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# Lingual primitives and critical discourse analysis: a case of gender ideology in *Cosmopolitan*

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This article investigates the utility of combining critical discourse analysis with the framework of lingual primitives advanced by Weideman (2011), in a critical analysis of gender ideology in the women's lifestyle magazine *Cosmopolitan*. More specifically, two elementary linguistic concepts are combined with the critical discourse analysis methodology in order to analyse a sample of feature articles from *Cosmopolitan*. The results are illustrated on the basis of a case study that is representative of this larger sample. The findings suggest that the abuse of power in this magazine is best conceptualised as the abuse of lingual trust.

## Linguale primitiewe en kritiese diskoersanalise: die geval van genderideologie in 'Cosmopolitan'

Hierdie artikel ondersoek 'n wyse waarop kritiese diskoersanalise gekombineer kan word met die raamwerk van linguale primitiewe as deel van 'n kritiese analise van geslagsideologie in die vroue leefstyltydskrif *Cosmopolitan*. Om meer spesifiek te wees, twee basiese taalkundige begrippe word gekombineer om 'n steekproef van artikels in *Cosmopolitan* te analiseer. Die resultate word op die basis van 'n gevallestudie, wat verteenwoordigend is van hierdie groter steekproef, geïllustreer. Die bevindinge dui daarop dat die misbruik van mag in hierdie tydskrif die beste gekonseptualiseer kan word as die misbruik van linguale vertroue.

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This article demonstrates how a framework of lingual primitives (Weideman 2011) may be combined with the critical discourse analysis (CDA) of gender ideology in *Cosmo* conducted by Conradie (2012). As articulated by Weideman (2011: 156-60), this framework identifies a number of elementary linguistic concepts, which characterise the discipline of linguistics and informs much of the work conducted by a number of its past and current paradigms. The analysis aims to illustrate how two of these elementary linguistic concepts may be combined with the methodology employed by Conradie (2011 & 2012) for investigating the construction of gender ideology in feature articles from *Cosmo*.

The article reviews the basic tenets of CDA, with specific attention to the approach proposed by Jäger & Maier (2009: 46-7), before considering the combination of this approach with Weideman's (2011) framework. Subsequently, the discussion seeks to contextualise the data collected from *Cosmo* by reviewing previous research on women's lifestyle magazines from both linguistic and sociological studies. On this basis, an empirical analysis of gender ideology in feature articles from *Cosmo* is conducted.

## 1. Critical discourse analysis

CDA differs significantly from other – often referred to as “more orthodox” – applied linguistic and sociolinguistic approaches, not least in terms of its methodological eclecticism that includes, on the one hand, analyses which make extensive use of the analytic tools advanced by these orthodox approaches and, on the other, studies that forgo detailed descriptions of the formal textual features of its data (Haig 2004: 133, Wodak & Meyer 2009: 5, 23). Central to all CDA investigations, regardless of its specific tools, is a problem-solving orientation that acknowledges and attempts to elucidate the connections between a text and its social context, including the relationships between its producers and consumers (Haig 2004: 133, Wodak & Meyer, 2009: 3).

This common agenda has engendered the following conceptualisation of the term ‘critical’. It is understood as describing theories that aim to enhance our understanding of society by incorporating

research from all the disciplines in the social sciences, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, political science, and economics (Wodak & Meyer 2009: 6). For the present study, the most relevant implication is that critical analyses should aim to investigate the extent to which some ideological bias is an inherent part of the discourse under study, and/or the extent to which the discourse is deliberately shaped to propagate a given ideology (Haig 2004: 137). For example, upon encountering a media text that describes all women as encumbered by anxiety over their physical beauty, the analysis may examine the use of passive sentence structures that are used to avoid identifying a specific source of that anxiety such as the mass media (Conradie 2012: 16). The ideology that may be generated by this approach is analysed in terms of the connections between the text, its producers and consumers, as well as the social contexts in which production and consumption transpire (Haig 2004: 137, Wodak & Meyer 2009: 7, Van Dijk 1993: 249).

This conceptualisation of the term ‘critical’ both accounts for CDA’s eclecticism and underscores the value accorded to interdisciplinary work (Wodak & Meyer 2009: 3). Admitting that some scholars may view these traits of CDA with scepticism, Wodak & Meyer (2009: 5) maintain that the perennial debates they engender, and the innovations they allow for, are essential to practitioners’ attempts to connect texts and contexts (as outlined earlier):

CDA has never been and has never attempted to [...] provide one single or specific theory. [Instead] studies in CDA are multifarious [and in] contrast to ‘total and closed’ theories, such as Chomsky’s Generative Transformational Grammar or Michael Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics, CDA has never had the image of a ‘sect’ and does not want [it].

The next section will outline Jäger & Maier’s (2009) approach to CDA by paying specific attention to their conceptualisation of discourse fragments, strands, knots and related terms, before considering its relation to the study of lingual primitives.

## 2. From planes to fragments

Jäger & Maier (2009: 46) observe that, although the selection of specific linguistic tools in CDA is determined by the nature of the data and the questions being asked in each study, there is nevertheless

a “standard repertoire”. From this point of departure, they proceed to offer terminology that may help to conceive this repertoire, by defining the following terms: discourse fragments, strands, knots, planes and sectors.

In their conceptualisation, a text consists of a number of discourse fragments. These are parts of a text that concern the same topic, such as sexuality, democracy, or terrorism, as determined by the research agenda (Jäger & Maier 2009: 46). If a text manages to confine itself exclusively to a single topic, the entire text may constitute a discourse fragment of the discourse of, for example, sexuality. However, as texts commonly address a number of topics, they typically contain discourse fragments on more than one topic, thus relating them to each other in a particular manner. Together, all the discourse fragments on a specific topic form a discourse strand (Jäger & Maier 2009: 47). As an example, consider a feature article in a women’s lifestyle magazine that addresses men’s apparent reluctance to commit themselves to long-term, romantic heterosexual relationships. Such a text may choose to attribute men’s behaviour to aspects of their sexuality. Those parts of the text that refer to men’s sexuality represent discourse fragments of masculine sexuality, and together form a discourse strand. The same text may also contain a number of other discourse strands. As these discourse strands are related to each other by the text in which they occur they form discursive knots. As an example, Jäger & Maier (2009: 47) offer the following sentence: “integrating immigrants into our society costs a lot of money”. In this instance, the discourse strands of immigration and economy form a discursive knot (Jäger & Maier 2009: 47). If the same text also contains the sentence “in (insert any Islamic country here) they still live in a patriarchal society”, the discourse strands of immigration and women are knotted together. Uncovering the nature of these knots may aid in elucidating the influence which the producer of a text aims to exert on consumers, by illuminating the connections between different discourse strands that have been constructed (Jäger & Maier 2009: 47). For example, a CDA analysis of a text that addresses men’s apparent resistance to commitment may question why men’s sexuality was included in the text, at the expense of other discourse strands, as well as the manner in which this strand is related to others that are present in the text.

In addition, the study of a discourse strand must also bear in mind the discourse plane on which it operates, such as the media, politics, and education, as well as the influence which these planes exert on each other. For example, the media's role in disseminating knowledge about political events means that several discourse fragments (obtained from an interview, for example) that form part of a discourse strand (such as immigration) are taken up in the media (for example, in the form of a special programme). As a result, the media plane can exert a significant influence on the extent to which these fragments are disseminated among members of the public, as well as the perspective from which a discourse strand is approached (that of the politician vs that of voters, for example). Finally, each plane is made up of different sectors. Women's lifestyle magazines constitute one sector on the media plane.

To summarise, Jäger & Maier (2009: 46-7) contend that practitioners of CDA can pursue their objectives by taking cognisance of the discourse plane and sector in which the texts under study are produced. Subsequently, an analysis of the various discourse fragments, the strands they form, and the relationships which these strands bear to each other may inform the analysts' selection of specific linguistic tools for his/her study. In the case of the present study, Fairclough's (2003: 55) conceptualisation of propositional assumptions and Brokensha's (2011) approach to membership categorisation were used for the purpose of investigating the gender ideologies that emerge from the construction of discourse strands, and their relation to each other, in a sample of feature articles from *Cosmo*.

### 3. Lingual primitives, elementary and complex linguistic concepts

Contending that linguistics, like any other discipline, requires a philosophical basis, Weideman (2011 & 2007) examines the utility of a framework of lingual primitives for enabling practitioners to understand and evaluate the various foci which different paradigms in linguistics have assumed as crucial to their work (Weideman 2011: 154-5). Central to this framework of lingual primitives is the set of modalities proposed by Dooyeweerd (1953), as it derives its structure from "analogies of other aspects within the lingual dimension of

experience” (Weideman 2011: 156). For example, observations about the conventional movement of lingual units, as articulated in transformational grammar, count as evidence of the linkages between the lingual and kinematic dimensions of experience. Weideman (2011: 156) posits that:

these basic concepts form a class of linguistic primitives or foundational theoretical concepts in linguistics that provide us with a framework to pursue the investigation of lingual phenomena not in a piecemeal, but in a single, coherent, and integrated framework.

Linkages between the lingual and one other aspect on this horizon of modalities constitute elementary linguistic concepts. For example, the link between the lingual and kinematic aspects is referred to as lingual constancy (Weideman 2011: 160). These are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Elementary linguistic concepts (adapted from Weideman 2011: 158)

Disciplinary angle	Mode to which the lingual refers	Analogical links
	Numerical	System and unity with multiplicity
	Spatial	Range and relation
	Kinematic	Constancy and movement
	Physical	Effect and process
	Organic	Differentiation and adaption
	Sensitive	Volition and perception
	Analytical	Meaning and identity
	Formative	Command and forms
Lingual		Expression related to the understanding of signs
	Social	Types of discourse and communication
	Economic	Scarcity and distribution
	Aesthetic	Alignment and co-construction
	Juridical	Ratification and redress
	Ethical	Accountability and integrity
	Confessional	Commitment and trust

From this perspective, elementary linguistic concepts may serve to describe some of the connections which specific fields in linguistics have investigated. For example, De Saussure's articulation of lingual system is viewed as evidence of the link between the lingual and numerical aspects (Weideman 2011: 160 & 2008: 628). As mentioned earlier, the concept of lingual constancy is central to transformational grammar. Similarly, lingual position and sequence, which reflect the connection between the lingual and spatial modes, is elucidated by structural linguistics, while analyses in the fields of pragmatics and discourse analysis may explicate linkages between the lingual and social aspects by examining lingual spheres of discourse (Weideman 2011: 159-60 & 2008: 628). In applying this framework of lingual primitives, Weideman also investigated the notion of a lingual economy to account for turn-taking procedures in institutionalised talk, as articulated by previous ethnomethodological studies in conversation analysis (Weideman 2008), as well as the juridical aspects of applied linguistic work (Weideman 2006 & 2009).

Weideman (2011: 135) also observes that entire sets of elementary concepts may be bundled together to form complex linguistic concepts "in order to elucidate a phenomenon operating within the lingual sphere". The most relevant of these, for the present study, concerns the relationships between lingual subjects (the "users of language") and objects ("the texts or factual lingual units we produce") (Weideman 2011: 135). As texts are produced and consumed within the context of such relationships, they may be expected to combine a number of elementary linguistic concepts. In addition, investigating relationships between lingual subjects and objects is clearly related to the agenda for CDA outlined earlier, in terms of the objective of connecting texts with their social contexts. Under the terms employed by Jäger & Maier (2009), the discourse fragments and the strands they form in a text may be investigated on the basis of elementary linguistic concepts and the role they play in relations between lingual subjects and objects. For example, discourse strands which serve to stereotype an ethnic minority suggest a link between the lingual and juridical aspects.

The current research intends to investigate the elementary linguistic concepts generated by connections between the lingual aspect and the confessional and juridical aspects, respectively. In terms of Jäger & Maier's (2009: 46-7) framework for CDA, the analysis seeks to

critically examine a woman's lifestyle magazine, as a sector on the plane of media discourse. More specifically, the article aims to analyse discourse strands in a sample of feature articles from *Cosmo* in order to ascertain whether the notions of lingual ratification (the connection between the lingual and juridical aspects) and lingual trust (the links between the lingual and confessional modes) may be used to conduct a CDA of the construction of gender ideology in these articles. In terms of lingual ratification, the analysis will investigate the generation of gender stereotypes on the basis of a CDA methodology employed by Conradie (2012). In the case of lingual trust, specific attention will be paid to the manner in which the discourse of feature articles in *Cosmo* attempts to construct a positive relationship between the reader and the author.

#### 4. Constructing femininity in women's lifestyle magazines

Following a long tradition of research on gender ideology, this analysis approaches gender as a social construct. This implies that the affective, cognitive and behavioural patterns commonly associated with either masculinity or femininity are not only determined by biology, but also by the process of gender socialisation. That is, individuals are socialised to perform gender according to a specific society's gender-typed norms and expectations (Butler 1989, Delamont 2001). The process of gender socialisation is influenced by social institutions such as the mass media and its various sectors that have the power to generate and disseminate discourses in which social meaning is assigned to gender (del-Teso-Craviotto 2006). From this perspective, the term 'gender ideology' is used to denote the perspectives on gender fashioned by these forces, and their utility to "provide the basis for judgements about what is good or bad, right or wrong" which, in turn, produce "basic guidelines for social perception and interaction" (Van Dijk 1995: 248).

The present study considers the construction of gender ideology in the context of women's lifestyle magazines. These magazines represent a sector of the mass media that derive their commercial impetus from marketing a specific identity as desirable for readers. Essential to this identity is the view that femininity denotes a distinct,

almost exclusive, set of affections, cognitions and behaviours. The magazine is constructed as an expert on the exact nature of these elements, and a guiding companion on how they are to be achieved and maintained (del-Teso-Cravaiotto 2006, Reichart 2001). This approach is manifested in a proclivity to feature how-to and step-by-step articles. In addition, since these magazines are presented as a distinctly feminine discourse, they ostensibly select and reformulate their topics in order to present an authentically female perspective (Ferguson 1983: 185-8, Conradie 2012: 14-5). In this capacity, the manner in which these magazines frame an ostensibly feminine perspective on social issues may have significant ideological ramifications. For example, Polonijo & Carpiano (2008: 463) found that discussions of cosmetic surgery in these magazines portrayed the medical procedures as risky but sensible options for augmenting both physical attractiveness and emotional health. More significantly, this argument was supported by citing the opinions of average men on the ideal female body (Polonijo & Carpiano 2008: 463). Implicitly, this discourse may normalise the view that heterosexual men's perceptions on female beauty should be a main factor in the decision to undergo surgery. In addition, the social power of this supposedly authentic female perspective is attested to by studies that critique government policies on issues such as depression literacy, for failing to take into account how these magazines approach the same topics (Gattuso *et al* 2005: 1640).

In women's magazines, this focus on marketing a particular identity results in a discourse that provides consumers with not only "a model on which to base their lives" but also "the goods necessary to accommodate it" (Rayner *et al* 2004: 154, 156). The consumerist vogue which the achievement and maintenance of this identity requires may be attributed to the fact that advertisers are a magazine's primary source of income (Moeran 2006: 727-8, Rayner *et al* 2004: 154-6). To survive, a magazine must pursue two interrelated goals, namely to attract readers and to convince various industries that these readers will be receptive to their advertisements (Conradie 2012: 20-1). One significant implication is that, while the discourse of women's magazines can underscore feminist positions, such as economic emancipation (Kirca 2001: 466), they nevertheless strive to promote

consumerism, as this is essential to attract advertisers (Rayner *et al* 2004: 154, Conradie 2012: 20-1).

To further contextualise the discourse of *Cosmo* in terms of these two interrelated goals, a brief word about its history is in order. When, during the 1960s, the magazine was saved from commercial failure by Helen Gurley Brown, it was not the first magazine with an explicit focus on sex (Braithwaite & Barrell 1988: 55). Instead its uniqueness was derived from Brown's aim to project the voice of "the perennial elder sister [...] who could advise girls on how to improve themselves [...] attract men, hold down a good job, make the best of herself, and, not least, improve her sex life" (Braithwaite & Barrell 1988: 55). Although this approach is ostensibly devoted to readers' interests, and may clearly contribute towards empowering women in some aspects, it is tempered by the need to draw advertisers. The result is that women must always be constructed as in dire need of the magazine's advice. That is, they must never become so independent that they no longer need it. For this reason, the aim to achieve the above-mentioned goals is constructed as a lifelong process that requires financial expenditure and, as a consequence, attention to the magazine's advertisers (Ferguson 1983: 191).

Finally, the fact that magazines such as *Cosmo* represent a worthy topic of CDA research is attested to by scholars who posit that they have the power to influence the identities of their target audience by repeatedly exposing them to the gender ideologies on which their content is predicated.<sup>1</sup> For example, del-Teso-Craviotto advanced a strong corpus-based methodology for investigating the texts contained in these magazines from a CDA perspective. The current analysis aims to continue this vein of research by considering the benefits of using a framework of lingual primitives to interpret the results of such research.

## 5. Analytic framework

Following del-Teso-Craviotto, Conradie (2012) departs from a corpus-based analysis of feature articles in ten issues of *Cosmo*, published between 2007 and 2008. WordSmith Tools was used to compare the collocations and context of the most frequent words in

1 Cf Talbot 1995, Machin & Thornborrow 2003, McCleneghan 2003, Attwood 2005, Brandt & Carstens 2005, del-Teso-Craviotto 2006.

the above-mentioned corpus for *Cosmo* with ten issues of the men's lifestyle magazine *For Him Magazine (FHM)* (cf Conradie 2011). After comparing forty articles from each magazine, the results showed that the lemmas 'anxiety', 'personality', 'negative' and 'help' are more prevalent in *Cosmo* than in *FHM*. When these words and their derivatives were traced to their original articles, it was confirmed that they were most commonly used in articles on psychology, romantic relationships and sex (Conradie 2012: 10-1, 23). These findings concur with those obtained by del-Teso-Craviotto (2006), McCleneghan (2003), and Machin & Thornborrow (2003).

On the basis of these findings, Conradie (2012) conducts a qualitative analysis of three feature articles that discuss issues related to psychology (such as anxiety, self-esteem and overall happiness), romantic relationships, and sex. Central to this analysis is Fairclough's (2003: 55) conceptualisation of propositional assumptions. These are defined as assumptions about the nature of a past, current or future state of affairs. For example, a political text may be informed by the propositional assumption that all adherents of the Islamic faith are unlikely to question the trustworthiness of their political leaders. This may become the basis of a second propositional assumption, such as the notion that this supposedly factual trait means that these people will carry out violent attacks against Western democracies if ordered to do so. Fairclough (2003: 55) argues that such implicit assumptions may be incorporated into the argument of a text so that they become part of the common ground, supposedly shared by the addressees and addresser, with the result that they are constructed as facts rather than assumptions. In this capacity, propositional assumptions may play a central role in shaping the content of a magazine such as *Cosmo*'s version of an ostensibly authentic feminine perspective on the issues discussed in feature articles. Therefore, these assumptions may promulgate stereotypes about the nature of female psychology and women's romantic relationships with men (Conradie 2012: 20). In the context of Jäger & Maier's (2009: 46-7) framework for CDA, propositional assumptions represent a means of investigating the way in which the content of a discourse strand has been formulated, as well as the nature of the discursive knots formed between different strands. In the example cited above, the discourse strand about the Islamic faith is constructed around assumptions that are presented as though

it were readily accepted common ground between the addresser and addressee. Subsequently, the strand of Islamic faith forms a knot with the discourse strand about Western democracies, based on assumptions about the actions which adherents of the Islamic faith are likely to pursue.

In addition to propositional assumptions, Conradie (2012) also uses membership categorisation (*cf* Brokensha 2010) to investigate the role of inclusive ('we', 'us' and 'our') and exclusive ('they', 'them' and 'their') pronouns in constructing relationships between women and men (Conradie 2012: 19).

For the purposes of the current article, a total of 50 feature articles from *Cosmo* (published between 2006 and 2011) were collected and analysed with the methodology employed by Conradie (2012). One case study from this sample, *How to make a good man great*, will illustrate the findings. This feature article was randomly selected to act as a case study, and the discourse features that constitute the focus of the analysis are representative of the sample as a whole. During the analysis, specific attention will be paid to the contribution that can be made by using the elementary linguistic concepts 'lingual ratification' and 'lingual trust' as a framework in which to interpret the ideological consequences of the propositional assumptions and membership categories identified in the text. Under the latter concept, the analysis will also consider a number of other discourse features (not investigated by Conradie 2012) that were characteristic of the sample, and that contribute to the establishment of a positive relationship between the author and readers.

## 6. Results

### 6.1 Lingual ratification in *How to make a good man great*

In this feature article, the male author provides a series of strategies that female readers can exploit to transform their boyfriends/husbands from "an average Joe" into a "great man". Since the article is concerned with heterosexual romantic relationships, and therefore involves both genders, its propositional assumptions are constructed around the supposed differences between them. These differences are depicted as the underlying causes of relationship problems, and

women are encouraged to manage these differences by improving the behaviour of their partners, in order to conform to a predetermined standard. Although men are constructed as resistant to change, the article's advice is justified by the assertion that men subconsciously desire the metamorphosis.

The article is divided into five segments that address specific areas in which women desire the improvement of their male partners: fashion, sex, dancing, arguing, and pornography. In each of these segments, the first paragraph sketches the problem while subsequent paragraphs present the male author's advice. The following section discusses the most prevalent propositional assumptions that underpin the article's ideology.<sup>2</sup>

## 6.2 Propositional assumptions

This section begins by discussing the assumption that heterosexual men are un-dynamic, while women are dynamic, as well as further assumptions that emanate from this. Next, the assumption that heterosexual men are rational, while women are irrational will be examined. A third assumption concerns the notion that, on applying the author's advice, the reader will find it easy to deal with these gender differences.

The first propositional assumption may be paraphrased as follows: heterosexual men are un-dynamic, or static, while women are dynamic in nature. This assumption is manifested in statements such as the following.

Extract 1: Any girl who's been in a long-term relationship knows that the average straight guy hates change.

Extract 2: While women are dynamic and get excited about trying new things [...] men are boring and take comfort in the regular.

Extract 3: [...] men loathe trying new things.

Extract 4: This is one of the defining differences between the sexes.

Although extract 1 is modified by the adjective "average", the portrayal of women as dynamic and men as the diametric opposite is elevated to a "defining" distinction in extract 4. Thus, the assumption

2 Owing to page constraints, only the most pervasive assumptions are discussed.

is constructed as a truth that applies to the majority of heterosexual men. Women's ability to accept and enjoy "new things" is described as an authentically feminine trait, while men's avoidance of change is normalised, thus providing a basis for the rest of the article's argument. The stereotype that informs these statements is also illustrated by the following extracts, which are intended to invoke situations from everyday life as evidence for its validity:

Extract 5: From his friends to his favourite drinks and his clothes, a man likes to stick with what he knows.

Extract 6: He'll choose his slacker, cheapskate mate who he went to prep school with over a presentable-looking NBF [new best friend] any day.

Extract 7: And why drink wine when beer's been doing the trick since he was 15?

Extract 8: This is one of the defining differences between the sexes - one that leads to the eternal argument. Dynamic, fashionable girlfriend: 'I threw away your old underpants and bought you some new Calvin Kleins'. Simple, loyal boyfriend: 'Noooo! Not my favourite boxers! Why are you always trying to change me?'

By assuming this stereotype as the rationale for the article's argument, masculinity's resistance to change is not only normalised, but the goal of managing/altering it is constructed as an authentically feminine pursuit. Therefore, it is women's prerogative/duty to effect change in their partners until they meet a predetermined standard. The execution of the article's strategies is justified by men's subconscious consent:

Extract 9: You don't want your man to be an average Joe and, most likely, he doesn't want to be one either.

Extract 10: The paradox, for men, comes from the realisation that we *also* don't want to be boring average Joes.

Extract 11: So, bearing in mind that men loathe trying new things, but deep down, we all want to stand out from the crowd, how can you go about improving your guy?

Extract 12: Men may write off guys who dance as girlie but (secretly) they would all love to.

However, the unconscious nature of this consent is illustrated by subsequent cautions to proceed by increments:

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Extract 13: Don't make a big thing about it. In fact, if he doesn't know he's changing anything, so much the better.

Extract 14: So make a game of it.

The second propositional assumption, namely that men are rational, while women are irrational, is manifested in the strategies women are encouraged to employ. Most of these tactics rest on the assumption that logical reasoning will be successful in goading men to improve in the areas addressed by the article.

Extract 15: Appeal to his masculine sense of logic.

Extract 16: The logic is straightforward - by focusing on your pleasure he will ultimately receive more pleasure from you.

Extract 17: Appeal to his sense of logic.

Extract 18: This is very straightforward thinking that any guy will understand.

To address the un-dynamic nature of men, women are encouraged to employ straightforward logic. Consequently, men are constructed as beings who struggle to comprehend the seemingly irrational desires of women, such as the desire to improve their partners' fashion and dancing skills. Part of this logic involves men's apparent understanding and acceptance of a *quid pro quo* exchange. This approach is particularly effective in the case of men's sexuality. Male Advice #2 contains a poignant example. Women are encouraged to motivate their partners into "upgrading his bedroom skills" by promising sexual incentives:

Extract 19: Every man likes to think of himself as the ultimate lover but deep down he wonders whether he really is one.

Extract 20: So how do you ask your man to upgrade his bedroom skills without spiking his fragile ego?

Extract 21: For every hour he pampers you, he gets a blowjob.

Extract 22: For him to reap the rewards, he has to upgrade his skills.

This approach is reinforced in Male Advice #3, where women are encouraged to use sexual incentives to goad men into dancing.

Extract 23: Tell him you can judge a man's bedroom ability by his dancing skills - and that you'd be happy to show him a thing or

two. There's lots of sexual innuendo there, which is sure to pique his interest!

In summary, women are advised to employ “masculine [...] logic” when attempting to improve their partners, which frequently involves the use of sexual incentives. This, in turn, may promulgate the view that men are acutely concerned with indulging their own sexual appetites, and are not offended by a *quid pro quo* method of satisfying these desires.<sup>3</sup>

The last propositional assumption aims to reassure the reader about the probability of success:

Extract 24: Very simply, you need a three-point strategy

Extract 25: Once he's had some decent tailoring, he won't look back.

Extract 26: He'll soon get the picture.

Extract 27: Next thing you know, you'll have an expert on your hands.

The purpose of this assumption might be to encourage the reader to implement the article's advice, based on the notion that, since the article has divided the process into five easy strategies, the reader is almost sure to succeed.

In terms of Jäger & Maier's (2009: 46-7) approach to CDA, the extracts cited above represent discourse fragments from the text under study. The strands which these fragments form are constructed around propositional assumptions that aid in forming the basis and content of the article's argument. As such, the analysis indicates that the discourse of *Cosmo* is typified by discourse strands that are constructed around assumptions about the psychology of men and women, illustrated in the case study by the assumptions about men's resistance to change, and women's desire to effect change in their male partners. In addition, the different strands also form discursive knots with the result, for example, that men's logical method of thinking is linked to their approach to sex. These findings reflect general patterns in the sample under study.

3 For an analysis of masculine sexuality in men's lifestyle magazines, cf Conradie 2011.

With respect to the juridical aspect of experience as it relates to notions of justice and fair treatment (Weideman 2009: 248-9), the stereotypes on which the argument of an article such as *How to make a good man great* builds, renders the concept of lingual ratification relevant. From the standpoint of CDA, analysts may view the article's discourse as restrictive, in the sense that male and female affections, behaviours and cognitions are limited to a set of gender stereotypes. What is problematic is the degree to which the discourse of a lifestyle magazine may realistically be expected to base, or at least attempt to base, its content on reasonable and unbiased considerations, rather than assumptions that reflect an ideological bias. At present, lifestyle magazines are not subjected to the same pressure to uphold institutionally sanctioned standards of fairness and objectivity as news journalism (*cf* Stenvall 2008). On this basis, the argument may be advanced that notions of justice and fair treatment are not relevant to evaluations of *Cosmo's* discourse. As mentioned earlier, however, such arguments are countered by observations from previous research that magazines such as *Cosmo* are discursively constructed experts on the nature of femininity (del-Teso-Cravaiotto 2006, Reichart 2001). In other words, its views are constructed as representative of its target audience, by virtue of the fact that they are portrayed as distinctly feminine (Ferguson 1983: 185-8, *cf* del-Teso-Cravaiotto 2006, Reichart 2001). More importantly, however, the notion that fair treatment should be relevant to the discourse of such magazines is underscored by the extent to which this discourse attempts to construct itself as a trustworthy source of information. That is, the relevance of lingual ratification is underlined by another elementary linguistic concept: lingual trust. To elaborate, in view of the fact that feature articles, such as the case study analysed in this instance, constitute lingual objects, produced by lingual subjects (journalists, editors, and so on) for consumption by other subjects, lingual trust becomes relevant to understanding the discourse of *Cosmo* because the scholarly literature on women's lifestyle magazines indicates that they are designed to speak to consumers with the tone of a friend, or older sister, who understands what it means to be a woman – occasionally inviting a

male speaker to act as an informer about the attributes of the opposite sex.<sup>4</sup>

The next section investigates this notion in more detail by analysing the manner in which the article attempts to establish a positive relationship with the reader, as evidence for the relevance of the concept of lingual trust.

### 6.3 Lingual trust in *How to make a good man great*

As mentioned earlier, *How to make a good man great* opens its discussion with references to events from daily life with which, it is assumed, its readers are familiar (*cf* extracts 5-7). This represents a general trend across the data.

In addition, the article's discourse is characterised by an informal register, including the use of abbreviations such as NBF (extract 6), and attempts to mimic the phonetic quality of spoken conversation, as in "Noooo!" (extract 8). The attempt to imitate spoken discourse is also reflected in the article's use of italics and brackets:

Extract 28: Contrary to the belief of some people, we men *do* actually want to look decent.

Extract 29: Do *not* overdo it!

Extract 30: [...] nothing is embarrassing, you can do *anything*.

Extract 31: It's no fun when *you* can't find the words to express exactly how you're feeling and *he's* so stubborn.

Extract 32: [...] otherwise he'll think you're giving him a makeover (which he'll think is bad).

Extract 33: Scout around on your own first, then go with him (preferably to one shop only).

The function of these features may be to imbue the article with the tone of an everyday conversation. In addition, the article also contains references to media icons, including James Bond, Frank Sinatra, George Clooney and Christopher Walken. Again, this feature proved pervasive in the sample.

4 *Cf* Ferguson 1983: 184-5, Braithwaite & Barrell 1988: 55, Talbot 1995: 143, Conradie 2012: 14, Conradie 2009.

Finally, in terms of membership categorisation, the article *How to make a good man great* employs the pronoun 'you' to refer to the female reader, while 'we', 'us', and 'our' denote heterosexual men in general. As such, the speaker serves as a representative of all heterosexual men, while the pronoun 'you' serves to address women as though in the context of an informal conversation. This feature contrasts with articles in which the speaker is female, where inclusive pronouns are commonly used to establish a sense of solidarity between readers and the female author.

These features are characteristic of the discourse of *Cosmo* and, in combination, function as instances of the elementary concept of lingual trust. The first feature attempts to establish common ground with the reader, while the second and third fix the discourse at the level of the everyday, as opposed to a specialised form. References to media icons may serve to demonstrate to readers that the magazine shares their supposed interest in celebrities.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the use of inclusive pronouns may contribute towards establishing a sense of solidarity between readers and authors. Based on research that emphasises the importance of fostering a positive relationship between a magazine and its core readership, the researcher posits that these discourse features form part of that pursuit.<sup>6</sup>

The connection between the lingual and confessional aspects implies that the text is constructed as though it promotes the readers' interests and as though its producer is convinced of its truthfulness. Although we cannot make categorical statements about the extent to which readers' lifestyles are influenced by magazines such as *Cosmo*, from a CDA perspective and in view of the stereotypes identified in the previous section, the question is whether or not the sense of trust, which the author clearly attempts to establish with the discourse features identified above, is abused. To summarise, although the text clearly contains instances in which the concept of lingual ratification points to the unfair treatment of gender differences, the question as to whether the article (and others like it) abuses social power involves the notion of lingual trust, as its discourse is designed to establish a

5 Celebrity gossip constitutes a significant part of *Cosmo's* discourse (cf Conradie 2009: 37-8).

6 Cf Small *et al* 2008: 31, Conradie 2012: 14-6, Ferguson 1983:10-1, 185-8.

positive relationship with readers. Therefore, under the framework of lingual primitives articulated by Weidmeman (2011), the results suggest that in *Cosmo* the abuse of power – an essential component of CDA analyses (Van Dijk 1993: 252) – can be conceptualised as the abuse of lingual trust, enacted in the context of relationships between lingual subjects involved in the production and consumption of lingual objects. In terms of the current article’s research goal, this suggests that a combination of lingual primitives with existing CDA methodologies – of which the use of propositional assumptions and membership categorisation is only one among many – is a profitable line of inquiry. The implication is that future analyses of ideologies in women’s lifestyle magazines may benefit from using a framework of primitives to interpret the results gained from other research tools. The next section elaborates on this implication.

## 7. Conclusion: the abuse of lingual trust?

A significant finding in Conradie’s (2012: 14-6) analysis concerns a feature article in which women’s supposed anxiety about their physical appearance is discussed. In examining the various sources that have contributed to an increase in contemporary women’s *angst* over this issue, the article observes: “The bar has been raised. It is no longer good enough to be smart or good-looking. You have to be working at both” (Conradie 2012: 14-6). What is problematic about this case is that the article fails to specify the source of this new standard. Although it is conceivable that the mass media has contributed towards exacerbating women’s anxiety over their physical appearance (Choplin 2010: 56), the article makes no mention of this hypothesis. Conradie’s (2012: 16) analysis posits that this can be accounted for by the degree to which *Cosmo* strives to balance readers’ interests with the objective of drawing advertisers. As such, it constitutes a case in which trust is abused, since the aim of informing readers about the nature of and possible solutions to their proposed problems is subordinated to the goal of drawing advertisers, including those from the fashion, dieting and cosmetics industries.

However, this article was unique in the sample collected for the present study, in the sense that no other text, including *How to make a good man great*, exhibited such clear tension between readers’ and

advertisers' dissimilar interests (Conradie 2012: 14-6). Nevertheless, using a conceptual framework within which the discourse features described in the previous section may be viewed as contributing towards the establishment of lingual trust suggests that at the very least the producers of *Cosmo* can be accused of not being transparent about the two competing goals that influence their discourse.

To elaborate, on the one hand, the question remains as to whether the producers of *Cosmo*, and magazines of a similar nature, may be accused of wilfully disseminating potentially harmful ideologies because they intentionally seek ways of constructing femininity in a manner that aligns it with advertisers' drive to sell their products. To aid in further contextualising this question, another result from the earlier WordSmith Tools analysis is relevant. The lemma 'say' was significantly more prevalent in *Cosmo* than in *FHM* (Conradie 2009: 32). When traced to its original context in *Cosmo*, it was invariably used to frame advice from independent psychologists, relationship counsellors and motivational speakers. This result also held true for the current sample of fifty feature articles. Examples include:

From *Closed books* (March 2010)

says Mike Lacey-Smith, a Johannesburg psychologist, life coach and motivational speaker

From *Revolutionary relationships* (May 2011)

says Rakhi Beekrum, a counselling psychologist in Durban.

From *Lessons in love* (April 2008)

says Johannesburg psychiatrist Suraya Omarjii.

In several articles, the counsellors' contact details are included. These findings demonstrate the extent to which *Cosmo* attempts to enhance the credibility of its advice.

On the other hand, the aim to enhance credibility and further strengthen the relationship between authors and readers remains only one part of the magazine's commercial strategy, especially since advertisers constitute the main source of a magazine's income (Moeran 2006: 727-8, Rayner *et al* 2004: 154-6). Although it is impossible to state that this tension between readers' and advertisers' interests robs all the advice contained in *Cosmo* of any value, it seems clear that, while the magazine goes to great lengths to establish a positive relationship

between itself and its core readership, it is not transparent about its dependence on advertisers. The citation of independent psychologists, counsellors and motivational speakers does not guarantee that the advice provided in feature articles is primarily concerned with promoting readers' well-being, especially when this might necessitate criticism of the magazine's advertisers.

An essential further step in the research process is to determine the extent to which readers – both core readers and less devoted ones – are aware of *Cosmo's* dependence on advertisers. This is especially important since it remains possible that many readers believe that they represent the magazine's strongest income and that its discourse is, therefore, devoted to sharing useful and honest information based on the readers' interests. Such an endeavour is an important part of CDA research, typified as it is by using its results to play “an advocacy role for socially discriminated groups” (Wodak & Meyer 2009: 19). In addition, such studies should also investigate the relationship between feature articles and other content, including advertising, as well as editors' and readers' letters. Future studies should also investigate the utility of the current article's application of lingual primitives by studying its appropriateness for other discourses that may be analysed within CDA.

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