'Lucky This is Anonymous'. Ethnographies of Reception in Men's Magazines: A 'Textual Culture' Approach

Dr. Bethan Benwell

b.m.benwell@stir.ac.uk

Department of English Studies

University of Stirling

Stirling

UK

FK9 4LA

01786 467976 (*telephone*)

01786 466210 (*fax*)

approx 10,160 words (excluding refs)

'Lucky This is Anonymous'. Ethnographies of Reception in Men's Magazines: A 'Textual Culture' Approach

Abstract

*In this paper I address the contribution that a study of **reader reception** might make to our understanding of the cultural meanings of the discourses to be found in and around men's magazines. Reception is a cultural site often neglected in linguistic analyses of popular cultural texts which are commonly treated as discrete, autonomous and ahistorical within these approaches.*

*Conversation Analysis of unstructured interviews with magazine readers is one means of accessing contexts of reception, which, unlike many ethnographic approaches, is properly reflexive about the ontological status of its data. The drawback of a strict ethnomethodological approach however, is its limited ability in recreating the original context of reading: the interview is arguably a situated account rather than a transparent report of reception. In order to expand the terms of 'context' for these interviews therefore, the paper proposes a triangulated method whereby the discourses and categories identified in talk can be intertextually linked (and indeed are sometimes intertextually indexed within the talk itself) to other communicative contexts in the circuit of culture, such as the magazine text, media debates, editorial identities and everyday talk. This 'textual culture'[1] approach to the analysis of popular culture effectively aims to analyse with ethnographic breadth and in discursive depth, the various, intersecting sites of culture within which the material text is formed – of which **reception***

serves as the focal point for this paper - and mirrors recent developments in Critical Discourse

Analysis (e.g. Wodak 1999, 2000).

The Meanings of Men's Magazines

The research presented in this paper arises from work on written popular texts and specifically the relationship between men's magazines and constructions/discourses of masculinity and lived cultures of masculinity. Whilst accounts of gender discursively constructed through written texts (particularly media texts and popular fiction) are relatively common (Mills 1995; Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard 1996; Talbot 1995, 1997; Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002), their relationship to the constitution of gender in the social world has rarely been explicitly demonstrated. What has tended to contribute to the neglect of this analytical approach is the practical and methodological problems theorists have encountered in attempting to engage with the dialogue between producer, text and reader. Whilst conversation analysts are, to an extent, able to provide an analysis of spoken interaction which attends to (and is thus accountable to) the orientations of the participants involved, a thoroughly context-sensitive analysis of how written texts for mass consumption operate within socio-cultural practice involves an almost Holy Grail quest in pursuit of all these various dimensions and the relationships between them.

One means of moving beyond the rather narrow focus of the text analyst, but which also, contrary to assumptions within Conversation Analysis, accepts that meaning is constituted more broadly than that which can be discerned within the text itself, is to turn to ideas within cultural and media studies. Work in this area has, since the early eighties, been concerned to describe culture,

not as a thing, but as a process - and to articulate the relationships between various sites of cultural process including production, representation, identity, consumption and lived experience.

The nature and forms of mass communication and popular culture have seemed naturally to lend themselves to a more 'social' view of the text and an orientation away from issues of content. For this reason there is a strong tradition of both detailed analyses of processes of **production** and regulation, and ethnographies of **reception** and far less emphasis upon the text in isolation within this field. The notion of a 'circuit' is now well established in media and cultural studies, but whilst early versions (e.g. Morley's 'circuit of mass communications' (1992: 77)) tended to present the sites within the circuit as discrete and unidirectionally and temporally related, more recent formulations have tended to stress the **inseparability** of these sites and the synchronic, simultaneous connections between them. Richard Johnson, for instance, describes these movements around and between these sites as 'circuits of culture':

> Each moment depends upon the others and is indispensible to the whole. Each involves distinctive changes of form, real transformations. If we are practically preoccupied with one moment and familiar with its forms, the other moments may not exist for us. (Johnson 1986: 284)

This is also an approach which has been practically realised in Du Gay et al's study of the cultural phenomenon of the Sony Walkman (1997). In the context of men's lifestyle magazines, a 'textual culture' approach might focus upon the 'productive' consumption of magazines by readers that feeds into market research and informs future content of the magazines as well as the existence of 'media debates' which circulate disapprovingly around men=s magazines and inform

the defensive meanings embodied in the editorial. What these recently articulated views of the 'circuit of culture' demonstrate, is that the 'production' of meaning both precedes and outlives the text and requires an examination, therefore, of both the **history** and **entailment** of the textual moment.

In a similar spirit, certain practitioners of cultural studies have advocated the contextualisation of the cultural text or genre under investigation within a much broader context of 'lived experience', by examining the 'cultural use to which such forms are put in daily life by cultural subjects' (Radway 1988: 363). In her autocritique of an earlier ethnographic study of readers of Romances, Radway suggests that the object of study for ethnographers needs to shift its focus to:

> the endlessly shifting, ever-evolving kaleidescope of daily life and the way in which the media are integrated and implicated within it. (ibid: 366)

Similarly Scollon's microsociological framework of 'Mediated Discourse Analysis' proposes that social action can be analysed in real-time moments ('sites of engagement') in which linked social practices come together and intersect in ways shared and familiar to its practitioners, called a 'nexus of practice' (Scollon 1998, 2001). The emphasis upon real-time action makes MDA particularly amenable to the study of lived experience - one of the important contexts of a text such as the lifestyle magazine:

> Nexus analysis is a way of opening up the circumference around moments of human action to begin to see the lines, sometimes visible and sometimes obscured, of historical and social process by which discourses come together at particular moments... (Scollon and Scollon

2002)

A textual culture approach to popular culture is similarly concerned to challenge the boundaries of the 'text' in this way, and some of these themes will be taken up again in this paper's conclusions.

The promise of these exciting formulations of textual culture is, however, somewhat compromised for me by their reluctance to engage in any kind of rigorous or systematic way with **language**, despite expressing a commitment to theories of the discursive formation of subjectivities. Du Gay et al, for instance, do not examine consumers' own accounts of their engagement with Sony Walkman, nor engage in any significant linguistic detail with the discourses surrounding the phenomenon. This is a pattern observed by Scollon who comments that where linguists tend to focus exclusively and myopically on the text, those working in ethnography and cultural studies are more interested in broader social forces, and he makes the following recommendation:

> The trick is to maintain an interdiscursive tension between the fine-grained analysis of specific mediated actions and socio-culturally contextualised analysis of the historical and social production of the sites of engagement. (Scollon 1998: 269)

In the next sections I shall start to explicate how this tension might be achieved in the specific sphere of **reception**.

Theories and Studies of Reception

Reception studies have appeared in various guises over the past few decades: the Reception Aesthetics and Reception History associated with Literary Criticism; the History of the Book; the anthropologically-inflected Ethnography of Reading; the emergent Cognitive Stylistics; and the Audience Studies that have dominated Cultural and Media studies since the 1980s.

Ahistorical, text-immanent approaches to reception, such as Reception Aesthetics (Iser 1978) and Cognitive Stylistics (Semino and Culpeper 2002, Stockwell 2002, Gavins and Steen 2003) can be criticised for failing to provide more robust empirical evidence of readers' actual interpretations of texts and indeed perpetuating interpretations of texts that continue to privilege the view of the analyst. Challenges to this approach can be found in History of the Book studies which are characterised by a focus on context and intertextuality, including historical archive work, textual bibliography and textual criticism and retrieval of contemporary document evidence such as adverts, artwork, letters, diaries and marginalia. Similarly, challenges have emerged in 'audience studies' of mass media and popular cultural texts, many from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, which invariably employ empirical, ethnographic methods of analysis and have the advantage of 'live' access to contemporary readers (e.g. Morley (1980), Ang (1982), Radway (1987), Corner et al (1990), Hermes (1995)). These studies were less interested in the 'subject positions' available in the text than in the contexts and ethnographies of reception and the role that consumption of such texts played in the broader texture of daily life (Machor and Goldstein 2001).

A number of potential weaknesses might, however, be identified in audience studies of popular

or mass culture. Firstly, the text itself is now neglected at the expense of an explication of reception contexts - an arguably reductive view of the communication process - with little attempt to draw explicit and systematic connections between content and reception. Secondly, and perhaps more crucially, the ethnographic data gathered by these studies tends to be treated as transparent and unproblematic; as a 'report' of reality rather than an account. This acknowledgement has led to an emerging **'crisis of representation'** (Moores 1993: 62) within the field whereby researchers have begun to question their ability to represent social reality with any objectivity, and a more self-reflexive examination of the **constructed** nature of their data and their own roles in its elicitation and interpretation has begun to emerge (cf. Ang (1991), Morley (1992), Corner et al (1990) and Dahlgren (1988)) - a methodological precursor to the conversational analytic approaches which would be taken up in sociological work. Radway's thought-provoking autocritique of her earlier study of readers of popular romance emphasises the contingent and 'nomadic' nature of readers' accounts, context-bound to particular discursive moments, and asks:

Can ethnography - which has tended to center its accounts on a conception of the individual as coherent, unified and present to the self - manage to capture the fluid, destabilised, ever-shifting nature of subjectivity produced through the articulation of discourses and their fragments? (Radway 1988: 368)

This crisis of representation has come to dominate the social sciences in recent years, and lies at the heart of a discourse analysis approach to 'textual culture'. Arguably a study of reception needs to adopt methods of analysis which treats the evidence of reading responses and practices as **accounts** not **reports**, and which assumes that the data which provides this evidence (in this

instance, interview talk) is 'constitutive of, performative of, and pervasively oriented to, the social interactional contingencies of whatever setting it is produced in' (Edwards and Stokoe, forthcoming). Furthermore, I wish to argue that such a study is incomplete without fuller attention to the relationship between the ethnographic, reception data and the 'circuit of culture' within which the magazine text is situated.

In the next sections I will elaborate on some of the limitations of ethnographic methods and outline the analytical frameworks which attempt to tease apart this conundrum whilst preserving the integrity of the data, such as Conversation Analysis (henceforth CA), whose benefits and limitations I shall outline. I will consider the positive contribution that Membership Categorization Analysis (henceforth MCA) can make in expanding the terms of the 'context' of the data, before finally proposing the need for an intertextual methodology as a means of supporting the Textual Culture approach ultimately advocated by this paper. This exposition will be illustrated by examples from my own data of unstructured interviews with readers of men's lifestyle magazines. I shall attempt to demonstrate that such an analysis is capable of illuminating common disjunctions between what is expressly 'reported' and other, more covertly revealed dispositions, which in turn may provide us with insights into the complexities of the reading process.

Data

Data took the form of informal, unstructured interviews led and guided by a male researcher who also circulated reading material to prompt discussion. Existing studies of readers of magazines

(e.g. Hermes 1995; Jackson et al 2001) have tended to elicit only broad dispositions and usual habits concerning reading, but an active engagement with a selection of magazines in the context of the interview was designed to recreate (in a limited way) the reading process. At this stage of the research only two interviews have been conducted. Nevertheless, qualitative analysis of the transcripts is valuable in illuminating the methods of a discursively-informed 'textual culture' approach to reception. The first group consisted of two 17 yr old males still at school in Scotland studying for their Highers. The second group consisted of four 21 yr old male students at a Scottish university. The design of the interview was set up to elicit the reading habits, practices and dispositions of a range of dedicated readers of men=s magazines with particular reference to issues of gender, sexism, humour and irony. Responses to specific texts, articles and images were also elicited. The recorded data were transcribed using conventions adapted from Jefferson (1984) and were initially analysed within a broadly ethnomethodological framework employing insights and tools from both Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis.

The Limits of Ethnographic Methodology

Whilst the crisis of representation has been acknowledged by media ethnographers, it is really to sociology that we must turn for the wealth of research on the limits of the interview/focus group methodology. Work within this area has attempted to problematise the view that interview questions and answers are simply a neutral filter for 'truths' about the social world (what Silverman (1993) deems the **positivist** view), and argue instead that they are a **constructed version** of this world **-** part, indeed, of the world they describe (the **interactionist** view). Within the interactionist paradigm, a number of positions have been adopted. Firstly there are those

9

whose main aim is to flag up the mediated nature of the data as a factor which needs to be accommodated within one's discussion (e.g. Silverman 1993, Ang 1989). This position tends to see mediation as a 'problem' for analysis, leading to 'bias', which needs to be overcome or avoided by raising awareness of the ways in which interview accounts are being jointly constructed by interviewer and interviewee (e.g. Rapley 2001 on the neglected role of the interviewer, Puchta and Potter 1999 on the ideal use of elaborated questions).

It would be easy, using Discourse and Conversation Analytical methods, to interpret my interview data in these terms. Firstly there was an issue of self-presentation in both groups which one could argue might have militated against the expression of more 'candid' accounts. This was particularly so with the group of 17 year olds in relation to sexuality and experience. The status of the interviewer possibly inhibited opinion in relation to politically-sensitive subjects such as sexism and homophobia commonly cited in critical discourses of disapproval in the media debates surrounding men=s magazines. For example, when asked about the issue of homosexuality in relation to men's magazines, Alastair's response is troubled, contradictory and ambivalent:

```
I: There is just one other thing that I sort of would be interested to (0.5)
   er sort of discuss and that is (1.0) um (1.5) and this sort of refers to
   the magazines generally as well and that is the issue of homosexuality
   (1.0) now (.) for a start do you find much about homosexuality in these
   magazines?
M: no
I: no you don't
M: no
I: no (.) what just no mention or?
```

10

```
M: I'm sure it comes up (0.3) very rarely
A: it's not quite homophobic in these magazines but I'm sure I've seen like
   little things (0.5) slightly slagging off people (1.0) it's not homophobic
   at all (0.5) not that (.) but I'm sure I can remember reading something (.)
   '13% of you are actually gay' and y'know 'how disappointing' or something
   like that
```

The oscillation between high modality ('very rarely', 'I'm sure'), extreme case formulations ('not homophobic at all') and then low modality and hedging ('not quite homophobic', 'slightly slagging off people', 'or something like that') is marked in this sequence, demonstrating a possible tension between loyalty to the magazine, the integrity of the recalled reading experience and the perceived ideological frame being set up by the interviewer's questions. Although the interviewer's question does not mention homophobia, this interpretation is alighted on by Alastair. There is evidence elsewhere in the interview of awkwardness (prolonged pauses, requests for clarification) prompted by the 'taboo' topics introduced by the interviewer, such as attitudes to women and sexual activity.

Other limitations were also apparent. The dynamics of the group led, particularly in the case of the 21 yr olds, to one dominant speaker frequently setting the agenda. Despite the fact that the interviews were lengthy (up to 2 hours long) and involved hands-on engagement with the magazines and detailed discussion of particular features and adverts, it was clear that discussion of reading practices is no substitute for the individual and private reading experience itself.

The guiding role of the interviewer meant that issues raised tended to be his (or indirectly mine) rather than theirs. This was starkly evident after a lengthy session in which the interviewer asked

the group to respond in detail to a promotional feature about grooming for men. Towards the

end of a long discussion, the following exchange occurred:

```
I: how does it make you feel as readers?
[3.0]
M: I probably wouldn=t have read the article anyway
```

The long, awkward pause suggests that Mike finds it difficult to engage with the question. This is

then supported by his dispreferred second, a rejection of the proposition embedded in the

question. These types of examples offered ample evidence that the interview was unable to

accurately recreate the reading experience.

Conversation Analytical Approaches to Ethnographic Data

A second position within the interactionist perspective, represented by Ethnomethodology and

Conversation Analysis (e.g. Myers 1998, 1999, 2000, Macnaghten and Myers: forthcoming),

rejects any kind of attempt to link the mediated talk to an external reality, but instead chooses to

capitalise on the data as an example of highly situated and locally-occasioned talk - arguably a

kind of speech event study of 'the focus group' or 'the unstructured interview'. In this model, the

talk ceases to be a resource and becomes the topic of analysis.

Conversation Analysis adopts the ethnomethodological assumption that it is the sequential

organisation of turns in interaction that provides the context for talk, and that it is only by

reference to these detailed patterns of organisation employed by participants themselves, that generalisations may be derived about the data: 'the search for context properly begins with the talk or other conduct being analysed' (Schegloff 1992: 197). In adopting this paradigm then, the previous observations about patterns of troubled sequences initiated by the interviewer's questions and the tendency for one member to dominate and shape the terms of the discussion would be viewed as a relevant aspect of context: a promising focus rather than a distracting distortion of the data. CA would consider any suggestion of a disparity between an authentic reading experience and the *reportage* of this experience to be an *a priori* assumption imported, unwarranted, into the analysis. Since the original context of reading is almost always a non-verbal, private and internalised process, it is not one which CA is equipped, or indeed interested in attempting to 'recover'.

So a CA approach may involve a focus upon ambiguous or 'problem' sequences, contradictions and anomalies within the data, but where the 'biases' and 'noise' are elements that the first position aims to eliminate, they become, in this model, the object of analysis. An example of such an ambiguous sequence occurs at one point in the discussion, where one of the 21 yr old, self-professed 'uninvested' readers expresses a personal view which curiously seems to morph into that of the magazine, so that we are unclear about whether these are his politics or those held by the magazine which he is objectively describing:

```
M: And if it was a big, ugly woman on the cover you wouldn=t buy the magazine
   (.) because above all it=s a men=s magazine (.) it doesn=t profess to be
   anything else.
```

13

By adopting insights from both CA and Discursive Psychology here, we can attempt to situate Mike's talk as a *performative account* oriented to the interview setting and values in which it was produced. We can observe the shift of *footing* that occurs in this turn. Mike begins by employing the ambiguously inclusive second person pronoun 'you' which is suggestive of an assumption that this course of action would be one shared by the addressee, the 'typical' reader and Mike himself. In the next sequence he shifts to the use of 'it' about the magazine, thus excluding any potential addressee, or indeed himself, from these values, implying that his first formulation 'big ugly woman' is deemed, within the interview context, to be negative or undesirable. Moving somewhat beyond a strict CA perspective, we might **speculate** that Mike has formulated a misogynistic construction, 'big, ugly woman' within the register of the men's magazine itself, implying a orientation to these values, which he immediately seems anxious to disown. This example enables us to draw conclusions about what cultural frame Mike attributes to the interview situation (a non-sexist one), as well as demonstrating the fluid range of orientations which may be adopted by a single speaker depending on context and audience. We do not, however, with a CA approach to interview data, find ourselves equipped to comment with any authority, on the 'authentic' reading experience and the meanings arising from men's magazines.

Ethnographic Data as both Topic and Resource

What strategies, then, are available to the ethnographer who **is** interested in getting closer to this 'original context' of reception? An approach which offers insight into the categories, meanings and values oriented to by participants and assumed to reflect cultural meanings *beyond* the talk

itself (and thus plausibly in the reading process) is MCA. This approach 'makes generalisations possible without violating the recognition of the interview as a situated encounter' (Silverman 1993: 112). A discursively-informed, ethnographic, interactionist approach representing a midway third position, is anxious not to relinquish entirely the view that interview data might be used as a **resource** for broader social analysis. Silverman for instance, questions whether we 'must ... choose between seeing interviews *either* as potentially 'true' reports or as situated narratives.' and suggests that we might treat interviews as 'giving us access to the *repertoire* of narratives that we use in producing accounts' (1993: 108). He goes on to argue that,

> interviews do indeed display realities which extend beyond the reality of conversational practices, so that when interviews take place, we witness both artful and universal practices and the display of cultural particulars expressing variable social practices. (1985: 170)

Similarly Baker asserts that 'interviewing is understood as an interactional event in which members draw on their cultural knowledge, including their knowledge about how members of categories routinely speak' and that 'cultural knowledge is audible and visible in how people account to one another' (1997: 131)

A properly discursive view of social life, should, after all, be able to assume that the interaction in a focus group discussion will never be entirely isolated, but will form an interdiscursive part of a bigger chain of interactions in which the participants are involved. In other words, it is possible that interviews are able to provide evidence of cultural norms and shared beliefs about identities and relationships beyond the local context (i.e. informing the reading process as well as the interview), **and sometimes in direct contradiction to the explicit, professed statements of the**

participants. This position has been taken up by a number of analysts employing MCA techniques, such as Baker (1997).

Baker discusses the 'accounting work' done by respondents in interview talk and offers a scheme for analysis based on an examination of the 'local production... of versions of a moral order' involving attention to the naming of categories and activities associated with particular groups (Baker 1997: 133). Drawing on Sacks' formulation of 'membership categorization devices' (Sacks 1992), she proposes a scheme for analysing the way that cultural knowledge is revealed through **naming**, identification of **activities** and **attributions** associated with named categories and the normative **social actions** implied by such associations. The category, 'lad' for instance is continually invoked, particularly by the older readers, and attached to a variety of often quite precise attributes or activities, e.g. 'what lad is going to go out and go "yeah, Ford Fiesta for me please"?'. The disjunction between 'lad' and Ford Fiestas in this example is a piece of cultural knowledge clearly oriented to by this group of men and might be assumed to form part of their cultural beliefs and assumptions; we might thus feel confident that we are recreating a reception context (at the very least for this group of readers) in assigning a particular interpretation to the advert to which this stretch of talk referred.

In the example above, the category 'lad' was explicitly named in the talk, but some practitioners of MCA are willing to *infer* a cultural category from the surrounding attributes and activities. For instance, Wowk's analysis of a murder suspect's account of his female victim invokes the category 'slut' although the suspect does not use this categorisation explicitly. She argues that such a categorisation is implicitly embedded in the associative attributes and actions named by the suspect (Wowk 1984). Such 'implied' categories are available in my data. One of the most

16

striking things revealed by the interviews was the implicit construction of two categories of readers which I have termed '**invested'** and **'uninvested/detached'.** In the group of 17yr olds, a far more **affiliated** and **invested** attitude to the magazines is revealed. They both regularly read *FHM* and *Maxim* and one actually gets *FHM* by monthly subscription. By contrast, the group of 21 yr olds construct themselves as uninvested, referring to a past, younger, invested self:

```
I: Do you actually buy any of these magazines?
M: yeah I used to be (0.5) totally addicted to them and buy(.) most of themΨ
   but I (.) kind of stopped (.) now (.) um and if I buy them at all I
   generally buy GQ and I=ll buy Esquire but I kind of got fed up withΨ
G: Um I don=t buy very many any more(0.5) I used to buy sort of like (.)( a
   few (0.5) if I=m out I might pick up one or two (.) something to readΨ.
J: I=m pretty much the same um (.) I used to read FHM and Maxim like pretty
   much every time they came out and stuff. Now I=ll buy them occasionally
   every so oftenΨ
D: I only used to read FHM and again it was maybe just till a couple of years
   ago I stopped buying it
M:Ψfrom buying them so much when we were younger and stuff (.) you tend to go
   (.) you=re still caught by the cover but I think the sensible part of your
   brain goes >that=s three quid for something you=re going to look at once=
```

All participants use a past-time perspective in presenting the Category Bound Activities associated with the **former invested reading self**. They echo each other's formulations ('I used to'), to describe their former regular engagement with the magazines ('…buy most of them'; 'buying them so much', 'every time they came out') and construct any current engagement as specifically superficial, functional and mitigated ('occasionally.. every so often', 'if I buy them at

all'). There is a structuralist dichotomy being constructed here between the younger, invested, naïve self ('totally addicted'; 'still caught by the cover') and the current, wiser, experienced self, benefiting from hindsight ('the sensible part of your brain', 'I kind of got fed up'); an 'uninvested reader' by default is largely one who **no longer** engages in these activities. In line with other studies of magazine readers, of both men=s and women=s magazines (Hermes 1995, Jackson et al 2001) these readers construct the magazines as trashy, disposable, a bit of fun if there=s nothing better to do by using vague formulations ('a bunch of stuff') and mitigation ('a wee while', 'just'):

```
M: Ψa bunch of stuff just to amuse guys for a wee while (.) just if you=re
     sat on a train or if there=s nothing on TV
```

Intertextuality and the 'Interpenetration of Communicative Contexts'

We have already discussed the more 'promiscuous' version of MCA which allows categories to be inferred from the surrounding talk and imported by the analyst, via the principle that categories are 'inference-rich'. Such an assumption would, nevertheless have to be carefully and persuasively justified by evidence of the associative attributes and activities unambiguously obtaining to the category, and the ways in which they were situated and worked up within the context of talk (Stokoe 2004), as 'uninvested reader' was. In this section I wish to argue that a more radical extension of the terms of 'context' may be achieved and used to facilitate our interpretation of the interview discourse and its relationship to reception, and that this relies on a principle of **intertextuality**.

18

For instance, a key, but potentially 'fuzzy' category or repertoire for an analysis of the reception of men's magazines, at which a strictly ethnomethodological procedure might balk, is 'masculinity'. Is it legitimate for a Conversation Analytical approach to detect discourses and normative assumptions about masculinity embedded in reception, unless masculinity is something **explicitly** invoked and oriented to by participants in interview talk?

The limitations of a CA definition of context have been amply debated (Schegloff 1997, Billig 1999a, 1999b Schegloff 1999a, 1999b, Wetherell 1998, Speer 2001, Edley 2001, Stokoe and Smithson 2002), and the discussion is often framed as an opposition between CA and Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA). Practitioners of CDA express a clear commitment to the principle that the 'meaning' of a text cannot be exclusively derived from the text itself and is thus dedicated to explicating the manifold layers of social and discursive practice within which it is embedded (e.g. Fairclough 1989, 1992a, 1995; Chouliarki and Fairclough 1999; Wodak and Meyer 2001). This more **interdiscursive, intertextual** view of texts which challenges the stable distinction between text and context is forthcoming in the light of the 'discursive turn' in critical theory and social sciences, and it is notable that recent publications within CDA are increasingly expressing a more radical view of the discursive scope of the 'text'. Wodak (2001), for instance suggests that:

A fully 'critical' account of discourse would... require a theorization and description of both the social processes and structures which give rise to the production of a text, and of the social structures and processes within which individuals or groups as social historical subjects, create

meanings in their interactions with texts. (Wodak 2001: 3)

Wetherell (1998), working within a broadly conversational paradigm but drawing on the poststructuralist theories of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) who argue that social space as a whole must be conceived as discursive, rejects the 'pure' CA approach to data which demands an exclusive focus upon the conversational activity (often a tiny, partial fragment of social life) and a set of interpretations occasioned **only** by the talk and the orientations of its participants. However, she also expresses misgivings about the orientation to 'structure' over 'agency' in the poststructuralist model, its decentering of the subject and the universalising tendencies inherent in a Foucauldian model of discourse and its limited interest in the detail of language (ibid: 402). Wetherell's proposed solution is a subtle meshing of the two approaches: the preservation of CA's attention to the 'highly occasioned and situated nature of subject positions' but combined with the broader, more inclusive definition of 'discourse' to be found within the poststructuralist model with its assumption of interdiscursivity. The resulting analytical approach is a 'genealogical' one which aims to trace normative practices, values and sense-making through both historical and synchronic intertextual analysis:

The genealogical approach... suggests that in analysing our always partial piece of the argumentative texture we also look to the broader forms of intelligibility running through the texture more generally. (Wetherell 1999:403)

Wetherell, whilst invoking plausible concepts and categories beyond the text here (e.g. heteronormativity), does not actually provide *intertextual* instances of such repertoires and this is arguably typical of approaches which rely upon commonsensical and inferential descriptions of

20

context. CDA practitioners have intermittently foregrounded the linguistic neglect of **contextual** sites of social practice and intertexts (Fairclough 1992b) and highlighted the lack of 'stringent procedure' in integrating historical context into the interpretation of texts (Meyer 2001: 27). Recent examples of 'triangulation methods' in language research (e.g. Cicourel 1992, Sunderland 1996, Scollon 2000, Wodak 1999, 2000, Sunderland et al 2002) aim to recreate the rich ethnographic context in which the speech event or text is embedded by tracing the discourse through a variety of relevant contexts or instantiations, both diachronic and synchronic (what Cicourel has usefully described as 'the interpenetration of communicative contexts' (1992)) and also by invoking the *post hoc* interpretation of participants.

To return to our data, we can assess the effectiveness of analysing identity categories and modes of discourse with recourse to the 'communicative contexts' surrounding and implicitly contained by the interview talk. One such possible example of 'masculinity' being performed and enacted in the interview talk occurred when the group of 21 year olds were asked to comment on 'kinds of women' represented in the magazines. They do so in relation to a feature, 'Girls on the Sofa':

```
M: well (0.3)these women are ho:t
G: [hhhhh yeah
D: [no ye(h)ah they are
I: hhhh yeah
M: it's like they do that sort of single woman like she's sort of available
   sort of like looking for a date or whatever but it's not always a
   stereotypical girl it's still a fit woman sort of scant[ily clad
G:                                                        [but you w[ould
M:                                                                 [they're
   all five (.) re:ally re:ally really hot women
```

This example might be thought to be a reasonably unambiguous collaborative enactment of heterosexual male desire – a cornerstone of hegemonic masculinity. But further support for its assignation as a Category Bound Attribute of Masculinity can be found by comparing its rhetorical form and lexical patterns with other discourses **surrounding** the interview talk – i.e. the discourse of the men's magazine itself. Despite their earlier cynicism and dismissal of these magazines, the humour, lively discourse and joshing of the focus group discussion with this group very much emulated the style and ethos of the magazine itself ('hot' 'fit' women). By comparing the discourse of the magazine with the everyday talk of the readers, we can indeed find intertextual evidence of this movement. Colloquial lexis employed by the 21 year old readers in the course of the interview included: *girl* (describing an adult woman)*, guy, hot,* (in relation to women), *lad, boobs, bird* (describing a woman)*, shag* and *arse* (describing anatomy only). In a survey of four 'lad' magazines (*Maxim, FHM, loaded* and *Ice*) from the same month (April 2003), I counted the occurrence of these items (and related lexemes) and discovered the following frequency, suggesting that they are indeed in common and regular circulation:

Girl(s):   98

Guy(s):   53

Hot(test): 37

Boobs: 25

Lad(s):   15

Shag(ged/ging): 12

Arse(s): 11

Bird(s):   10

Further evidence of the 'interpenetration of communicative contexts' is provided in the way that

the interview chat amongst the 21 year olds frequently mirrors the teasing, joshing register of the

magazines themselves - a strategy explicitly acknowledged by one of the group:

```
M: It's the same kind of humour as when you're out with your pals and one of
   your pals falls over and you laugh at him (.)it's laughing at rather than
   with (1.0) asking the kinds of questions likely to embarrass them (.)
   looking for a rise
```

Similarly, in the following example, where the informants have been asked whether they pay

attention to advertising on grooming products, Mike explicitly adopts a reading position resistant

to the magazine content and values, which is then teasingly challenged by Gordon in the very

manner described above by Mike .

```
I: Do you tend to look at these kinds of things?
M: I don't (.) at all but that's because I'm a bit of a scab
G: You moisturise!
[laughter]
```

In the second turn, Mike embraces a recognisable 'laddish' laissez faire in claiming to be

uninterested in grooming products (the slightly euphemistic 'these kinds of things'). However,

his rejection of a potentially 'feminised' identity is carefully justified by a reference to his **own**

shortcomings ('I'm a bit of a scab'), rather than to an explicit gender politics, again perhaps

revealing an orientation to the perceived 'moral frame' of the interview situation. Mike seems

keen here to carefully manage the account of his choices in a way which presents him as non-

feminine, but equally not defensively masculine either. Paradoxically, the slang use of 'scab' is arguably reminiscent of the magazine register, again suggesting an alignment to 'laddish' values through an emulation of discourse, rather than through content . This careful account is then mischievously undermined by Gordon's accusation in the form of a challenge that Mike **is** invested in his appearance after all - a familiar put-down in masculine culture, and one invoking the spectre of femininity.

These examples of intertextuality, the talk of the respondents mirroring the very rhetorical patterns they identify in the magazines, and the (usually) artless repetition of lexis shared with the magazines are again suggestive of the broader set of discourses circulating between magazine and reader. Whilst this is presently limited evidence, it could easily, in a larger study, be extended to take in a much larger corpus. What, of course, this intertextual evidence *does* provide is a likely context for interpreting aspects of the talk in the interview which go beyond the local situation.

A further insight deriving from this intertextual connection between interview talk and magazine discourse is one which relates to the apparent **contradiction** between overtly expressed dispositions to the tone, content and politics of men's magazine (uninvested) and the ventriloquization of its discourse, as we saw in Mike's formulation above. This in turn may enrich our understanding of the probable reception context for these readers, with all its attendant ambiguities. Despite an earlier broadly negative critique of a magazine as 'just like a porn mag' ('there's a lot of nudity (1.0) it doesn't seem (.) it makes you think who the hell decides what goes in these things'), in the context of responding to a particular feature, 'Girls on the Sofa', we saw above that Mike was able to slip seamlessly into a seemingly non-ironic assumption of 'lad' discourse: 'they're all five really really hot women'. This was just one example of a common

kind of slippage between the explicitly attributed identity of detached, uninvested and even disapproving reader and the kinds of revealed values that emerged discursively in the more detailed engagement with texts.

So a certain light can be shed on the cultural resources being mined by these respondents via a close comparison of different sites of cultural context surrounding the talk, thus extending the boundaries of 'sense-making' beyond the limits of the interview itself, and gaining tentative insight into the relationships between reading practices, texts and lived cultures. Further evidence of intertextuality is to be found **explicitly embedded** in the interview talk, which sheds light on the relationship between Membership Categorisation Devices and their role in social and cultural life beyond that of the local context of the interview talk. It is suggestive, for instance, that appeals to broader, shared social discourses were repeatedly made in the interview data via a regular formulation: 'the/that (whole)... thing' which expresses both generic truism in the definite article and an assumption of a shared deictic point from which to supply the full attributes and activities:

'that whole ladette thing'

'the guy's commitment thing'

'a laddish kind of thing'

'the Ben Sherman look'

'the kind of smart comment'

'that sort of classic sort of humour that they use'

'the whole man and woman relationship'

'it's the whole lad image again'

In this common and repeated formulation, 'thing' seems to serve as an index for the activities and attributes of the named Membership Cataegory (e.g. 'lad', 'ladette') assumed to be shared as common sense cultural knowledge amongst the participants. In other words, this pattern embeds an appeal to intertexuality, an orientation to history and context, within the talk itself, and **invites** us to supply evidence from other sites of culture, an analytical process we are surely obliged to follow up by expanding the terms of our analysis.

In the next section I will focus on a particular stretch of talk in the interview with the 21 year old readers in order to provide a more detailed intertextual analysis. This stretch of talk, I want to argue, enacts a particular masculine performativity. I will begin by applying Conversation Analytical techniques to interpret the orientations of the participants in the local situated context and to reiterate observations about the common disjunction between explicitly articulated opinions and more covert dispositions, which might illuminate the complexities of the reception context and alert us to the unstable nature of readers' reports of their reading responses. In order to gain support for these interpretations and to shed light on the process of reception I will then go on to trace the repertoires I have thus identified via the magazine-reader interface by examining magazine content which seems to echo these same rhetorical forms, and in a final act of triangulation, look at the responses within the interview to these very same extracts of text. Finally, I will broaden out the scope of the intertexts by attempting to trace tropes and repertoires across the various 'circuits of culture' (production, media debates, promotion etc) giving rise to the material text, in order to move towards the full implications of a 'textual culture' approach to analysis.

Case Study

As we have so far seen, an analysis which treats interview responses as accounts rather than reports may also reveal attitudes and interpretations which are not directly or explicitly expressed, or indeed which **contradict** directly expressed opinions. As a brief example we can see an interesting sequence in the interview with the 21yr olds in which the group police one member=s account of his relationship to the consumption of grooming products, despite a more positive orientation to the idea of male 'grooming' elsewhere in the interview. The interviewer has asked about their reading practices and whether there are parts of the magazine they avoid:

```
I: Are there parts of the magazine you always ignore?
```

In his answer, Mike says to much laughter,

```
M: I generally try to skip past the 50 pages worth of adverts
[laughter]
```

Laughter from other participants is often a useful gauge of normative values. Here it is clear that there is a cultural consensus that adverts are a dominant part of the magazines, perhaps even an implicit acknowledgement that their revenue financially underpins the publication, but that they are not worthy of attention and an irritating distraction. Arguably this consensus is actually worked up during the process of the interview, thus constructing as well as reflecting normative values. The interviewer perhaps prompts this consensus by asking:

I: Mike avoids adverts (1) is that the same for <u>all</u> of you?

This is taken up by Greg and Daniel in the form of preferred responses confirming Mike=s opinion:

```
G: Yeah (.) I try my best not to look at them
D: There=s just so much advertising in them anyway(.) turn a page >oh no not
   another advertisement= you=re like >is there anything here worth reading=
```

Jonathan, however, offers a counter to this consensus, in the form of an anecdote:

```
J: I remember doing a Nivea thing that I bought Nivea after reading it (.)
   years ago like y'know how they have like article[s
I:                                              [An article rather than an
   ad[vert
J:   [Yeah it was like a sponsored article=
M: =L(h)ucky this is anonymous!
[laughter]
```

Significantly, Jonathan's turn is not explicitly framed as an *accountable* contradiction to this consensus, although it is arguably mitigated by the vague formulation 'Nivea thing' and by his past-time perspective ('I remember', 'years ago') which again invokes the 'moral order' so far jointly constructed by these participants of the 'naive younger self' invested in magazine culture. Yet it is made clear by Mike's humorous comment ('lucky this is anonymous') and the group's unanimous laughter that Jonathan has breached some sort of normative code, possibly by admitting a) to being susceptible to the power of advertising and b) to buying a grooming product

more commonly associated with women and femininity – this is of course an inevitable *inference* imported by the analyst, but a highly plausible one. The sequence of talk - the consensus built up about the degraded status of adverts in these men's cultural world followed by Jonathan's flouting of the code, and the humour used to make the censure palatable - provides clues to a kind of normative masculinity operating in the cultural sphere of this group. A pragmatic reading would ask what could be inferred from a desire for anonymity and conclude it would probably have to be to protect the speaker from either danger or humiliation. The cultural *inference* is made that this potential humiliation is associated with normative gender. This kind of analysis is thus arguably more fruitful in revealing the implicit attitudes and norms informing the reading process than a direct question about masculinity or even attitudes to using grooming products. Indeed, this whole exchange can be usefully compared with one later in the interview where the interviewer elicits the same readers' responses to a promotional feature on grooming in one of the magazines:

```
D: I think humour is a good way of getting around touchy subjects, like y'know
    (0.5) if you asked a normal kind of lad who'd be like 'oh I'm not going to
    go and have a facial' or some[thing
Q:                             [having read it(.)would any of you be
    interested in those kinds of product?
M: Great! if I had the money I'd have a go at it
```

Via MCA, this exchange reveals a) what the assumptions, values and anxieties of a 'normal lad' are and b) the implication that the two speakers do not identify with this heteronormative construction, firstly by the employment of third person, distancing strategies (' a normal kind of lad') and secondly by an explicit, positive, non-ironic alignment to the grooming feature, all of

which seems to be at odds with the normative masculinity built up around the discussion of Jonathan's foray into a traditionally 'feminine' preserve. This analytical approach therefore is able to foreground examples of **disparity** between explicit 'reports' of attitudes and implicitly revealed normative assumptions in the process of accounting, particularly in formulations relating to the readers' alignment with the masculine constructions promoted by the magazines.

So far, I have argued that a discourse analytical approach may expand the terms of 'context' of interview data by analysing the way in which a local 'moral order' is constructed in participants' accounts which may be assumed to reflect cultural values **beyond** those of the interview. This approach arguably challenges the traditional binary between 'naturally-occurring' and 'artificial' spheres of talk and thus potentially recuperates the problematic ontological status of the ethnographic interview or focus group. Both Speer (2002), in a recent exchange in *Discourse Studies*, and Miller and Glassner (1997) propose to dissolve the distinction between 'natural' and 'cultural' or 'natural' and 'artificial'. This argument is underpinned firstly by the assumption that the categories and values invoked in interviews are drawn from broader cultural resources, but also by the proposition that *all* talk is to some degree mediated by the constraints of its context; and all talk, whether before an academic interviewer in a formal situation or before one's peers in an informal situation, is likely to involve forms of accounting and self presentation, as indeed we witnessed in the teasing policing of Jonathan's account of his purchase of Nivea products by the rest of the group. In other words, one is just as likely to access the 'truth' about a group's reading practices in an interview situation as one is by overhearing a group discuss men's magazines and their affiliations to it down the pub. It is simply that these 'truths' may be differently oriented to their respective audiences.

By returning to the excerpt of data analysed above, in which Mike implicitly reveals a key tenet of popular masculinity and his affiliation to this ('real' men do not use grooming products), we can apply in more detail this principle of intertextuality or 'interpenetration of communicative contexts'. Whilst a strict CA approach would, of course, be reluctant to assign these external cultural meanings to Mike's response, since the meaning is not ambiguously retrievable from the *text alone*, these **normative** cultural meanings and narratives (what Scollon describes as 'members' generalisations' (1998: 278-9)) may be compared **intertextually** with other sites of meaning-production, such as the magazine texts, TV and naturally-occurring conversations. In this instance, the defensive masculine code concerning grooming can be retrieved from the men's magazines themselves in their promotion of such goods and practices. For instance, a recent Nivea advertising campaign prevalent in many magazines at this time was 'For Men Who Dare to Care', implying a need for courage in using such products and chiming with the inference of 'danger' implicit in Mike's reference to anonymity. A similar trope involving humorous, defensive or ironic caveats in relation to men using grooming products threads its way relentlessly through men's lifestyle magazines, especially those identified as 'new lad'. A promotional feature for men's facial and manicure treatments in *Maxim*, for instance, is heavily protected by one such example:

A men-only grooming shop for normal, everyday, nothing-funny-about my testosterone-levels-thankyou- blokes who quite fancy the idea of a de-stressing massage, with maybe a facial and, oh what the hell, a manicure while I'm here. (*Maxim* April 1997: 106)

Similarly, in a feature profiling a series of aftershaves, a hyperbolic, dialogic, vernacular and arguably macho register is employed:

Crave by Calvin Klein. You said: Aquite simply, the nuts! Looks mad, smells great. And survived a three-storey drop from my balcony!≅ (FHM April 2003)

This in turn, was presented to the focus group for their interpretation who supported my intuition that this reflected a deliberate masculinisation of a potentially feminine product by this language:

```
M: hhhhhh it=s trying to make it as unfeminine as possible (0.5) it=s trying
to make it as masculine as possible
```

However, this response is also accompanied by a high degree of hilarity and incredulity from the group, who clearly find such bombast ludicrous. This is a clear instance of the need to distinguish between interpretation and **disposition**. The group's interpretation of the feature is a neutral one, but their disposition is resistant, lending weight to Hall's thesis that a dominant code may be 'correctly' interpreted, but simultaneously rejected if it does not chime with the reader's values (Hall: 1973). This group - the 21 year olds - actively maintain their self-construction as 'uninvested' readers by such discursive strategies. This circular tracing of a particular discursive strategy through reader formulation, popular cultural texts and back, via triangulation, to reader, is one means by which the hermeneutic circle may be made more transparent and a more robust interpretation of reading practices may be articulated. It gives credence to the view that these 'accounts' are part of a whole repertoire likely to be worked up in different contexts away from the interview.

Finally we can extend our 'intertextual net' wider to embrace further discursive sites within the

circuit of culture surrounding men's magazines. One such site is the often disapproving **metadiscourse** in the form of **media debates** surrounding the publication of men's magazines, particularly around the time of their inception (Jackson et al 2001: 31-47), and particularly invoking the 'lad' or 'new lad' - a personified construction which tends to follow a regular linguistic form: the definite article and a particular label ('the new man', 'the new lad', 'the soft lad', 'the ladette'), followed by a relative clause pinning down its definitive attributes and activities ('who likes' 'who's into'). Numerous newspapers attempted to define the qualities and characteristics of the 'new lad' and their articles ranged from celebratory (the red tops) to disapproving (the broadsheets). For instance, in commenting on the rise of the 'ladette', Suzanne Moore describes the 'lad' and *loaded*'s role in his creation: '*loaded* magazine is credited with having helped to create the rise of the ladette's male counterpart, **the lad who** likes tits, beer and football' (Moore, *Guardian* 18/3/96). Similarly, we find in an article on *Later*, a magazine aimed at older men and launched in 1999: '*Later* **Man** is *Loaded* **Lad grown up: someone who** still wants a laugh **but who** has grown up too' (*Guardian* 27/4/99).

The provenance of this kind of media construction, is, ironically, arguably the magazines themselves and their accompanying publicity. In the original outing of the 'new lad', Sean O'Hagan, writing in *Arena* magazine, and using this same rhetorical formulation, described him as 'a **would-be New Man who** can't quite shake off his outmoded but snug-fitting laddishness'. In their media pack, *Maxim* magazine identifies 'Maxim man' who 'likes to spend time grooming himself', 'enjoys his drink' etc.

An awareness of these grammatically regular media constructions **in and surrounding** the magazines is, in turn, intertextually manifested in the frequently critical and reflexive talk of the

33

older informants who also employ the very same choice of syntactic construction: 'a laddish kind of thing'; 'it was that whole ladette thing'; 'it=s about the "**new lad" who=s** kinda sensitive *[laughter]* but he's still got that rugged side to him'. This is supported by Jackson et al's observation in their own study of men's magazines that their focus group discussions with readers frequently and self-consciously represented 'reflections on the discourses that were currently circulating more widely in the media' (Jackson et al, 2001: 32). In various ways, then, we can observe how the media construction as a rhetorical device is embedded in the discourse circulating between a **number** of sites: the magazines, the magazines' promotional material, the metadiscourse of the media debates and the talk of the readers themselves.

In this brief, programmatic discussion, I have attempted to demonstrate an approach towards the analysis of ethnographies of reading as part of a broader project involving the discursive analysis of textual culture. By adopting elements of a Conversational Analytical approach in which identities are assumed to be an on-going discursive process, as well as insights of Membership Categorization Analysis which reveals the jointly constructed social and moral order to which the members orient, it is possible to offer a more robust and critical account of members' reading practices. Whilst a series of questions can elicit a series of seemingly unproblematic 'facts' about regular reading and buying habits (e.g. how often magazines are bought, which features are read in which order, and which are missed), a closer unpacking of the discourse used to produce these accounts involving insights from CA is able to illustrate the effects of the local contexts in which generalisations are produced. For instance, such an analysis might illuminate the way that particular expressions seemed artfully designed to make the speaker morally accountable to the values projected by the interviewer's questions and the way that certain categorizations (e.g. 'uninvested reader') seem to be a jointly produced account reflecting the social order of an

established friendship group. Such an approach is not content to simply gather members'
responses as a series of transparent and timeless propositions, but is keen to situate this discourse
as contingent, flexible and versatile within its local context of production.

My analysis also pointed to the anomaly, contradiction and ambivalence that throws categorical
statements into doubt. In the course of both interviews I was interested to observe a common
disjunction between a broader critique of men's magazines and a more positive investment
emergent in the detailed discussion of features leading to paradoxical interpretive models of
reception. The 21 year old readers, whilst broadly deriding the magazines as trashy, immature and
pornographic seemed, in more detailed discussions of particular features or adverts, to be both
entertained and highly invested in defending the magazines from implicit charges of sexism or
homophobia. Although the interviewer was careful never to reveal his own disposition regarding
these issues, it was likely that the type of question prompted awareness of a whole culture of
criticism known to circulate vigorously around men's magazines. This resistance to the
authoritative, public culture of criticism even prompted rebellious accounts by informants,
intertextually echoing those of editors responding to media criticism ('couldn't have cared less
what the literati were saying' (Southwell 1998: 207)), and arguably making a stand against this
perceived censoriousness:

M: It's not going to stop me buying it (.) the fact that it's full of garbage

The concomitant critical distance and complicity via a 'lived' or ventriloquized internalisation of
the magazine values, points to a complexity and sophistication of reading practices and an easy
ability to accommodate contradiction in the reading experience, also observed in a number of

35

media audience studies (McRobbie 1999, Ballaster et al 1991, Radway 1987).

Conclusion

In conclusion we can reiterate a commitment to the 'interpenetration of communicative contexts' in approaches to the analysis of popular culture. Whilst this paper has had little opportunity to do more than hint at the possible wealth of analysis to be had by extending its focus to all relevant sites of culture informing the discursive moment or by rigorously asserting generalisations through an extensive, quantitative, corpus approach to data, it has nevertheless attempted to illustrate a potential method by presenting an analytical 'slice' of the circuit. The focus on cultures of reception attempted to build on existing ethnographic methodologies by stressing the increasingly influential methods of CA and MCA. The proposed methodology then departed iconoclastically from the CA orientation to the local moment by drawing upon evidence of the intertexts threading their way through the data which are, in turn, embedded in their own contexts and norms of culture:

> Intertextuality alerts us to the fact that... documents are part of a wider system of distribution and exchange. (Atkinson and Coffey 1997: 57)

The combination of ethnomethodological and intertextual approaches advocated here (and recalling Wetherell's 'meshing' of CA and Foucauldian assumptions), though still inevitably inferential, facilitates a richer reconstruction of the practices of reception. The adoption and ventriloquization of discourses present in the magazine by the 21 year old 'uninvested' readers,

for instance, reveals a more complex, ambivalent and 'performative' alignment to the values of 'laddish masculinity' than is proclaimed 'on the record'.

Future analysis might also extend its interpretation of 'intertexts' to the resultant actions prompted by consumption of men's magazines - a focus upon the neglected 'anticipatory' quality of discourse (Scollon and Scollon, 2000). This kind of analysis would be interested in the connections between the textual world and the physical world, and anecdotally, might include a focus on practices of subscription, decorating one's bedroom with posters, buying products advertised in the magazines and other actions that arise from an engagement with men's magazines, such as the letters pages and reader involvement in activities and features (Benwell 2001). This in turn attempts to address Threadgold's call to treat talk as **embodied action**, 'located in space/time, tied into institutional and community practices and knowledges, dialoguing with other textual practices' (Threadgold 2003: 30).

The ultimate objective of a 'textual culture' approach to texts and discourse is closely allied to Radway's proposal to capture 'the endlessly shifting, ever-evolving kaleidescope of daily life and the way in which the media are integrated and implicated within it' (1988: 366). Further foci would therefore need to include an analysis of 'lived experience' via unsolicited talk and the way media discourses are embedded, negotiated and function within it. Above all, a discursively informed 'textual culture' approach must be committed to deep analysis of an almost limitless range of intersecting discourses, including reader response, 'lived practices' in which the text plays a role, interviews with producers (see Crewe 2003), recorded data of the discourse surrounding production, the texts themselves, the intertexts they draw upon, the discourse of regulation surrounding such texts and, perhaps most ambitiously of all, the relationships holding

between all these sites.

Notes

1. The term 'textual culture' is one which has arisen from interdisciplinary research at the University of Stirling. It is situated within the interstices between intellectual history, literary criticism, critical theory, discourse analysis, history of the book, and publishing-as-process. It does not have an allegiance to a single disciplinary area, and it contests the boundaries and traditions of existing categories. One of its key aims is to explore relations between the circuits of culture surrounding texts (both literary and popular) and to focus on discursive methodologies for clarifying those relations.

Acknowledgements

References

Ang, I (1982) *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*. London:

Methuen.

Ang, I. (1989) 'Wanted: Audiences. On the Politics of Empirical Audience Studies', in E. Seiter et al. (eds) *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*. London: Routledge.

Ang, I. (1991) *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. London: Routledge.

Atkinson, P. & Coffey A. (1997) 'Analysing Documentary Realities', in D. Silverman (ed) *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*. London: Sage.

Baker, C. (1997) 'Membership Categorization and Interview Accounts', in D. Silverman (ed) *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*. London: Sage.

Ballaster, R., Beetham, M., Frazer, E. & Hebron, S. (1991) *Women's Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine.* London: Macmillan.

Benwell, B. (2001) '*Have a go if you think you're hard enough:* Male gossip and language play in the letters pages of men's lifestyle magazines.' *Journal of Popular Culture* 35(1): 19-33

Billig, M. (1999a) 'Whose terms? Whose ordinariness? Rhetoric and ideology in Conversation Analysis', *Discourse and Society* 10 (4): 543-558.

Billig, M. (1999b) 'Conversation Analysis and the claims of naivety', *Discourse and Society* 10 (4): 572-576.

Caldas-Coulthard, C. & Coulthard, M. (1996) (eds) *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge.

Chouliaraki, L. & Fairclough, N. (1999) *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Cicourel, A. (1992) 'The Interpenetration of Communicative Contexts: Examples from Medical Encounters, in A. Duranti and C. Goodwin (eds) *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Corner, J., Richardson, K. & Fenton, N. (1990) *Nuclear Reactions: Form and Response in 'Public Issue' Television*. London: John Libbey.

Crewe, B. (2003) *Representing Men: Cultural Production and Producers in the Men's Magazine Market*. Oxford: Berg.

Dahlgren, P. (1988) 'What's the Meaning of This?: Viewers' Plural Sense-Making of TV News', *Media, Culture and Society*. 10(3): 285-301.

Du Gay, P., Hall, S., Janes, L., Mackay, H.& Negus, K. (1997) *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*. London: Sage/Open University Press.

Edley, N. (2001) 'Conversation Analysis, Discursive Psychology and the Study of Ideology: A

Response to Speer', *Feminism and Psychology* 11(1), 136-140.

Edwards, D. & Stokoe, E. H. (forthcoming) 'Discursive psychology, focus group interviews, and participants' categories' *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*.

Fairclough, N. (1989) *Language and Power*. London: Longman

Fairclough, N. (1992a) *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fairclough, N. (1992b) 'Discourse and Text: Linguistic and Intertextual Analysis within Discourse Analysis', *Discourse and Society* 3(2):193-217.

Fairclough, N. (1995) *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Longman

Gavins, R. & Steen, G. (2003) (eds) *Cognitive Poetics in Practice*. London: Routledge.

Hall, S. (1973) 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse', reprinted in S. Hall et al (eds) *Culture, Media, Language*. London: Hutchinson.

Hermes, J. (1995) *Reading Women's Magazines*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Iser, W. (1978) *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Reception*. London: John Hopkins University Press.

Jackson, P., Stevenson, N. & Brooks, K. (2001) *Making Sense of Men's Magazines*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jefferson, G. 1984. Transcript Notation. In J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.) *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Johnson, R. (1986) 'The story so far: and other transformations', in D. Punter (ed) *Introduction to Contemporary Cultural Studies,* London: Longman, pp. 277-313.

Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: Verso

Litosseliti, L. & Sunderland, J. (eds) (2002) *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Machor, J. L. & Goldstein, P. (2001) *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*. London/NY: Routledge.

Macnaghten, P. & Myers, G. (forthcoming) 'Focus Groups: The Moderator's View and the Analyst's View', in G. Gobo et al (eds) *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage.

McRobbie, A. (1999) 'MORE! New Sexualities in Girls' and Women's Magazines'. In A. McRobbie, *In the Culture Society: Art, Fashion and Popular Music.* London: Routledge.

Meyer, M. (2001) 'Between Theory, Method, and Politics: Positioning of the Approaches to CDA', in R. Wodak & M. Meyer (eds) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage.

Miller, J. & Glassner, B. (1997) 'The 'Inside' and the 'Outside': Finding Realities in Interviews', in D. Silverman (ed) *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice.* London: Sage.

Mills, S. (1995) *Feminist Stylistics*. London: Routledge.

Moores, S. (1993) *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption*. London: Sage.

Morley, D. (1980) *The Nationwide Audience*. London: British Film Institute

Morley, D. (1992) *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge.

Myers, G. (1998) 'Displaying Opinions: Topics and Disagreement in Focus Groups', *Language and Society*, 27: 85-111

Myers, G. (1999) 'Functions of Reported Speech in Group Discussions', *Applied Linguistics*, 20(3): 376-401.

Myers, G. (2000) 'Becoming A Group: Face and Sociability in Moderated Discussions', in S.Sarangi & M. Coulthard (eds) *Discourse and Social Life*. London: Longman.

Puchta, C. & Potter, J. (1999) 'Asking Elaborate Questions: Focus Groups and the Management of Spontaneity', *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 3(3): 314-335.

Radway, J. (1987) *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*. London: Verso.

Radway, J. (1988) 'Reception Study: Ethnography and the Problem of Dispersed Audiences and Nomadic Subjects', *Cultural Studies* 2(3): 359-76.

Rapley, T.J. (2001) 'The Art(fulness) of Open-ended Interviewing: Some Considerations on Analysing Interviews', *Qualitative Research* 1(3): 303-323.

Sacks, H. (1992) *Lectures on Conversation,* vols I and II, ed G. Jefferson. Oxford: Blackwell.

Schegloff E.A. (1992) 'In Another Context', in A Duranti and C. Goodwin (eds) *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press.

Schegloff, E. A. (1997) 'Whose Text? Whose Context?', *Discourse & Society* 8: 165-87.

Schegloff, E.A. (1999a) 'Schegloff's texts as Billig's data', *Discourse and Society* 10 (4): 558-572.

Schegloff, E.A. (1999b) 'Naivety vs. sophistication or discipline vs. self-indulgence', *Discourse and Society* 10 (4): 577-582.

Scollon, R. (1998) *Mediated Discourse as Social Interaction: A Study of News Discourse*. London: Longman.

Scollon, R (2000) 'Methodological Interdiscursivity: An Ethnographic Understanding of Unfinalisability', in S. Sarangi & M. Coulthard (eds) *Discourse and Social Life*. London: Longman.

Scollon, R. (2001) *Mediated Discourse: The Nexus of Practice*. London: Routledge.

Scollon, R. & Scollon, S. (2000) 'The Construction of Agency and Action in Anticipatory Discourse: Positioning Ourselves Against Neo-Liberalism'. Paper presented at the III Conference for Sociocultural Research, UNICAMP, Campinas, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Scollon, R. & Scollon, S. (2002) 'Nexus Analysis: Expanding the Circumference of Discourse Analysis'. Talk given at the PARC forum, Paolo Alto, California.

Semino, E. & Culpeper, J. (2002) *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis*. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Silverman, D. (1993) *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*. London: Sage.

Silverman, D. (1985) *Qualitative Methodology and Sociology*. London: Gower.

Southwell, T. (1998) *Getting Away With It: The Inside Story of Loaded*. London: Ebury.

Speer, S. (2001) 'Reconsidering the Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: Discursive Psychology, Conversation Analysis and Participants' Orientations', *Feminism and Psychology* 11(1): 107-135.

Speer, S. (2002) ''Natural' and 'Contrived' Data: A Sustainable Distinction?', *Discourse Studies* 4(4): 511-525.

Stockwell, P. (2002) *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Stokoe, E.H. (2004) 'Gender and discourse, gender and categorization: current developments in language and gender research', *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 1: 107-129.

Stokoe, E.H. and Smithson, J. (2002) 'Gender and sexuality in talk -in -interaction: Considering a conversation analytic perspective'. In P. McIlvenny (ed.) Talking Gender and Sexuality. John Benjamins: Amsterdam.

Sunderland, J. (1996) 'We're Boys, Miss!': Finding Gendered Identities and Looking for Gendering of Identities in the Foreign Language Classroom', in S. Mills (ed) *Language and Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London: Longman.

Sunderland, J., Cowley, M, Rahim, F., Leontzakou, C. & Shattuck, J. (2002) 'From

Representation towards Discursive Practices: Gender in the Foreign Language Textbook Revisited', in L. Litosseliti & J. Sunderland (eds) *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Talbot, M. (1995) 'A synthetic sisterhood: False friends in a teenage magazine'. In K. Hall & M. Bucholtz (eds), *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. London/NY: Routledge.

Talbot, M. (1997) '*Randy fish boss branded a stinker*: Coherence and the construction of masculinities in a British tabloid paper'. In S. Johnson & U. Meinhof (eds), *Language and Masculinity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Threadgold, T. (2003) 'Cultural Studies, Critical Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis: Histories, Remembering and Futures', *Linguistik Online* 14(2): 1-37.

Wetherell, M. (1998) 'Positioning and Interpretative Repertoires: Conversation Analysis and Post-Structuralism in Dialogue', *Discourse & Society* 9(3): 387-412.

Wodak, R. (1999) *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Wodak, R. (2000) 'Recontextualisation and the Transformation of Meanings' in S. Sarangi and M. Coulthard (eds) *Discourse and Social Life*. London: Longman.

Wodak, R. (2001) 'What CDA is About – A Summary of its History, Important Concepts and its Developments', in R. Wodak & M. Meyer (eds) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage.

Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (2001) (eds) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage.

Wowk, M. T. (1984), Blame allocation, sex and gender in a murder interrogation, *Women's Studies International Forum,* 7(1): 75-82.

Biography

Bethan Benwell is a lecturer in English Language and Linguistics in the Department of English Studies at the University of Stirling. Her research interests include language and gender, educational linguistics, discourse analysis and textual culture and she has published journal articles and book chapters on masculine discourse in men's lifestyle magazines and (with Stokoe) student identity in tutorial discourse. She is the editor of *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines* (2003) Blackwell, and has a continuing interest in researching popular cultural realisations of masculinity. She is currently co-writing a book, *Discourse and Identity* with Elizabeth Stokoe (Loughborough University) for EUP. In the English Studies department at Stirling she is part of a 'Textual Culture' research group.