



How to Analyse Collective Identity in Discourse – Textual and Contextual Parameters

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Abstract

This article presents an approach to analysing collective identity in discourse that distinguishes the linguistic and semiotic description of textual features from their socio-cognitive interpretation. Collective identities are theorised as conceptual structures comprising beliefs and knowledge, norms and values, attitudes and expectations as well as emotions, and as being reinforced and negotiated in discourse. A number of linguistic and semiotic features are suggested to ascertain what collective identities are constructed in texts and how. These include social actor representation, process types, evaluation, modality, metaphoric expressions and intertextuality. The findings from such an analysis are then linked to questions about genre and the participants and processes of discourse practice as well as to the social context and the ideologies by which it is dominated. The analytical procedure is exemplified with an excerpt from a retailer's catalogue that is investigated for the discursive construction and socio-cognitive representation of gender and sexual identity.

Keywords: advertising discourse, collective identity, gender, sexual identity, socio-cognitive approach

1. Introduction

In this article, I present a working model for analysing collective identity in discourse which integrates a socio-cognitive approach as a major strand in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This choice is motivated by an understanding of collective identity as a mental model that comprises cognitive and affective components and is further to change through negotiation in discourse. The linguistic and discursive analysis of such a model necessitates a theoretical and methodological framework that can account for the complexity of collective identity. I will present that framework in section 2 by elaborating on the notion of collective identities as socio-cognitive representations and outlining the socio-cognitive approach in CDA. The third section is dedicated to indicating parameters for analysis and formulating general research questions at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels of discourse. The emphasis will be on the detailed analysis of linguistic features, to which end I will suggest an open-ended list of linguistic parameters that have proved useful in the analysis of collective identity. The reason for focusing on the micro-level is the fact that in the framework presented in this article, the results of text analysis are seen as evidence and

serve as an entry point to interpreting that evidence. Linguistic analysis is paramount because it is the foundation upon which further context analysis relies. In section 4, the general framework will then be illustrated by the analysis of the gender and sexual identities constructed in a retailer's catalogue as an instance of advertising discourse. The gendered nature of advertising has of course been researched thoroughly (e.g. Cook 2007: chapters 42-46; Goffman 1979b; Lazar 2006), so the point here is not to add yet another study to an already sizable body of work but to illustrate a particular methodology that relies on the notion of collective identity as a socio-cognitive representation. Another rationale behind the choice of data is the idea that hegemonic ideologies work implicitly, as 'common sense', in mundane texts, so normative gender and sexual identities may work most effectively in texts which are not explicitly addressing those identities but construct them as part of another communicative purpose, in this case persuading consumers to shop at a particular retailer. The article closes by sketching the implications that the sample analysis has more generally on the linguistic and discourse analytical study of group identities. First, however, the next section will sketch the theoretical background to analysing identities in discourse.

2. Socio-cognitive Approaches to Collective Identity

This section introduces the notion of collective identities as socio-cognitive representations, which are held by people who identify as members of a group. They are further theorised as being constructed, negotiated and changed through discursive interaction within and between groups. In discourse as a social practice, socio-cognitive representations that a text producer holds about a social group, be it their own or another, translate into the textual construction of a collective identity for it. Hence, a socio-cognitive approach to critical discourse studies seems pertinent when analysing collective identities.

Drawing on a concept from social psychology (Moscovici 2000), social representations — or socio-cognitive representations (SCRs) as they can be called more accurately — have been defined as 'organized, coherent, socially shared set[s] of knowledge about an object or domain of objects' which combine with 'affective structures with inherent normative and evaluative dimensions' (Augoustinos et al. 2006: 42, 94; note that 'objects' can here also mean abstract notions such as group identities). As such, they comprise beliefs and/or knowledge, including second-hand knowledge gained through media consumption, the norms and values held by members of a discourse community, the attitudes and expectations deriving from the combination of beliefs/knowledge on the one hand and norms and values on the other, and the emotions that accrue to all of these elements.

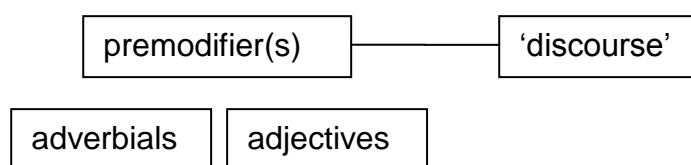
While all SCRs of social actor groups are formed from knowledge about, and hence expectations of, social groups, stereotypes of social groups are petrified knowledge structures which lead to the behaviour of group members being explained by their group membership, while exceptions are ignored or explained by contextual factors (Kunda 1999: 313-94). Crucially, stereotypes can be seen as metonymic conceptualisation (Lakoff 1999) in that the characteristics of a sub-category come to stand for the whole category. For

example, an interest in fashion and cosmetics as displayed by some women comes to structure the SCR of the whole social group. In the case of gender, which is often conceptualised as a binary category in which two social groups constitute each other (see section 4.3), the elements of one group stereotype are ipso facto seen as incompatible with the stereotype of the respective other group. Stereotypes are cognitively efficient in that they are automatically activated when encountering a member of a social group with little if any recourse to the 'data' at hand. While they thus help to make sense of the perceived behaviour, attributes and attitudes in others, they gloss over intra-group differences and the resulting prejudice is bound to be harmful for the social relations between, and the self-image of, members of a particular group. This is especially the case for negative stereotypes. Positive stereotypes - e.g. a belief that all members of the social group 'women' are sensitive and supportive - are discussed less often in the literature. They should not be confused with ideal types, which can be theorised as extreme values of prototype elements (Bless et al. 2004: 57), where prototypes are structures of abstracted knowledge about an entity.

Importantly, SCRs are not individually held mental models but cognitive structures shared by members of a particular group. As such they are 'socially and discursively constructed in the course of ... communication', establish social identities and relations by being communicated, and are subject to 'continual transformation ... through the ebb and flow of intergroup relations' (Augoustinos et al. 2006: 258-9). This means that SCRs are at least partly constituted intertextually, by relevant texts being circulated within and across discourse communities. We are therefore dealing with a cyclical model of cognition and discourse, in which the former is instantiated in the latter while also being shaped by it. This social constructivist aspect also entails that representations are culturally bound and come into being at particular historical moments. In the case of the collective gender and sexual identities constructed and negotiated in contemporary advertising discourse, the relevant historical moment would be consumer capitalism as it presents itself in post-industrial economies of the early 21st century. Given their historical contingency, SCRs are dynamic and flexible, also because they are not necessarily internally consistent but can show contradictory elements that lead to their change over time (Augoustinos et al. 2006: 99).

SCRs of gender and sexual identity are constructed, negotiated, reinforced and possibly subverted in and through discourse, here defined in general terms as language use as social practice that is based on knowledge. Following the distinction between discourse as either an uncountable or a count noun (Fairclough 2010: 95-6), discourse as a mass noun can be pre-modified to indicate the historical context and social realm in which the discourse under investigation is enacted, e.g. 'late 19th century political discourse' or 'late capitalist advertising discourse'. Discourses as count nouns can be differentiated by indicating stance and topic as well as locality, producer and channel of distribution, e.g. 'a nationalist discourse on immigration in British newspapers' or 'the environmentalist discourse of the Conservative party'. This way of naming discourses can be abstracted as follows:

‘Discourse’ as uncountable noun:



‘Discourse’ as count noun:

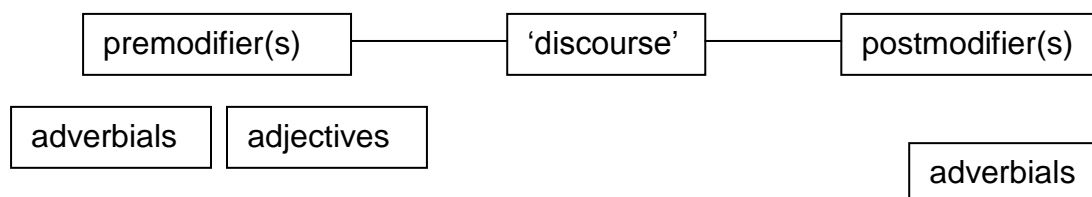


Figure 1: Naming discourses

To repeat a central tenet of CDA, discourse thus defined does ideological work in that participants draw on linguistic resources to encode combinations of beliefs, values, norms, goals and emotions — i.e. SCRs — in order to gain and/or maintain power and influence. In view of the CDA focus on textually mediated social action, it is worth remembering that texts and discourses can have concrete material impacts, ranging from the (un)equal distribution of wealth to the creation and allocation of particular spaces and even physical violence against objects and people. With regards to the sample text analysed in this article, the focus on materiality in consumer capitalism often means that the values and norms communicated in texts are translated into material semiotic markers such as clothing or hairstyles.

The framework outlined above integrates notions from the socio-cognitive approach (e.g. Chilton 2004; Hart and Lukeš 2007, Koller 2005; O’Halloran 2003; van Dijk 2003, 2009). This take on discourse is problem-oriented, starting from a specific social phenomenon that is created, reinforced, negotiated and challenged through discourse. The socio-cognitive dimension of the phenomenon under investigation is its conceptualisation as a mental model in and through discourse. What makes such a social phenomenon problematic from a critical standpoint is that it involves the unequal distribution of power between discourse participants, leading to marginalisation, discrimination and, ultimately, suffering. The sample text, while not explicitly advocating discrimination, represents a mundane yet stark construction of binaries, which lay the ground for power imbalances on the basis of gender, and marginalises non-normative sexual identities. To proceed, researchers focusing on socio-cognitive aspects would analyse texts in their socio-political contexts in order to infer underlying mental models, such as collective identities. Again, detailed textual analysis is of central importance, revealing what devices are used to express mental models, including SCRs. From a critical perspective, repeatedly exposing text

recipients to representations transported in texts, under similar conditions of reception, may help to align their representations with that of the text producer and build an advantage for the latter's in-group. However, the fact that recipients actively co-construct the texts' meaning, adopting or changing the representations they are confronted with according to their own background, makes the success of any attempt at cognitive alignment uncertain. Therefore, a socio-cognitive analysis will relate the text to its contexts of production and/or processing. In summary, the socio-cognitive approach is indispensable when collective identity, understood as an SCR, is to be investigated.

3. Analytical Parameters

The critical analysis of collective identity in discourse will describe the linguistic features of texts and interpret them by analysing the discourse practice and social contexts. As SCRs and other mental models cannot simply be read off texts but have to be inferred from the linguistic findings, socio-cognitive notions are most pertinent at the interpretation stage. The three interrelated levels of discourse, and the generic research questions they entail, are represented in Figure 2 (see also Fairclough 2010: 133).

Starting at the micro-level of individual texts, certain parameters may be of help when addressing collective identity in discourse. However, it should be understood that there is no final 'shopping list'; while it is advisable to aim for consistency in applying analytical categories across texts, individual instances of language use will show different characteristics depending on what genre they represent, what audience they are aimed at and what discourses they instantiate. Therefore, any list of linguistic parameters should be handled flexibly enough to incorporate categories that are particularly important for the text under investigation, and to disregard those that are not. With these provisos in place, the following categories features are likely to prove useful when analyzing collective identity in discourse:¹

Social actor representation (see van Leeuwen 1996): This feature bridges content and linguistic analysis at the text level, asking questions such as: What groups and individuals are referred to and how? Are social actors included or excluded, genericised or specified, activated or subjected? In socio-cognitive terms, text producers communicate particular SCRs of social actor groups, including beliefs and/or knowledge about them, the attitudes towards and expectations of them that ensue from beliefs and/or knowledge, and the emotions that accrue to them. For any study of collective identities, this parameter is likely to be of paramount importance, to the extent that the following parameters can be seen as feeding into it to provide cumulative evidence.

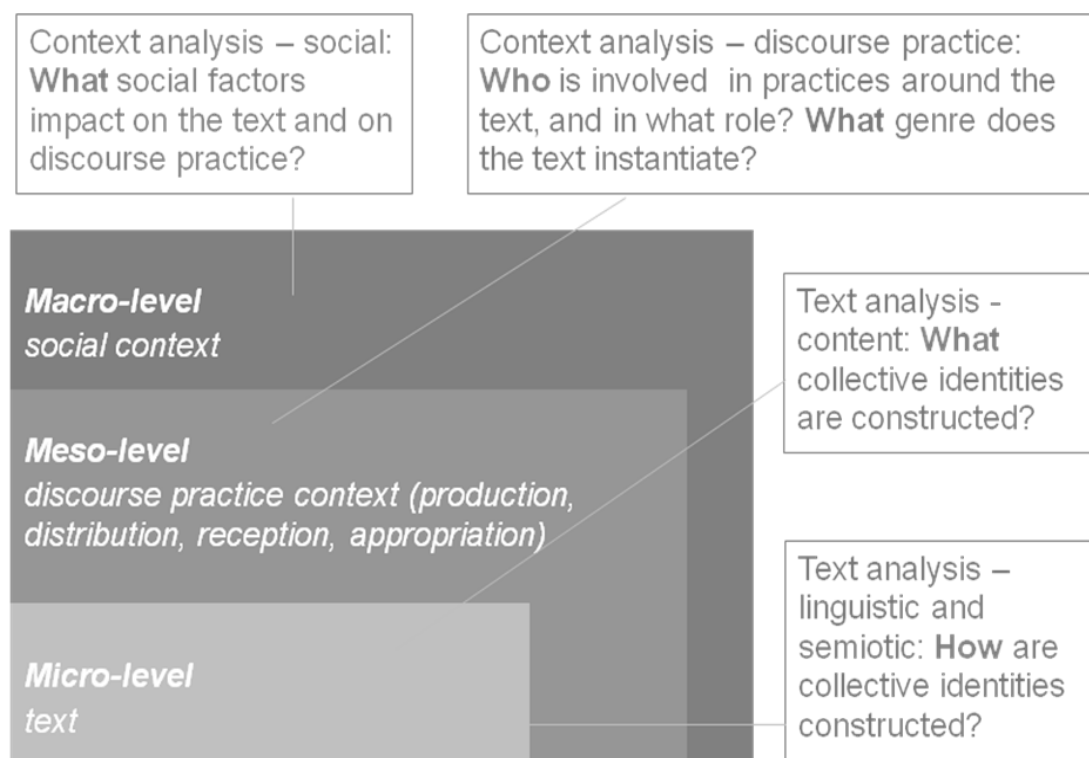


Figure 2: Levels of analysing collective identity in discourse

Processes: What process types are ascribed to social actors? In answering this question, the analysis of process types further differentiates the model of collective identity at stake by associating a group with particular actions. Together with social actor representation, this parameter helps to investigate patterns of transitivity in texts. In the systemic-functional framework (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 168-259; Thompson 2004: 88-105), this involves looking at how particular domains of experience – divided into processes, participants and circumstances – are constructed in discourse. Apart from attitudes and expectations as well as emotions concerning the social actors that the actions are ascribed to, this parameter specifically relies on knowledge about processes, i.e. on scripts.

Evaluation: What qualities are associated with groups and individuals and how are they evaluated? This question throws light on the norms and values component of a specific SCR of social actors as well as on the related emotions. Answering it also allows for the inference of stereotypes and ideal types about represented social actors. Evaluation can be cross-classified into negative and positive, implicit and explicit evaluation. However, there are a number of problems with categorising evaluative language. For instance, the statement, taken from a speech by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair,² that ‘the Muslim world [moves] towards greater democratic stability, liberty and human rights’ could be categorised as either implicitly positive, given the value that the speaker places on democracy etc. At the same time, however, the claim that ‘the Muslim world’ is ‘moving towards’ these values implies that they have not achieved them yet and could therefore be read as an implicitly

negative evaluation. A more fine-grained analytical framework, such as appraisal theory (Martin and White 2007), could be helpful here.

Modality: What does the author perceive a social group to be like in the past, present and future? What possible developments are constructed for them (epistemic)? How would the text producer like them to be (deontic)? Such an analysis of likelihood and desirability helps text producers communicate their beliefs about a group of social actors and define goals for them. As goals are motivated by values - social actors striving to attain what they believe good and/or important and hence desirable - , the analysis of modality is implicitly linked to the norms and values ascertained by analysing evaluation.

Intertextuality and interdiscursivity (see Fairclough 2003: 218): What other concrete texts are incorporated into the data at hand? What other genres and discourses do authors align themselves with? Which do they refute? Apart from direct intertextual references, links between texts can also be achieved by interdiscursivity, where the author of a text that instantiates a particular discourse draws on another discourse. Obviously, findings crucially depend on how discourses are labelled and demarcated (see Figure 1), a reminder of how necessary it is to have a clear formula for naming discourses. In any case, investigating the links between the texts, genres and discourses appropriated by different discourse communities not only ascertains inter-group relations but also reflects on collective identity by showing what features the author borrows to construct that identity. To the extent that intertextuality and interdiscursivity can be used to align or distance the text producer with the producers of other text and discourses, this parameter also addresses the norms and values part of SCRs about social actors.

Metaphoric expressions: According to conceptual metaphor theory, metaphoric expressions are the linguistic or semiotic realisation of underlying conceptual metaphors at the cognitive level.³ This makes this parameter the one that most obviously lends itself to an interpretation in socio-cognitive terms. The question is thus: How are communities that share a collective identity conceptualised in the text? And further, how do the underlying metaphors structure the representation of social actors and their actions (ideational metafunction) as well as the relations between them (interpersonal metafunction)?

Semiotic analysis: Every text, whether spoken or written, also contains visual features such as gesture, facial expression and body posture (for spoken interactions), or images, colour, layout and type font (for written texts). In addition, texts can feature music and sound, e.g. in commercials, or haptic elements such as the feel of the paper that a text is printed on. In a systemic-functional perspective (Kress and van Leeuwen 2002: 345-52, 2006; van Leeuwen 1999 [2006], 2006: 142-3), these elements are part of semiotic modes as their use is regular, not arbitrary, and intended to meet the text's communicative purpose; fulfils all three Hallidayan metafunctions in that the elements supplement linguistic reference to social actors and other entities (ideational metafunction), represent and thereby establish relations between the text producer, the recipient and represented social actors (interpersonal metafunction), and contribute towards cohesion and coherence in texts (textual metafunction); forms a system of elements that can be combined with each other, with 'grammar' rules operating upon appropriate combinations.

Semiotic analysis can be applied to all of the parameters listed above and semiotic modes can therefore reinforce, supplement or contradict the constructions of collective identity that are achieved by the various features of linguistic text.

While the above parameters suggest an in-depth manual analysis of a limited dataset, it is worth noting that some can also be investigated with the help of corpus linguistic tools. These provide a shallow but broad analysis and can thus complement manual analysis. The results of a computer-assisted corpus analysis can indicate areas of interest that might otherwise have been overlooked and thereby direct the focus of a follow-up manual analysis. In practice, the researcher will often go back and forth between the two forms of analyses, e.g. to check if a particular lexical or grammatical pattern found in a text can be ascertained across a larger data set. Basic corpus linguistic parameters are word frequency lists, keywords, concordances and collocations (see Baker 2006 for more detail). In principle, corpus analysis can be applied to any parameter that is instantiated in lexical and/or grammatical ways, although the identification of metaphoric expressions raises issues that are perhaps best addressed by different tools such as semi-automated semantic annotation (see Hardie et al. 2007).

The description of the above and/or any other linguistic features used in a particular communication situation serves as evidence for subsequent arguments made in the course of their interpretation. This involves analysing the discursive practices that surround the text, i.e. the roles of, and relationships between, members of a discourse community. This part of the analysis ascertains patterns of who acts as the producer of what kind of texts, who distributes them and via what medium, what audiences texts are designed for, e.g. by drawing on assumed shared knowledge and values, who actually receives and interprets the text in question and finally, who appropriates particular texts to what ends. Cutting across these is the question under what conditions production, distribution, reception and appropriation take place. In socio-cognitive terms, analyzing the discourse practice context tells us about the procedural scripts that discourse participants enact, or indeed deviate from, in their practices of text production etc. Furthermore, discourse practices can also be seen as influenced by SCRs of discourse producers and recipients, including stereo- and ideal types. To the extent that discourse participants pursue particular communicative purposes by producing and distributing texts, these will be instantiations of genres and as such show certain linguistic and semiotic features. Moreover, they will be circulated through channels that are most likely to meet the communicative goals of their producer. Prototypical instances of a genre will include recognisable features. In addition, the text's linguistic features are also influenced by the producer's model of the ideal recipient as well as the assumed conditions of reception.

Discourse practice and the cognitive models underlying it not only impact on the micro-level of text, but are in turn also influenced by the macro-level of social context. Thus, socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions give some discourse participants preferred access, or block access, to means of production and distribution on a large scale, while simultaneously endowing them with a certain degree of credibility, or lack thereof. At the reception side,

it is again only particular social groups who have access to a greater or lesser number of texts, or to different kinds of texts. Finally, appropriation relies on cultural capital such as literacy and again on access to means of production and distribution, therefore favouring some groups and disadvantaging others.

As the three levels of text and contexts are interrelated, the analysis of the wider social formation is also taken into account to interpret the findings of the textual analysis. For different texts, the focus may be on historical, economic, political, cultural or religious formations, respectively, or on a combination of them. Questions at this context level ask about details of the social formation and what roles it allocates to people, as well as inquiring if the social formation is changing and if so, how and why. A socio-cognitive analysis will infer SCRs of social groups and institutions as well as dominant or counter-ideologies, where ideologies can be provisionally defined as networks of SCRs. Ultimately, the answers to those questions link back to the textual micro-level in that they in turn help answer the question why particular social actors are represented in particular ways.

The above tripartite model of interrelated contexts, metafunctions and levels of analysis gives rise to the following generic research questions to be answered in a study of collective identity in discourse:

1. What collective identities do discourse producers construct in a particular text? (micro-level)
2. How are collective identities constructed in a concrete text? (micro-level)
3. Who is involved in the discursive practices around the text, and in what role? What genre does the text instantiate? (meso-level)
4. What social factors impact on the text and on discourse practice? (macro-level)

Questions 3 and 4 feed into the ultimate question as to

- Why are these identities constructed in discourse and why in this way?

By way of illustrating the framework, the remainder of this article will provide an analysis of a sample text that constructs particular collective identities for consumers.

4. Example: Gender and Sexual Identities in Commercial Discourse

The sample text chosen for analysis is the 2009 Christmas catalogue of Boots, a UK high street chemist. The catalogue, which was available for free in Boots branches, comprises 299 pages divided into six sections according to product category. Of these, three were selected for analysis, namely beauty and fragrance, bath and body, and male grooming, as those that are potentially most relevant for an analysis of gender and sexual identities (for a semiotic analysis of gendered toys and games, another section, see Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen 2002). The catalogue also features various text types: introduction to product categories, introduction to brands, promotions, customer and employee testimonials, expert advice, shopping tips, and

product descriptions. Again, the first three were selected, as these show the longest stretches of continuous text. In total, the data that was analysed is made up of 2,335 words. In the following paragraphs, I will provide an analysis of three of the text's features, namely social actors, processes and evaluation, to be supplemented with a brief look at semiotic features. This will be followed by a discussion of the discourse practice and socio-economic contexts.

4.1 Textual Analysis

The first observation we can make is that of the six product categories in the catalogue, two are clearly aimed at women, namely beauty and fragrance, and bath and body, and only one specifically targets men. What is more, of the 2,335 words selected for analysis, 1,650 words or 70.66 per cent are to be found in the two product categories that are clearly aimed at female consumers. This is more than the expected two thirds and with a chi-square of 16.672, the difference between observed and expected values is statistically significant for $p < 0.0001$, suggesting that the focus of the catalogue is on products for women. Qualitatively, the male-targeted category actually features the word 'male' in the heading, while the two aimed at female consumers do not show the equivalent; this constructs cosmetics as a normatively female domain.

To get a broad overview of gendered lexis in the data, Wordsmith Tools 5.0 was used to generate word frequency lists for the female and male product categories. The following two lists feature, in alphabetical and order of frequency, all content words that accounted for more than 0.3 per cent of the data, where underlining indicates words that are specific to the category in question. (No distinction was made between word classes, so that 'choose' and 'choice' do not count as specific.)

female: body, gift(s), Christmas, beauty/beautiful, set(s), eau, perfect, collection, parfum, products, range, day, girls, gorgeous, love, style, includes, list, luxurious, make/made, most, best, chic, choose, go, look, lotion, pampering

male: man/men, body, gift(s), grooming, Christmas, shave/shaving, eau, hair, make, set, cool, gel, love, toilette, treat, balm, bathroom, best, boys, choice, day, full, fun, ideas, life, little, perfect, products, range, refreshing, shower, skincare, style, wash(bag)

This overview of gender-specific lexis shows three things: Firstly, the lexis used in the male section is more varied, comprising 34 content words compared to 28 for the sections on products for women. This may be due to the male cosmetics market being relatively new, so that the associated language has not yet ossified into cliché. Secondly, at 21 out of 34 words or 61.76 per cent, the lexis in the male grooming section shows relatively more specific words than that in the two women-directed sections (14 out of 28 or 50 per cent). This suggests that copywriters have made an effort to differentiate male cosmetics from the female norm, probably to avoid associations that could raise questions about the target consumer's gender and sexual identity (see section 4.3). Thirdly, there are gendered contrasts in product description: The woman-directed products are said to be 'luxurious' and 'chic' and used for 'pampering', while the male products are 'cool' (used

metaphorically) and ‘fun’, being used for ‘wash[ing]’, ‘grooming’ and as a ‘treat’. We can also find semantic categories that are gender-exclusive: Only male products are described with their physical effects, as being cool (used literally) and refreshing. Conversely, only the female product categories feature words denoting looks, namely ‘beauty/beautiful’ and ‘gorgeous’. It seems that for female cosmetics, the practical uses and effects of the product are secondary to its intangible values of luxury and indulgence, and that text producers assume female consumers to care mostly about feelings and appearances.

There is also an asymmetry in terms for social actors. Including words whose occurrences constitute less than 0.3 per cent of the respective dataset gives us the following picture of gendered social actor reference, with frequencies indicated in brackets:

female social actors	male social actors
girl(s) (10)	boys (3)
woman/women (8)	man/men (22)
(best) friend (3)	--
ladies (2)	--
daughter, niece (1 each)	brothers, uncles (1 each)
miss (1)	--
--	boyfriend (1)

Table 1: Gendered social actors

This overview shows that reference to female social actors is spread over a larger number of terms, while male social actors are referred to by the words ‘man/men’ in 78.57 per cent of all cases. The latter is actually a keyword in the male grooming section, i.e. overused with statistical significance when compared to the data from the two female product categories. Moreover, the male product section records a normalised 41 gendered references per 1,000 words, compared to 15 references per 1,000 words in the female product sections. This again points toward cosmetics as normatively female, with cosmetics for men having to be clearly labeled as such. The female dataset features ‘girl(s)’ as the most frequent reference term, which creates an asymmetry with the male dataset and its dominant usage of ‘man/men’. Finally, gender-specific reference to social actors is split along the two data sets, with ‘girl(s)’ etc. featuring only in the female sections and ‘boys’ etc. only in the male one. What we find then is a degree of gender segregation as well as gender asymmetry, and, in quantitative terms at least, a more dominant gendering of male social actors.

At this point, it should be noted that the social actor references in the text denote not necessarily the readers, but the person for whom they are encouraged to buy presents (see concordance lines in Figure 3). While more analysis is needed to determine the collective identity constructed for the recipients, we can state that the texts attempt to persuade them to buy for

female best friends or women younger than themselves, such as daughters or nieces. On the other hand, readers are encouraged to buy for the ‘man in your life’ or male relatives the same age or older than them, i.e. brothers or uncles. Spouses are conspicuously absent as receivers of presents.

N Concordance

1 somewhere! And for the perfect gift for a girl with attitude, you can't go wrong with
 2 of pampering products to help every girl feel confident and feminine. Gok Hey
 3 Heaven in a Hatbox will make any girls' Christmas a little merrier. It
 4 she's always wanted. Tevor Sorbie: For girls who love to look their very best,
 5 of this year's most-wanted gifts for girls, and put a big smile on her face. It
 6 for all your fashion-forward girls. 20 treats for teens: Cool, quirky,
 7 and is bang on-trend for fashion-forward girls. One of London's hottest labels,
 8 season. So treat all the gorgeous girls on your list to their most beautiful
 9 candle. The Garden Collection: Outdoor girls will love bringing the sweet scents
 10 modern beauty range suits sassy girls who like their pampering products to

Figure 3: Concordance ‘girl(s)’

Moving on to the associated processes, we find that across the two datasets, the most frequent social actors are indeed actors rather than beneficiaries. The one exception is the second person as addressed in the male dataset; of its five occurrences, the reader is a beneficiary in ‘here are some inspiring ideas to get you in all the boys’ good books’ and ‘Gucci Pour Homme Gift Set is sure to make you a big hit Christmas morning!’. Social esteem is here presented as an effect of consumption. While this is a staple of advertising discourse, it is noteworthy there is no comparable feature in the female dataset. Apparently, the reader is assumed to wish more for the approval of men than of women.

‘Girl(s)’ and the anaphoric personal pronoun ‘she’ together are active in 82.35 per cent of occurrences, while ‘man/men’ and ‘he’ combined feature as actor in only 58.82 percent of cases, constructing female social actors as more active, at least grammatically. Given the rather gender-stereotypical collective identities that we have seen constructed in the data so far, this is somewhat surprising. A qualitative analysis of process types does not modify this finding, as roughly 70 per cent of actions are mental processes in both datasets, which may well be an effect of the type of products advertised. The picture changes to a more stereotypical one, however, when we look at the concordances for the most frequent verbs in this category, namely ‘love’, ‘like’, ‘want’ and ‘wish’: Female social actors love gifts and celebrity magazines, to ‘look their very best’ and ‘bringing the sweet scents of garden indoors’; they like ‘their pampering products’, want a particular kind of hair and also covet ‘the latest catwalk look’. Men by contrast, while they ‘love a little me-time too’ and ‘using the grooming gifts’ they ‘wish for’, also love ‘to be original and a bit daring’, like ‘to make an impact’ and want ‘to push the boundaries’. With their source domain

of force dynamics, these metaphoric expressions convey a sense of dynamicity that is absent from the female dataset.

After looking at what social actors are represented and how, and what activity patterns and processes are allocated to them, we will now turn to how those actors and their actions are evaluated. Many aspects of evaluation in the catalogue are typical of the genre. For instance, evaluation is overwhelmingly positive, with negative evaluation being either attenuated ('just a little bit naughty') or implicitly negated ('Who says men are hard to buy for?'). Hyperbole is another prominent feature, realised through prefixes, superlatives, and adverb + adjective combinations ('ultra-chic, ultra-hip cosmetics'; 'most-wanted gifts'; 'a truly luxurious choice'). Other elements of advertising language that tie in with evaluation are vague language ('ultimate gift'), puns ('stocking-thrillers') and triplets ('cool, crisp and refreshing') (Myers 1994: chapter 5).

Focusing on adjectival attributes for social actors, we can again see more variation for the male actors; with ten different attributes that are realised eleven times, they record a type-token ratio of 0.909, compared to 0.52 for female social actors. This corroborates the findings for frequent lexis and social actor representation (see also Koller 2004 for a greater variation of metaphoric expressions for male social actors). Only three attributes are shared by male and female social actors - 'cool', 'modern' and 'fashion-conscious'/'fashion-forward' - while the rest divides up as follows:

female: body-conscious, chic, confident, elegant, fabulous, feminine, glamour [used adjectivally], gorgeous, (trend-)savvy, sophisticated

male: casual, classic, daring, fun, hard to buy for, hard-working, naughty, original, serious, sporty, wild-at-heart

Clearly, the focus for female actors is on physical appearance, while for men, it is character traits. The one possible exception, 'confident', features as part of the phrase 'products to help every girl feel confident and feminine', constructing women as needing to consume to gain confidence and such confidence as linked to femininity. Evaluation is thus the parameter to rely most obviously on gender stereotypes.

Given the heavily visual nature of the catalogue, it is worth looking, albeit briefly, at some semiotic features. Printed on glossy but rather thin paper and displaying a value offer on the cover, the catalogue seems to be aimed at the middle market. Measuring 19 x 23 centimetres, it comes in a format compatible with rucksacks, briefcases and most handbags. A look at the cover page (Figure 4) reveals that the catalogue's producers may have envisioned it to go mostly into handbags.



Figure 4: Catalogue's cover page

All but three of the depicted products are aimed at women or girls, and the shaded pink background with floral patterns reinforces the feminine connotations. It seems that women are not only the people to be given most of the products listed in the catalogue but may also be the main addressees to whom the catalogue is meant to appeal. The company relates to these addressees not least through the cover page. The author of the text is positioned in the centre of the page, represented by their logo, which consists of the company name in the historical type font (Boots Heritage n.d.), combining a curvy, handwritten style with an upward slant indicating dynamicity. The central position not only structures the page layout, thus meeting the textual metafunction. What is more, the logo is reproduced with a halo effect, which conveys maximum importance and elevates the company, as do its central position and the arrangement of products pointing towards it (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 196, 209). This ideational representation of the text producer is linked to an interpersonal relationship in that an imperative ('feel good') is placed right underneath the logo. This not only addresses the reader and positions them close to the company but also sets up a cause-effect relation between buying the company's products and feeling good. The collective identity thus constructed is therefore very much that of a stereotypically feminine woman whose wellbeing is linked to consumption.

In sum, the textual analysis shows gender segregation as well as gender asymmetry in the data. Thus, cosmetics are constructed as a normatively female domain and the text producers have tried to distinguish male cosmetics from that female norm. The language used in the datasets for male products is also more varied and less clichéd. Women are grammatically more active but their actions lack the dynamicity found in men's processes; they are further represented as occupied with feelings and appearance rather than practicality and character as well with as gaining approval from men. These

beliefs about women are linked to consumption in that the text, as an instance of advertising discourse, presents the products offered as an aid to gaining confidence, approval and hence wellbeing.

The findings from the textual analysis will now be interpreted with recourse to the contexts of discourse practice.

4.2 Contextual Analysis I: Discourse Practice

The textual analysis showed that the catalogue is a typical example of its genre, meeting the readers' expectations in that some of its prominent elements are positive evaluation of products and the persons they are given to as presents, direct address to involve the addressee, and a use of layout and transitivity meant to establish a link between consumption and wellbeing, all of which are intended to persuade the reader to buy from the company.

While the text producers use their text to mediate their relationship with the recipient, the text and its production and distribution also reveal some of its producers' identity and will likely activate certain SCRs about companies in the reader. A retailer's catalogue is often produced by an external agency, which acts on a briefing from the client. In Goffman's (1979a) terms, this makes the company issuing the catalogue the principal, with the agency being the author. What is more, the common practice of commissioning an agency constitutes an expensive outsourcing of expertise and therefore requires access to sufficient funds not always available to small businesses. If the catalogue is distributed in-store for free, the return on investment has to come through meeting the text's goals, i.e. increase sales. The very existence of a professionally designed catalogue freely available in a store therefore influences representations that recipients have of the producer, i.e. as a sizeable company in financial terms. These recipients are potentially all customers and, given that Boots is a high-street retailer in a non-specialist market, could be very diverse. However, the text limits the ideal customers to young heterosexual women.

Apart from the fact that shopping itself has been theorised as a gendered practice (Shaw 2010: chapter 5), Boots, while trading in products ranging from children's toys to cameras, calls itself a 'health and beauty retailer'. This focus on the feminine components of the business is underscored by its support for women's health and children's charities. At the textual level, the analysis has described how cosmetics are set up as normatively female and thus meant to appeal to the reader to purchase them as gifts. We can here add that the style of the text adapts features from celebrity magazines as a genre directed at and mostly read by young women ('recreate your favourite celebrity style') and also assumes shared knowledge about this area ('look A-list gorgeous'). The SCR-based construction of a collective identity for the ideal reader can be witnessed in seemingly minor details such as the use of the possessive pronoun in 'girls who like their pampering products', which assumes that women indeed buy and use such products. Finally, the style of the text tends to imitate spoken language that is culturally connoted as feminine, including hyperbole ('ultra-chic'), interjections ('oh-so-desirable') and diminutives ('just a little bit naughty', 'pressie'; the latter can be found outside the datasets). If we infer the ideal reader to be female, the collective identity constructed for her also involves her to be heterosexual, as evidenced

by assumptions that there is a 'fashion-conscious man in [her] life' and that she consumes to 'get ... in all the boys' good books'. The ideal reader's age is less obvious, although the allusions to celebrity magazines, the fact that 'girl(s)' is the most frequent social actor term in the female dataset and the absence of 'husband' or 'partner' as social actors suggests a woman in her twenties.

The final sub-section of the analysis will now briefly look at the links between gender and sexual identity, and discuss their function in consumer capitalism.

4.3 Contextual Analysis II: Socio-economic Background

While in this article, gender is theorised as a socio-cognitive representation reflected, negotiated and shaped in discourse, normative discourses on gender see it as either biologically determined or socially shaped difference. Although the latter view is somewhat less essentialist, both conceptualise gender as a binary category in which two social groups constitute each other. According to the biologist view, which has recently regained prominence along with the rise of evolutionary psychology (but see Cameron 2007, Fine 2010), sex as a biological given determines gender identity, so that males will identify as masculine and females as feminine. Such identification, so the argument proceeds, will then determine behaviour, e.g. language use, and have attraction to the opposite sex as one of its defining elements. Heterosexuality is thus a stereotype that works across the binary, while gender stereotypes are complementary in that whatever is culturally conceptualised as feminine is ipso facto not masculine. To state the obvious, such a binary representation locks individuals and groups into a limited number of sanctioned qualities and behaviours and therefore denies them their full human potential.

So gender is closely linked to sexual identity, where the latter is the aspect of a person's self that is constructed, expressed and negotiated on the basis of their sexuality. As has been well documented (e.g. Cameron 1997), the culturally shaped SCRs of gender and sexual identity are so closely linked as to give rise to confusions, where behaviour inconsistent with a gender stereotype is conceptualised as indicating homosexuality. We could see in the text analysis that in order to avoid notions of femininity that could accrue to cosmetics for men, advertising makes an effort to differentiate those products from the female norm. As further detailed in section 4.1, the text reflects a number of gender stereotypes. These construct a collective identity for young women as static and pre-occupied with feelings and appearance as well as identifying as heterosexual and (therefore?) seeking male approval. The SCR about femininity that is at work in the text comprises the beliefs that women identify as feminine and wish to have romantic/sexual relationships with men, are motivated in their actions by the values and goals of beauty and indulgence, are influenced by the norms of celebrity style and can be expected to be susceptible to offers promising to fulfil those goals and norms. Despite the positive evaluation, this not only limits the options for gender-appropriate qualities and behaviour, but also creates a gendered power imbalance that disadvantages women.

The fact that the collective identity that can be inferred from the text also constructs women as needing to consume for their wellbeing, points to a crucial aspect of the socio-economic context: Constructing women in the way observed above is in the interest of the text producers not because it gives them an advantage as men - if indeed they are - but because it makes women more likely to consume beauty products. Similarly driven by business interests is the extension to male cosmetics in order to sell more products. The fact that the text reinforces the female norm for cosmetics and clearly demarcates male-directed products - often in a coquettishly feminine way, e.g. 'shhhhh... it's a secret, but men love a little me-time too' - rather suggests that text producers react to the potential disturbance of the gender system signalled by male cosmetics by reinforcing gender stereotypes and binaries.

In the text, consumption is presented as a means to achieve the goals that are constructed as constitutive elements of gender and sexual identity SCRs. Consumer capitalism discriminates solely, if fiercely, on the basis of disposable income, and gender and sexual identity stereotypes are ancillary to the imperative of consumption. Because there is money in promising text recipients 'appropriate' gender and sexual identities, these are constructed as effects of consumption. As Inoue (2006: 88-9) puts it:

This new relation to the self subjects individuals ... by rewarding their ... aesthetic mastery of the self while making any problematization of ... social structure counter-intuitive ... In an age of neoliberalism ... the sovereignty of 'identity' refers ... to the 'free choice' of the consumer, ... where choice ... is reduced to selection among the predetermined universe of commoditized goods and services.

Gender and sexual identities become consumer goods, radically reducing the possibilities of identity formation and expression.

5. Conclusion

The analysis in this article has demonstrated how socio-economic factors at the macro-level impact, via the meso-level of discourse practice, on the selection of linguistic features at the micro-level. In general, a close focus on text and language shows how instances of discourse are produced, distributed, received and appropriated, while combining socio-cognitive approaches throw light on the discursive construction and cognitive structure of collective identity, answering questions as to what representations prevail in any given discourse, how these are represented in language, who is involved in the discourse practices surrounding such mental models, and why socio-cognitive representations take the form they do at any given historical moment.

Notes

- ¹ Some of the parameters listed in the following take their cue from systemic-functional linguistics (SFL). It should be noted that two of the main proponents of the socio-

cognitive approach to CDA, van Dijk (2004: 340-7) and Chilton (2005), have voiced strong criticisms of that framework on account of its disregard for cognitive notions. This disregard is indeed a serious problem in SFL, but in this article, elements of SFL are used in a portfolio of analytical methods without an attempt to tackle the more fundamental issues that the theory presents.

- ² Speech delivered at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office leadership conference, 7 January 2003.
- ³ There is some evidence from research into second-language acquisition (Philip 2010) that the phraseological realisations of conceptual metaphors in a particular language are not just surface phenomena but impact on fixing the conceptual mapping itself. This corroborates the cyclical model of discourse and cognition outlined in section 2 of this article.

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