in the following example where two women, the editor and her friend, share memories from their school days.

- (14) Recently, I bumped into a school friend I hadn't seen for years. Of course, it was amazing catching up with her after such a long time, but it was only when I told her I worked on *Cosmo* that her face cracked into the biggest smile. Immediately, she recited a piece of advice she'd read a while back in this magazine that had given her the confidence to accept the offer of a job abroad. (March 04)

The theme of sharing is expressed with strong emotion as in *a school friend I hadn't seen for years, amazing catching up with her after such a long time and her face cracked into the biggest smile*. A shared past has created a bond between them which still exists. The theme evokes the pleasure of meeting again, it is

amazing, and the reference to mutual joy evokes not only the repertoire of friendship but also connects to the repertoire of pleasure. The repertoires of friendship and pleasure intertwine when old school friends are able to reconnect whenever they meet, even if they were never intimate friends or have not met for a long period of time. In addition, these two friends share another interest: *Cosmo*. Once the friend has been told the name of the editor's work-place she reacts with joy: *her face cracked into the biggest smile*.

The theme is also extended to sharing and enjoying each other's success. The editor enjoys her friend's tale of success, especially as it is a compliment to her own work as, for instance in, *Immediately, she recited a piece of advice she'd read a while back in this magazine that had given her the confidence to accept the offer of a job abroad for six months*. The editor and her friend are performing the *Cosmo girl* femininity in that they are successful, each in her own field. They are performing the *Cosmo girl* also in the respect that their success, implicitly, is the result of making the correct choices – not to mention the fact that they have both taken the advice of *Cosmo*. Obviously, the editor's friend has provided her with an item of praise that will serve to promote her magazine. Therefore, the editor makes sure that she shares this experience with her reader-friend as well!

The theme of affection expressed between personal friends may not exist between colleague-friends. Their relationship based on professional solidarity may take the form of, for instance, a public display of friendship. The theme of friends sharing when that friend is a colleague is found in the following passage.

- (15) It's an opportunity for us to come together with the legendary *Cosmo* founder Helen Gurley Brown, to share news and views with each other, and swap advice, stories and ideas. Inevitably, after three days together (in Manhattan, which was fab), conversations started to get personal and the whole event turned into a massive girls' night out – we talked about how we are constantly organising our lives around work and relationships, friends and family, even though we wouldn't have it any other way! (Aug. 2004).

The theme of professional friends sharing is found in, for instance, the expressions *to share news and views* and *swap advice, stories and ideas*. The example is an excerpt from an editorial about the biannual international conference for *Cosmopolitan* editors. The editorial describes the editors expressing solidarity and sharing stories and ideas on equal grounds. There are no traces in this representation of the professional jealousy or territory-mindedness which (in my professional experience) would inevitably seep into such a reunion. Indeed, the editors are all friends which can be deduced from the mention that *conversations started to*

get personal. Finally, the colleague-friends celebrate their togetherness as seen from the description of the event as turning into *a massive girls' night out*.

The colloquial expression “a girls’ night out” has moved into literature and media texts. The expression has established itself in everyday language use, alongside the male equivalent “a lads’ night out”. It describes how the modern liberated *Cosmo girl* has fun going out with her friends in a context which was previously reserved only for a company of men. Coates (1996: 23), among others, mentions Gilda O’Neill’s *A Night Out with the Girls* as an example of the aspect of women having fun as part of their friendship. A Google literature search gives several findings for books with similar names published both in the US and Great Britain.

Equally, the theme of professional friends sharing is found in the expression *to come together with the legendary Cosmo founder Helen Gurley Brown*. The colleagues are linked together by their professional network which is fortified by the display of friendship. The *legendary Cosmo founder*¹⁵ is at the centre of their professional network. She appears to be on equal footing with the editors and is prepared to “talk shop” and exchange ideas with them. Her willingness to share ideas appears to suggest that she rejects rivalry and underlines that the editors must all work together towards the goal set for the magazine by its publisher; their employer. In this way, the *Cosmo girl* is shown to experience support and solidarity within a community of colleagues.

The solidarity between colleague-friends is strengthened by the fact that they face similar challenges in their life. They share the need to cope with professional as well as personal life as in *we are constantly organising our lives around work and relationships, friends and family, even though we wouldn't have it any other way!* The theme of colleague-friends sharing is found in the description of their struggle to organize their lives and meet the double expectations placed on them by and by family and friends. Their solidarity is confirmed in a public performance of friendship when they indulge in *a massive girls' night out*. The repertoire of friendship is a potential source for the editors can draw on when refuting competing discourse threatening the description of the *Cosmo girl* femininity.

This subchapter has dealt with the repertoire of friendship, which is part of the discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. The repertoire was formed by the recurring themes of friends supporting, sharing and having

¹⁵ See Chapter 2. Helen Gurley Brown was not the founder of *Cosmopolitan* (its predecessor *The Cosmopolitan* was established in 1886). She did, however, outline the topics on which the magazine is focused even today.

mutual understanding. The function of the repertoire was to describe an unselfish side of the *Cosmo girl* where the focus was on interaction with those around her. It constructs a safety platform, which the *Cosmo girl* needs when facing adversities. This repertoire has the potential to neutralize competing discourses which threaten the performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity; therefore, it appears to offer possibilities for solutions in the problem-solution schema.

4.5 Trouble: Career Obstacles, Illness and Assault

A fifth repertoire identified in the editorials was that of *trouble*. The repertoire is formed by various themes such as sexual assault and illnesses which may interfere with the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. The repertoire prepares the *Cosmo girl* for misfortune by allowing her to learn about problems and danger through the experiences of others. Thus, this repertoire, although created by the editors, can be understood to fill a function similar to that of the repertoire of emotional learning and connected knowing identified by Hermes (1995: 41, 45) in her study of the reasons women readers give for reading women's magazines. She found that the respondents in her reader interviews used the repertoire to describe how reading about other people's troubles could prepare them for possible problems in their own lives, and teach them ways to cope with misfortune. They referred to this as emotional learning which helped them to become less insecure in case of events which might disrupt their lives.

The repertoire of trouble is formed by themes referring to physical and sexual violence and illnesses, but also to constraint from, for instance, social practices. The theme of constraint is found, for instance, in the following passage.

- (16) It was an interesting debate and I heard a phrase from *The Guardian* writer Beatrix Campbell that I hadn't come across before. She said women weren't so worried about pushing through the 'glass ceiling' any more - they were more affected by 'sticky floors'. What she meant was that, today, poor standards of education in some cases and not being able to get back to work after starting a family or taking a sabbatical, were more pressing problems than that of men preventing us from reaching the top of our career ladders. Women get stuck at home or in a rut, she explained. (Jan. 04)

Constraint is evoked by the expressions *glass ceiling* and *sticky floors* and also in the reference to *poor standards of education*, as well as the difficulties in getting back to work after having a child or taking a sabbatical. The *glass ceiling* describes the invisible level over which women seldom advance professionally – or

are allowed to advance. Albeit that men are no longer *preventing* women from climbing the career ladder, women can still feel that they are glued to *sticky floors*. The reasons may be insufficient education and also the attitude of employers who may not want to employ young women. Alternatively, once employed, young women may not be allowed to return after a leave – regardless of trade union agreements about maternity leave.

Furthermore, the themes of sexual assault and rape are themes in the repertoire of trouble. With these themes, the repertoire of trouble undermines the repertoire of independence, which is a crucial part of the discourse of the ideal performance. The theme of rape is illustrated in the following passages.

- (17) I received heartbreaking letters from women who'd been attacked but hadn't spoken to anyone about it before. As you know, very few women go to the police to report the crimes against them so they never get referred to support networks; they deal with the pain alone. We don't want that to happen anymore. *Cosmo* approached Rape Crisis and the Metropolitan Police's ground-breaking rape investigation squad Operation (formerly Project) Sapphire to help us look into setting up a line. (Feb. 2004).

The theme of rape is evoked through expressions of strong emotion such as *heartbreaking* and having to *deal with the pain alone*. The theme refers to how women may be doubly afflicted, first by having been assaulted and then by being left alone to deal with the physical and emotional pain. It is also present in the use of the passive mode to construct woman as the object acted upon; for instance, *women who'd been attacked* and *they never get referred*. Therefore, it undermines the theme of control from the repertoire of independence: a woman does not have the possibility to control the situation when assaulted. The rape victims have *been attacked* in a situation outside their control and they *never get referred* to networks of support. Also, the women had rejected the option of alerting the police in order to bring the perpetrator to justice. Seeing the perpetrator punished could possibly have given them a feeling of having claimed back some amount of control for themselves.

The repertoire of the independence of the *Cosmo girl* and choice and control over her lifestyle may also be threatened by a theme of illness as in the following passages.

- (18) 'It's really scary,' she said. 'I'm so glad it doesn't affect me.' Her friends both nodded in agreement. 'I know,' one of them said. 'Thank God girls like us don't get STIs.'

I was shocked: Were they virgins or one-man women who had all married one-woman men? Or maybe they had never, ever had unprotected sex, not even when they were drunk. But no, it turned out, as the conversation continued, that their perceived immunity came from being nice, ordinary women, with good jobs and fashionable clothes, who had notched up more than a football team between them, but were currently with men they trusted. This, they agreed, meant they were STI-free. And it made me think, maybe that's why the STI rates are soaring – women like us believe STIs only affect other people. (Nov. 2004).

The theme of illness is found in the direct naming of the illness “STI” and its circumstances as in *unprotected sex* and the belief that *STIs only affect other people*. It is also present in emotional reference such as *scary* and *Thank God*. The editor is reporting and commenting on a lunch conversation she had accidentally overheard. The theme teaches the *Cosmo girl* to beware of the risks of contracting illnesses and not to disregard information. She learns that statistics show a high increase in STI cases and that everyone sexually active is exposed, as in *that's why the STI rates are soaring – women like us believe STIs only affect other people*. Indeed, the attitude that illnesses only affect “other people” is one of the factors which contribute to spreading the illnesses. The *Cosmo girl* also learns that “perceived immunity” is a faulty, and dangerous, belief. Her present lifestyle, with a good job, fashionable clothes and her relationship with a reliable man, is no guarantee that she will avoid infection. The ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity, her lifestyle, or wearing the right trendy clothes, is not a method of protection against STIs.

Illness would undermine the lifestyle of the *Cosmo girl*. She may be at risk because she exercises (or have exercised) her choice and control also in her sexual life. Her claims for equality in society include her right to be sexually liberated and pursue her relationships on her own terms. The metaphor *had notched up more than a football team between them* carries with it associations from the field of predominantly male behaviour. Hunters or soldiers, for example, are reputed to carve notches on the butts of their rifles to keep count of the number of prey or enemies taken down. To notch up is also informal language for achieving something or setting a record: a company can notch up gains and a tennis player can notch up another victory. The use of the metaphor suggests that the three ladies had kept count of their men in the same way, setting a record of the number of players in a football team.

The themes of rape and illness in the repertoire of trouble function as an indirect reference to the themes of choice and control in the repertoire of independence.

They point to areas in life such as sexual violence and sexual health issues over which the *Cosmo girl* may have little or no control. She may take precautions to avoid problems of this nature but there are no guarantees that she will be safe. She is in danger of becoming the object acted upon. In the example above the editor reports the young women using the ambiguous verb “get” in ‘*Thank God girls like us don’t get STIs.*’ *Get* may mean to acquire but its meaning of actively acquiring something is, naturally, out of the question in this context where illness is to be avoided. One possible reading is that the verb is used to denote *be given* or *be inflicted by*. Thus, the use of this transitive verb in the active voice functions to construct the subject acted upon, even without the use of the passive voice.

This subchapter has dealt with the repertoire of trouble, the existence of which was briefly suggested in the editorials. Its themes were those of constraint, illness, violence and rape. Their purpose, and that of the whole repertoire, was to prepare the reader for possible misfortune in her life. Although marginal in the editorials, the repertoire functioned to introduce the descriptions of trouble which were developed in full in the feature stories proposed in the ensuing contents of the magazine. Thus, this repertoire identified already in the editorials provides the foundation for answering research question 2 concerning the repertoires of the feature stories to be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has dealt with the repertoires which form the magazine’s discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. In answer to research question 1, concerning the discourses of the performances of the *Cosmo girl* introduced in the editorials as well as their function, the repertoires found described her independence, her pleasures and her friendships. In the editorials, the *fun* part of the *fun, fearless females* took the front seat. A repertoire of consumerism was found to interact with these three repertoires. Finally, the first traces of a repertoire of trouble were found describing problems and ill fortune, which she might encounter in the form of illnesses and rape.

The repertoire of the independence in *Cosmo girl* femininity was formed by the themes of having choice and control in life. These themes of choice and control recurred independently and also intermingled with the themes of other repertoires. The *Cosmo girl* was described as agentive in all fields of life. She had the choice of the profession, the career and lifestyle she wanted. She had control of her body and ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity, or worked to gain that control by

doing body and beauty work, and by consuming. Consumption, constructed as a condition for achieving control, was at the basis of her behaviour.

The themes of choice and control described how the *Cosmo girl* was focused on herself and her emotions, and the descriptions accepted her self-centeredness. The reader who was, or would like to be, a *Cosmo girl* was offered suggestions and advice instructing her to concentrate on her own needs and her own satisfaction. The editorials were found to advise her how to perform at her best, be happy and enjoy her lifestyle. Satisfaction in the synthetic sisterhood derived from having body confidence and working successfully to achieve it, fulfilling shopping urges, described as having balance in life, and sexual satisfaction. In contrast to her focus on herself, the theme of friends and partners was present and the repertoire of friendship described the nurturing of relationships. Nevertheless, other people appeared to be constructed almost as supporting actors and theatrical props, while the limelight was on the *Cosmo girl* alone.

Furthermore, the self-centeredness of the *Cosmo girl* was constructed as acceptable in statements which emphasized the individual and diminished solidarity between women. The *Cosmo girl* claimed equality in professional and personal life, without necessarily knowing that equality today may be the result of feminist struggle in the past. However, the *Cosmopolitan* version of feminism was no longer to be understood as a concept of collective solidarity between women, but as a 'choice' which was expressed in terms of individual action. The *Cosmo girl* was at liberty to make the choice of investing in herself in order to enjoy herself. To make choices was constructed as being in control; to make them was empowering. To make the right ones was the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity.

In addition, a repertoire of consumerism was found to recur and interact with the repertoires of the *Cosmo girl*. The themes of this repertoire were shopping, awareness of fashion trends, and styling and they intermingled with themes from other repertoires, particularly those of independence and pleasure. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the pressure to consume becomes one form of constraint to independence. The recurring references to consumerism in the repertoire of pleasure describe how by consuming, she invests in pleasure, in herself and her performance. She is constructed as a consumer and addressed as one. Although she is described as having control her own life, she does not have the choice of not consuming. Consuming to create her lifestyle is normalized as a pattern of behaviour, and her only choice as a consumer is between products. She cannot choose not to consume. In this respect her control, and thus her independence, are limited by advertising, marketing and the production of consumer goods. Consequently, the choices of the self-confident, outgoing *Cosmo girl* are restricted by the agenda of

consumerism expressed in the magazine and supported by its advertisers. The demands of consumerism restrict her behaviour and attitudes, prompting her to focus on the lifestyle promoted by the magazine. In this respect, the contemporary 'new woman' is as much a prisoner of the market forces as was the 19th century woman of her husband or family.

Already in the editorials, the *Cosmo girl's* exercise of her independence is subject to limitations both on the level of personal behaviour, and on the level of conditions set by society. On the personal level there are themes of warning about attitudes from men and emotional issues which might restrict her choice and control. For instance, there were hints about being too agentive: that might make her less attractive to male partners (she adopts a passive role and *swoons* when faced with an attractive male: Ed, Sept. 2004). Men in general were constructed as having an inability to relate to capable women, possibly because they found it more difficult to understand or control these women. In this respect the advice given to the *Cosmo girl* of the 21st century was no different from advice to her sisters thirty or fifty years previously.

In the editorials, references made to limitations imposed on the *Cosmo girl* by society came in the form of implicit norms of behaviour. Love, for instance, was constructed as having the same effect on a woman as during previous generations: love in the 21st century still makes the *Cosmo girl swoon* (Ed, Sept. 2004), although that love is a matter that defies scientific analysis and lies outside the control of human beings. Traditional values of female identity, such as love and relationships, thus governed (and still today govern) the editorial policy of the magazine.

The repertoires introduced in the editorials served to construct the magazine's discourse about the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity as true and relevant to the reader. Nevertheless, to preserve its credibility, the magazine needs to introduce "authentic" narratives from the situated world where lives may be out of control. The credibility of the magazine is essential when it proceeds to offer advice, particularly advice on how to deal with trouble. Already in the editorials, a repertoire of trouble prepared the *Cosmo girl* for misfortune and advised her how to avoid dangers. It gave examples of situations where a woman does not have control, such as falling victim to rape or illnesses. It suggested that there are instances where women are being acted upon, which is not in line with the *Cosmo girl* performance.

In what follows, the problems which *Cosmopolitan* constructs for the *Cosmo girl* will be discussed, as well as the advice the magazine proposes that she will need in order to deal with trouble. The advice of the magazine is dressed as examples

of solutions to possible problems, and it serves to neutralize the repertoires which pose a threat to its dominant discourse, that of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity.

It is now clear that in addition to “sugar and spice and all that’s nice”, little girls are made of independence, pleasure, friendship, and the urge to consume. The question is, how they will hold their own against the working of “frogs and snails and puppy-dogs’ tails”. (*Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* 1969: 100–101)

5 FEATURE STORIES: THE SITUATED WORLD MEETS THE MEDIATED WORLD

In the introduction to this thesis, the magazine was characterized as a forum where editors and readers are involved in a continuous reciprocal dialogue. This forum also becomes an *interface* where the magazine's discourse of the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity meets discourses that challenge it. An interface may be an internet browser interacting with other pieces of software on the computer, or more tangibly the keyboard enabling the user to connect to the computer. The forum of the magazine offers feature stories in which the repertoires from the editorials (those of independence, pleasure, consumerism, friendship, and that of trouble, which was only hinted at) are joined by new repertoires. These are repertoires of various forms of trouble constructing a *discourse of trouble* which undermines the dominant discourse of the magazine. Each of these repertoires describing trouble is formed by specific themes of sexism, harassment, betrayal, violence, sexual assault and rape, drinking habits, illness and accidents. They are discursive constructions of cultural and social practices generated in western society and in the western world of knowledge. Thus in the feature stories a *repertoire of the price of consumerism* challenges the repertoire of consumerism of the editorials, where consumerism is described as a positive and desirable behaviour. Equally the *repertoire of threats to the lifestyle of the Cosmo girl* challenges the repertoire of friendship and with it those of independence and pleasure. Also a *repertoire of threats outside the control of the Cosmo girl* challenges the repertoires of independence and pleasure. Finally, a new repertoire emerges, and that provides examples of how to deal with trouble. This can be described as the *repertoire of re-inventing the Cosmo girl*, who is given advice about how to deal with trouble. This new repertoire neutralizes the discourse of trouble and helps the *Cosmo girl* to rise from the ashes like a Phoenix.

The current chapter will deal with the competition between the magazine's discourse of the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity and the discourse of trouble in the feature stories (henceforth FS). The analysis is set on the level of repertoires and the themes which form them. Most importantly, the chapter will show the construction of a new, *sixth* repertoire arising out of the feature stories and describing how the *Cosmo girl* can regain control. Through the examples of a *Cosmo girl* in trouble which it offers, this repertoire created by the editors serves the magazine's purpose of bringing the challenging discourse and its repertoires into line with its dominant discourse. These examples resemble those of the reader-constructed repertoire of connected knowing and practical knowledge identified by Hermes (1995: 41, 45): they are useful and applicable in the event of trouble. The current chapter will provide answers to research question 2 concerning

the discourses introduced in the feature stories and their function, as well as research question 3, concerning how the magazine deals with competing discourses.

The assumptive hypothesis of this thesis has been that *Cosmopolitan* on a macro-level reduces the conflict between its dominant discourse – that of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity – and competing discourses, specifically the discourse of trouble, to a ‘problem-solution’ frame. The magazine provides the reader with competing discourses of femininity, one being the dominant discourse of the commercially driven performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity, whereas the other describes ‘authentic’ performances in the situated world, thereby challenging the former and, accordingly, the credibility of the magazine. To succeed as a convincing adviser, journalistic product, and, ultimately, as a business enterprise, the magazine needs to uphold its credibility by displaying “awareness of real life” in the situated world. Therefore, it strengthens its own discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity by allowing in competing discourses albeit with the purpose of neutralizing them.

In what follows, first the discourse of the *Cosmo girl* in the feature stories, with its repertoires of independence, pleasure, consumerism, and friendship will be discussed and juxtaposed to the discourse of trouble challenging it through the repertoires of the price of consumerism, threats to the lifestyle of the *Cosmo girl*, and threats outside the control of the *Cosmo girl*. Secondly, the role of the new repertoire describing how the *Cosmo girl* can reclaim control will be discussed in relation to the repertoires of the discourse of trouble.

5.1 The Price of Consumerism

In the situated world of today, the *Cosmo girl* is subjected to the demands of commercial interests expressed in the mediated world of consumerism. It tells her how to look and dress and how to perform her femininity. It tells her that she enjoys consuming and that she will find pleasure in looking good. Moreover, it tells her what to consume in order to achieve the feeling of pleasure. This subchapter will deal with the repertoire of consumerism found in the feature stories, where it is united with independence and pleasure, and then with the way it is challenged by the repertoire of the price of consumerism. In the feature stories as in the editorials, the repertoire of consumerism was found to interact with the repertoires of independence and pleasure. The repertoire is expanded with the new themes of money and tokens of success. The theme of money also refers to the repertoire of independence constructing it through economic security. The theme of tokens of success also refers to the repertoire of pleasure; there is personal pleasure from

owning and using tokens of success such as exclusive branded fashion items. (Needless to say, this is yet another way of performing one's independence and mediated identity.) The *Cosmo girl* experiences independence through money and derives double pleasure from being successful: the pleasure of her success and pleasure from the tokens of her success. However, the repertoire of consumerism also places demands on her; the result is themes indicating a repertoire of the price of consumerism.

As seen already in the editorials, themes have the ability to refer to several repertoires. For instance, themes suggesting the price of consumerism, together with themes of personal pleasure and pleasure in looks from the repertoire of pleasure, were found inserted into the repertoire of consumerism. Such interaction (not unlike intertextuality) can be seen in the following example referred to earlier as Example 7 (4.2.1 and 4.3); this example is now renumbered.

- (19) [...] all the things you love about the party season, without a 'pull a cracker' insight! There are no turkeys or tinsel here – just the very best of the things you love *Cosmo* for. Sexy, affordable and, most of all, flattering party outfits for every budget and body shape; five-minute after-work makeovers you can do at your desk and celebrity tips and tricks for getting red-carpet ready; (Ed., Dec. 2004).

The theme of the obligation to consume suggests pressure and the price of consumerism. The preferred reading is that following the advice of the magazine is not optional, this is what the *Cosmo girl* has to do: her party outfit needs to be *sexy, affordable* [and] *flattering*. She will also need the skills to do *five-minute after-work makeovers* and, specifically, the *celebrity tips and tricks* which will make her perform like a celebrity walking the red carpet to a gala opening. Presumably, the make-up skills and tips and tricks will require the acquisition of certain make-up brands and utensils like brushes. Nevertheless, a reader with a critical view of consumerism would ignore the preferred reading, and choose an alternative one to contest the advice.

The magazine's assumption is that the *Cosmo girl* is unsure about her choices as a consumer; if so, there is always *Cosmopolitan* to support her. The magazine's advice becomes explicit in the following example quoted earlier as Example 9 (4.2.2).

- (20) Finally, it's holiday time (hurrah!) so now's the chance to relax and enjoy one of the highlights of the year. Read our advice on getting beach body confidence, so you can enjoy your best summer. Plus, our fashion team has tried on just about every swimsuit and bikini on the

high street, so there WILL be one to suit you - promise.
(Ed., June 2004).

The theme of the obligation to consume is clear as the editor addresses her reader as a consumer and, specifically, one in need of advice. She reassures her reader that the staff of the magazine is there to support her: the *fashion team* has undertaken the ground work for her and they *promise* that she will be pleased with the result. The relationship between the magazine, reader and the fashion industry described in the example could be seen as a triangle where one side represents the magazine and its commercial interests in relation to its advertisers and its reader, the consumer; another the business interests of the fashion industry which acts through advertising, and the third the reader of the magazine/consumer of the products advertised whose spending habits are a focal points for the other two parties.

In the feature stories, the repertoires of independence, pleasure, and consumerism interact to support and complement each other, as they do in the editorials. Equally, themes referring to the repertoire of the price of consumerism are inserted. To have independence and to enjoy one's lifestyle are like two sides of the same coin. The feature stories, as well as the editorials, describe how the *Cosmo girl* takes pleasure in the performance of her femininity. For example, the theme of personal pleasure is referred to in *I know people think I'm attractive, I enjoy my life* (Example 21 below). She takes pleasure in looking attractive and in the body work and beauty work she undertakes in order to perform her femininity. The theme of success (Examples 22 and 23 below) shows the pleasure she derives from being successful.

In the feature stories, independence is about career success and money, and about the pleasure derived from being successful. In the example below, an interviewee describes herself in terms of the theme of control from the repertoire of independence, as well as themes from the repertoires of pleasure and friendship.

- (21) "I'm a confident person in most respects. I'm successful, I know people think I'm attractive, I enjoy my life, I have great friends and I love my family," she [the interviewee] says. (FS, July 04: 67)

The repertoire of independence is evoked by the theme of control, as in *a confident person*, since confidence is one aspect of control. The interviewee has independence and declares this in *I'm a confident person in most respects. In most respects* I take to mean in most situations she has to cope with in her personal life and also as a professional. Independence comes from being *confident*; it may also come from the understanding that she is *successful* and *attractive* and finds pleas-

ure in the lifestyle of her choice, and is surrounded by friends and family. Indeed, in this example the themes of success and attractiveness can also point to a repertoire of pleasure, and the themes of *great friends* and love for her family to a repertoire of friendship. In fact, the interviewee describes herself by evoking precisely the themes which correspond to those forming the repertoires which are part of the discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity in the editorials.

Independence is constructed as inherent in the modern woman in direct statements by women featured in the stories, and indirectly through the editors' descriptions of the interviewees. The statements describe what constitutes independence in her personal sphere and in her professional capacity. Independence may come from a feeling of self-confidence, and expressly from an income level which enables the *Cosmo girl* to use her freedom of choice. The themes of control and choice through outstanding professional success and ensuing financial security appear in the following passages.

- (22) Julie [an investment broker] is thankful that her three years in the job have paid for her west London flat and a lifestyle most women would envy. She'll get her bonus in February and has already planned trips to Milan and Florence to splash out on designer clothes. (FS, Dec. 06: 116)

The theme of control is found in the mention of *three years in the job*, and the job in question is the highly demanding one of an investment broker. The level of her salary is a confirmation of her professional status. The theme of choice is found in the mention of her flat and its location and her plans to go shopping in Milan. The interviewee has control over her professional life, which leads to having choice in her personal life and consumer habits. She has chosen to invest her earnings in an up-market flat in west London. The flat may serve as her warrant for an unpredictable future, since the career of an investment broker may be a short one. Meanwhile, she can choose to invest in herself and have the *lifestyle most women would envy* and that lifestyle includes consuming brand products like designer clothes in one of the most expensive shopping districts possible. This is how the *Cosmo girl* performs her independence: it is the right to consume.

However, a theme of *insecurity* is hinted at in the mention of *three years in the job* suggesting the price of consumerism. An investment broker faces competition from colleagues in the same firm and from other firms, and her success depends on her professional proficiency. Indeed, her job depends on the unpredictable changes in the global economy. Therefore, the lifestyle of consumerism, which she enjoys at the time of the interview, is not to be taken for granted. The *Cosmo*

girl's ability to consume depends on having a job and a certain salary level. Without those, she cannot produce the ideal performance of her femininity. Consumerism and the price of consumerism balance the scales.

Therefore, the independence of a modern woman depends on her professional proficiency: she needs to do her job just as well as, or better than, a male colleague. The theme of professional control is found in the following passages which argue that a woman may, in fact, be the best option in certain professions.

- (23) Think of a private eye and a distinct image springs to mind: tough, unshaven men skulking in bushes or shabby downtown offices. They're mean, they're often seedy, but most of all they're men. Busted [an all-female detective agency in Atlanta, Georgia] is changing all that and, according to founder Jeanene Weiner, it's proving once and for all that women make the best detectives. (FS, Oct. 06: 123)

The theme of professional control appears in the mention of the female detective agency, its female founder and its work which is *proving once and for all that women make the best detectives*. The agency's founder is constructed as being in control of her work and representing it with great self-confidence. She is a modern professional with the independence to claim that she does not only equal her male colleagues, but surpasses them. Indeed, the founder of the agency *Busted* claims that her work is proof of this. In other words, she claims a high level of proficiency: a woman can challenge male territory and improve the quality of work in that territory.

A modern woman like the *Cosmo girl* has the choice of any career option, including those previously associated mostly with men. One such option is the profession of female detective. However, the magazine emphasizes the originality of such a choice by juxtaposing it against a stereotyped image of the male detective, the "private eye" described in detective stories and featured on the screen. In the feature story, the description of *tough, unshaven men skulking in bushes or shabby downtown offices* brings to mind the fictional characters Philip Marlowe and Sam Spade created by the suspense writers Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett respectively and immortalized on the screen by, first and foremost, Humphrey Bogart. This image is challenged, not only by one female detective, but by a whole agency staffed with women only.

The female detective in Example 23 performs her femininity with the professional and personal control which allows her to regard herself with humour and irony. Male dominance is, once again, challenged linguistically by the founder's choice of a name for her agency, *Busted*. At first sight, it is a reference to the colloquial

American term for being apprehended by the police, or being *busted*. However, the company's name also functions as a pun referring to the female bosom. It can be understood as a statement about her all-female staff and ultimately gender equality.

In the feature stories, the repertoire of consumerism is evoked by a theme such as fashion brands, which is related to the themes of shopping, awareness of fashion trends, and styling already found in the editorials. The theme can also refer to personal pleasure and money, which are themes in the repertoires of pleasure and independence. Equally, the theme of tokens of success functions to evoke the repertoire of pleasure in the following passage.

- (24) I [the reporter] manage to linger long enough to chat to two young female brokers who are knocking back champagne. I ask them what they are celebrating. "Nothing," says one. "It's just a regular night out after work. Although you could say I'm celebrating my eighth purchase from Jimmy Choo this year." She kicks out a four-inch stiletto from beneath the table. (FS, Dec. 06: 115)

The themes of fashion brands and personal pleasure are found in the description of how the two women in the feature story can indulge themselves: champagne on *a regular night out after work* and champagne to *celebrate* an act of consumerism, that is, her *eighth purchase* for the year of a pair of very expensive designer shoes.

The repertoire of consumerism as suggested by the magazine is a positive one: consumerism is a lifestyle to pursue. However, a challenging repertoire of the price of consumerism is also introduced. Such a repertoire focuses on the *price to pay* for one's consumerism. A price in the form of long working hours is described in the passage below.

- (25) At a leaving party for one broker, I sit next to Julie, 27, who works in investment. She's wearing a low-cut Gucci dress. In spite of drinking several glasses of Veuve Clicquot, her regular tippie, she will go back to her desk in an hour and continue to work until past midnight. Next morning, she'll be back at her desk at 8am. (FS, Dec. 06: 116)

The theme of fashion brands refers to the modern woman enjoying her tokens of success, thereby adding to the repertoire of pleasure. In the descriptions of *Julie* the theme is found in the mention of the *low-cut Gucci dress* she wears and the expensive champagne which is her *regular tippie*. She can, in other words, allow herself the pleasure of that drink whenever she wants. By contrast, the editor does

not mention how *Julie* looks or how her personality comes across. In this way, *Julie* is constructed through her accessories. It may be argued that the presupposition is that she is good-looking, or at least well-groomed, and healthy and young because of the demands of her profession, with working days 18 hours long; *from 8 a.m. to midnight*.

The repertoire of the price of consumerism is present not only in the references to the price to pay, but is visible also in the theme of fashion brands. The *Cosmo girl* pays a price for her lifestyle of consumerism, her independence and pleasure in the form of the extremely long working hours, *from 8 a.m. to midnight*. Equally, the theme of fashion brands mentioning specific luxury products functions as a constraint of consumerism. The detailed suggestions as to what to consume such as *designer clothes* to be purchased in Milan and Florence (Example 22), the *low-cut Gucci dress*, the shoes from Jimmy Choo (Example 24), and the champagne brand Veuve Clicquot (Example 25) set them firmly outside the situated world of a majority of working women. The price level of these items is beyond the reach of the majority of *Cosmopolitan* readers. Therefore the mention of the brands may not necessarily serve to advertise them, but rather to create the image of a lifestyle based on luxurious consumerism.

The expensive brands place the young female brokers in a world of consumerism. They function as tokens of success and the purchase power of the brokers, allowing them to consume those particular brands, is the confirmation of their success. The description of the two brokers suggests that shopping gives personal pleasure from which follows that shopping for more expensive items gives more pleasure. Their shopping habits are similar to those of certain popular culture characters on television and in films. The mention of *the four-inch stiletto* from Jimmy Choo¹⁶ (Example 24) opens up references to the lifestyle constructed in TV-series and films such as *Sex and the City*. This, of course, is no coincidence since both the TV-series *Sex and the City* and the magazine *Cosmopolitan* pay homage to the ideas of Helen Gurley Brown and her list of the interests of the single girl. Reading about the performance of such a lifestyle (or watching characters enact it on television) may in itself be a pleasure. Most readers will, nevertheless, recognize that mediated world for what it is, a construction. Most of them (us) will, however, realize that it differs from their (our) situated world with everyday routines, their (our) work situation and the consumer habits adapted to their (our) current income.

¹⁶ Because of *Sex and the City* and other similar television series, shoe designers such as Jimmy Choo and Manolo Blahnik have been iconized – to be recognized even by those of us who have never been into a shop where these designer shoes are to be purchased.

This subchapter has dealt with the repertoire of the price of consumerism, which was set against that of consumerism and its themes which also refer to independence and pleasure which are all part of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl*. The price of consumerism was constructed through the themes of insecurity, long working hours to pay for one's consumption, and the ambiguous theme of fashion brands, which excludes readers not on a top-level income. The findings show that the price of consumerism is partly self-inflicted: the *Cosmo girl* strives to conform to the norms of an ideal performance conveyed by the media. Other forms of the price of consumerism derive directly from descriptions of how to be a modern woman circulating in society and promoted by the media: the clothes and accessories suggested by a magazine such as *Cosmopolitan* are naturalized as shared knowledge, making the magazine's advice implicit: we all know that this is what we need to put on the ideal performance!

5.2 Threats to the Lifestyle of the *Cosmo Girl*

The feature stories describe how the *Cosmo girl* values her family and friends. Themes of mutual understanding, support, and sharing in the feature stories confirm the repertoire of friendship introduced in the editorials. The theme of support in the feature stories highlights her family members as the most important source of support and consolation. "Family" in this context means not only husband/wife/partner and children but also parents and siblings. They represent safety and support and they are important to her. The themes of sharing and mutual understanding highlight the importance of friends in difficult times, and suggest that the *Cosmo girl*, in turn, is prepared to offer her friends support.

There are, however, cultural and social practices which place constraints on the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. These social practices find their discursive construction as repertoires of various forms of threats posed by human beings and their actions. It may happen, that the *Cosmo girl*, in her attempt to comply with the norms circulated in the mass media, generates demands of conformity on herself, or she may be surrounded by threats generated in her surroundings. She may become the object of social (mal)practices like sexism and harassment in the workplace or in her personal life, and she may experience betrayal by friends or relatives. This subchapter will deal with the repertoire of threats to the lifestyle of the *Cosmo girl* as challenges to the repertoire of friendship, and in part also to the repertoire of independence. Notwithstanding these threats, the repertoire of friendship serves to stabilize the life of the *Cosmo girl*.

In the feature stories, the themes of support and understanding from family members and partners are foregrounded. When the *Cosmo girl* is under pressure, the repertoire of friendship serves to stabilize her life. It has the potential to neutralize other possible repertoires challenging it or the other repertoires of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. These themes contribute to the repertoire of friendship describing how the *Cosmo girl* appreciates her friends and loves her family. The two themes are found, for instance, in the words of an interviewee, *I have great friends and I love my family* (Example 21 in 5.1). It is present in the mention of *great friends* and her love for her family. While friends are “great” because they can be trusted and relied on, the love between family members is securely built on mutual trust. Such a theme of unconditional support from a family member is found, for instance, in the following passage.

- (26) Tonight was my last evening at home for I don’t know how long. Rob went into the bathroom and shaved off all his hair. “Let’s do yours next,” he said. I started crying as we cut my dark hair into a really short crop, but I was determined to attack this cancer instead of just letting it attack me. (FS, Dec. 06: 122)

The theme of support for a partner is referred to in the description of an action like in *Rob went into the bathroom and shaved off all his hair*. The interviewee is preparing to go into hospital for cancer treatment and the couple anticipate the loss of her hair following chemotherapy. Her partner knows that words will not be enough and, instead, he performs an act by which he expresses his support. Shaving their heads becomes a symbolic act on the theme of sharing the burden of her illness and the theme of giving and receiving support.

In addition, the theme of mutual understanding supports the repertoire of friendship which in turn is part of the dominant discourse. Mutual understanding grows slowly over time as a result of shared experiences, memories and values. Moreover, it may grow almost instantly as a result of a shared traumatic experience; the key word is shared experience which corresponds to the theme of sharing. Mutual understanding is present in, for instance, the following excerpt from the story of two survivors of the King’s Cross bomb explosions on 7th July 2005 in the London underground.

- (27) One girl, Amy, 24, also from north London, was particularly kind and we agreed to meet beforehand so I didn’t have to go alone [to a survivors’ meeting organized by King’s Cross United].

From the moment we met I felt I’d finally found someone who could relate to how I was feeling. Someone who knew that just because I survived didn’t mean I wasn’t suffering.

[...]

Amy and I talked a lot and met up often; and slowly I came to terms with what happened [...] (FS, July 06: 103)

The themes of mutual understanding, support and sharing are present in each sentence; the kindness, meeting up beforehand and the relief of not needing to go alone, finding someone who shared the experience and could understand, someone to talk to. The interviewee (referred to as Kristina in the example below: Example 28) constructs herself alone with her trauma. She survived without physical injuries but the memories of the hours underground are still with her. She finds it hard to explain them to someone who was not there. Finding another survivor, Amy, to befriend means finding support and sharing the experience helps her to deal with it and, eventually, *come to terms* with the incomprehensible. Equally, the themes forming the repertoire of friendship are found in the following passages quoting her friend.

(28) When we met it felt like we had known each other for ever. I still wasn't using the tube at that stage and Kristina helped me find the strength to go back on it. (FS, July 06: 103)

The themes of mutual understanding and sharing are found in Amy's reaction, *it felt like we had known each other for ever* and the theme of support in that repertoire is directly referred to in her words *helped me find the strength*. Amy constructs their friendship as reliable by describing it in terms of a time frame, as if it had existed for a very long time. In her mention of the time factor she indirectly comments on the fact that hers and Kristina's friendship was more or less instantaneous. Nevertheless, it helped her to find the courage to go down and use the underground again.

The image of the *Cosmo girl* and her relationships emerging through the repertoire of friendship differs from the description of the attitudes and behaviour of *Cosmo* women provided by Machin and van Leeuwen (2003) in their study "Global Schemas and Local Discourses in *Cosmopolitan*". They show that in the fantasy world of *Cosmo* there is no room for friendship, and human beings are basically unreliable. They describe the fellow human beings of that world, whether colleagues, friends or lovers, as "essentially unreliable" and prepared to "plot against you behind your back, they take advantage of you and they double-cross you". Also, their study shows that the discursively constructed suggestions for how to solve problems do not take into consideration support from other people (friends, relatives, or colleagues) as a means of dealing with an issue. (Machin & van Leeuwen 2003: 502, 505)

The focus of their study as compared to the focus of this current study may account for this difference. The focus of their study was on problem-solution genres, case stories and expert discourses (Machin & van Leeuwen 2003: 496), and the magazine's implicit assumption that the *Cosmo girl* is all alone in the world, with no other friend than the magazine, and that she needs advice. The focus of the study at hand is on competing discourses and the interface where they challenge the dominant discourse of the magazine, only to be neutralized. On that interface, the magazine offers a script describing the *Cosmo girl* as successful not because she is a lone ranger, but because she has the support of family, trusted friends, and reliable colleagues.

Nevertheless, in spite of the support which surrounds her, the *Cosmo girl* may not be content within herself. She may place demands on herself such as those stemming from her determination to conform to the femininities circulated and promoted by the media. One such demand may be that she produces the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity: the achiever, who is attractive, successful, and in control. Constantly measuring oneself against such demands may result in feelings of insufficiency and low self-esteem. There may be a discrepancy between the public image of a woman and her inner feelings. Such a crack is evoked in the following example containing the themes of *self-harming* among young women and *dissatisfaction* in themselves.

- (29) I'm a confident person in most respects. I'm successful, I know people think I'm attractive, I enjoy my life, I have great friends and I love my family," she says. "My problem is that I find it hard to communicate when I'm feeling low. Self-harming is simply my coping mechanism at times when the anger and unhappiness I have locked up inside myself come to the surface. It doesn't hurt at the time – it just tingles – but the overwhelming feeling is one of relief. I know some self-harmers need to see blood but, for me, blood has nothing to do with it. I get a rush of endorphins when I do it, and that's the feeling I need to remain sane. (FS, July 04: 67, 69)

The theme is revealed in the reference to *my problem*. The first two sentences, which constituted Example 21 (in 5.1), describe all the characteristics of an ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity. The interviewee then moves on to make statements about herself which conflict with her previous ones. The theme of dissatisfaction is found in expressions like *anger and unhappiness*, *hard to communicate*, *feeling low*.

The interviewee describes how self-harming becomes a substitute for control of her life. Exercising control in this way gives her an *overwhelming feeling* [...] of

relief. If she cannot control her own frustration at the demands placed upon her (by herself or her life and work surroundings), she can at least control her own body and its sensation of pain. She attempts to justify her own behaviour by rationalizing it, when she is, in fact, referring to the conflict between her front stage image and the backstage one. To do so, she uses one (quasi-)medical explanation (*I get a rush of endorphins when I do it*) and one set in popular psychology (*that's the feeling I need to remain sane*).

The themes of self-harming and control are linked also in the following example.

- (30) I didn't know what to do – how to deal with the jumble of feelings. I'd already imagined how it would feel to cut myself: it would, I believed, give me a sense of release – and control. It was a way to focus the guilt, self-loathing and loneliness I felt into a tangible, physical, manageable pain. It seemed like a way out, so I grabbed the carving knife from my kitchen and cut.” (FS, June 06: 103)

The connection between the two themes is suggested in the mention of the interviewee's *jumble of feelings*. She does not have control over her feelings, and self-harming then become a means of control. It functions as a safety valve for pent-up feelings. The interviewee chooses self-harm to help her re-focus her inner turmoil into physical pain which she finds *tangible* [and therefore] *manageable*. When harming herself she releases her emotional pain and regains control, as in the expression *sense of release – and control*. Self-harming becomes a mockery of control, cruelly mimicking it.

Thus the theme of control from the repertoire of independence becomes a reversed mirror image, which functions to undermine that discourse. Needless to say, the *Cosmo girl* of the editorials does not inflict self-harm on herself. She does not need to because she lives in the mediated world where she is in control. By contrast, the feature stories, which can be understood as reports from the situated world, describe not only the demands she places on herself but also social practices which may target her to inflict injury.

5.2.1 *Sexism and Harassment*

In the workplace, the themes of *Cosmo girl*'s control and choice, and thus her independence, may be challenged by various themes of sexism such as inequality in salaries and other company policies related to gender. Sexism in this context is to be understood as (unacceptable) attitudes “based on conservative and stereotypical beliefs” in the way described by Mills (2008: 2). In the feature stories,

some of these themes through which sexism is constructed are those of equal/unequal pay and equal/unequal job opportunities, discrepancy in attitudes according to which women and men are assessed, and lack of control. The theme of unequal pay is found in the following example.

- (31) 'We did the same job but he earned £4.000 more'

New year, same old pay divide. Incredibly, women still earn around 18 per cent less than men – as **Sarah Daly**, 28, learned the hard way. She tells her story and we tell you how to get the salary you deserve... (FS, Feb. 2004: 87)

The theme of sexism through inequality in salaries is found in '*We did the same job but he earned £4.000 more*', *same old pay divide* and *women still earn around 18 per cent less than men*. The magazine addresses the *Cosmo girl* as a person who knows her independence is being undermined; consequently, she needs advice to challenge the constraints of sexism. She does the same job as a man does. It is self-evident that she deserves equal pay. However, this competent woman still earns less than her male colleague. The editor assumes that she does not know how to deal with the situation and steps in: *we tell you how to get the salary you deserve*. The magazine instructs her on the levels of argumentation and action alike. It gives her the arguments she needs to challenge the existing salary practices and possibly also instructs her how to behave to bring about change. In this way, the magazine counters the practice of sexism and attempts to neutralize it with its advice. However, the advice remains on the personal level; no attempt is made to suggest actions which might change a (political and cultural) system which allows inequality.

The social practice of sexism, discursively constructed through the themes related to sexism, undermines the theme of choice from the repertoire of the *Cosmo girl's* independence. Practices of sexism are constructed in the world of bankers and investment brokers, as in the following example.

- (32) Sexism is, of course, a staple rumour of the Square Mile [of London] and it's inevitable that some of the women I meet feel they're working in a man's world, in every sense.

Pretending to be a City PA, I ask Anna, 26, a trader, whether she's noticed an inequality. [...] "When we complain to our bosses that we're working harder than some of our male colleagues but getting paid a fraction of what they get, we're told that the boys need it for their fast cars, boats, holidays and lap-dancing jaunts." (FS, Dec. 06: 115)

The theme of sexism through salary inequality is explicitly mentioned in *we're working harder than some of our male colleagues but getting paid a fraction of what they get*. Outright sexism is evoked in *the boys need it for their fast cars, boats, holidays and lap-dancing jaunts*. The *Cosmo girl* may have gained access to a male-dominated profession, but that does not mean that the practices of her workplace grant her equal rights or even equal value as a human being. The justification for that high salary is that they need it for pastimes which are demeaning to women, like *lap-dancing jaunts*. Thus the *Cosmo girl* finds that even though she may work hard, or even harder than her male colleagues, this is not enough. She is still paid less. She does not fit in, since she does answer to the stereotype of a man who needs a higher salary for the stereotypical male activities of *fast cars, boats, holidays and lap-dancing jaunts*.

In order to preserve her independence, the *Cosmo girl* needs to find ways of dealing with such a situation. She may accept that she cannot, for the time being, change the attitudes which are behind the social practices. Instead, she develops an attitude for her own protection as shown in the following example.

- (33) Madeleine, a 29-year-old broker, says, "I've developed this attitude of 'boys will be boys'. It's the only way to deal with it. If they need their toys and cars and women to feel important, let them have it. The day you speak out about the injustice of it all is the day you can expect to leave your job." (FS, Dec. 06: 116)

The theme of a woman's lack of control is found in the argumentation of the interviewee here. She realizes that she cannot influence company salary practices. She does not have control nor can she bring about change, so she resorts to the use of a discursive element, the old proverb *boys will be boys*. She accepts the situation, and distances herself in order to protect herself. In other words, she constructs herself as a more mature person (a mother figure?) who is indulgent towards boys behaving badly. Indeed, in order to cope with the expressions of overt sexism, she constructs a relationship like that of a mother/son or a sister/younger brother. This attitude of hers hides the fact that there is a lack of equality in the relationship between her and her male colleagues. Thus economic inequality opens a crack in the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity.

Notably, the magazine does not offer an example of how to deal with the situation; adopting an attitude of *boys will be boys* does not provide a solution. The *Cosmo girl's* decision to adopt this attitude may be necessary for her self-preservation, but it is a short-term solution. She knows that in this case her choices are limited. She will be allowed to stay in her competitive profession only as long as she follows the rules, including the ones that reproduce gender inequality.

Her choice is to comply and keep her job, as seen from her statement: *The day you speak out about the injustice of it all is the day you can expect to leave your job*. Her choice is to deal with the problem by submitting to the practices of her workplace which, of course, is not a solution at all in the long run. It is certainly not one that will further equal pay for women and men. This is the price she pays for a job which allows her to uphold the expensive lifestyle of her choice.

The independence of the *Cosmo girl* can also be undermined by themes of victimization through harassment or bullying in the work place and the construction of insecurity in the victim. She is particularly vulnerable in a situation where the bully is her boss or in other ways her senior. A theme of victimization through harassment in the work place is described in the following example.

- (34) ‘Tell me about your boyfriend,’ he [her boss] said. ‘I suppose you’ll be in bed together all weekend?’ I tried to brush it off, but it was unsettling. He was happily married and had been a kind boss so far. Had I misunderstood?

But from that moment, he made a habit of coming onto me when no one was around. Mornings weren’t so bad – the office was too busy for him to bother me – but I dreaded the afternoons because I came to know this was when he’d approach. (FS, July 04: 87)

The insecurity in the designated victim is a prerequisite for sexual harassment. The theme of insecurity is found in expressions such as *unsettling* and *Had I misunderstood?* It allows the bully to take control over his intended victim. The interviewee in this feature story frequently refers to the theme of insecurity when recounting how the bully undermines her control; he makes her doubt her own judgement. His words are unmistakable but she finds it hard to combine them with her picture of him as a married man and a kind boss. Consequently, she doubts herself and is tempted to put his statements down as a misunderstanding. For bullies, this element of doubt is one way to control their victims’ minds and before long their victims will be in such a state of insecurity that they do not know what to expect – or when.

Thus also in the context of bullying, interpellation appears to be at work. Over time, the victim comes to identify herself as the useless person interpellated by her bully. As a consequence, she is losing her foothold, as illustrated in the following example from the same speaker.

- (35) At work, I slowly changed from a bright, enthusiastic person to a shy, nervous shadow. Mr. Tullet’s sleazy comments were mixed in with

remarks about how useless I was, so I never knew what form his attacks would take. One minute he'd tell me I was too attractive for my boyfriend, the next he'd say my work was terrible and that I was lucky to have a job. Slowly, I came to believe he was right. (FS, July 04: 88)

Insecurity as an effect of bullying is found in expressions like *shy*, *nervous shadow* and *slowly, I came to believe he was right*. The bully is undermining her self-esteem in stages. He first targets her with his sexual remarks and then attacks her professionalism in order to make sure she remains his victim. He calls her *useless* and implies that she is lucky that he chooses to employ her, in spite of her work being *terrible*. Indeed, with this he suggests that she should be thankful towards her tormentor. His bullying reduces her control to the extent that even her personality changes – at least, that is how she experiences it. She is no longer the bright person who used to be a competent and enthusiastic *Cosmo girl*, but the shadow of her former self. Harassment may, over time, cause a woman to lose her perspective of herself and her abilities and, like the interviewee in this example, she may come to believe that her bully is right when he constructs her as personally and professionally *useless*. Thus the theme of insecurity opens another crack in the performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity. The magazine's suggestions for how to deal with such a situation will be discussed further in 5.4.

5.2.2 *Betrayal*

The control exercised by the *Cosmo girl* can also be undermined by her partners and friends. This theme of betrayal is found in the following example.

- (36) When a man cheats on you, whether six months into a fling or after six years together, it makes you question everything – the choices you've made, your own judgement. "The effects can be devastating on even the strongest person's sense of self-worth," says *Cosmo* psychologist Dr Linda Papadopoulos. "It may lead to long-term feelings of insecurity and jealousy." (FS, June 04: 101)

Here the editor refers to members of the synthetic sisterhood to validate her argument. Both the editor (from the group *we, the editors*) and a professional psychologist (from the group of *celebrities and experts*) describe the effects of betrayal. They appear in expressions such as *it makes you question everything* and *devastating on even the strongest person's sense of self-worth*. Both the editor and the psychologist are able to distance themselves from the issue. The editor does so by using generalizations, as in *it makes you question everything – the*

choices you've made, your own judgement. The psychologist uses matter-of-fact language, as in *effects*, a *person's sense of self-worth* and in her description of the result, which can be *long-term feelings of insecurity and jealousy*. This use of a formal, professional language serves to assure the reader of the validity of the psychologist's description: it also tells the reader that she is not alone with her experiences.

The effects of betrayal are also described as first-hand experience. For the *Cosmo girl* it is an added humiliation to have to question her choices, choice being one of the building blocks of her independence. The intensity of the anger and frustration associated with the theme of betrayal is described in the following example.

- (37) I [the editor] ask Jenny [the interviewee] what happened with her ex, Jack, and in a flash the sweetness evaporates. "He's a complete wanker," she blurts out. "If he dies tomorrow it'll be too late." Jack had cheated on Jenny, a 27-year-old beauty therapist, five times during their three-year relationship – twice with girls she considered her friends – and now she's out for revenge. (FS, Sept. 06: 85-86)

However, betrayal does not necessarily mean that the *Cosmo girl* will accept the object position of a victim. Her ability to resort to agency is evoked in the mention of the decision of "Jenny" to take revenge. The (possible) humiliation can be turned into agency. For instance, "Jenny" does not see herself as a victim. Her anger makes her want to act. She is determined to revenge herself on her ex-partner and takes action. She sets aside the image of an accommodating *girl* and her transformation is described in the way her *sweetness evaporates* instantly; she does not hide her frustration but *blurts out* abuse and bluntly calls him a *wanker*.

In the data for this thesis, humiliation caused by a partner's betrayal appears to be the only negative experience which causes a woman to reject the object position of a victim and transform herself into the subject. Revenge in itself is a social practice of agency. It may even serve as a substitute for closure. It would appear from my material that revenge inspires inventiveness. Incidentally, the practice of revenge is also becoming a business idea. There are a number of UK-based websites (for instance, *Is a Cheat* 2010; *So You've Been Dumped* 2011) where one can discuss revenge – the grounds for it, the means, the methods and its possible outcome – and share experiences.

It seems that the revenge of women is often directed at the material things that are important to men and their status; money, the car, the flat. At one point, the magazine refers to the urban legend that one woman reportedly sold her cheating husband's Lotus sports car (worth £25,000) on eBay for 50p, another burned the

man's clothes and posted him the ashes, yet another spread a rumour that her ex-partner had STI (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Sept. 06: 86, 88). Indeed, even if a betrayed woman questions her judgement regarding her choice of a partner, she will not easily question her judgement as to the methods she uses to avenge herself on that ex-partner!

With her love for her family, the *Cosmo girl* is also vulnerable to betrayal by family members. The repertoire of friendship found in both editorials and feature stories describes how she values and loves her family. They support her and give her a feeling of belonging and security. Consequently, betrayal within the family threatens support from family; equally it threatens control. Betrayal within the family is found in the following passages by an interviewee.

- (38) I'd always known this man as Dad, [...], the person whose surname I had been given and shared. Now, aged 19 and delving into his past, I discovered he had two identities. (FS, Nov. 06: 111)

[...]

When I heard he had been sentenced to 21 months for deception, I was speechless. Dad still refused to reveal his true identity, even to us. [...] how many people have a fraudster for a father? I felt so alone. When people first move away from home, as I had, they try to figure out who they are but normally your family and your background are a constant. I'd just had the rugs of both pulled out from under me. (FS, Nov. 06: 113)

The theme of betrayal of within the family is a betrayal of trust. It is evoked in the descriptions of her family as a *constant* and her feeling of loneliness; *I felt so alone*. The safety her family offers her is the basis of her concept of herself. The effect of betrayal by a family member (and a central one like a father) is described in a metaphor, to have *had the rugs of both* [family and background] *pulled out from under me*.

However, betrayal may not be intentional. What one party experiences as betrayal may be the other party's decision to put her or his own interest first, regardless of the effects on other people. In the example above, their identity as a family was built around one being the father, the other being the daughter. The statements describe the sharing of the basic elements of being a family: sharing a surname, calling the parent "Dad". These are some of the elements constituting trust within the family. Now the daughter found out that he had yet another identity. This other identity, which he had refused to reveal, existed outside the family and was that of a professional *fraudster*. To the daughter this meant that he was not only a

criminal, but also that he had severed the bond which defined them as family. Trust within the family is now hard to restore.

Indeed, betrayal within the family is constructed by the magazine as the worst possible kind of betrayal of trust. Such a theme is found in the following example.

(39) The ultimate betrayal [magazine's subhead]

She was my sister. He was my father. Her stepfather. They weren't blood relations, but it still felt incestuous. She'd called him Dad as a child. He'd bounced her on his knee and taken her to the playground. How could he think of Heather in *that* (original's italics) way? The more I thought about it, the sicker it seemed. Didn't it bother her she was having sex with a man who'd slept with her own mum?

I felt betrayed. (FS, July 06:110)

This act of betrayal is evaluated in the subhead, *the ultimate betrayal*. The subhead entered by the magazine serves to support the moral position of the interviewee. Significantly, she does not use the phrase *the ultimate betrayal* during the interview. The subhead describes the magazine's interpretation of her feelings. It constructs the values she strives to uphold as desirable. The question of who may marry whom is a culturally sanctioned practice supported by legislation. This practice does not allow marriages between, for instance, close blood relatives. The two people mentioned in the example above are not blood relatives. However, they have previously occupied the positions assigned to daughter and (step)father and lived accordingly. According to the interviewee, their past lives as daughter and (step)father put them under moral obligation to observe the sanctions. To the interviewee, everything else is a betrayal of family values. The expression *I felt betrayed* states her feeling unambiguously.

This subchapter has dealt with the threats to the lifestyle of the *Cosmo girl* which challenge friendship as well as independence from the discourse of the *Cosmo girl's* ideal performance of her femininity. The repertoire of threats is formed by themes of sexism, harassment, and betrayal. The themes show how she may be subjected to sexism, which takes the forms of practices of unequal pay and condescension. Moreover, she is the object of sexual harassment and workplace bullying, and she suffers betrayal in relationships and in the family. These themes of threats challenge the *Cosmo girl's* control, and sometimes her choice, undermining the ideal performance of her femininity.

5.3 Threats outside the Control of the *Cosmo Girl*

There are personal threats to the *Cosmo girl* in the form of events and occurrences over which she has no control. They are described in the repertoire of threats outside the control of the *Cosmo girl*, which is formed by the themes of violence, sexual assault, illness and accidents. These events differ from threats to her lifestyle in that there may not be a personal connection between the cause and the victim: acts of violence may be randomly imposed on her, illness and accidents occur. These undermine her personal safety, her control and choice, her lifestyle, and ultimately her performance. They challenge the repertoires of independence and pleasure from the discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl*. The repertoire describes how she is transformed from an agent into the object of the actions of others. She may be threatened by isolated random acts of physical violence, sexual harassment in the workplace, or long-term sexual abuse and rape within a family. This subchapter will deal with the repertoire of threats outside the control of the *Cosmo girl* found in the feature stories. The themes of this repertoire range from loss of independence and agency to physical violence and invasion of personal space. There are also themes evoking the health of the *Cosmo girl*, including her drinking habits, which may challenge her control.

5.3.1 *Violence and Sexual Assault*

The theme of violence in this repertoire challenges the repertoire of the *Cosmo girl*'s independence: her control and choice. It is connected to themes of bodily harm and mental trauma as a result of violence. It is found in an interview dealing with an attack in an elevator as in the example below.

- (40) Katie [having had her lift hailed by an unknown man at the last moment] was relieved when the lift reached her floor. The doors opened and she stepped out. "Suddenly the man grabbed me around the waist and pulled me back into the lift. He pushed me to the ground with his hand over my mouth. I started kicking and screaming. He shoved his hand between my legs and started rubbing, and then began simulating sex.

I was petrified. I had no doubt he would try to get inside my trousers so I kept on screaming and struggling to all I was worth."

Then, as the doors opened at the sixth floor, Katie's attacker got up and ran off. (FS, Oct. 04: 71)

When attacked, a *Cosmo girl* like “Katie” finds that she has very little control over the situation. The attack is described in verbs in the active mode which all denote violent action by the perpetrator. The verbs construct her as an object acted upon; she is *grabbed*, *pulled*, *pushed* and finally the perpetrator simulates sexual intercourse. He alone has agency; “Katie” is deprived of hers. She is the victim and she is *petrified*. Nevertheless, she still manages to claim some agency for herself; she kicks, screams and struggles. However, she does not escape from her ordeal because of her own resistance, but because the elevator reaches its designated floor and the doors open. She reaches safety because of fortunate circumstances, not through her own agency.

The theme of violence refers to effects such as bodily harm, but also mental trauma, or both. The effects of physical violence, and the threat of violence, are illustrated in the following example.

(41) “I woke up with a knife in my face”

For Anya Jaeckel, 23, a PA from north London, sleeping soundly nearly cost her her life. Now she can’t sleep at all...

[...]

The next thing I knew, a man was standing over my bed.

[...] He whipped out a six-inch kitchen knife – the one we’d used to slice up our pizza the night before – from inside his black bomber jacket and told me not to scream.

“This isn’t a joke,” he said. “I need money.”

[...] My room wasn’t safe anymore.

[...] I’m constantly terrified, but I know I’ll have to deal with this or it’ll mess me up forever. (FS, March 06: 100-101)

Also a mental trauma threatens individual control. It is present in *My room wasn’t safe anymore* and *I’m constantly terrified*. The traumatic experience is referred to already in the headline *I woke up with a knife in my face*. In the continuation of the feature story, it is referred to in *a man standing over my bed*, *whipped out a six-inch kitchen knife* and *told me not to scream*. The interviewee may have escaped physically unscathed but the experience has left a mental trauma which will influence her future performance in public places: the discourse of the *Cosmo girl* is undermined.

The magazine suggests that the *Cosmo girl* needs advice about how to *deal with* such an experience. The experience of finding a burglar in one’s own house rep-

resents an invasion; therefore, the theme of mental trauma challenges the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl*. The home of the *Cosmo girl* is her sanctuary, the one place where she should be able to feel safe. The appearance of the burglar in her room takes away this feeling of safety in the home, as in *my room wasn't safe anymore*. To wake up to a stranger standing over her bed appears to her like a sequence from the worst possible nightmare. The experience disturbs her for a long time; she is *constantly terrified* and cannot stay alone in the house she rents with her brother and a few friends. She realizes that she will need to *deal with* her feelings of anxiety. For once, the advice of the magazine is not enough: the *Cosmo girl* needs to process her trauma, on her own or by seeking professional help. The magazine does, however, provide a suggestion for a solution: she [will] *have to deal with* the mental trauma. That solution focuses on the actions she can take to help herself; it does not question the society which allows incidents like the one described.

Another form of violence directed at the *Cosmo girl* is found in the themes of sexual assault by strangers or by family members. The themes show that the purpose of sexual violence is to deprive her of her control. In this respect sexual violence is both physical and psychological. Such an experience is described in the following example.

- (42) Sarah [29, a marketing manager] was on a night out with girlfriends in London when they were approached by a group of rich, charming men. "They showered us with cocktails," she tells me. "We were flattered and trusted them because they seemed so nice." The next thing she remembers is waking up on a sofa, semi-naked, in a house she didn't recognize. "I was bruised all over and in agony. There was no one around – just a note saying, 'Thanks for a great evening, let yourself out.' Traumatized she went straight to her GUM clinic, where doctors found internal bruising. Sarah was too ashamed to go to the police, but is having counselling to help her get over the ordeal. (FS, March 04: 102)

Loss of control is evoked in this description of how "Sarah" moves from flattery and attention to assault and humiliation. Her perceived security in the public place (the bar) is contrasted with the ensuing events when she is left alone in the private house. Her story of drug-rape contradicts the repertoires of the *Cosmo girl*'s independence and pleasure. It undermines her control and also her right to live the lifestyle of her choice. A fun-loving *Cosmo girl* like "Sarah" does not take into consideration the fact that her control may be undermined by sinister practices. She describes the first meeting with the group of men in positive words; *rich*,

charming, showering the ladies with cocktails and flattering them with attention. In short, they were *so nice*.

The decision of the ladies to trust the strangers leads to a chain of events which deprive the *Cosmo girl* “Sarah” of her choice and control. She falls victim to practices of drug-rape and wakes up *bruised and in agony, traumatized and ashamed*. An anonymous note confirms her lack of control by constructing her as having consented to the abuse - like her rapist she has supposedly enjoyed *a great evening*. It is the final humiliation for her to be constructed as a consenting partner when she was in fact the object of sexual abuse.

The experiences of any woman such as “Sarah” may easily lead her to believe that she is to blame for what has happened to her. She may confuse her feelings of humiliation with those of guilt. The editor defends the right of the *Cosmo girl* to make her own decisions – and mistakes – in the following example.

- (43) One letter that moved me shows one of the two main reasons why women still believe rape is their fault – women are not perfect; they do make bad choices or display poor judgement. When someone tells me she made a decision to accept the offer of a lift home from an acquaintance in a nightclub after several glasses of wine, and admits she would never have done it sober, I appreciate that her experience has taught her a hard lesson. But I also know that the worst she is guilty of is bad judgement, not guilty conduct. (FS, Jan 04: 66)

The right of the *Cosmo girl* to choose her own lifestyle is evoked in the expression *the worst she is guilty of is bad judgement, not guilty conduct*. She should not feel, or be made to feel, guilty over decisions she has taken – not even over those that may have harmed her. The editor takes the explicit stance that bad judgement has nothing to do with guilt. Women may sometimes make ill-advised decisions and the editor points out that it is human to err; *women are not perfect*.

With this feature story, the magazine takes a stance on the tendency in society to place the guilt with the (female) victim in rape cases. Such a turn of events is not unusual, as can be seen from news reporting. One comment, globally reported in the news media, placing the responsibility on the woman led to public reactions in the situated world. In Toronto, Canada in April 2011 a policeman reportedly told young female students to dress “decently” in order not to encourage rape. A number of women reacted spontaneously to this and took to the streets in an effort to claim their right to dress according to their choice. The result was the Slutwalk; a

mode of demonstration which in less than six months had spread over the world¹⁷. It needs to be noted, that taking a stance does not constitute a solution to the social and cultural problem of rape.

The *Cosmo girl* does not expect to be sexually abused by a member of her family. To her, the family represents safety and support. She expects family and friends to be there for her in difficult times. The repertoire of friendship found in both the editorials and the features stories describes the love of the *Cosmo girl* for her family members. Therefore, incest involving an adult and a minor may have particularly severe effects since it is both a physical violation and a violation of trust between family members. It can be understood as intentional victimization or a conscious intention to continuously and consistently hurt or humiliate another person. The theme of incest is found in the following example, where the experiences of a victim subjected to it for a long period of time are described.

- (44) I didn't dare scream for fear of waking the others. 'Please don't,' I begged him. But he raped me. Physically, I was in agony, but that was nothing compared to how low I felt. I wished I were dead.

When he'd finished, I was bleeding, but he didn't care. I was so frightened, I was violently sick. Then I went to bed and cried for hours. I badly wanted to tell Mum, but I believed Alan's threats that I'd be taken into care and people would think I was 'dirty'. (FS, Sept. 04: 97-98)

The theme of incest interacts with the themes of the physical pain and mental despair of the incest victim as in *Physically, I was in agony*, and *that was nothing compared to how low I felt. I wished I were dead*. The interviewee is telling her story of how her stepfather abused her while she was still a child and a teenager. In Example 44, the first occurrence is described; however, the abuse was to continue for a number of years. She recalls her physical experience of pain and her even stronger feeling of fear and despair resulting from the act itself and from the betrayal it represented.

Intentional humiliation of the victim is evoked in threats of what would happen if she dared to speak out about the abuse. The interviewee describes how her stepfather strives to control her mind in addition to the physical abuse, all for his own safety. For instance, he refers to "naughtiness" in girls which he constructs as common knowledge; *girls* who have sex with their stepfathers are *dirty* and will

¹⁷ On Saturday 6th August 2011, a news story in the daily paper Hufvudstadsbladet, published in Swedish in Helsinki, reported on the preparations for the first Slutwalks in Finland.

be *taken into care*. Needless to say, he does not elaborate on the fact that the responsibility and the guilt are his, not hers.

His discursively constructed psychological power over her continues for many years after the practice of physical abuse has already stopped. She finds it difficult to regain control over her own life, as illustrated in the following example.

- (45) But, over the next few months, having to talk to the police and my family about it all made me an emotional wreck. It was as if confronting the abuse had opened a dam, and all my suppressed pain was flooding out.

[...]

In my heart, I knew I should have felt empowered by telling the police, but it brought back memories of feeling worthless, just as when Alan was abusing me. Over the next months, I sank lower and lower. My doctor gave me antidepressants, but they didn't seem to work. (FS, Sept. 04: 100)

Getting professional help or turning to the police is often described in contemporary culture as one way of regaining control over one's life. In society there is a discourse, rooted in popular psychology, about being empowered by facing one's problems. The abused teenager in the example above, now an adult, refers to such a discourse in her statement *I knew I should have felt empowered by telling the police*. However, facing the past brings her neither relief nor a feeling of having regained control. Instead, it brings back experiences she has tried to put behind her, as those of the continued power of the abuser over his victim which is evoked in *confronting the abuse had opened a dam, and all my suppressed pain was flooding out* and *brought back memories of feeling worthless*. Finally, her depression becomes deeper in spite of medication; she has been turned into *an emotional wreck*. The process should have brought her closure but instead leads to a deeper depression. For instance, to describe her reactions, she uses two metaphors. One is of drowning, *I sank lower and lower*; the other compares the intensity of her feelings with the power of a flood breaking through an opened dam.

Solutions described in and for the mediated world may not function as solutions in the situated world. Example 45 illustrates this discrepancy between the two worlds. Taking action or facing one's problem in the way described in the mediated world may not automatically lead to empowerment, or remove the problem, in the situated world. In the case of the interviewee in the example, turning to the police did not lead to the removal of the problem, that is, the abuse she had been subjected to and the memories of that experience. In the situated world, it was not

a “solution” in the sense that it removed the problem, as it would in the mediated world, in the way described by Machin and van Leeuwen (2003: 506). Neither did it correspond to their description of a “wrong” solution in the mediated world, meaning that the solution led to the opposite of the desired outcome. Empowerment does not come from action alone, since it is a conviction or a mental state. Indeed, the magazine is suggesting to the *Cosmo girl* that mediated solutions may not always function in the situated world.

Nevertheless, the magazine attempts to close the crack between the two worlds by bringing the disturbing theme of continued abuse into line with its dominant discourse of the performance of the *Cosmo girl*. It acknowledges that when the problem is of a psychological nature, as opposed to a practical problem, action may not always be a “quick-fix” solution to the problem. Instead, the magazine describes a slow process: a solution needs to arise out of the mental realization that one has the ability to break the circle of abuse (or the harassment discussed earlier). The interviewee’s decision to tell the police was a first step towards dealing with the issues of the past. This way, her action came to represent a move towards a future solution which might function in the situated world – and one that will eventually bring her experiences into line with the magazine’s dominant discourse. However, there is a crack in the *Cosmo* worldview: it has often been shown that the police are ill-equipped to deal sensitively with such cases. The solution suggested might not be one after all.

5.3.2 *Illness and Accidents*

The mediated *Cosmo girl* of the editorials and the successful one of the feature stories does not have health problems. She may have body issues as described in the repertoire of pleasure, where the themes of personal pleasure and pleasure in looks refer to her doing body and beauty work (see 4.2). There may be threats to her health, as, for instance, the STIs described in the repertoire of trouble (see 4.5). That repertoire also gives her advice on how to behave to avoid catching an STI. Consequently, she can be in control of this aspect of her health by choosing the way in which she behaves.

The themes of illness and accidents contribute to the repertoire of threats outside the control of the *Cosmo girl* as this repertoire challenges the repertoires of independence and pleasure. It undermines the theme of control: events like illness or accidents are events over which the *Cosmo girl* has no control. It may also undermine the themes of personal pleasure, pleasure in looks and pleasure in success, since these are elements crucial for her physical performance which is an essential aspect of *Cosmo girl* femininity. The magazine describes not only such

events and their effect on her life and performance, but gives examples of different ways of dealing with them. In addition, it describes how the *Cosmo girl* finds support from family and friends. Thus the repertoire of threats outside the control of the *Cosmo girl* interacts with the repertoire of friendship, and strengthens it.

In the feature stories, the theme of illness refers to women in the situated world and their efforts to come to term with a new life situation. The women interviewed need to find ways of dealing with an illness and make choices about how to relate to it. The magazine provides examples such as the one below, where a woman may choose to deny her illness.

- (46) Despite my lung problems, I partied as hard as I studied. I told people I had CF (cystic fibrosis) – I’ve never been ashamed of it – but just got on with life. I smoked socially, although it made me cough horribly. (FS, April 04: 91) [...]

Then in August 1998, a check-up showed the effects of my life-style. ‘Do you want to continue burning the candle at both ends or do you want to live [,] Nicky?’ the doctor asked. My lung capacity had dropped significantly. He told me I’d be lucky if I lived to 40.

[...]

Now, I’d have to give up work and who knew if Mark and I had much of a future left. For the first time in my life, I felt like CF was controlling me. I rang my sister Sam in tears. (FS, April 04: 91, 93)

The theme of illness and her denial of illness are constructed as an issue of control. They are referred to in the expressions *I partied as hard as I studied* and *continue burning the candle at both ends*. The interviewee suffers from a lung problem (cystic fibrosis) which is expected to undermine her health and, in the end, threaten her life. In the interview she recalls how, in spite of this prognosis, she partied and studied with the same frenzy. To prove to herself that she is still in control of her life and her future, the interviewee denies her illness. Also when she collapses, she sees it as an issue of control, *For the first time in my life, I felt like CF was controlling me*. Her illness is now dictating her lifestyle and she can no longer live the life of her choice. This makes her doubt her future both on the professional and personal level. Such a performance is not in line with the discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity; therefore, the magazine needs to neutralize the theme of illness by providing an example (although the example in this case is no solution) illustrating how to relate to it.

The themes of illness and accidents in a woman’s life are grim tests of the loyalty and support of friends, family, and her partner. Loyalties are tested in situations

where ill health befalls a partner, family or friends, or the woman herself. Support can, for instance, take the form of planning for the future, as in the following example.

- (47) A doctor examined me and said, “It looks like cervical cancer.” Blunt as that. I went numb but couldn’t cry. [...] the surgeon said that in his opinion it was a ‘squamous’ cervical cancer, the kind 85% of sufferers get, which means I needed a hysterectomy. Rob said we could still adopt kids. I couldn’t believe we were talking about this; just four days earlier, he’d proposed to me! (FS, Dec. 06: 121)

This example is taken from a feature story which takes the form of a diary, and the headline of the story is “Diary of a Survivor”. The format of the (supposed) diary accounts for the shortness and directness of the statements; however, the entries will have undergone editing. The theme of illness is underlined through the gravity of the illness in *cervical cancer* and *I needed a hysterectomy*. The theme of support from a partner is referred to in *Rob said we could still adopt kids*. The *blunt* diagnosis *cervical cancer* may have consequences for how the interviewee defines herself as a woman. She describes how she *went numb but couldn’t cry*. Her evaluation of herself, and thus also her self-esteem, may be grounded in how she perceives her body and its functions. The ability to bear children is one of the ways in which a woman can define herself. The measure required to deal with the cancer is a hysterectomy, which means that she will never be able to bear children of her own. Thus, hysterectomy appears to limit the choices a woman has of how to define herself – although it does not necessarily need to do so¹⁸. The ability to bear children – or the lack of it – may also affect the progress of possible future relationships.

The importance of a specific statement may also lie in the omissions, in what is not mentioned. In the example above, the diagnosis affects not only the woman herself, but also those closest to her. The diary states very curtly: *I needed a hysterectomy. Rob said we could still adopt kids*. Her omission in the form of her direct jump from the word *hysterectomy* to her partner’s statement *Rob said we could still adopt kids* is significant in that it constructs what is not said: the hysterectomy means that she will not bear children or be a mother. It is possible that she does not have any detailed notes describing her first painful reactions – or she has chosen not to share those too personal responses with the readers. There is no mention of her thoughts after the doctor’s statement or the dialogue she must have

¹⁸ On this issue, I speak not only as a researcher but also from personal experience.

had with her husband before he offered this consoling comment. By mentioning adoption, he suggests that bearing the child yourself is not crucial. Instead, he actively constructs for her a femininity which includes motherhood but not child-bearing.

Finally, the theme of accidents refers to ways in which the *Cosmo girl*'s feeling of security and her enjoyment of life is shattered. The type of accident may vary (car and plane crashes, natural disasters) but their common denominator is that the theme of accidents refers to events which are – or are perceived to be – situations of physical danger. Invariably, to those involved they represent a traumatic experience. Such an experience is described in the following example.

- (48) Some passengers flew home the next day. Half of me wanted to try to fly back too, but Richard refused so we stayed for four days until a coach took us home. Staying meant that we could also attend a group counselling session, which really helped.

Back in England I had nightmares and flashbacks every half hour – the crashing, the falling, the stench of fuel. Seeing any accident on the news made me relive the smells, the sensations... (FS, Feb. 04: 73)

The themes of accident and trauma are found in the expressions *the crashing, the falling, the stench of fuel* and *any accident on the news made me relive the smells, the sensations...* Although the immediate physical effects of an accident may soon pass, the mental stress it causes may lead to long-term discomfort. The example above is from a description of British holidaymakers on a charter tour surviving a plane crash on the coast of Spain. The interviewee recounts how she developed a fear of flying – her partner even more so; *Half of me wanted to try to fly back too, but Richard refused*. In spite of attending a *group counselling session* she is still haunted by the memories and still suffers from nightmares. She continues to relive the crash, its smells and sensations whenever she sees an accident on the news. However, her reference to the counselling session suggests that there may be ways of dealing with the memory of such an experience. The reference can be seen as the magazine's advice about how to deal with this trauma.

However, there are also other social practices undermining her independence and lifestyle for which the *Cosmo girl* herself is responsible. One such theme is found in descriptions of drinking habits. Drinking is an ambiguous issue from the perspective of this study: It can be regarded as an illness or a threat, or both, and whether the *Cosmo girl* has, or can have, control over it is a matter of debate. Previously, women may have compared their skills and constructed their financial status through domestic work and the state of their home. Today the *Cosmo girl* is evaluated on the basis of her ability to measure up in that public domain which is

fairly new to her, the bar/pub. The fun-loving *Cosmo girl* likes to go out with her friends, and women claim the right to the pub or the club as men have previously done. Their intention is to have fun together, but they also go out to meet men. However, their attempts to claim their place alongside men in that new world may lead to excessive drinking. The pleasure of going out and meeting friends is challenged by the theme of drinking habits.

As does the magazine, the producers of beverages construct the *Cosmo girl* as a consumer. They target her as a new and growing group of customers. The change in the drinking habits of women is indicated in the following example.

- (49) Compare our drinking habits to those of our mothers at our age and, yes, we drink more. Long working hours and higher incomes combined with the fact that women are having children later, and therefore have fewer responsibilities, are the main reasons for this greater indulgence.

[...]

The drinks industry has tapped into this new, growing market of women and their midweek bottles of Chardonnay. (FS, June 04: 67)

The theme of women's drinking habits as they are seen to interact with the interests of the *drinks industry* is evoked in *yes, we drink more, this greater indulgence* [when it comes to using alcohol] and *has tapped into this new, growing market of women*. Changes in women's life situations today allow them to spend their time with the pastimes of their choice. Women have claimed for themselves public spaces previously reserved for men like bars and pubs (with the exception, perhaps, of some bars in Australia). Women in this generation have time and money of their own to spend, and their drinking has increased (*Cosmopolitan*, quoting statistics in the example above). Also this behaviour is commercially induced: the drinks industry has been quick to target this growing group of consumers and their preferences. Thus, women like the *Cosmo girl* are constructed as wine consumers, wanting to enjoy *their midweek bottles of Chardonnay*.

Nevertheless, women may still doubt their claim to this new public space and its activities. This theme of insecurity is found in the following example.

- (50) "Of course men are under the same pressure to prove themselves by drinking, but they have defined the social environment of bar culture. Women are still trying to prove they have a right to be there," she [Dr Hanan Mardini, a researcher at Newcastle University] explains.

“Many women feel they need to earn their place in a male-created society by proving they’re tough enough.”

[...]

“As far as I can see, the men want to drink loads and the women want to be where the men are, so they end up drinking an enormous amount, too. I [Caroline, a 20-year old graphic designer interviewed] find myself doing it even though it makes me uncomfortable.” (FS, June 04: 70)

Having claimed the public space for themselves, women are still insecure about their right to it. According to the researcher interviewed, they *are still trying to prove that they have a right to be there* [in the bar] and *women feel they need to earn their place in a male-created society. [...] by proving they’re tough enough.* One (traditionally male) way of proving one’s toughness is by drinking. The result is that women too drink too much. The statements of the interviewee “Caroline” in the latter part of the example above illustrate this issue. She is well aware of the scenario: the women are in the pub to meet the men. They claim their right to be there by adopting their drinking habits. They do so against their intentions as if by subconscious group pressure. In the situation described in the example above, “Caroline” finds it hard to choose not to drink. Her first choice may not be to drink as much as the men or enough to keep up with her friends. However, in spite of her own preferences, she finds herself adopting the practices of those around her although it makes her *uncomfortable*.

The company and example of her friends contribute to the pleasure of the *Cosmo girl*. The importance of their meeting socially is referred to through the theme of personal pleasure from the repertoire of pleasure and that of friends sharing from the repertoire of friendship as in the following example.

- (51) “Drinking is an emotional issue for women because many associate it with meeting up with friends, bonding and getting their problems off their chests,” comments Dr Peter Marsh, the co-director of the Social Issues Research Centre, Oxford. Buying rounds is about equality – it shows you’re able to ‘keep up’ with friends financially.” (FS, June 04: 68)

In this example, the theme of drinking habits is also connected to the theme of drinking as an emotional experience. The theme is explicitly present in *Drinking is an emotional issue for women*. They meet their friends, they bond, get *their problems off their chests*. In other words, this is the behaviour of female friends who keep in touch, meet, talk, and support each other. The only difference is that

their meeting now takes place in a public place like a bar, a pub or a nightclub, while previously women may have come together in the safety of their homes or in a restaurant to eat.

It can be argued that constructing such a mode of behaviour to be applied exclusively to women can be construed as missing the target. The description of friends meeting in a bar/pub might just as well apply to men, including the element of possible danger. In fact, this is the traditional image of how men meet and bond. They may have other codes of behaviour and their choice of what to talk about and how to talk about it may differ. Basically, however, they are honouring the same practice, that of friends meeting.

Finally, the theme of drinking habits is linked to the theme of financial equality between women friends and the importance of this is illustrated in *Buying rounds is about equality* and to *'keep up' with friends financially*. Previously, the skills of these women may have been measured on the basis of their housekeeping. In the same way, their financial status was assessed on the evidence of their house. Today, however, their status is measured outside the house through their ability to perform in that new public location the bar/pub. Thus the theme of drinking habits places demands on the *Cosmo girl* and refers to performances which challenge the repertoires of independence and pleasure from the discourse of the ideal performance of her femininity.

This subchapter has dealt with the repertoire of threats outside the control of the *Cosmo girl*. A discrepancy was found between this repertoire and the discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl's* femininity. The repertoire of threats outside the control of the *Cosmo girl* was formed by themes of violence, various forms of sexual assault, illness and accidents, and drinking habits. These themes had led the *Cosmo girl* to ponder questions of guilt, shame, and lack of control, issues which do not belong within the magazine's dominant discourse. In addition, this repertoire was found to draw on and support the repertoire of friendship, especially through its theme of illness and accidents, showing how the *Cosmo girl* finds support from friends and family in her hour of need.

It seems likely, that the discourse of trouble and its three repertoires discussed so far in this chapter are included in *Cosmopolitan* to strengthen the credibility of the magazine. By including them, it demonstrates its awareness of life in the situated world. Nevertheless, the magazine needs to contest the discourse of trouble which challenges its dominant discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. It does so by providing examples of how women have dealt with trouble drawing on the interviews in the feature stories. In what follows, the magazine's suggestions for how the *Cosmo girl* can deal with trouble will be discussed.

5.4 The *Cosmo Girl* Regaining Control

Already in the editorials there were hints that it is possible for the *Cosmo girl* to retake control or “bounce back” (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial, March 2004). In the feature stories, the possibility of “bouncing back” mentioned in the editorials is elaborated into a *repertoire of regaining control* which describes how independence (and, possibly, also pleasure) can be reclaimed. The function of this repertoire is to neutralize the threats to the *Cosmo girl*, her person and lifestyle. The repertoire provides examples of how a woman can find her way back to being a *Cosmo girl*. She may not be the same *Cosmo girl* that she was before, but a wiser and more experienced one. Thus, in the repertoire of regaining control, the editors construct the *fearless* from *fun, fearless females* takes the front seat, while *fun* is in focus in the discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl*. The repertoire of regaining control is not unlike the reader-constructed repertoire of emotional learning and connected knowing identified by Hermes (1995: 41, 45). In her study of the reasons women gave for reading women’s magazines, one of the justifications was that of vicarious suffering. Reading about the trouble of other people is an emotional learning process which helps the reader to prepare for possible trouble. The reader learns how to cope with misfortune.

This subchapter will deal with repertoire of regaining control in which the magazine provides practical advice which fits into the problem-solution schema proposed by Machin and van Leeuwen (2003). Suggested solutions concern mainly how to deal with betrayal, illness, and the effects of sexual assault, that is, issues where the *Cosmo girl* can choose how to act. By contrast, very little is said about issues in society such as sexism, harassment, and drinking habits. The repertoire of regaining control is constructed by the themes of *finding closure* and *moving on*. It provides examples of the way in which the women of the feature stories find means of regaining control and re-invent themselves as *Cosmo girls*. The themes refer to how the *Cosmo girl* can bring about closure which enables her to move on. Finding closure is realized through the help of experts, and the interviewee’s own actions and decisions. Moving on is prompted by the power of support, and the person’s own ability to come to terms with the past. Both themes are connected to a learning process which brings about acceptance, which may, ultimately, lead to closure. However, acceptance cannot be regarded as a solution in the sense of the problem-solution schema. The magazine describes acceptance in cases over which the *Cosmo girl* has no control: bereavement, self-harm, unequal pay, attitudes to protect her such as *boys will be boys* (FS, Dec. 06: 116), 18-hour days, and some cases of betrayal in the family (for instance, FS, July 06:110). In such situations, acceptance may be the only way towards moving forward.

The women in the feature stories use the repertoire of regaining control to explain how they have managed to come to terms with the problems described in the discourse of trouble. They may have sought the help of professional expertise, they may have found the courage needed to face the issue and the agency needed to confront their adversaries and learnt to re-evaluate their lifestyle and values. Life changes may entail moving house, returning to university, taking courses to improve professional qualifications, or embarking on a new career. They will seek closure after illness and accidents or after having been the victim of violence and betrayal. Finding closure is described as a learning process where a woman may learn to put grief and thoughts of revenge behind her.

The theme of finding closure shows how a woman through a process of learning may be able to develop insights which help her to change her life situation. The theme is present in the following passage, where a cancer victim is speaking.

- (52) I can see how pressured my life was before, when I placed so much importance on success. I don't want that life back. Telling myself every day that I'll get better has made me believe in myself again. I'll never worry about my career again because, even if I earn nothing, at least I'll be well. (FS, Dec. 06: 122)

Before, being happy was about achievements like how much money I earned and how successful I was. I haven't gone back to work and only care about spending time – quality time – with the people I love. In four years, I'll hopefully be in the all-clear. Until then, I'll have to keep on going to see my gynaecologist every three to six months but I'm determined to be the best mum I can be – and see my daughter grow up. (FS, Dec. 06: 124)

In the example above, a learning process has brought about a change in the interviewee's priorities as in *I don't want that life back* and *I'll never worry about my career again because, even if I earn nothing, at least I'll be well*. Learning is referred to in *Telling myself every day that I'll get better has made me believe in myself again* and *only care about spending time – quality time – with the people I love*. To the interviewee, issues like career development and success may no longer be as important as they were before her illness. She may even find her previous career-focused life undesirable, as seen from her statement *I don't want that life back*. Her new values are her relationships and her quality of life. The quality time she can spend with her family is more important than the career she once had. Her priorities have changed from a focus on status to an emphasis on her quality of life. She has emerged from trouble as a wiser person, and clearly a *fearless* one.

The themes of finding closure and moving on, and the means by which they are achieved, function as the magazine's suggestions for solutions: the advice will guide the *Cosmo girl* in re-establishing the ideal performance of her femininity. The magazine uses the examples of experiences described in the feature stories to neutralize challenging discourses and promote its dominant discourse. It also assures the *Cosmo girl* that she is welcome back after her ordeal, although that her experiences have changed her.

5.4.1 *Finding Closure*

Finding closure through expert help consists of finding a solution through a process in which a woman actively solicits expert help. This may help her after, for instance, a traumatic experience. The kind of expert help she needs depends, naturally, on her situation; a solution through medically trained help is suggested in the following example.

- (53) Yet women need to know there are methods that do work to aid recovery [after rape]. Today, the best way to treat these symptoms is immediate crisis intervention – treatment and counselling that attempts to return the victim to how she felt before the attack. Survivors cannot be helped to recovery without proper services. (FS, Jan 04: 68)

In the example, the theme of closure points to a solution for how to deal with the impact of the violence to which she has been subjected. The possibility of closure is referred to in *to return the victim to how she felt before the attack*. The professional support which may bring about closure is referred to in *methods that do work to aid recovery* and *immediate crisis intervention – treatment and counselling*. The importance of professional support for the theme of closure is present also in the last sentence of the example: the road to recovery is not possible *without proper services*.

The presupposition in the example above is that the woman was content with her life before trouble befell her. This is the state of mind to which she wished to return. However, no return is possible *without proper services*. The emphasis is on the necessity of and the professionalism of these services which help the victim recover. In this example, there is no mention of the individual's own agency in the recovery process, although she herself will have to make the decision of seeking and/or accepting help.

Equally, the theme of finding closure by facing one's past refers to finding a solution through a process in which a woman reviews her memories in order to take

control over her future. To do so, she will first make the decision to seek expert help such as legal advice or resort to legal measures. However, the process of coming to terms with one's memories can be extremely painful, especially in instances when a woman has been the victim of practices such as rape, sexual assault, physical violence, or mental cruelty. Facing one's past may take the form of a concrete, almost symbolic, event such as facing the perpetrator in court and hearing his sentence read out. Finding closure through such a painful symbolic act is found in the following example provided by the woman whose stepfather sexually abused her while she was a child and a teenager (Examples 44 and 45; discussed in 5.3.1).

- (54) But I couldn't look at him as I gave evidence, as I knew he'd intimidate me, and I cried in front of the jury – it felt as if I was naked in a room full of strangers.

When I walked out, my legs buckled, [...] Finally the foreman spoke: 'Guilty,' he said, of all four charges of indecent assault and all four accounts of rape. The judge sentenced Alan to eight years in prison, and I almost collapsed with relief and, yes, joy.

[...]

I want other women who have been abused to know that there is life afterwards – you *can* (italics in original) speak out, get justice and move on. And there are people out there who are willing to help you. You don't have to be a victim. Agreeing to waive my anonymity and tell my story took a lot of courage, but I've finally realised that Alan is the one who should be ashamed, not me. (FS, Sept. 04: 100)

Here closure is contrasted with the strenuous process of reaching it. It is referred to in *there is life afterwards*. The painfulness of the process is described in *I cried in front of the jury* and *[it] took a lot of courage*. The torment of the woman facing her rapist from the past is described in terms of physical weakness. Giving evidence in the trial against him, even as an adult, reminds her of her helplessness. She describes the situation in terms of physical reactions; her helplessness is referred to in *I couldn't look at him*, she felt as if *naked in a room full of strangers* and when she had to walk her *legs buckled*. Finally, closure is confirmed in the statement *You don't have to be a victim* and you can *speak out, get justice and move on*.

Here finding closure is referred to in terms of physical reactions of relief. The interviewee *almost collapsed with relief and, yes, joy*. Her relief is understandable. Her insertion of the "yes" before admitting to joy suggests that she knows that a prison sentence is no reason to rejoice, whatever the circumstances. With

that “yes” she indicates that she wanted justice, not revenge. However, she defends her right to be honest and her feeling of joy over the sentence. To her it means positive closure and she wants to share the knowledge of this solution with other women.

Thus, the repertoire of regaining control assures women that closure is possible after a traumatic experience; there is a solution, not only acceptance. The theme of finding closure is referred to in the statement *you don't have to be a victim*. Reaching the point where you may begin to find closure depends on outside help, *there are people out there who are willing to help you*, but also on your own ability to find enough courage to deal with the situation and share your experiences with other women. Indeed, whether the *Cosmo girl* finds closure does not necessarily depend on help from experts or her friends; her own actions and decisions can also provide a solution.

The repertoire of regaining control also describes finding closure through actions and decisions of one's own. The theme refers to personal agency and women's ability to resolve an issue and find joy in their own capacity. Such agency is described in the following passage, where the interviewee obtains justice, after having been subjected to harassment by her boss, affecting both her personal and professional self-confidence.

- (55) Pinpointing the proudest moment in my life is easy. It was 4 June last year, when I stood up at an employment tribunal and described, in nerve-racking detail, how my former boss had sexually harassed me. And I'd gathered all the evidence myself. How I found the strength to finally stand up against him still astonishes me. (FS, July 04: 87)

In the example, the woman describes how she found the strength and courage to confront her former boss in court. She did not accept the situation; she fought back. Doing so, she could find closure, as in *the proudest moment in my life*. Closure brings her joy, especially since she realizes that her own decisions, and actions led to that proud moment as in *And I'd gathered all the evidence myself*. [...] *I found the strength to finally stand up against him and I stood up at an employment tribunal*. Her story is one of systematic harassment (Examples 34 and 35; discussed in 5.2.1). At some point, she decides to fight back with the same systematic persistence; she begins to gather evidence against her boss and takes him to the employment tribunal – where the ruling, finally, is in her favour. These are the moments she describes as *the proudest moment in my life*; through her own actions she has regained her pride in herself. With this example, the magazine proposes the *Cosmo girl*'s own agency and resourcefulness as a means of finding

a solution. It implies that she herself can re-establish her self-esteem and regain control; this is her independence.

5.4.2 *Moving on*

The second theme forming the repertoire of regaining control is that of moving on. Moving on becomes possible when a woman finds strength in the support of friends and family, or learns to accept her situation after bereavement or illness. This occurs also when a woman experiences a shift in her values and changes her lifestyle accordingly. The theme of moving on interacts with the theme of support imported from the repertoire of friendship.

In the repertoire of friendship, family ties are described as a source of strength: they support a woman and help her to rebuild her life after bereavement. Family support as a means of regaining control is described in the following example where the interviewee has been widowed after a very short marriage.

- (56) I still wear my wedding ring and use Rob's last name, Bendelow. I'm only 21 and I'm a widow, but I don't tell people who don't ask. I don't want sympathy. I've moved back with my parents and I'm working as a healthcare assistant. I'm trying to keep Rob's memory alive in a way he'd be proud of, so I'm running the Race For Life for Cancer Research.

Someone asked me recently if I would have chosen not to meet Rob had I known what the future held. But I cherish every minute of the 11 months we had together. [...] When you love someone, nothing else matters. (FS, June 06: 108)

Moving on is referred to in *I've moved back with my parents and I'm working as a healthcare assistant* and also in *I'm running the Race For Life for Cancer Research*. She has made (at least) three changes to her lifestyle and these have been made possible because of the support of her parents; studying and finding a new job, moving back to her parents' house and taking up running. She evokes family support in her mention of her choice to go back to live with her parents because she needs their care for a while, before venturing out into the world once more. Indirectly, she refers to the power of family ties in her mention of how she honours the memory of her husband by participating in fund raising for cancer research. Running the race is a symbolic act which for her fuses past, present and future. It keeps her memories of the months spent with her husband alive, *I cherish every minute of the 11 months we had together*, while her decision to run indi-

cates that she is capable of making decisions about where she will be going in the future.

Family ties are also described as a source of strength which helps a woman to rebuild her life after a severe illness. The strength of family support will enable her to move on in a way described in the following example.

- (57) Now, 18 months later, my life is getting back on track. I've moved out from my parents' house and into my own home. I have a great boyfriend and even a new career. While I was recovering, I did a floristry course to keep busy and loved it; I've just qualified and have a new job.

It's taking me longer to get back to Peru than planned but I hope to go in a few months, after my check-up. Nothing – not even a brain invader – will stop me getting on that plane. (FS, Aug. 06: 229)

Here the theme of moving on is present in each sentence in the first paragraph, as in *my life is getting back on track. I've moved out from my parents' house and into my own home. Also I have a great boyfriend and even a new career. [...] I've just qualified and have a new job.* The interviewee in this example was diagnosed with a brain tumour. For her, as for the interviewee in the previous example, moving in to live with her parents was a way of finding strength to cope with her condition and the treatment she was receiving. Having recovered, she had been able to move into a house of her own, which in itself is a decision to move on. Another decision was to take the floristry course, and a third to get a job as a florist. At some point, her life-changing decisions also brought with them a new boyfriend. Now she plans ahead; she wants to return to Peru where she had been working before her tumour was diagnosed.

The experiences in the example above suggest solutions; they echo the resourcefulness of the *Cosmo girl* of the editorials and the ideal performance of her femininity. She will bounce back from trouble and back into control with a new, more suitable boyfriend and a new, better job. She will not be the same person, but she will be *fearless* in the manner of a *Cosmo girl*.

The ability to move on may depend on one's will to re-assess one's values. Indeed, the process of deciding to move on and the process of changing one's values would occur over a long period of time; therefore, it is difficult to say which is the cause and which the effect. It can be argued that the two processes support each other and develop simultaneously in interaction. The following passage, where the interviewee describes her cystic fibrosis, illustrates how moving on is interdependent on a change of values.

- (58) It was one of my most inspirational days. There I was talking to a room full of celebrities and MPs about how I got through each day with cystic fibrosis and what I was saying was moving many of them to tears.

[...]

I'm helping to raise £8.8 million for developing gene therapy. It's too late for me, but it will help other people with CF. I'm lucky to have lived as long as I have and experienced things other sufferers don't. Having this disease has made me more compassionate, and making a difference is so satisfying – it's the best thing I could ever do. (FS, April 04: 91, 93)

A change in values as part of moving on is referred to in [...] *this disease has made me more compassionate, and making a difference is so satisfying – it's the best thing I could ever do*. The life change described consists of helping others, which in this case are *other people with CF*. Consequently, helping others can help a woman define her place in society. In the feature story, she first describes how she *partied as hard as* [she] *studied* and that her physician told her she was *burning the candle at both end* (Example 46; discussed in 5.3.2) She neglected her disease and continued to live life at a breakneck pace. For her it is too late for recovery. But other sufferers may still be able to influence the development of their disease and they may benefit from possible future research findings.

The change in values she has undergone becomes apparent as the interview moves on to describe her current life situation. She is no longer focused only on herself, she now considers other human beings with empathy. She calls herself *lucky to have lived as long* because of her life experiences, and she can also see that the disease has made her more *compassionate* as a human being. At the same time helping others understand the disease can be experienced as highly rewarding, it is *satisfying* and *the best thing I could ever do*. Giving a talk makes her experience *one of my most inspirational days* and she feels she is *making a difference*. With this example, the magazine offers a solution for how to move on through a change in values and with support from friends and/or peers: a *fearless* woman emerges.

The theme of moving on also refers to finding a solution through a process of learning which helps a woman to reconcile herself with the past. Going through a process of learning may enable her to embrace changes which she has previously considered unacceptable. Learning will encourage reconciliation and help her to process betrayal or accidents and, as a result, continue with her life. Reconciliation as a prerequisite for life change is described in the following example.

- (59) I'm a private person and find it hard to trust others, but because I was so desperate to know my dad, I let my guard down. It's been hard to get over, but I have to move on. I'm lucky to have [husband] Dan and from now on I'll concentrate on him and our future together. I'm leaving the past behind. (FS, July 06:110)

Moving on in life requires an active decision as in *I'm leaving the past behind*. She has found a solution to her situation and that is to leave the past behind and look to the future as in *It's been hard to get over, but I have to move on*. Reaching the inner balance needed to change is not an easy process, as can be seen from *It's been hard* and *from now on I'll concentrate on him* [husband Dan] *and our future together*. In order to develop, the interviewee has had to make a choice about focus. She has chosen to shut out the things she finds difficult and will instead focus on the positive things in her life. She describes herself as a *private person* who finds it hard to trust others, but having found her long-lost father, she was desperate to know him and trust him. However, he violated her moral values by marrying her half-sister, his stepdaughter, thus committing *the ultimate betrayal* (Cf. Example 39; discussed in 5.2.2). She eventually realizes that she [has] *to move on* [...] *leaving the past behind* and that her future is with her husband in their life together.

Indeed, the magazine in its examples emphasizes reconciliation and acceptance as means towards a solution such as moving on. In the passage below, a woman betrayed by a partner finds suggestions for reconciliation in the words of a psychologist quoted earlier.

- (60) When a man cheats on you, whether six months into a fling or after six years together, it makes you question everything – the choices you've made, your own judgement. "The effects can be devastating on even the strongest person's sense of self-worth," says Cosmo psychologist Dr Linda Papadopoulos. "It may lead to long-term feelings of insecurity and jealousy. But, by learning to put the hurt and anger behind us, we emerge stronger and more confident, and have a greater chance of finding love again." (FS, June 04: 101)¹⁹

The psychologist in her capacity of an expert describes reconciliation as a learning process. The theme of moving on through such a process is referred to in the

¹⁹ The three first sentences of this example constituted Example 56 in 5.2.3. Here one more sentence is added in which the expert suggests the possibility of reconciliation and a life change.

statement *learning to put the hurt and anger behind us*. It will enable women to *emerge stronger and more confident*. First she describes how a cheating partner may cause a woman to question her choices and her own judgement and damage her control (Example 36, discussed in 5.2.2). She then proceeds to suggesting that it is possible to *learn* how to overcome hurt and anger. Only then can women *have a greater chance of finding love again*. Consequently, a woman can hope to start a new, hopefully more rewarding, relationship only by putting aside the memories of a previous, unsatisfactory relationship.

However, a theme of the sweetness of revenge inserting itself from another repertoire (possibly one of revenge, which was briefly mentioned in connection with the rape victim example) may challenge reconciliation. Such a struggle between themes is found in the following passage, where a woman comes to terms with betrayal.

- (61) After only a month of chatting to Gaby, I begin to notice a change in her tone. She seems much calmer and says she is starting to move on. She says she feels she has ‘exorcised’ his memory and is no longer hell-bent on getting even. [...]

She also says she’s decided not to sell his golf clubs. “I’ve started taking golf lessons instead.” It seems, for Gaby at least, it’s time to call it a day. “I’m removing his details from the sites. I now know that letting go is the only way I can move on with my life. I can’t do this [revengeing herself on her ex] forever and closure is what I truly want.” (FS, Sept. 06: 88)

Here the ability to move on is referred to in *a change in her tone* and *she is starting to move on*. Reconciliation is described in dramatic, even diabolic, possibly ironic, terms like *exorcised* and *hell-bent*. The interviewee has reached a point where she is ready for change; *she has ‘exorcised’ his memory* and *she is no longer hell-bent on getting even*. First, her determination to bring about life changes is confirmed in her decision to take golf lessons instead of selling her ex’s clubs, a mode of revenge she had planned in minute detail. By contrast, now her focus is no longer on him: it has switched to herself. Secondly, her determination to proceed in life is explicitly confirmed in her words *it’s time to call it a day*. The learning process has given her the insight that it is necessary to come to terms with her past, in order to embrace the future: *letting go is the only way I can move on with my life*.

Thus in the example above, the need to move on overrides the need for revenge. Planning revenge may feel as rewarding as actually carrying out the plan. Planning can function as an act of cleansing which in the case of “Gaby” makes her

feel that she *has* ‘exorcised’ his memory. Therefore, she feels reconciled and will be able to move on. Indeed, the interviewee appears to refer to a certain amount of exhaustion by inserting a word like “truly” into her statement; *closure is what I truly want*. The turmoil of feelings described in her being *hell-bent* on revenge is over and the calmness of reconciliation sets in as may be inferred from *it’s time to call it a day*.

Finally, moving on refers to the need to find reconciliation through a learning process after an accident. Such a process may take time as illustrated in the following passage.

- (62) Plane crashes make everything worse – and watching the first few episodes of *Lost* was hideous. *But you have to move on*. Richard kept the cuttings from the crash *but I recently got rid of everything*. *You have to let it go and live your life*. (FS, Feb. 04: 73)

The necessity of embracing change is referred to in *But you have to move on*. In order to move on it is necessary to let go, as in *You have to let it go and live your life*. The interviewee describes the solution she has found making it possible for her to move on; she gets rid of all newspapers cutting concerning the crash, *I recently got rid of everything*. In that symbolic action she rids herself of the concrete reminders of the crash and the act may also help her to lay her personal memories of it to rest. To move on after a traumatizing accident may mean having to let both the memories of it, and the mementoes from it, go. In the example above, the interviewee’s memories are triggered by news items of plane crashes – such events from anywhere in the world will inevitable be broadcast. Watching fiction like the episodes of *Lost*²⁰ may not have been a wise decision either. She realizes that everyday life is more important than an accident in the past, however traumatic; *You have to [...] live your life*. Only then can she regain control and live without fear.

This subchapter has dealt with the repertoire of regaining control found in the feature stories of *Cosmopolitan*, in which the magazine offers suggestions in the form of examples for how the *Cosmo girl* can regain control. It suggests how she can re-invent herself and re-establish the ideal performance of her femininity. She may no longer have as much emphasis on *fun*, but she will be *fearless*, and most decidedly a *Cosmo girl*. The examples provided by the magazine described solu-

²⁰ An American television series about a plane crash in the South Pacific and the lives of the survivors on an island which is (possibly) uninhabited. The series ended in May 2010 after running for six seasons.

tions through the themes of finding closure and moving on. The theme of finding closure was linked to soliciting expert help, taking action and making decisions. The theme of moving on was linked to support from family and friends, and finding reconciliation.

The examples quoted in this subchapter illustrate how the magazine incorporates the mediated speech of the interviewees to strengthen its dominant discourse. The journalistic choices of the magazine promote stories of how trouble is overcome, and offers the experiences of the interviewees as examples of possible solutions. Thereby, the challenging discourse of trouble is neutralized, allowing the magazine's discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity to prevail.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has dealt with the discourses identified in the feature stories of *Cosmopolitan* UK 2004 and 2006, that of trouble and that of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. The discourse of trouble was found to challenge the dominant discourse of the magazine. The chapter has answered research question 2 concerning the discourses introduced in the feature stories and their function. The discourse of trouble was identified, consisting of repertoires such as that of the price of consumerism, threats to the lifestyle of the *Cosmo girl* and, and threats to her personal safety, which all challenged repertoires from the dominant discourse. The discourse of trouble was, in turn, challenged by a new repertoire, that of regaining control. In that repertoire the magazine offered solutions for how to deal with trouble, using the experiences of women interviewed in the feature stories as examples.

The chapter showed how the *Cosmopolitan* ideology intervenes to neutralize threats aimed at the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity. The discourse of the *Cosmo girl*, and her lifestyle based in consumption, has to be maintained since the success of the magazine as a business venture depends on it. Already in the editorials, the repertoire of trouble prepared the *Cosmo girl* for misfortune and taught her to avoid dangers. It explicitly described situations where a woman does not have control, such as falling victim to rape or illnesses. It also offered individual examples of women as being acted upon which were not in line with an ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity.

The women interviewed in the feature stories occasionally used the same repertoires to describe their lives that the editors used in their editorials; they were independent, they had choice in their personal and professional life and control over it. Like the *Cosmo girl*, they also enjoyed their lifestyle, their success and their

careers, as well as the company of family and friends. Nevertheless, the women interviewed also introduced a whole discourse of trouble, an elaboration on the repertoire of trouble hinted at in the editorials. Trouble inserted itself into their lives and upset their balance. They were no longer in control of their lives; instead, they were subjected to and victimized by the actions of other people.

The magazine and its descriptions of women being acted upon highlighted the importance of finding solutions to regain control; this is the independence of the *Cosmo girl*. Nevertheless, already in the editorials there were references to the possibility of recovery after loss of control. For instance, the advice given suggested to the *Cosmo girl* “how to bounce back from everything” (*Cosmopolitan* UK, Editorial March 2004). Significantly, the editorial referred to a feature story in that issue enabling the magazine to use it as an example of a possible solution for how to regain control.

In the feature stories, the interviewees resorted to the repertoire of regaining control to describe the various means they had used to overcome problems. These means were found in the themes of finding closure and moving on. The women had found closure by seeking professional help, taking action and making decisions. The importance of moving on was emphasized and the road to that goal was described as a learning process.

In the features stories, the *fearless* part of the *fun, fearless females* took the front seat. The feature stories showed that it is possible for a woman to re-invent herself as a *Cosmo girl*; she will not be exactly the person she was before trouble befell her, she will be wiser and *fearless*. The women described how the process took time and required effort; it was not merely a question of *bounc[ing] back from everything*. Unlike the *Cosmo girl*, the interviewees did not construct themselves as self-sufficient. When in need, they turned to their loved ones; partners, friends and family. While the *Cosmo girl* of the editorials was self-centred and only in theory described what it meant to be a friend, the interviewees referred to personal experiences of having received support. In life in the situated world, friends had stood up for them, partners had supported them, family members had gathered around them. Support was what helped the women to start reconstructing their lives.

Finally, in answer to research question 3, the findings showed that *Cosmopolitan* did, in fact, reduce the issue of its dominant discourse and competing discourses to a problem-solution schema. The “problem” was trouble as described in the discourse of trouble and its repertoires. The “solution” was the re-invention of the *Cosmo girl* as described in the repertoire of regaining control. However, the findings also showed that the magazine was unable to suggest solutions for all prob-

lems. Solutions were offered in relation to personal experiences such as betrayal and sexual assault, but not to issues in society such as sexism, workplace harassment, or drinking problems.

The magazine allowed for the introduction of the discourse of trouble, although this discourse had the ability to challenge the dominant discourse of the magazine. That decision was selective, since it was a discourse which the magazine would be able to neutralize, while it would not have been able to neutralize discourses such as those of gender equality, non-consumerism, sustainable development, or global solidarity. The magazine appears to have a purpose when introducing that particular discourse: to neutralize it and, as a result, strengthen its own dominant discourse. Simultaneously, it welcomed the *Cosmo girl*, although no longer the same, back to the synthetic sisterhood.

While on a discourse level, the discourse of trouble challenged the magazine's dominant discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl*, on the level of repertoires, those of the price of consumerism, threats to the *Cosmo girl* lifestyle, and threats to personal safety challenged the repertoires of independence, pleasure, consumerism, and friendship. They were, in turn, challenged by the repertoire of regaining control. The means of regaining control were suggested through the examples found in the feature stories and offered to the readers in the way advice is offered in problem-solution texts. These examples were presented as solutions, which supported the magazine's discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* and re-established that dominant discourse. Consequently, to the magazine the competing discourses were indeed problems, which were dealt with through inclusion and contestation resulting in the restoration of dominance, and thereby solved. The message of the magazine to its readers was that a woman could reinvent herself after having gone through hardship. This, indeed, was what made her a survivor, a *Cosmo girl*.

In what follows, the methodology used in this current thesis will be evaluated and the implications of the findings will be discussed.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The present thesis investigated how *Cosmopolitan* UK includes competing discourses to the dominant one of the *Cosmo girl* and how it closes the gap between the two. The method was repertoire analysis based on Potter and Wetherell (1987), Wetherell and Potter (1988), Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), and Jokinen et al. (1993). In contrast to previous research in this area (Hermes 1995; Machin & van Leeuwen 2003), this study concentrated on competing discourses introduced by the magazine itself. Whereas prior work (Hermes 1995) concentrated on how readers understood and negotiated the use of the advice of a magazine, the present study focused on the context in which and what advice *Cosmopolitan* UK offers to bring the competing discourses in line with the dominant one. In addition, contrary to earlier research (Machin & van Leeuwen 2003), which focused on the problem-solution schemas as a recurring structure in articles in women's magazines, the introduction of competing discourses in the present study made it possible to view the advice offered to the reader as strategic moves that return the reader to the *Cosmo* world.

The starting point of this study was the editorials, a forum where the readers and the editors met and shared the values and attitudes constructed as belonging to the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity. They all pledged allegiance to her behaviour and her lifestyle. Moving on to the feature stories, it became evident that the *Cosmo girl* could, nevertheless, encounter trouble in life. When she found herself in a crisis, she valued family ties and relationships more than money and a career. The magazine constructed these qualities as the factor which in the end enabled the women in the feature stories to resolve their problems and emerge, once more, as *Cosmo girls*. They had re-invented themselves, and regained control. This, if anything, was in the spirit of a true *Cosmo girl*. In the editorials, the *fun* part of the *fun, fearless females* took the front seat, while in the feature stories, the *fearless* part dominated.

The assumptive hypothesis of this thesis has been that editorials and feature stories are engaged in a dialogue of competing discourses, and that *Cosmopolitan* strives to bring these discourses into line with its dominant discourse of the *Cosmo girl*. To this purpose, the magazine selectively introduces competing discourses from among the ones of interest to the readership of *Cosmopolitan*, while ensuring that they are discourses which can be dealt with. Their inclusion is motivated by the need of authentication, but they also need to be solved, assuring the reader that "we know what your life can be like", and your life can finally be brought into line with the ideal performance of a *Cosmo girl*. If the competing discourse were to be left without refutation, and the problems to remain unsolved,

the dominant discourse would be deconstructed. The assumptive hypothesis rose out of the notion that *Cosmopolitan* on the macro-level reduces difficulties in individual lives to the 'problem-solution' frame of advice columns described by Machin and van Leeuwen (2004: 118). This is done in a way similar to the way this schema is used in individual stories in the magazine. The stories offer advice in the form of actions or skills which provide solutions to the problems.

In order to test the hypothesis the following three research questions were posed.

- 1) What discourses of performances of the *Cosmo girl* are introduced in the editorials and what is their function (dominant, competing)?
- 2) What discourses of performances are introduced in the feature stories? How have they been selected with reference to the dominant discourse (for example, can they be brought into line with the dominant discourse) and also the situated world of the readership?
- 3) How does the magazine deal with competing discourses? Are they made compatible with the dominant discourse? Can the set-up of a competing discourse and its neutralization be reduced to the problem-solution pattern?

The data for the study consisted of the twelve 2004 editorials of *Cosmopolitan* UK edition and 48 feature stories from *Cosmopolitan* UK 2004 and 2006. The editorials were written by three separate editors during the span of one year. The topics dealt with ranged from advice on the body, consumer goods, and social networks to definitions of the meaning of feminism today, as well as calls for support for the magazine's campaigns like the one to stop rapists. The common denominator of the feature stories was that they were human-interest stories, that is, self-narratives based on the personal experience of women interviewed.

The theoretical framework of this thesis was Critical Discourse Analysis and the method used within this framework was repertoire analysis following Potter and Wetherell (1987), Wetherell and Potter (1988), and Hermes (1995). The central concepts were discourse, repertoires, and themes. Discourse was understood to be the construction of reality. A discourse consisted of several interacting repertoires, and a repertoire was formed by several related and recurring themes. The repertoire analysis was conducted in a similar way on both the editorials and the feature stories. The description of the *Cosmo girl* femininity was analyzed mainly from the point of view of the dominant reading in the way suggested by *Cosmopolitan*, leaving possible resistant and negotiated readings outside the scope of the study.

The methodology used is open-ended and lends itself to adaptations depending on the perspective from which a researcher might want to approach her material. As Blommaert (2005:21) points out, CDA is not as a methodology in itself, but rather a critical perspective of looking at language in society. The interdisciplinary nature of CDA requires the researcher to establish such a perspective and choose an approach suited to her particular field of research. CDA does not favour a specific method of analysis, although some researchers (among them Fairclough) consider Systemic Functional Linguistics as a possible provider of tools of analysis. Nevertheless, the methodology used in this study may be criticized for the richness of the terminology introduced. The three levels “discourse”, “repertoires”, and “themes” constitute a hierarchy where repertoires represent the main level: they form a discourse, but are in turn formed by the smaller units, themes. This “step-ladder” of concepts was introduced to suggest one way of approaching repertoire analysis within critical discourse analysis. Equally, their introduction served to illustrate how the writer positioned herself in regard to other available methods of discourse analysis.

The advantage of the method of repertoire analysis used in this study lies in its exactness. It allowed findings to be tied to specific linguistics elements such as words and expressions, which constitute the themes of the repertoires in the texts. The themes could be shown to recur to form repertoires and the repertoires in turn could be shown to build a specific discourse, such as that of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity and that of trouble. This method of repertoire analysis is applicable within areas of research dealing with non-fiction narratives such as media texts and self-narratives collected for research purposes.

The study proceeded according to the ten stages of the repertoire analysis process of Potter and Wetherell (1987: 160-176). The first stage consisted of the setting of the research questions, stage two of selecting the data, and stage three was collecting records and documents. Stages four and five, interviews with respondents and transcription of the material, were omitted. Stage six, the coding of the themes, provided the foundation for the ensuing analysis, which was stage seven where the repertoires were identified. The findings were validated in stage eight, and the writing of the report was undertaken in stage nine. The tenth and final stage was the drawing of conclusions.

The findings showed that the editorials introduced the discourse of the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity, which was the dominant discourse of the magazine. Its function was to provide the reader with instructions for how to achieve that performance. The discourse described her in terms of her independence, pleasures, friendships, and consumerism, as well as in relation to trouble she might encounter. The discourse of the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* was

formed by five repertoires; those of *independence*, *pleasure*, *friendship*, *consumerism*, and *trouble*. Each repertoire revolved round several themes. Two of the repertoires were more prominent than the others. One was the repertoire of independence and its themes of choice and control, around which two whole editorials were built. The other was the repertoire of pleasure, which revolved around personal pleasure, pleasure in looks and pleasure in success. The repertoire of pleasure appeared eleven times in eight editorials. The repertoire of consumerism was found to insert itself into other repertoires, especially those of independence and pleasure.

In addition, the findings showed that the feature stories introduced a discourse which competed with *Cosmopolitan's* dominant discourse of the ideal performance of *Cosmo girl* femininity: the discourse of *trouble* with its several repertoires. This competing discourse challenging the dominant discourse was in turn challenged and, finally, neutralized. In fact, the function of the competing discourse in the feature stories was to strengthen the magazine's epitome, the *Cosmo girl*, by first allowing her to be challenged and then suggesting ways of regaining control. The magazine did indeed regard the competing discourses as problems to be solved. It used the competing discourses as an opportunity to test its discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity and establish its dominance. The competing discourses which the magazine allows with the purpose of neutralizing them should not be confused with resistant and negotiated readings that may be created by readers to mark that they are not prepared to accept the editor's propositions of a synthetic sisterhood or the proposed subject position of a consumer of certain products (see Santhakumaran 2004: 15). Indeed, parallel to the dominant reading of the *Cosmo girl* femininity, which has been the focus of this current study, there is also the possibility of counter-readings. One reading might actively resist the dominant discourse of the magazine, rejecting its ideology concerning, for instance, consumerism; another might negotiate the relationship between competing discourses in favour of one challenging the dominant discourse.

In the feature stories, the first four of the repertoires found in the editorials, those of independence, pleasure, consumerism, and friendship, could also be identified. The feature stories created an image of the independent modern woman who had the self-confidence to be in control and make her choices. She found pleasure in life, she enjoyed being attractive and enjoyed success. She had the salary to allow her to be an up-market consumer. She also valued her relationships and her friends and her family in particular was important to her.

In the feature stories, the discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* was, however, challenged by the discourse of trouble, which had developed out of

the fifth repertoire of the editorials, that of trouble. While the editorials only hinted at the possibility of trouble in the life of the *Cosmo girl*, the discourse of trouble in the feature stories was formed by the repertoire of the price of consumerism, that of threats to the *Cosmo girl* lifestyle, and that of threats outside her control. The repertoires were formed around themes such as sexism, harassment, and betrayal; violence, sexual assault, and illness and accidents. These repertoires in the discourse of trouble challenged the repertoires of the discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity and her lifestyle: her independence, in terms of control and choice, and her pleasures.

Most important in the feature stories was, however, the occurrence of a new repertoire, which was that of *regaining control*. The repertoire, which was made up of the themes of finding closure and moving on, offered examples describing how and by what means a woman subjected to harmful practice could once again regain her control and enjoyment of life. A victimized woman might decide to seek professional help to find closure. She might re-evaluate her lifestyle and values, and change her life by moving house, going back to university, or improving her professional qualifications, which would help her to start a new career. She might embark on a learning process which would – eventually, hopefully – help her to come to terms with what befell her, and allow her to move on. Thus, the repertoire of regaining control was found to support not only the repertoire of independence but also those of pleasure and friendships.

As the results of this study emphasizes the scripts for the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity, they can be read in relation to Kim and Ward's (2012) discussion of women's acceptance of the sexual scripts offered by magazines. They found that the representations of female sexuality circulating in the mass media and popular culture could potentially influence women's developing sexual identities. Already a brief exposure to a women's magazine rendered young women more likely to believe that women should assert themselves and their sexual desires. They also became less likely to believe that engaging in sexual activities carries risks. Kim and Ward (2012: 326) conclude that the complex and sometimes conflicting representations could be both empowering and problematic. Their study, set in the field of psychology, used reading groups given magazine scripts of sexual relationships and a control group given no scripts of sexual relationships. In the current study, one such double-sided script was found in one of the editorials of *Cosmopolitan*, where a group of women were described as pursuing their sexual relationships on their own terms: they *had notched up more than a football team between them* (November 2004). There was, however, a drawback: the risk of catching STIs. Another example was in a feature story (March 2004: 101) describing drug-rape: a couple of young women met some

(seemingly nice) men in a bar, accepted drinks from them, and later, an invitation to their house. The party ended in rape. Indeed, empowering scripts are not unproblematic.

This present study has contributed to the linguistic literature on media by presenting new findings on the discourses at work in the magazine *Cosmopolitan*. It has shown that *Cosmopolitan* UK in 2004 and 2006 incorporated competing discourses into its contents. The introduction of such discourses was necessary, otherwise the readers would not find the magazine and its mediated contents relevant to them in their lives in the situated world. As a business enterprise, however, the magazine could not allow its epitome, the *Cosmo girl* and her lifestyle, to be undermined. Consequently, the magazine had to neutralize the competing discourses which it had chosen to introduce.

This study also added to the knowledge of how a magazine uses its journalistic discourses to support the commercial venture of the publisher. This is problematic from the point of view of journalistic ethics; basically, the main issue of credibility lies here, not in the truthfulness of the discourses. Traditionally, reliable news reporting is expected to be independent or at least unbiased, albeit that there is no such thing as “objective” reporting. Using the fusion of journalistic contents and commercial interests within *Cosmopolitan* as an example, it can be argued that magazine journalism has developed in a direction of its own, compared to news journalism. The value of the contents of the magazine is, in fact, estimated through the number of copies sold at the newsagent’s.

The success of the magazine as a journalistic product and a commercial enterprise depends on the credibility of its contents. Credibility is created when, and if, the editors are able to convince the readers that the repertoires forming the magazine’s dominant discourse are truthful and relevant. Obviously, credibility is at the basis of the success of a magazine, whether *Cosmopolitan* or any other magazine: it is crucial for retaining readership and circulation, advertising and revenue.

On the macro-level, the magazine achieves credibility by allowing competing discourses from the situated world to enter the mediated world of its contents. Originally, the *Cosmo girl* became the epitome of *Cosmopolitan* through a process commencing in qualitative market research, which developed into lifestyle research. The mediated image of the *Cosmo girl* would then have been translated into editorial policy to function as a criterion against which the editors measure their decisions about the contents of each issue. As a result, they offer their readers the lifestyle values of the magazine and its epitome and produce repertoires describing her performance. To highlight her, they allow competing discourses whose purpose is to invite the readers to identify the magazine’s contents as cred-

ible. Finally, they strengthen the epitome by bringing the competing discourse into line with the magazine's dominant discourse of the ideal performance of the *Cosmo girl* femininity. Ultimately, the magazine retains its readers by welcoming them back as *Cosmo girls*.

Based on these findings and conclusions, further research on magazine narratives as reports from the situated world is possible. The contents of women's magazines constitute a fruitful field for future research projects. Some research has been done into elements such as advice columns and advertorials. The area of feature stories (that is, human-interest stories) offers an abundance of material. It is evident that the feature stories of *Cosmopolitan* UK, as well as other women's magazines, are rich in narratives about how women construct their life experiences. They can be regarded as contemporary fairy-tales, and investigated as self-narratives where a heroine encounters adversity, struggles to overcome it, and emerges triumphant.

Alternatively, the feature stories can be investigated from the point of view of the magazine for evidence as to how magazines choose to construct reality. They provide the interface where the situated world communicates with the mediated world. On that interface, the reader can interact with the interviewees and their experiences and draw conclusions about their relevance to her own life. The narratives can be understood as live reports from the situated world which are edited and transformed for the magazine into mediated experience. The moderator of that interface is the editor, who can choose between a number of professional journalistic tools to persuade: writer voice and reporter voice, headlines, pictures and layout. To conclude: the feature stories of a magazine can be approached using methodologies from a number of fields such as sociology, sociolinguistics, and media studies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Printout from

<http://www.natmags.co.uk/students/demographic.asp>

Cited on 21st Nov. 2006, webpage no longer available on 19th July 2012.

EDITOR: Sam Baker

Total Circulation: 461,610 (ABC Jul-Dec 2005)

Adult Readership: 1,921,000 (NRS Jul-Dec 2005)

Women Readership: 1,719,000 (NRS Jul-Dec 2005)

Median Age: 28

British *Cosmopolitan* was launched in March 1972. The magazine is known for its creation of the ‘*Cosmopolitan Girl*’. The liberated *Cosmo Girl* could attract men, have a career, make the best of herself and improve her sex life. It was an immediate and outstanding success.

Cosmopolitan, selling almost half a million copies every month in the UK, leads in the market for young women’s magazines. The magazine is a powerful brand with a sophisticated image. *Cosmopolitan* is now an international magazine with editions in the USA, Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hong Kong, Japan, Latin America and South Africa.

CORE BUYER – The *Cosmopolitan* core buyer is ABC1 and in her mid to late twenties. Intelligent and independent, she is determined to succeed – in her career, her social life and her relationships. She wants to take full advantage of the many exciting choices and opportunities open to her, but she understands that self-fulfilment comes from having fun and indulging herself, as much as from work and financial achievements.

Appendix 2

NATIONAL MAGAZINE COMPANY

COSMOPOLITAN 020 7439 5542

Reaches 1 in 3 ABC1 women aged
18-30 every year

Total Circulation *	430,353
Adult Readership #	1,804,000
Female	88%
Male	12%
ABC1 Profile	67%
Median Age	27



ADVERTISING RATES

Positions	Pages	Spreads
A	£27,444	£53,790
B	£25,612	£51,224
C	£21,945	£43,890
D	£20,127	£40,254
E	£18,296	£36,592
<i>Promotions</i>	£16,109	£28,996

Excerpt from the National Magazines Rate Card 2010, page 2. PDF file downloaded from http://www.natmags.co.uk/index.php/v1/Rate_Card.
Cited on 8th Nov. 2010, webpage no longer available on 19th July 2012.

Appendix 3

Editorial of *Cosmopolitan* UK Edition October 2006

One of the first things I did when I became Editor of *Cosmo* was to reintroduce the Sex & The Single *Girl* column. There were two reasons for this: firstly, because sex and the single *girl* is what *Cosmo* is all about, and has been ever since it was founded in the US over 40 years ago by Helen Gurley Brown as the bible for sexy, independent young women. But also, because sometimes it is tough flying solo (and at other times you wouldn't give it up for all the single men in Alaska), we wanted to dedicate a column to the pleasures, passions and pitfalls of the single life. This was a page where singletons could vent, share the things they'd learnt about being single and why, in many cases, they'd come to love it. Their stories – often funny, sometimes cringe-making and always 'Oh my god, me too' – have made *Cosmo*'s back page a must-turn-to every month. What we hadn't realised was that each column also offered one woman's own personal rule for living the single life. That lightning bolt only struck when one reader wrote to us after reading one written by Shane Watson early last year. In it, Shane had written that 'the really seductive aspect of being single is hope, it's that simple...when you're single the world is full of opportunities'. "Shane Watson changed my attitude", the reader told us. "Ever since my fiancé dumped me I felt desperate, on the shelf...Shane made me see things differently and I've been living by her single rule ever since and have never been happier." So, to celebrate two years of Sex & The Single *Girl*, we've combined our favourites in an '8 Rules All Single *Girls* Should Know' special on p94. Another thing you should know is that on p236 we're giving away five sets of the 80 best beauty products in the world, worth £ 1,400. These products, the winners of *Cosmo*'s fourth annual Beauty Awards, are genuinely the very best in class as picked by *Cosmo*'s expert judges – and you the reader. Don't miss your chance to try them all for free.

Sam (handwritten)

SAM BAKER, EDITOR

- Got a spare lunch hour? Check out *Cosmo*'s gorgeous new website at www.cosmopolitan.co.uk for sex advice, relationship chat, shopping tips, sexy centrefolds and much more.

Appendix 4

Editorial of *Cosmopolitan* UK Edition November 2004

Sitting in a cafe the other day, I overheard a conversation that really made me think. New government statistics about soaring STI rates had just been published, and you couldn't open a newspaper without concluding we were all riddled with infection. Three women – your average twentysomething *girls* – were having a lunch-hour gossip at the table behind me. As always, they talked about men (how crap/great they are), sex (how crap/great that can be) and then one of them mentioned 'all the fuss' about STIs. 'It's really scary,' she said. 'I'm so glad it doesn't affect me.' Her friends both nodded in agreement. 'I know,' one of them said. 'Thank God *girls* like us don't get STIs.'

I was shocked: Were they virgins or one-man women who had all married one-woman men? Or maybe they had never, ever had unprotected sex, not even when they were drunk. But no, it turned out, as the conversation continued, that their perceived immunity came from being nice, ordinary women, with good jobs and fashionable clothes, who had notched up more than a football team between them, but were currently with men they trusted. This, they agreed, meant they were STI-free. And it made me think, maybe that's why the STI rates are soaring – women like us believe STIs only affect other people. So, we're reintroducing Cosmo's Passion Roulette Campaign: our seven page section is the most authoritative STI myth-busting guide you'll ever read.

This month also sees the return of *Cosmo's* Sex & The Single *Girl* column. With more women than ever living life on their own terms, and loving it, we decided to sing the praises of the single life. So, whether you're between boyfriends, multi-dating or just too busy (or even just nostalgic for your single days!), we're sure Victoria Coren's insightful and entertaining look at why men can't cope with multi-faceted modern women will strike a chord.

There's so much more I want to tell you about, but here are just a few things I'd hate you to miss: the heart-rending story of Chantal McCorkle, incarcerated in a US jail for 24 years, for a crime that isn't even a crime in the UK; our inspiring Be The Best section, where our favourite celebs share the tragedies that made them the women they are today, and Darius speaks exclusively to *Cosmo* about the trauma of his father's cancer. As for the rest, you'll just have to buy the November issue and start reading.

Sam

Appendix 5

Editorial of *Cosmopolitan* UK Edition August 2004

Every two years, *Cosmo* performs an amazing feat by gathering the editors of all the *Cosmopolitan* magazines around the world (that's 52 editions, reaching 47million women) and holding an international conference. It's an opportunity for us to come together with the legendary *Cosmo* founder Helen Gurley Brown, to share news and views with each other, and swap advice, stories and ideas. Inevitably, after three days together (in Manhattan, which was fab), conversations started to get personal and the whole event turned into a massive *girls'* night out – we talked about how we are constantly organising our lives around work and relationships, friends and family, even though we wouldn't have it any other way!

There are so many choices available to us and, although this can be really demanding, it was fascinating to hear how different women survive and thrive. There were also lots of cocktails, lots of dancing and lots of lively debate on love, lust and just how we fit everything we need to do into one day! It really is inspirational to hear so many "fun, fearless females" (and they truly are) talk about what affects their lives in their own countries and what are the hot topics for their own editions of *Cosmo*.

For all of us, however, our relationships and being the best we can be are of paramount importance, which is why I hope you'll enjoy *Cosmo's* Be The Best Special on p66. We spoke to nine fun, sexy and intelligent women who are from all over the UK, but from different ethnic backgrounds, to see the positive effect this has had on their lives.

I hope you enjoy reading this, and the rest of the issue – let me know what you think.

Nina

Appendix 6

Editorial of *Cosmopolitan* UK Edition October 2004

I have always been a *Cosmo* girl, ever since I picked up my first copy of *Cosmopolitan* as an 18-year-old student in Birmingham – away from home for the first time, terrified and loving it all at the same time. I'd always wanted the things that my first ever copy of *Cosmo* made me believe I could have – not some success-crazed, unattainable version of life, but to live life on your own terms – whether that featured a career, a man, marriage, babies, or not. Whatever felt right for you.

From the moment I first picked up a copy (or should I say fought over a copy with my flatmates) something clicked, and I began to believe my dream of becoming a journalist on a glossy magazine could come true. That dream had been shattered by a London journalism college, who told me I didn't have what it took to make it in magazine journalism (not tough enough, apparently) and sent me packing with tears in my eyes. I didn't know that this very rejection would motivate me for years to come!

It was *Cosmo* (and the many subsequent glossy magazines that have since emulated it) that made me believe I COULD.

I could leave that boyfriend, who had reduced my self-esteem to the size of a pea. I could learn to love (well, like) my ginger hair!

I could learn to type, move to London and con someone into actually employing me. Better still, I could summon the courage to throw in that job and join a temping agency, in the vain hope of landing a job – any job – on a magazine. And when I got lucky – which by some miracle, I did – I could persuade the Editor to let me write the shopping page, just once, to show her I could do it.

I confess I harboured fantasies of one day becoming a magazine editor – the fact that one day that magazine might be *Cosmo*, was a bit outlandish even for me! So when I answered my mobile three months ago, to be offered the editorship of *Cosmo*, it was a bit like being told you could choose between Brad Pitt and Orlando Bloom, and then dump them both for Johnny Depp. The ultimate *Cosmo* moment, and the realisation of a secret ambition I would never have had the courage to nurture, if it wasn't for *Cosmo* in the first place.

Cosmo's fun, fearless and unashamedly female approach gave me more than any number of exam passes ever could. Yes, *Cosmo* is 'just a magazine' – full of fan-

tastic advice that really works on all areas of your life, must-have shopping ideas, gorgeous beauty, and far more must-read features than any other women's glossy. But, I love *Cosmo* and I hope that over the coming months, you will too.

You'll see a few changes and I'd love to know what you think, so email me at cosmo.editor@natmags.co.uk. I hope it will be the start, if not of a meaningful relationship, at least more than a flip-flop-induced one-month stand.

Sam

Appendix 7

Editorial of *Cosmopolitan* UK Edition March 2004

Phew! There are so many things to tell you this month. First of all, Editor Lorraine Candy is on maternity leave. She's just given birth to a baby *girl* (Grace), the reason I'm standing in for the next few months. Next, our fashion team has been busy putting together our great new section, *Cosmo Shops* (p152), which brings you the best high-street buys to suit your body and budget. What's more, we've started a fantastic new page, *Your Sixth Sense* (p63), in response to letters and emails about your interest in the spiritual world. Each month, experienced *Cosmo* journalist and newly appointed Spirituality Editor Hannah Borno will be looking at everything, from tapping into your intuition and boosting your self-esteem, to consulting psychics and astrologers.

Which brings me on to one final thing I want to share. Recently, I bumped into a school friend I hadn't seen for years. Of course, it was amazing catching up with her after such a long time, but it was only when I told her I worked on *Cosmo* that her face cracked into the biggest smile. Immediately, she recited a piece of advice she'd read a while back in this magazine that had given her the confidence to accept the offer of a job abroad for six months. She was hesitant because she'd started a new relationship at the time and was worried it would be too much of an upheaval. But the advice - which said there was lots to be gained from jumping into a situation and taking risks - left a big impression on her. "It actually helped me make my mind up," she told me, before revealing she had taken up the offer - and kept her man, too, since the relationship survived the six-month parting.

Afterwards, I started thinking about the power of the advice given in *Cosmo*. This month I've found the feature *How To Bounce Back From Everything* (p89) extraordinarily touching and memorable. The mix of inspiration, knowledge, empathy and encouragement is what fuels those memorable '*Cosmo* moments'. So I asked around the office to find out which *Cosmo* moments had left a big impression on the staff - here's what they had to say...

- "I remember reading a *Cosmo* article called *Be True To Yourself* and that message really changed my life. For I'd been convinced I'd become a doctor but, around the time I was filling in my application, I read the article, looked into my heart and decided I couldn't go through with it. I had no idea what I would end up do

ing, but was prepared to have trust in the future - little did I know I'd actually end up working for *Cosmo* itself!"

Hannah Borno, Spirituality Editor

- "Bonnie Greer's words in *Why Young Love Makes You Stronger* (January) - 'no one can truly love till they love themselves' - made a huge impression on me. When you're happy in a relationship, as I am, it's easy to channel all your energy into your partner's happiness. Bonnie's words reminded me it's crucial to make time for my needs and desires if we're to live happy ever after."

Helen Daly, Assistant Editor

- "Dr Linda recently gave out five tips on how to love your body - remembering them always helps to make me feel positive if I ever have negative thoughts about my body."

Elle Iannaccone, Art Editor

I hope you enjoy this month's issue. Do write in to tell me about your own *Cosmo* moments - or you can email cosmo.mail@natmags.com.

Nina Ahmad, Acting Editor

Appendix 8

Editorial of *Cosmopolitan* UK Edition April 2004

As you know all of us at *Cosmo* are really proud of the fact that our magazine is packed with intimate advice on how you can have a happier healthier sex life. We're especially thrilled to have the best authorities on the subject of sex and relationships writing for *Cosmo* - our Sex Editors Rachel Morris, Dr Sarah Humphery and Sarah Hedley. So, you can imagine how we all felt when the trio were invited to the US by Oprah Winfrey - yep Oprah, to give the benefit of their experience. She wanted our Sex Editors to guest on one of her shows, entitled *Is Your Sex Life Normal?* I also learned that the Oprah Winfrey show has an audience of a staggering 23 million. And our *girls* did a super-impressive job, each of them turned out in sexy pinstripe suits, looking like modern day *Charlie's Angels* delivering great advice for the whole of the US to hear. "It was a great experience, especially being picked up from the airport in the stretchiest limo ever!" Rachel (a *Cosmo girl* if ever I knew one) told me, "Oprah was really warm and approachable and had the best comic timing of anyone I've ever met!" Unfortunately the show won't be transmitted in the UK, but you can catch up with how the *girls* got on by logging on to www.oprah.com and of course they're giving advice and inspiration in our *Passion Package* (p137).

Obviously I know you'll enjoy the rest of the magazine. Please make sure to read *You + Your Friends* (p95). I think one of the great things about being a woman is our friendships. I don't know what I'd do without my own friends, who I think are the most understanding women in the world, even when I don't call often enough and forget the occasional birthday (well, quite a few actually!). But I was so moved by the stories of against-the-odds friendships that have survived illness and huge tragedy that it's only right *Cosmo* pay tribute to those special women who play such a big part in all our lives.

Also, check our *RapeStoppers Campaign* update on p66. As you know, we have been running this since the start of last year to help raise money for a national helpline for survivors of rape. But never has it been more needed than now. In November last year we received a call at the *Cosmo* offices from a distraught woman who said she had been drug-raped and needed help. We aren't trained counsellors, yet she thought we were her only source of help at the time. It's a shocking situation that needs your support, so please turn to p70 to find out how to help. I hope you enjoy this issue - we're here to entertain and inform, so let me know your thoughts by writing in, or you can email mail@natmags.com.

Nina Ahmad, Acting Editor

Appendix 9

Editorial of *Cosmopolitan* UK Edition February 2004

Isn't it great to start the New Year on a positive note? Here at *Cosmo* we've been lucky enough to begin 2004 clasping a new award - and one which you've played an integral part in us winning. *Cosmo* has just scooped the British Society of Magazine Editors Innovation of the Year award for the unique Rape Stoppers campaign. Readers' letters prompted me to start this campaign to set up a 24-hour phone line for women who have been raped or sexually abused.

I received heartbreaking letters from women who'd been attacked but hadn't spoken to anyone about it before. As you know, very few women go to the police to report the crimes against them so they never get referred to support networks; they deal with the pain alone. We don't want that to happen anymore. *Cosmo* approached Rape Crisis and the Metropolitan Police's ground-breaking rape investigation squad Operation (formerly Project) Sapphire to help us look into setting up a line. Now, after a meeting with Home Secretary David Blunkett, the Government has pledged support for the line and is conducting research into setting it up.

We will be presenting our findings to a Home Office committee this month and will continue to apply pressure on them to fund such a line as soon as possible. We had so much support from you for Rape Stoppers, it was brilliant. We need you even more this year - and if you know any multi-millionaire businesses who'd like to help us achieve the dream of getting the line running in the next six months, then I'd love to hear from you. (We also won International Magazine of the Year at the ACE publishing awards - congratulations to our Head of New-trade Marketing Jennifer Caughey for that.)

I can only hope 2004 continues in such an optimistic and cheerful way, as we've got lots of new plans for *Cosmo* that will make your lives better and brighter. I hope you enjoy the exclusive 28-day diet we've tailored to meet your individual needs (p69) with help from Champneys Health Resorts. You wrote and told us you needed a quick, simple diet to help you either lose weight or just feel healthier, so we came up with our Happy Diet. This easy eating plan should take you through the year without so much as having to count a single calorie and will give you loads more energy. I think we can guarantee a happier and sexier new you in time for Valentine's Day and don't forget this year is a leap year, so if you fancy popping the question, now's the time. Write and let us know how it goes. Good luck!

Lorraine Candy, Editor

PS If you can't get enough of *Cosmo* this month, then grab a copy of the *Cosmopolitan Book Of Love - For "fun, fearless females"*. It's just £4.99 and is on sale exclusively in WHSmith. Find it next to the latest issue of your favourite magazine for the answer to all your dating and relating questions in one go.