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A decade of *DIVA*: constructing community in a British lesbian magazine, 1994-2004

by

Georgina Turner

A doctoral thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

October 21st 2009

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This thesis is the product of a discourse analytic investigation of the first decade of the British lesbian magazine, *DIVA*, which launched in 1994. Work on mainstream women’s and men’s magazines has established them as sites at which (largely heterosexual) femininities and masculinities are constructed and construed, but relatively little scholarship has addressed lesbian magazines in this fashion. *DIVA* is Britain’s only nationally sold, mainstream lesbian magazine; with this in mind, the thesis provides an analytic account of the magazine’s launch, production and brand, and considers the discursive construction of lesbian community and the boundary work that that entails.

The initial analytic chapters detail editorial philosophies, routines, and financial circumstances; design, front covers, and editorial content. Though the magazine has only limited resources available, those restrictions are simultaneously liberating, allowing *DIVA*s editors to pursue their political commitments at the same time as operating in the commercial marketplace. In considering the discursive construction of ‘us’, the thesis highlights a focus on community, support, and heritage. It further considers the discursive management of the boundaries of that imagined community, focusing on the ‘threat’ posed by bisexual women and the arguments this causes among readers. Finally, *DIVA’s* handling of (heterosexual) others is considered, concluding that ‘they’ are constructed as irrational, yet powerful, aggressors.

Overall, *DIVA’s* was a brand invested in the notion of community and in its role not only in imagining that community but also bringing members together. Though readers were at times divided over who belonged, or should belong, they were united in their belief that there was something to belong *to*. In the face of a hostile greater ‘other’, which was constructed as a constant source of threat, this belonging was incredibly important.

**Keywords**
Critical discourse analysis, lesbian discourse, identity, (gay) community, media discourse, magazines
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Chapter One: Introduction

Our way of thinking about ourselves has been formed to a large extent by the gay press. Validating who we are and what we want is a very important purpose of gay newspapers

Jim Kepner 1993

1.1 Outline of the study

This thesis is the product of a discourse analytic investigation of the first decade of the British lesbian magazine, DIVA, which launched in 1994. Work on mainstream women’s and men’s magazines has established them as sites at which (largely heterosexual) femininities and masculinities are constructed and construed, but relatively little scholarship has addressed lesbian magazines in this fashion (see Chapter Two for more detailed consideration of this literature). DIVA is Britain’s only nationally sold, mainstream lesbian magazine, and is Europe’s best-selling lesbian title, with a readership currently estimated at 150,000 women. This represents a significant community of readers, for many of whom DIVA can be central to the development and maintenance of their sexual identity; Gillian Rodgerson, editor between 1997 and 2004, describes the magazine as a first point of contact and information tool for lesbians. Though DIVA has undergone significant changes since the end of the sample analysed here, its publishers continue to describe the magazine as “a trusted source of information”, which is “on the cutting edge of popular lesbian culture”. For Meeker (2006: 2), communication is “a central, perhaps the central thread” in gay history, with widely-distributed texts like magazines central to gay identity as collective identity. With this in mind, my purpose in this research has been: first, taking DIVA as a source of information, to provide an analytic account of the magazine’s launch, production and brand; and second, since as well as being “reflected in discourse, identity is actively, ongoingly, dynamically constituted in discourse” (Benwell & Stokoe 2006:4), to consider the discursive (re)construction of a collective lesbian identity.

It was not until the late 1960s that anthropologists began to study homosexuality as a social phenomenon (see Sonenschein 1966; Simon and Gagnon 1967), shifting their attention from “individuals to communities and from illness to routine (Rubin 2002: 22). A number of studies focused on gay and
lesbian communities, centred on local institutions such as bars (Warren 1974; Achilles 1967) or feminist groups (Ross 1995; Franzen 1993; Krieger 1983; Wolf 1979 and Barnhart 1975). Oral history approaches have produced several exceptional diachronic accounts of (often mixed, typically US) gay communities spanning decades. Like Achilles (1967) and Warren (1974), Davis and Lapovsky Kennedy (1995) identify bars as central institutions in the production of (lesbian) meaning within a single locale (Buffalo), and gather women’s stories from the 1940s to the 1960s. Bonfitto (1997) covers 70 years of life in a Connecticut town, drawing residents’ stories together to produce a kind of collective local biography. Newton’s (1993) cultural history of the gay resort community at Cherry Grove between the 1930s and 1980s is especially comprehensive. Based largely on interviews with long-term residents – ‘elders’ – she details the birth and development of the first US gay town. Her discussion with older lesbians about the different meanings invested in the terms ‘dyke’ and ‘lady’, and their use to establish and define spaces and groups, illuminates the importance of language and practice in producing and maintaining communities even where they may be simultaneously shaped by location.

Language and discourse have become increasingly central in the social sciences and scholarship addressing gay subcultures is no exception. Robinson (2008) focuses primarily on discourse in her recent examination of social control – defined as the process by which the community functions and is maintained – in a lesbian community. Much of her discussion centres on language use, particularly when considering the production of a normative ‘us’ and ‘them’ through naming, description, gossip and narratives. Her success in demonstrating the operation of local “webs of text and talk” (p. 45) suggests that a magazine like DIVA might act as a kind of institutional organ. Certainly, with the rise of internet communication, several scholars have moved to reformulate community in non-geographic terms. Following Krieger’s (1982: 92) suggestion that community be defined as:

the range of social groups in which the lesbian individual may feel a sense of camaraderie with other lesbians, a sense of support, shared understanding, shared vision, shared sense of self ‘as a lesbian’, vis-à-vis the outside world

Correll (1995) analyses interactions between women at The Lesbian Café, an online bulletin board, and supplements her reading with interviews with
Unlike Munt, Bassett and O’Riordan (2002), who state that online interaction is a precursor to entering a ‘real world’ community, Correll’s analysis suggests that *The Lesbian Café* is not only a ‘real’ community, but also a site for the imagination of a broader lesbian subculture. As Wakeford (1998) comments in her exploration of a San Francisco online lesbian group, the significance of the online space is its continual confirmation or challenge of lesbian experience and identity. Importantly, she indicates that “players in the lesbian definition game have differing degrees of influence in terms of who may present their contextual construction as the standardised definition and act to include or exclude on the basis of it” (p. 184).

My viewpoint in conducting this research is that *DIVA* is well placed to produce ‘standardised definitions’ of lesbian life, since its definition comes “with its authority fused to it” (Bakhtin 1981: 344). The magazine is a medium “through which members communicate to themselves in concert about the characters of their collectivities” (Handelman 1998: 15), and to which members turn for precisely this purpose, among others. One of Driver’s (2007: 12) lesbian interviewees suggests this when she states that: “As one of the few *bona fide* items of queer (pop) culture available to me, *DIVA* has a great influence on how I see myself and others. The contents are truly relevant to me, and it is something of an outlet”. As both Driver (*ibid.*) and Gross (2005) point out, lesbian magazines stand against a mainstream market that renders readers marginal at best and invisible at worst, and instead produce exactly that which is missing: community. This construct circulates certain cultural markers, experience and interests taken to be locally – and centrally – meaningful.

1.2 Research aims

My sample begins with *DIVA*’s launch issue in April 1994 and ends with the 10th birthday issue of April 2004, and my analysis is both quantitative and qualitative (Chapter Three). There are several specific aspects of the magazine with which the research is expressly concerned; the aims of the project being:

1. To consider the particular processes and conditions involved in producing *DIVA* magazine.

2. To examine the nature of the *DIVA* ‘brand’, by looking at editorial content and multimodal features of the sample.
3. To analyse if, how and on what terms notions of ‘us’ – that is, of a community of women as readers and lesbians – and of ‘them’ – others – are activated, constructed and managed.

4. To analyse the various ways in which the magazine and its readers mark and police the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

5. To outline the social climate relative to the gay community, with particular attention to the conditions surrounding (specifically lesbian and gay) publishing, in the second half of the 20th century.

6. To consider the relationships between aspects of the text – (3), (4), and (5), discourse practice – (2), and social practice – (1).

Aspects (1) and (2) are, evidently, concerned with the magazine itself. Mainstream women’s magazines are instantly recognisable in both the public and academic spheres; academics have been able to produce accounts of the ‘typical’ women’s magazine (see Caldas-Coulthard 1996, for example). On the contrary, lesbian magazines have been afforded no such attention. Thus, the primary task of this study is to produce an account of DIVA’s production – its launch, ongoing financial circumstances, editorial approach and so on – and of DIVA as a product – how much advertising is there? Who advertises? What kinds of editorial content are there? How is all this laid out? Auxiliary to these questions are those that enquire about which topics are given the most, or the most frequent, attention and how they are handled.

Aspects (3) and (4) are focused on the magazine’s construction of collective identity, asking: Who are we? Who are they? When do these groups change, bend or falter? How are boundaries marked, and to the inclusion and exclusion of whom? Considering these discursive processes reveals how easy or difficult might it be for certain readers to identify with ‘us’, and how consistently that ease/difficulty might be experienced.

Given the size of the sample, analysis in all of these areas should be diachronic; in relation to all aspects I consider whether and how the answers to my questions change. As aspects (5) and (6) suggest, I do not consider DIVA in a vacuum, but attempt to put those answers into dialogue with the social context and with one another. DIVA did not spring into being in April 1994 without a biography. The magazine, those producing it, those consuming it – the researcher interpreting it – are all shaped by the history that led to its first issue, and the
social context in which the magazine continued to exist. With this in mind the following section outlines the development of lesbian magazines in Britain and the social changes that influenced them from the first in 1964 to the contemporaries of DIVA that appeared 30 years later. Section 1.4 then considers the late 20th century social context within which DIVA was created and existed.

1.3 The British lesbian publishing tradition

In Germany, the first lesbian magazine appeared in the interwar years, when Friedrich Radszuweit’s newly-formed Bund für Menschenrecht (Union for human rights7), began publishing some of the most influential gay periodicals. Among them was Die Freundin (Girlfriend) in 1924, which established itself as “the definitive reference point for lesbians of the 1920s” (Tamagne 2004: 78). Die Freundin and the organisations that produced magazines of its kind proliferated at this point in German history, and not elsewhere (it predates American and British efforts by some 32 years) because it was there that Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee), the first organisation to campaign for gay rights and recognition, was founded in 1897, and where censorship was hugely relaxed after the first world war. Homosexual organisations and meeting places flourished, and so in turn did periodicals8.

In Britain that moment of viability would not come for another 40 years, when, out of the oppressive conformity that characterised the post-war nation, law reform aided the genesis of a comparatively permissive culture (Hall 1980). Part of this process was Lord Wolfenden’s report in 1957 calling for private sex acts between consenting adult men to be decriminalised. Although the recommendation was far from universally well-received and would take another 10 years to be enacted, British society was now a place where the Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS) and its charitable arm the Albany Trust could operate; debate on homosexuality was no longer limited to questions of cures or restrictions. In January 1963, Twentieth Century magazine published an article by Dilys Rowe entitled “A quick look at the lesbians”, an investigation of a “misty, unmapped world” (Rowe 1963: 67). The piece did not itself produce the moment at which a lesbian magazine became viable in Britain; rather it was a part of it. And it was the catalyst that meant British lesbians would wait only one more year.

Rowe was one of three journalists apparently commissioned by Twentieth Century to find out more about lesbianism for a special ‘Morals’ issue, but the
only one to submit copy. The article included excerpts from interviews with ‘confessed’ lesbians and contended that lesbians were the product of failed relationships with their fathers. Although it was intended as a serious consideration of an ignored social ‘problem’, the nature of the interviewees and the author’s conclusion that “lesbianism, although often ludicrous, may be no less pitiable, no less sexually repulsive (to heterosexuals) and no less destructive of lives than much male homosexuality” (*ibid.*: 71) raised the hackles of author, journalist and proud lesbian, Esmé Langley.

Within a few months, Langley had established the Minorities Research Group (MRG), which set out to be part of future research on homosexuality and engage in dialogue with key institutions (Jennings 2007b, Hamer 1996). A magazine was to be central to this. “I am planning to publish a ‘newsletter’,” she wrote, “by, for and about Lesbians, inverts, their problems, the historical background, the social perspectives and so on”. She had a hunch, she said, that the time was ripe for a magazine. “I think it would do many people a power of good to be able to contribute to their own magazine, even if anonymously, and say what they have always wanted to say without let or hindrance”. Langley wanted a magazine that would give the wider heterosexual public, as well as lesbians, a more accurate picture than the “skiddy, slide-eyed glance along a row of oddballs” (Langley 1964: 6) Rowe had offered.

In 1964, the first issue of *Arena Three* was published, its 11 pictureless pages simply stapled together in the top corner. In keeping with the group’s aims, the first issue responded to the Rowe article and contained serious articles on perceptions of lesbians and the nature of homosexuality. In the seven years that it was in press, the magazine provided readers with book and film reviews, stories about women of the past thought to have been lesbians, poems and fiction, and (mainstream) press cuttings as well as continuing to consider the lesbian in society (Jennings 2007a; Hamer 1996). *Arena Three* provided lesbians with an opportunity to talk to one another and to talk about their lives; it gave them a voice they had barely imagined possible. “Esmé Langley was dedicated to her mission to encourage lesbians to come out and build successful lives … she was consistently upbeat about the possibility of lesbian heritage” (Hamer 1996: 167).

Circulation and readership of *Arena Three* have only ever been estimated, but according to the magazine itself the usual print run was 1000. Copies were distributed, for the most part, to members who paid for subscriptions. The
inevitable funding shortfall, despite unpaid editorial labour, is recorded as having been met by Langley herself, though the extent of the cost to her is not known. *Arena Three*’s ability to generate a more considerable income was hindered by the reluctance of newspapers to carry advertisements – though many newspapers carried features about MRG and *Arena Three* in the mid-1960s, they were less keen to be seen to be promoting the interests of the group. These were still deemed scandalous enough that married women were prevented from subscribing to the magazine without the written consent of their husbands, for fear of legal action on the grounds of alienation of affection. The magazine was consistently dogged by financial worries, and in 1970 MRG established a Press Freedom Group to campaign against discrimination by advertising departments; a glossy new look and a doubled print run had not resulted in increased sales and left *Arena Three* virtually bankrupt. Langley handed over control to a consortium containing several of the Press Freedom Group, who had breathed new life into operations (Hamer 1996).

The end is perhaps less important than the beginning. When Langley started *Arena Three*, she forced as much as grabbed the opportunity to get a lesbian magazine going. Her drive was relentless and she was prepared to be identified to a public that was still terrified of, and repulsed by, homosexuality in equal measure. By the time the magazine folded, however, gay sex had been decriminalised, the Stonewall riots had inspired the UK’s own Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and “lesbians and gay men came roaring out of the closet” (Hamer 1996: 199). The change in the law and the decline of pathologising scientific discourse surrounding homosexuality also prompted the gradual thawing of public attitudes in the 1970s. The decade felt like something of an ‘Indian summer’ (David 1997: 231), and in this new climate a gay press emerged. A commercially viable gay press, in fact, with the introduction of *Gay News* in 1972. In the final issue of *Arena Three*, a consortium had promised to revive the magazine the following year. Led by GLF co-founder Jackie Forster, the first issue of *Sappho* appeared in March 1972. It kept the same cover design as its predecessor and continued to be distributed at group meetings (now known as *Sappho*, not MRG) and in London clubs such as the Gateways. However, *Sappho* took a more explicitly activist line than its predecessor; women’s liberation rhetoric was in no short supply. The new group and magazine dropped MRG’s concern with scientific research on the condition of the homosexual. Instead *Sappho* was
concerned with getting people together, and getting them out of the closet: it was the ‘visible culture’ (Lemon & Patton 1997) of lesbian existence and proud of it.

Sappho had a marginally slicker design than Arena Three and was much more light-hearted in its content – reflecting its altered aims and the altered era in which it existed. There were cartoons, tongue-in-cheek quizzes, ‘Sapphoscopes’, crosswords and film and book reviews, as well as comment on more serious matters. By 1979, the now redesigned magazine had 3000 subscribers but was still struggling financially. Forster did not want to rely on subscriptions and frequently took to the streets to raise awareness of Sappho and attempt to convince shop owners to stock it, with little success. Cover prices rose by 50% in the two years to 1981, by which time lapsed subscribers outnumbered current subscribers by two to one. The editorial collective had grown tired of the fiscal juggling necessary and decided to close the magazine at the end of the year. “Our efforts and support of lesbians to start their own contacts, groups, newsletters, activities in their own areas succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. Sappho was no longer the only once-a-month contact with other lesbians. We had served our purpose. It was time to go” (Forster 1984: 31).

After the Indian summer of the 1970s, the 1980s turned out to be an extraordinarily frosty winter for Britain’s gay population: the sex wars reverberated through the decade, taking their toll on any notion of lesbian unity that had previously been fostered, and things worsened dramatically with the arrival of HIV/AIDS in 1982. The horror of the disease failed to move some radical feminists, who maintained a separatist stance, while other lesbians struggled together with gay men to cope - without help from a government happy to consider it a gay disease. The media exposure was intense and unpleasant; the public backlash vitriolic. In 1986 William Brownhill, leader of the Conservative South Staffordshire council, claimed that a suitable cure would be to “put 90% of queers in the ruddy gas chambers”\(^\text{12}\). In 1988 the Conservative government backed an amendment to the Local Government Bill designed to appease supporters spooked by tabloid scaremongering about ‘loony Left’ councils handing out gay-friendly texts at schools. When Section 28, which prevented local authorities from ‘promoting homosexuality’ and specifically schools from promoting ‘the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship’, became law, it produced a moment of profound change for British lesbians and gay men.
It was a really horrible blow - now it seems unthinkably hostile. We’d all had a really clear message that we were beyond the pale. And we’d also had a massive wake up call, as an activist community, that the way that we’d chosen to fight that particular piece of legislation hadn’t worked. Section 28 and the way people responded to it was a real turning point.\(^\text{13}\)

In the wake of Section 28, lesbians and gay men were galvanised to work together in a way that had little been seen since the 1970s and the GLF. Only now, gay activism climbed down from the barricades, put on a suit and made lunch appointments with ministers: Stonewall was established in 1989 as a ‘professional lobbying group’\(^\text{14}\) by activists who recognised the need to engage with government. This shift towards campaign professionalism was paralleled by the emergence of an increasingly professional gay press.

**1.4 DIVA in its social context: a 90s girl in a 90s world**

Changes in the nature of gay publications have been largely ascribed to the commercialisation and commodification of gay culture as gay men and lesbians abandoned the rage and fury that had failed to prevent the implementation of Section 28, and embraced less radical dreams in a post-Thatcher climate (Woods 1995). In this smartened up gay rights movement, a new market emerged. Rouge, ‘A Lesbian and Gay Socialist Quarterly’, entered the fray in late 1989 and summed up the publishing proliferation:

> What better way to start the 1990s than with a new lesbian and gay publication! After a disastrous 1980s, many were predicting the new year being brought in by the sound of closet doors slamming shut. Well tough luck ‘Moral Majority’, we’re here to stay!\(^\text{15}\)

Around this time men’s magazines Boyz and Attitude joined the recently established Pink Paper and veteran newspaper Gay Times on the shelves of Britain’s newsagents. Mixed magazine Phase appeared in 1994 and disappeared very shortly after. Several lesbian magazines appeared “with an almost bewildering frequency” (Ainley 1995: 176): Quim (a lesbian sex magazine), Lip and Shebang (Pink Paper imprints), Lesbian London (a collective zine-esque effort) and DIVA all launched in an era during which lesbian culture began to align itself more closely to the market ideology of the ‘pink pound’ (Graham 1997, Jennings 2007b). This re-alignment was generally less emphatic than that of the gay male population but, however grudgingly, many women recognised the
opportunity. Frances Williams, then a news writer for the Millivres Ltd publication *Gay Times*, was among them. “Millivres was a very male company which saw its primary audience as gay men, but as lesbians and gay men were now working and playing together more, there was more scope to argue the case for lesbian representation, both as producers and consumers of gay media.”

The climate was further helped by the mainstream consumption of lesbian identity in the form of ‘lesbian chic’. In the early 1990s, mainstream media developed a taste for a hyper-feminine, heterosexual vision of ‘the lesbian’ that put lesbians into the public sphere in a way that they had never yet experienced. The new, chic lesbians offered a rehabilitated, less transgressive media image far from the ranting, hairy man-haters they had previously been caricatured as (O’Sullivan 1994). This image seemed, to many lesbians, however, to be so far removed from their own reality that, paradoxically, their existence was denied. While the sight of kd lang in a suit having her chin ‘shaved’ by a scantily clad Cindy Crawford on the front of *Vanity Fair*, marked a watershed moment, much of lesbian chic’s imagery served simply to “contain, curtail and ultimately destroy the idea of lesbianism as it has been produced by lesbians” (Cottingham 1996: 3). Dissatisfaction with these mainstream images did mean, however, that lesbians were inspired to use the moment to their own gain: “While the media are courting us, it would be a crying shame to waste this ceasefire by the tabloids when the publicity could be turned to our advantage” (Radclyffe 1994: 62). In short, given their 1980s experiences and the new commercial opportunities at hand, lesbian chic - however tenuously representative of ‘real’ lesbians - was a gift horse not to be looked in the mouth. “Lesbian chic was useful hype,” remembers Williams. “It was about capitalising on the interest and catching the wave.” Kim Watson, *DIVA* publisher, concurs: “The mainstream media were objectifying lesbians. We were getting in on the act but actually upstaging them.”

*DIVA* piggybacked on the new gay commercial potential without really buying into the identification-as-consumption model, instead mixing consumption with politics (Lewis 1997). Writing her first editor’s letter, Williams told readers that *DIVA* would “put lesbians centre-stage” and celebrate the “splendid diversity” of lesbian life, from women in the mainstream to the “regular dykes about town” – things mainstream culture’s “Sapphic extravaganza” had failed to do (Williams, 1994: 4). Although Williams wanted *DIVA* to share the production values of mainstream women’s magazines (Chapter Five), the magazine was primarily
informed by an activist, rather than a consumerist, ideology. This chance to speak, at last, to a national audience was a new form of activism. Even as the magazine grew more established and consumerism tightened its grip elsewhere, succeeding editor Gillian Rodgerson was determined that the gay press, and DIVA in particular, should serve a purpose above and beyond attracting advertisers (Chapter Four).

The rest of the 1990s, however gay-friendly they may have disingenuously promised to be, continued to provide an era in which DIVA had a role beyond selling its readership to advertisers. Even at the apex of lesbian chic, mainstream newspapers continued to invest in homophobic discourse at the expense of the women they were supposedly celebrating. In 1994 the (lesbian) headteacher of a Hackney primary school, Jane Brown, was reported to have turned down subsidised tickets for her students to see Romeo & Juliet because it was an entirely heterosexual love story. The first story to appear about the events in the Sun referred to Brown as a “hatchet-faced dyke”; like the rest of the press, particularly right-wing publications such as the Daily Mail and the Daily Express, the Sun ignored entirely any debate about Brown’s argument, blasting her instead as a politically correct, butch lesbian who was ‘poisoning’ children. Her home and her partner were under constant surveillance (Steinberg, Epstein & Johnson 1996).

The first part of the 1990s, then, was a time when public unease and suspicion did not disappear simply because soap operas like Emmerdale and Brookside opted to include lesbian characters (indeed, a Broadcasting Standards Council survey in 1994 showed that 50% of the viewing public still disliked ‘gay scenes’, while 22% felt that there should not be any gay characters on television). Lesbians seemed to be able to take two steps forward before taking one step back: despite research suggesting that the children of lesbians were as well adjusted as others (Patterson 1994; Golombok, Spencer & Rutter 1983; and Kirkpatrick, Smith & Roy 1981) and a subsequent increase in the number of lesbians winning custody cases, even by 1998 then Home Secretary Jack Straw launched a government green paper on families by saying that “A family headed by a married couple is the best type for raising children”. In the media, the mid-1990s saw several popular shows feature lesbian moments, and gay programming in the UK enjoyed a relative financial boom17. Yet still, Channel 4 cut the sitcom Ellen midway through its last season in 1999 without explanation or apology. The season before had seen Ellen come out as a lesbian.
Social attitudes were also slow in changing. In 1994, *DIVA* reported that two women had been violently attacked for holding hands in the street, and a sadly similar attack was reported in 2002. In the meantime, a Muslim lesbian was forced into hiding after being outed and subjected to abuse in 1997, the same year a woman was raped at Brighton Pride. In 1999, David Copeland killed three people when he nail-bombed the (gay-owned and -frequented) Admiral Duncan pub on Old Compton Street. A Stonewall report in 2003 suggested that one in three gay men and one in four lesbians had been violently assaulted at least once. In 1999, the government had answered calls for gay hate crime legislation with a resounding ‘no’, saying that specific laws were not necessary, and that attacks on the grounds of sexuality were not comparable to racially-motivated attacks. After Stonewall’s report, the Crown Prosecution Service announced a zero tolerance approach to homophobic assaults and the Criminal Justice Bill of 2004 made such attacks official ‘hate crimes’.

Thus it was in the law that the most solid progress was made: from hazy Labour election promises and recommendations or ‘voluntary codes’ in the mid-1990s, the turn of the millennium saw legislative change take a sudden and dizzying turn of pace: tenancy rights for lesbians and gay men received backing from the House of Lords; gay families were endorsed by the Head of Family Law and the Children’s Society dropped its ban on lesbian and gay fostering and adoption in 1999 – by 2003, lesbians and gay men had equal adoption rights; more than 30 years after homosexuality was decriminalised, the age of consent for gay men was lowered to match the heterosexual 16; Employment Equality Regulations came into force in 2003; and the Human Rights Act, which became UK law in 2000, meant discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation had become far more difficult to defend in many public arenas. In September 2003, Section 28 was repealed having never resulted in a prosecution. Shortly after the end of the sample, in November 2004, the Civil Partnership Bill was enacted, allowing same-sex couples civil unions with the same rights and responsibilities as a heterosexual civil marriage. An unfortunately high number of the legal advances mentioned above came as a result of rulings from the European Parliament; some were implemented slowly and reluctantly in Britain, or implemented with disappointing exemptions (religious employers’ continued ability to turn down applications from the gay community, granted in 2003, being a notable example). However, the cumulative effect of these changes –
particularly the repeal of Section 28, the confused interpretation of which had seen discussion of homosexuality disappear from many classrooms and a cautious approach to dealing with homophobic bullying; and the introduction of civil partnerships – seemed to mark the end of the legitimate treatment of gay people as “second class citizens”.

Any summary of the relevant cultural and political changes during this time will unfortunately do a certain violence to the subtlety and detail of what happened, and how it felt for those living through it. But it is clear that this was an era of remarkable and almost constant change on several fronts. What this meant for DIVA, apart from anything, was that it was operating in quite unprecedented times. Its counterparts in history had argued against governments who barely deigned to listen, let alone answer; tried to incite empathy or even sympathy from a disinterested – worse, horrified – public. DIVA lived in a world where Stonewall could command the ear of cabinet ministers (and where some of those cabinet ministers were coming out themselves), where it was increasingly a case of when, rather than if, gay rights would be won. The magazine spoke to women who cared passionately about the fight as well as women who had never known there was a fight to begin with. What virtually all its readers had in common, apart from their sexual orientation, was the knowledge that DIVA was theirs, and that it was virtually the only place they could find ‘home-grown’ lesbian iconography. In a single-product market, DIVA bore a remarkable burden of representation – and the need for that product was one felt urgently by women who felt increasingly entitled to see themselves ‘out there’ (Akass & McCabe 2006).

In this sense, DIVA was not necessarily faced with a task alien to its predecessors: its existence, before all else, tells the isolated reader that they are not alone in wrestling with their sexual identity. Where it differs, perhaps, is in the modern reader’s understanding of her sexual identity, and her expectations of a (the) lesbian magazine. However sure they were of their attraction to women, readers of Arena Three were often as curious as the public, the medical profession, and the government about ‘what’, exactly, they were. And precisely because of that curiosity and the busy exchange of theories of homosexuality, Arena Three was produced with one eye on a mainstream audience. In contrast, the question of ‘what is a lesbian?’ (or indeed, ‘why is a lesbian?’) no longer remained for DIVA to answer. Its readers expected a lifestyle – the question of ‘how to be a lesbian’ remained. Writing in 1993, a year before DIVA’s launch,
Arlene Stein described being asked by a woman if there was a book she could read in order to learn how to be a lesbian. “Her question reminded me of how invisible we remain, how difficult it is to obtain information about our lives, and how important is the task of building and sharing the information we have, both inside and outside our communities” (Stein 1993: xv).

To a greater degree than before, DIVA was able to provide a forum for reader interaction; the construction of its ‘mythic community’ (Bignell 2002: 74) was richer and stronger than the magazines of the past. Wakeford (1998: 184, using Phelan 1989) identifies four fundamental processes of community:

First, a community provides insulation from hostility in relation to sexuality. In other words a place 'where being a lesbian is simply not an issue'. Second, a community promotes visibility or, in Phelan's words, acts as 'a beacon for lesbians'. Third, it encompasses a socialising function and provides guidance on behaviour and self-interpretation: the 'how to be a lesbian' function. Finally, the community is situated politically in relation to hegemonic systems.

It is clear, when considering this in light of the social context that led to, produced and surrounded DIVA, that we can identify in the magazine these elements – that we might talk about it as being at the hub of a community which is ongoingly invented and socio-historically contingent. According to van Dijk (1998: 6), “[Discourse is] needed and used by group members to learn, acquire, change, confirm, articulate, as well as to pervasively convey ideologies to group members”. At this point then, we can see DIVA’s ideological profile as a primary discursive element in British lesbian culture, and the importance and interest in critically analysing it. The project will not tell us what lesbian identity is, nor even what it was for everybody, but it will show us one of the (central) ways in which lesbian culture was being articulated, and the kind of collective identity it was articulating.

1.5 A guide to the rest of the thesis

This chapter has made passing reference to a number of studies; in Chapter Two, I set out the literature(s) that has contributed to my conception of this study, and to which it in turn contributes. Chapter Three discusses in greater detail my sample, its selection and handling, and the methods used in this multiple-method project. Each method is considered in terms of its application to the sample and
the pertinence of the data it provides. The five chapters that follow this are analytic, reporting my findings with regard to DIVA’s production and brand (Chapters Four and Five), and to the construction of collective identity (Chapters Six to Eight).

Chapter Four details the philosophies of DIVA’s founding editor and her successor, the magazine’s day-to-day running, and its financial circumstances. Chapter Five turns to the magazine itself, discussing design, front covers as a branding tool, and editorial content in terms of genre and topic. In both chapters I suggest that DIVA embraces some alternative values at the same time as operating in the commercial marketplace (see also Turner 2009). Chapter Five highlights the apparent change in emphasis from lesbian heritage to individual participation, though both are characteristic of DIVA across the sample.

Chapter Six includes my analysis of the discursive construction of ‘us’, considering referential and predicational strategies, the use of conceptual metaphor, and of historical narratives. It suggests that processes and contents of identity construction typically found in relation to national identity are significant here. Chapter Seven sets out an analysis of boundary management in DIVA, focusing specifically on bisexuals as a transgressive, and therefore potentially threatening, group. The chapter considers editorial handling of bisexual subjects but focuses primarily on debates in and between readers’ letters on the inclusion of bisexuals within the (reading) community. The nature of these debates is revealing of the ‘difficulties’ bisexuality presents for those with an investment in a specifically lesbian identity. Bisexuals constitute what might be called a ‘border group’; in contrast, in Chapter Eight, I address the construction of further removed others, ‘them’, through the lenses of three significant areas of content: coverage of Section 28; mainstream media representations of lesbians; and parenting. Each produces differing but overlapping groups of ‘others’. DIVA walks a difficult line between acknowledging the power of these groups while also discursively empowering ‘us’. The findings presented in each analytic chapter are drawn together in Chapter Nine, which concludes the thesis by considering the strengths and limitations of the study, and directions for future research on this subject.

Some free titles, such as g3, are nationally distributed, but DIVA is the sole commercial title.

According to the magazine’s 2009 media pack (http://media.millivres.co.uk/mp/diva_mediapack.pdf). Approximately 98% of readers are female.

I use the term “community” throughout this thesis with a note of caution. At times it is used to refer to DIVA’s reading community. Where it does not do so, it should be understood as an expedient shorthand term, rather than suggesting that a single lesbian community exists.


See Beemyn (1997), which contains several insightful analyses of local lesbian and gay communities between 1930s and 1970s.


See Beemyn (1997), which contains several insightful analyses of local lesbian and gay communities between 1930s and 1970s.

BfM went on to become the largest homosexual organisation in Germany, with worldwide affiliates and relatively huge print runs of its various publications.

At least until the election of the National Socialist Party – Die Freundin was shut down in 1933.

Letter, dated May 10th 1963, held by and accessed at London School of Economics’ Hall-Carpenter Archive.

As Dick Michaels, founder of US gay liberation newspaper The Advocate, and co-founder of US lesbian magazine The Ladder, Phyllis Lyon, also found. “You couldn’t put anything in the newspapers,” Lyon said at 2002’s ‘First time in print’ panel at San Francisco Public Library. “I mean, any time anybody tried this they kept saying ‘This is a family newspaper; we only print about rapes and things like that’”.

The Gateways, on Kings Road in Chelsea, was a private lesbian club from the mid-60s. For many women, their first visit was an initiation in ‘lesbian life’.

Brownhill made the comments at a meeting of the council’s Health Committee. Jack Greenaway, the local Labour leader, was quoted as saying afterwards: “Every one of us here will agree with what has been said.”

Quote from DIVA’s current deputy editor Louise Carolin. Chapter Three describes the interviewing process.


Vanity Fair August 1993

Channel 4 allocated £3m to lesbian and gay content in 1995.


Both Arena Three and Sappho were the publications of pre-existing groups, and the social occasions they organised do not really signify the same kind of mythic community that I refer to here.
Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of those bodies of literature most relevant to the study and to which the study seeks, to varying degrees, to contribute. With reference to the aims of this project (summarised in Chapter One, Section Two), four areas of scholarship emerge as significant, and are considered in turn below. I begin, in Section 2.2, by establishing the ontological perspective of my thesis, setting out the theoretical tenets and principles of critical approaches to discourse and the contribution these approaches make to our understanding of social problems like (collective) identity and media. I also discuss the pertinence of this kind of approach here, outlining my understanding of the central concepts of power, ideology and critique. Section 2.3 discusses the development of theories of language, gender and sexuality from early feminist work on difference and domination to the more performative, locally-oriented research of the past two decades. I highlight in particular the predominance in language and sexuality research of analyses of talk and interaction; my research aims to redress the balance somewhat by focusing on shared written texts. In Section 2.4 I consider magazines as a particularly salient site for the construction of gender, sexuality and community. Noting that this is not reflected in the diversity and size of existing research, I conclude that a critical investigation of DIVA magazine contributes, to varying degrees, to filling gaps in each field, and to pulling their boundaries closer together.

2.2 A critical approach to discourse analysis

_Language should be seen... as the medium of consciousness for a society_

Hodge and Kress 1991: 14

_We see CDA as bringing a variety of theories into dialogue, especially social theories on the one hand and linguistic theories on the other, so that its theory is a shifting synthesis of other theories, though what it itself theorises in particular is the mediation between the social and the linguistic_

Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999:16
Some critical approaches to discourse are frequently grouped together under the title Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA); a useful acronym, but one that can obscure the diversity of scholarship to which it is applied (Wodak and Meyer (2009) differentiate several key approaches in detail). Broadly speaking, then, critical discourse analysts see language use as a social practice, as “one element or ‘moment’ of the material social process” (Fairclough 2001: 121) whose meaningfulness is embedded in socio-historical context (Wodak 1999). In contrast to more idealist social constructionist thinking, they suggest that this ‘moment’ is in a dialectical relationship with others at situational, institutional and social level (Wodak 1995). Discourse contributes to shaping social structures (its constitutive function) and is at once reflective of them (its performative function) (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). Thus, CDA practitioners “[consider] the context of language to be crucial” (Weiss and Wodak 2003: 13), and tend towards a kind of “constructivist structuralism” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 1). CDA is seen as a means of highlighting the interconnectedness of discursive and non-discursive elements of social life (ibid.), of understanding how language use “functions in constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organising social institutions or in exercising power” (Wodak and Meyer 2009: 7).

Fairclough (1992: 64) distinguishes three constructive aspects of discourse: its contribution to the reproduction and transformation of social identities, social relationships and systems of knowledge and belief. The interests, data and method, and theoretical backgrounds of scholars who position their work in the CDA school are varied, but discourse is consistently problematised as potentially ideologically loaded (Fowler 1991) and “socially consequential” (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258). Though concepts of critique and ideology are now relatively broad (see below), much of the work that served, intentionally or otherwise, to define CDA in the 1990s derived its critical theory from the Frankfurt School, understanding ideology as “meaning in the service of power” (Thompson 1990: 7) and power as determined by social structure¹. Thus, if we accept that social inequalities exist, we must accept that discourse plays a part in creating, maintaining and sometimes challenging unequal power relations. CDA has, therefore, generally focused on the texts and discourses of powerful elites (van Dijk 1993a; Weiss and Wodak 2003), the intention being to make visible those features that perpetuate and are perpetuated by relations of power and control, dominance and discrimination. “CDA aims to investigate critically social
inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimised, and so on, by language use” (Wodak and Meyer 2009: 10). Seeing the relatively powerless – the working or dominated classes, ethnic minorities and women – as victims of discriminatory discourse, a further aim has been to effect change in social practice: the “emancipatory requirement” (Titscher *et al*. 2000). We might therefore summarise CDA (in its classic formulation) thus:

- CDA aims to shed light on the linguistic-discursive dimension of social and cultural phenomena
- In CDA, language-as-discourse is *both* a form of action (cf. Austin 1962) through which people can change the world *and* a form of action which is socially and historically situated and in a dialectical relationship with other aspects of the social
- CDA should analyse language empirically within its social context
- Enlisting the concept of ideology to theorise the subjugation of one social group to other social groups, critical discourse analysts suggest discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups. CDA’s critical imperative is to reveal this
- CDA is politically committed to social change. In the name of emancipation, critical discourse analytical approaches take the side of oppressed social groups

Compiled from Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 60-64

I refer to this as CDA’s ‘classic formulation’ because a number of definitions and principles have shifted and broadened over time. CDA has always been declared “at most a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis” (van Dijk 1993a: 131), and its use has extended far beyond the cluster of scholars who helped to establish so centrally the above definitions (Fairclough 1992, 1995; Wodak 1989; and van Dijk 1993b). For some researchers adopting CDA, the Frankfurt School has been less central to defining key concepts such as ideology, power and critique. As these scholars redefine such terms in the course of their own projects (Locke 2004), so the scope of the field widens. This multifariousness, as Wodak (2006: 2) describes it, “allows for open discussions and debates, for changes in the definition of aims and goals, and for innovation”.
In analysing *DIVA*, I work with specific notions of ideology, power and critique. Though I have found Fairclough’s approach to discourse useful, I do not follow his rather Marxist notions of ideology (Wodak and Meyer 2009), adopting instead van Dijk’s (1998) understanding of ideologies as: “the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group. This means that ideologies allow people, as group members, to organise the multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, for them” (p.8, emphasis in original). Taking a less ‘suspicious’ (Hodge and Kress 1991) view of ideology reconfigures power, which remains a factor of differentiation among members – readers are in a less powerful position to influence ‘DIVA discourse’ than its contributors and editors, but in a more powerful position than ‘others’ – but, should not be assumed to involve abuse or subjugation.

Taking these notions of power and ideology together, my stance is that *DIVA* is a potentially persuasive ideological text. The process of socialisation, by which children and adolescents are exposed to normative behaviours and attitudes, usually takes place in the home, at school, in peer groups and via the mass media. This is not, however, the case for lesbian identity: society remains an environment of compulsory (that is, assumed) heterosexuality (Rich 1980). A text like *DIVA* is a space for subaltern values (Thornton 1995), one of few such social resources available to individuals in the construction of a lesbian identity (Sender 2003); its consumption a process by which values and beliefs might be internalised in pursuit of that social identity (Mead 1982).

As Wodak (1999; 2006) notes, being critical now denotes social engagement rather than, specifically, a stance against the dominant social order. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002: 145), “Discourses, by representing reality in one particular way rather than in other possible ways, constitute subjects and objects in particular ways, create boundaries between the true and the false, and make certain types of action relevant and others unthinkable.” I define my work as critical because it is motivated by a desire to “question over and over again what is postulated as self-evident” (Foucault in Kritzman 1988: 265), and thereby “to contribute to an awareness of what is, how it has come to be, and what it might become” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 4). Specifically, I consider “the social effects of the meanings a reader is being positioned or called upon to subscribe to” (Locke 2004: 9).
2.2.1 CDA frameworks

Theorising that “language simultaneously reflects reality and constructs it to be a certain way” (Gee 1999: 82), critical discourse analysts have sought to develop frameworks that synthesise linguistic analysis and social analysis (Wood and Kroger 2000). Fairclough (1992; 1995) provides the most thoroughgoing account of such a framework, which includes three levels:

- **texts** – linguistic and multisemiotic analysis attending to *ideational* (constitution of systems of knowledge), *interpersonal* (constitution of social identities and social relations), and *textual* elements
- **discourse practice** – analysis of text production and consumption, from the narrowest sense (a single reader’s decoding) to a broader sense (the editorial routines in place at DIVA). At the border between analysis of text and discourse practice is the analysis of *intertextuality*, “which locates the text in relation to social repertoires of discourses” (Fairclough 1995: 61)
- **sociocultural practice** – a further layer of contextualising analysis concerned with economic, political and cultural aspects of the social.

Fairclough’s framework, which I make use of in this study, is considered in greater detail in Chapter Three. My purpose in outlining it here is to suggest that the strength of this approach is its ability to “combine social relevance with textual specificity” (Fairclough 1992: 100). Analysis at all three levels involves abductive manoeuvring between theory and data, helping the researcher to avoid “fitting the data to illustrate the theory” (Wodak 2006: 6). Context (at discourse and sociocultural level) is embedded in the hermeneutic process so that readings are generated not by analysing a single element of a communicative event, but by the interaction of interpretations and understandings of each with the other.

It should also be noted that, though Fairclough focuses especially on language, analysis at the textual level is increasingly multimodal (see Chapter Three). The development of critical linguistics (CL) in the 1970s (see Fowler *et al.* 1979; Kress and Hodge 1979), was particularly influential in the development of CDA (van Dijk 2003), and the increasing focus on visual features of texts by critical linguists-turned-social semioticians (see Hodge and Kress 1988; Kress and van Leeuwen 1990, 2001, 1996/2006) equally so. These authors and others recognise that the same meanings can be expressed by different semiotic elements.
(Matthiessen 2007), and that connotative meaning in particular can be established visually in ways difficult or impossible to achieve verbally (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001). Further, O’Halloran (2004) highlights the potential in multimodal analysis for considering the integrated meaning potential of linguistic, typographical and visual features of a single text. This communion is central to Machin (2007), who explicates Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2001) mapping of linguistic metafunctions onto more visual semiotic modes – *visual grammar* – before applying it to a number of media texts. Machin and Niblock (2008) further suggest that knowing how to exploit visual meaning potential is increasingly important in a commercialised media world.

2.2.2 Media discourse, and social identities

The perceived pertinence of media texts is not restricted to the field of CDA; during the course of the 20th century, various notions of power, influence and effect have dominated media research. An expediently oversimplified tour takes us from early transmission models, through more optimistic, pragmatic approaches; to Marxist theories of hegemonic ideological reinforcement, active audiences and contemporary notions of media within, structuring and structured by political and social economies. What has remained constant, however, is the conviction that:

[The media] increasingly play a central role in shaping our ways of living, our cultures and our societies. Besides helping us to negotiate meaning of what is going on in the world, they are important agents of socialisation. They help us to learn about the values, beliefs and norms of our societies as well as assist us to develop our own sense of identity

(Williams 2003: 6).

Taking the media to be in a “uniquely influential and formative position” (Fairclough 1995: 126, see also Talbot, Atkinson and Atkinson 2003), and taking discourse to be socially constituted and constitutive, a number of factors emerge as being central to the critical study of media discourse. These pertain both to the production and consumption of media texts as well as to the texts themselves. Though much has been made of recent internet technology such as blogging, and the supposed ‘democratisation of media’ (see Knobel 2005), there remains an imbalance of power in terms of those who have access most regularly and most effectively to the production of media messages. Questions must be asked,
therefore, with regard to their aims and priorities in doing so. Furthermore, in a capitalist society, we must consider what commercial pressures are exerted upon media producers, by whom and with what potential effect. Looking to the text, we must ask who is being represented (and who is not), how they are being represented and in what relation to others, for it is here, among other sites, that people’s sense of themselves and the world around them is produced (Pickering 2001; Matheson 2005). Mass media representation can only ever be partial and selective, versions of selves in particular relationships and with particular sets of values (Faireclough 1995; Williams 2003). Media texts are, then, a site of struggle that renders them “ideological in principle” (Koselzi 2008: 227). The ways in which they are deciphered and consumed by audiences will vary according to macro- and micro-contexts and across and within individual subjects, but the salience of media discourse in “shaping social consciousness” (Murdock 1982: 118) remains.

Given the prominence of concerns over power relations, critical analysis of media discourse has frequently focused on the representation of minority ethnic groups in mainstream print media. This is usually assumed to (re)produce prevalent racist attitudes in particular societies at particular times – see van Dijk’s (1991) seminal study of reporting on immigration and immigrants in Britain and Holland, in addition to a number of subsequent studies2. Among other things, such studies are suggestive of the pertinence of CDA to the exploration of social identities. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999: 83) note, “struggles over the construction of identities are a salient feature of late modern social life” (see also Jedema and Caldas-Coulthard 2008). For Weedon (1987: 21), “language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested”. Cultural texts such as those produced by the media are especially salient in this regard; Thompson (1990: 100) suggests they are most influential in maintaining the status quo, “since the very process of consuming the products of the culture industry induces individuals to identify with prevailing social norms”. I would suggest that subcultural texts such as DIVA contest prevailing social norms at the same time as producing sets of ingroup norms in their (re)production of a specifically ‘lesbian’ social reality and identities.

Wodak et al. (1999) developed their particular CDA approach in considering the construction of (Austrian) national identity and the interplay of
this discursive process with socio-political change. Their analysis includes several genres, ranging from public (commemorative speeches, media discourse and poster campaigns), through semi-public (focus group discussions), to semi-private discourse (interview transcripts). Summarising this work, de Cillia et al. (1999: 170) stress the import of:

including data from everyday life and experience; to complement the study of elite discourse with ethnographic research, in order to grasp the tensions and interdiscursive relationships within and between official, semi-official and quasi-private discourse as well as between discursive and other forms of social practice.

Alameda Hernández (2008) and Li (2009) fail to exploit quite such a range of data in their studies of media constructions of Gibraltarian and Chinese national identities respectively, but are careful to place their textual analysis in the context of contemporary socio-political change (Hernández) and global intertextuality (Li). Similarly, though in a rather different context, Taylor and Sunderland (2002) remark on the fruitfulness of CDA, and the particular contribution of intertextual analysis, to their exploration of the construction of masculinity in men’s magazine Maxim (magazine research is discussed at greater length below). More recently, Ainsworth and Hardy (2007) have adopted a CDA approach to studying the construction of older worker identity along gendered lines, and the relationship of such constructions to material conditions. Ainsworth (2004) in particular advocates the application of CDA to questions of social identity, as does Koller (2008a: 191):

[CDA] enables the researcher to uncover the formation and negotiation of (collective) identity as it emerges through textual interaction in context.

This thesis is intended to further contribute to the rich field of CDA and the insights into discourse and identity, media and culture that it has produced. As demonstrated, CDA has been insightful in the consideration of identity construction (Ainsworth 2004) and the articulation of ‘otherness’ in talk (Wodak et al 1990; 1999) and mass media (van Dijk 1991; Richardson 2004). CDA studies that consider these questions with reference to discourse produced by ‘the other’, however, are harder to come by – though there are some exceptions, the most notable in this instance being Koller’s (2008a) book-length study of lesbian discourses, discussed below. As Sutton (1999: 164-165) observes, “mainstream
media … [tell] us much about how we are supposed to sound rather than how we actually do sound”. Moshin (2007) focuses his critical attentions on Heeb, an irreverent US Jewish magazine, in order to get at in-group representations of Jewishness. His analysis is rather too closely focused on the text, on which he also relies for his consideration of readers’ attitudes, and his knowledge of production processes at Heeb seems to rely on guesswork rather than ethnographic data. However, his key finding – that Heeb (re)uses and thus reifies negative cultural stereotypes about Jews – is extremely interesting and suggests, like Sutton, in-group media as an excellent site for critical discourse analysis.

2.2.3 Media subcultures

In the last 20 years, traditional conceptualisations of subcultures have been criticised by feminists (McRobbie 1994), by post-structuralists (see Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004) and by queer theorists (Halberstam 2003). Halberstam eloquently highlights the particular problems with traditional definitions for research into queer girl subcultures, though her new definition remains problematic in terms of my project, since it rests on face-to-face, embodied social interaction. A number of scholars have, however, insisted on the importance of media texts to subcultural groups. Borrowing from Bourdieu (1986), Thornton (1995: 203) claims that subcultures rest on “subcultural capital” – knowledge, language, styles and practices, the display of which produce (or reject) membership. In her view, media circulation of subcultural capital is fundamental:

Within the economy of subcultural capital the media is not simply another symbolic good or marker of distinction… but a network crucial to the definition and distribution of cultural knowledge.

Sender’s (2003: 91) analysis of gay magazines (see Section 2.4) prompts her to conclude that “shared subcultural capital helps to constitute the ‘us’… in order that we know who we are”. For Stahl (1999), the potency of media agency disrupts the local spatiality of traditional notions of subcultures, which can instead be rethought as virtual or imagined communities. Anderson’s (1991) description of ‘imagined community’ was based in a discussion of national culture, but the concept has been reworked and applied to smaller groups whose geographical dispersion and commitment to some concept of comradeship take on similar dimensions – Koller (2008a), for example, suggests that the lesbian community is
imagined in the way Anderson (1991) describes. Precisely because the community, beyond the day-to-day experience of any individual, is *imagined*, agents such as media:

act as gatekeepers, cultural custodians and intermediaries who can oversee, evaluate, sanction, or consecrate, and thereby legitimise, certain cultural forms and practices… they actualise discourses, such as those attached to notions of authenticity, constructing an (ideological) opposition between mainstream and margin that remains integral to the distinctions that differentiate individuals and their social groups from others (Stahl 1999: 22).

Some approaches to subculture have made empirical use of discursive theories: Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) recognise the role of language (specifically, interaction in talk) in subcultures; and Fine (1995: 128) defines social movements as a “bundle of narratives”, the telling of which produces cohesive links between members. I have found limited empirical work (e.g. Livia 2002) that investigates lesbian media as a principle site for imagining the community, despite Taylor and Whittier’s (1995: 183) suggestion that such texts are a “fertile context” for the elaboration of group discourses. Though I do not claim that *DIVA* speaks for and to all lesbians, I believe it is a powerful site for the imagining of a subcultural lesbian collectivity that extends beyond its readers; the fact that it quickly became a text to which mainstream media turned for ‘lesbian’ views and images\(^3\) supports this. Barker and Galasiński (2001) have called for CDA and cultural studies to recognise their similar interests and combine to produce more grounded research. I intend, therefore, that this research will contribute to the engagement with discourse in (post-)subcultural literature.

### 2.3 Language, gender and sexuality

> *While language can be used to communicate sexual and gender identities, it also provides the means through which our understandings about sexuality and gender are formed*  
> Baker 2008a: 15

*DIVA* is produced for (and by) a particular *gendered* and *(homo)*sexualised group. My project is driven not by a focus on gender, but on the production of a social, sexual, identity. It is difficult, however – and perhaps counterproductive – to tease apart language research concerned with gender, and sexuality, since the
two are implicated in and produced by one another. Below I outline the development of approaches to language, gender and sexuality, by reference to a number of seminal studies, before discussing research of particular significance to this thesis.

2.3.1 Difference and dominance

Early (feminist) sociolinguistic studies of language and gender fall into two camps: those concerned with gender differences in language use (what Sunderland and Litosseliti (2002: 3) call a parole approach), and those that assumed language systems themselves to be biased in favour of men (a corresponding langue approach exemplified by Spender’s (1980) study of the lexico-grammatical subjugation and degradation of women). Lakoff’s (1975) foundational work drew the two together, highlighting the androcentrism of language and women’s use of language according to maxims that marked them as non- (i.e. less than) male and gave men the floor.

Increasingly, attention focused specifically on language use; feminist scholars continued to be concerned with dominance and the ways in which men enforced gender hierarchically (see, for example, West and Zimmerman 1983 and 1975, who locate male conversational dominance in, among other things, frequent interruptions). O’Barr and Atkins (1980) disputed the relationship between gender and conversational difference, asserting instead the significance of power relations. In their formulation, what had been characterised as ‘women’s language’ was better described as ‘powerless language’. Alongside these developments, other scholars began to configure gender differences as cultural differences (Maltz and Borker 1982), produced by separate and different early childhood socialisation (Tannen 1994) and resulting in men and women having different conversational goals (Coates 1986).

The brevity with which I outline almost two decades of work here is necessary both due to the limited space available and to the subsequent evaluation of these approaches as problematic and flawed. Though several (particularly Lakoff 1975, republished with updated commentaries in 2004) remain influential, these studies have been criticised for their tendency to treat men and women as global, homogeneous group categories (Cameron 1998) and for focusing on cross-rather than intra-gender difference (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002). Increasingly reflexive scholars proposed that in their quest to discover gender differences, early
feminist sociolinguists produced precisely the answers they were looking for (Stokoe and Weatherall 2002; Bing and Bergvall, 1996).

As the field of language and sexuality research has evolved over the past decade or so, these approaches have been further criticised for their almost universal assumption of heterosexuality (Bucholtz & Hall 2004; Livia and Hall 1997). Early sexuality research was similarly flawed, however: besides largely failing to consider gender, these studies too approached homosexuals as a homogeneous group with its own language. This is reflected in a number of studies of ‘gay lexicon’ from the mid-20th century onwards (see Cory and LeRoy 1963; Farrell 1972; Rodgers 1972). Few of these studies took as their object lesbian speech, though Giallombardo’s (1966) examination of female inmates’ vocabulary includes some lesbian terms. Ashley (1982) also attempts to collate a kind of lesbian lexicon, producing a meandering list of anatomical references and descriptions of sex acts, the sources of which are as dubious as the claim that they constitute ‘dyke diction’.

From here, scholars moved on, just as gender researchers had done, to focus on language use, in particular on conversation. Many of these studies assessed the notions worked up by difference/dominance scholars in relation to gay speakers, concluding that both gay men (Leap 1996) and lesbians (Day and Morse 1981) converse cooperatively and do not reproduce the hierarchy attributed to heterosexual, cross-gender talk (importantly, however, few studies assessed cross-gender talk between lesbians and gay men). Several studies also attempted, largely unsuccessfully, to define ‘gay speech’ according to phonological (see Gaudio 1994; Moonwomon 1985) or grammatical (Lumby 1976) variation. Just like scholars of language and gender, those working on gay conversation and variation assumed that ‘gay language’ could be located in quantifiable features (Baker 2008), and sought to identify a gay dialect (Cameron and Kulick 2006) – ignoring Darsey’s (1981) assertion that gay people doing X does not make X ‘gay’.

2.3.2 The turn to discourse: social constructionism and performativity

Models considering linguistic practices to be produced by, or at least a reflection of, the gender and/or sexuality of speakers were, of course, products of their time: essentialist notions of gender and sexuality were prevalent at lay and academic level (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002; Baker 2008). As the 1980s
progressed, and particularly in the 1990s, the field shifted towards more (poststructuralist) constructionist approaches, and the understanding that “few features of language directly and exclusively index gender” (Ochs 1992: 340).

Feminist theorists Fuss (1989) and Butler (1990) were influential in producing accounts of gender that subverted and deconstructed essential notions of masculine and feminine substances tied to sexed bodies - Butler’s notion of performativity was particularly influential, maintaining that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; … identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results” (1990: 25). In so doing, Butler effectively emptied the categories ‘male’ and ‘female’ and suggested instead that repeated constitutive acts (re)produce hegemonic gender and sexual norms. She aimed to show up the ‘fiction’ of essential identity: in short, her argument was that gender is something that one does, rather than something one has. In this formulation, feminist accounts of language and gender were unravelled: language is not a means of communicating some pre-existing facet of the self but precisely the means of accomplishing the self (Hall 1990; Bucholtz and Hall 2004).

Though it remains the cornerstone of queer thinking with regard to identity, Butler’s approach has by no means been met by universal acceptance, and continues to be the subject of debate in feminist circles (cf. Hekman 2000). Interpreting it in its strictest form, Gross (2005) has described Butler’s account as utopian, reflecting a sense among a number of researchers that it fails sufficiently to acknowledge (global) context and iniquitous structures, and implies free agency on the part of individuals (Cameron 2005; Wodak 1997). For others, the idealism of Butler’s abstract notions is at odds with the continued desire for, and political usefulness of, (at least quasi-)essentialist accounts of gender and sexual identity ‘in the real world’ (Fraser 2008; Bucholtz & Hall 2004; Cameron 1998; Esterberg 1997). These concerns are particularly salient when considering collective identity. As Whisman (1993: 60) states: “If we deconstruct before they deconstruct, we end up in a situation where… equality is defined as blindness to real difference”. It should be noted that Butler has, on a number of occasions, attempted to clarify her position, especially with regard to agency (1999), but scholars still struggle to get to grips with the “buttery dictionary of the postmodern” (Hallett 1999: 8). Many take a middle ground, offering a mitigated endorsement of Butler from within sociocultural linguistic approaches. I concur
with Koller (2008a: 191), who suggests that Butler’s approach is “perhaps too close to a discourse idealism that disregards material practices,” but agrees that, “it is still true that the image of a community, however conceptualised, is clearly constructed, reiterated and challenged in discourse”.

Despite its tempered reception, Butler’s thesis has been influential, with most scholars adopting a constructionist approach to discourse (as opposed to language), and its role in (re)producing gender and sexual identities, which are therefore never definitively accomplished or independent of representation (Hall 1990). Questions such as ‘How do we speak?’ have been largely discarded in favour of: ‘Who do we say we are?’, ‘How do we talk about others?’, and ‘What behaviours do we suggest are ours, or right, or wrong?’ (see de Fina 2006). “Who we are is constantly being shaped by the taken-for-granted concepts and assumptions embedded in discourses, and vice versa,” (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002: 23). In this view, cultural ‘texts’ – discourses⁹ - produce and circulate scripts and resources for constructing identities that may be by turn enabling and constraining (Shotter and Gergen 1989: ix, see also Vance 1999, and Meinhof and Galasiński 2005).

2.3.3 Looking locally: context and communities of practice

Recognising these conditions and the important dialectical relationship between context and discourse, gender scholars have increasingly opted to ‘look locally’; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) set out a framework based on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of communities of practice (CoP). This approach is grounded in the discourse of specific groups of people who:

- come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 64).

Gendered or homo-/hetero-sexualised groups remain the object of study, but a CoP approach recognises that gender and sexual identities are “transgressed already” by other social identities and spaces (Fuss 1989: 28), and must be considered in relation to the interactions and practices shared by and between members of the CoP. Language is crucial to this set of practices, especially for constructing and giving meaning to a sense of social identity (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1995; Bucholtz and Hall 2006; Vance 1999). Bucholtz and Hall
(2004) set out an insightful addition to the CoP framework by outlining the means by which identity is locally produced by and through language use. They describe three pairs of “tactics of intersubjectivity” (adequation and distinction; authentication and denaturalisation; authorisation and illegitimation\(^{10}\)) that can be seen as researchers’ tools in analysing and demonstrating how speakers establish contextually sufficient identity (dis)alignments. Bucholtz and Hall (2004: 476) strongly advocate a discursive identity approach to sexuality that pays attention to “diverse ethnographic contexts”, not simply to address difference between those contexts, but in order to “examine understudied groups on their own terms”. This has been taken up most notably in recent empirical collections edited by Sauntson and Kyratzis (2007) and Morrish and Sauntson (2007). Both support a move away from the search for unique ‘gay language’, and focus instead on situated and localised discursive research.

De Fina (2006, 2010) is sceptical about CoP approaches for critical research, suggesting that they focus too closely on interaction and fail to consider wider social constraints and frames\(^ {11}\). I agree that a CoP approach can be (and often is) restricted in these ways, but believe nonetheless in its salience in my research. Using Hoagland’s (1988: 9) definition of lesbian community as “a ground of lesbian be-ing, a ground of possibility, a context in which we perceive each other essentially as lesbians, a context in which we create lesbian meaning”, I position DIVA as a hub of a CoP of readers and writers, and consider the context (and interactions) of the CoP to be vital to its (re)production of lesbian identity. I also, in line with de Fina’s comments, consider the extended sociocultural context in which the CoP is situated to be integral to that process of meaning-making.

Bucholtz (2003) sets out an excellent overview of key discourse analytic approaches to gender, and a number of edited collections provide empirical support for these approaches, in particular papers in: Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002); McIlvenny (2002); Bucholtz, Liang and Sutton (1999) Bergvall, Bing and Freed (1996); and Hall and Bucholtz (1995). I will not dwell on these here, however, in order to preserve space for discussion of similar approaches to meaning-making with regards to sexuality\(^ {12}\), which divide broadly into two camps: those using interview data, and those using (written or spoken) texts.

Generally speaking, the former predate the latter given the more recent emphasis on analysing ‘real’ language use rather than accounts of meaning, but several interview studies recognise the accounts they procure as constructed and
analyse them accordingly. Kitzinger’s (1987, 1989) work on the social construction of lesbianism was intended as a radical intervention in psychological approaches to homosexuality, but her exploration of the circulation of hegemonic discourses in women’s accounts of their lesbian identity has been influential in several fields – Eliason and Morgan’s (1998) study of lesbian identity owes a particular debt to Kitzinger and contributes too to our understanding of lesbian meaning-making, if only at the individual level (see also Jenness 1992). Maher and Pusch (1995) ask women to describe (construct) their experience as lesbians, drawing out themes that co-occur across participants. Their study is interesting not just for highlighting how lesbians’ talk rubs up against and exposes the boundaries of dominant discourse(s), but also for showing how women work to redefine the lesbian label beyond deviance and towards culture.

Also adopting a social constructionist approach, Esterberg’s (1997) book-length study surveys and interviews 120 lesbian and bisexual women, examining the stories they “tell about who they are, how they came to see themselves as lesbian or bisexual, and what those identities mean to them” (p. 5). Though these interviews are clearly personal in nature, Esterberg draws out lines of difference or similarity among interviewees and is careful to relate their accounts – and the changes that show up in them when re-interviewed several years later – to local and global social contexts such as affiliation to the local community and the feminist movement. Esterberg’s discussion of the way the women talk about ‘community’ is particularly relevant to my project, and the constructions she identifies share some important similarities to those identified here (see Chapter Eight).

Most commonly, however, those studies concerned with ‘natural’ data have enabled me to delineate my position in the field. Morrish and Leap (2007), Moonwomon (1995) and Morgan and Wood (1995) all adopt a CoP stance and consider intra-group conversation as a means of working up (lesbian) identity. All three find that expressions of shared identity, of belonging, typically depend upon the assumption by speakers of knowledge or experience particularly relevant to that identity. The interactional success of these assumptions (i.e. their take-up or reception) constructs membership of the same category for fellow interlocutors. Morgan and Wood (ibid.: 237) characterise this as a collusion of “suspended differences”. Rightly, none of these studies concludes that these features of interaction are uniquely lesbian. However, neither do they delve into the precise
kinds of knowledge and experience that produce lesbian identity and discuss what kind of lesbian identity is therefore being constructed, beyond a sense of its sharedness.

Queen (2005) gets closer to doing so in her exploration of joking and teasing within two different lesbian friendship networks. Gathering data as a participant observer, Queen is interested in the interactional success or failure of jokes, and in the “power of humour to encode, engender and entextualise social categorisation” (p. 242). She shows how many jokes employ stereotypes about lesbians that are either unfamiliar to non-lesbians (or have altered ‘lesbian’ meanings), or parody mainstream tropes to tease heterosexual members. These moves continually (re)negotiate the substance of those stereotypes/tropes and position members in relation to them with a kind of temporary evaluation (though without necessarily threatening their membership). Abe (2004) adopts a similar approach to lesbian bar talk in Japan, focusing on interactional linguistic behaviour as well as the discursive construction of social categories, though she does spend more time on the former. More recently Jones (2009), too, has analysed the negotiation of stereotypes in a (UK) lesbian walking group, and their part in the discursive production of notions of authenticity. All of these studies adopt a CoP approach in which meaning-making is central (Walters and Barrett 1994, see also Queen 1997). They show up the most salient images of ‘us’ circulated among lesbian CoPs (which share some interesting cross-CoP – cross-national – similarities), and the ways in which they are discursively handled by participants.

A number of studies have located identity production at boundary disputes; Murphy (1997) tackles the exclusionary side of identity production by combining the results of questionnaire and corpus analysis relating to the GayNet Digest. Although she acknowledges that the data allows her access to people’s perceptions of the use of category labels as much as to their actual use, the unsolicited corpus data provides her with a number of interesting insights into the discursive exclusion of bisexuals, even from terms that ostensibly include them. Lesbian and gay participants tend to use ‘queer’ synonymously with ‘lesbian and gay’, and their ongoing success in (re)producing that meaning suggests that bisexuals lack “sufficient social power” (p. 52) to effect lexico-semantic change.

Gamson’s (1996) essay is concerned primarily with theorising the disruptive nature of ‘queer’ for gay identity politics, suggesting that not only
queer but bisexual and transgender bodies upset gay and lesbian identities by asking questions of their content and thus their ongoing validity. By illustrating this ‘trouble’ with reference to disputes in and between letters to the editor of San Francisco’s *Bay Times*, Gamson not only highlights the substance of the arguments but their construction and presentation for a specific audience, and the reception of those arguments by that audience. Similarly, Jacobs (1998) refers to example texts from Toronto’s lesbian and gay newspaper in discussing local arguments over queer terminology and what appears to be at stake for lesbian and gay people in its use. Their analyses, though broadly thematic rather than linguistic-discursive, successfully demonstrate the importance of ‘in-group’ texts with regards to collective identity construction and struggle.

More often than in research on conversational interaction, these studies acknowledge and consider contestations of meaning, which are just as salient in the production of identity as those constructions upon which there appears to be consensus. They also recognise that the impact of such texts is likely to be (positively or negatively) affected by their institutional ‘authority’ (Bucholtz and Hall 2004). Discursive influence is not evenly distributed; helping to create meaning within a CoP relies upon “being at the table at which ‘what is right’ is continually negotiated” (Eckert and Wenger 2005: 583). This is reflected in the work of several scholars, who have approached language and lesbian identity by analysing more or less prominent ‘in-group’ texts. Shaw (2009) identifies lesbian comics as primary locations for the representation and (re)definition of lesbian meaning. Looking at the work of four prominent lesbian comic artists, Shaw looks at how they draw on and help to produce notions of identity and community that are fluid and diverse yet underpinned by an immutable desire for community. She suggests that such narratives contribute to readers’ sense of what it means to be a lesbian as well as creating an imagined community of readers whose point of contact – “mutual endeavour”, as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992: 64) call it – is their reading of the comic.

Livia (2002) similarly positions French lesbian magazine *Lesbia* as a point of contact in her investigation of meaning-making. Having identified, via interview, personal advertisements as central to readers’ patterns of consumption, she combines discourse analysis and editor interviews to pick out the tussles between readers and writers over evaluative terms that serve to define (and therefore include and, more frequently, exclude people from) the community. She
focuses on how readers define their desired other to work up implicitly outlawed qualities (ethnicity, class, bisexuality and, Livia’s focus, masculinity\(^{17}\)), and how the magazine manages this process. Her findings are extremely interesting and persuasive of the potential of such research; though I do not replicate exactly her study (DIVA’s personal ads are not managed in the same way editorially), my work on readers’ letters (Chapter Seven) suggests parallels between the two CoPs. Both this thesis and Livia’s (2002) research make fundamental contributions to the exploration of lesbian boundary management.

Two further studies focus on rather different ‘in-group’ texts, and both take an explicitly critical approach. Starting from the sound assumption that more than a single lesbian identity exists, Chirrey (2007: 223) examines lesbian-authored British self-help literature and how writers “critique various versions of lesbian sexual identity and… replace them with others”. She suggests that these texts present nascent lesbians with cultural norms and values and sets of common experiences as constitutive (and constituted by) lesbian identity, and that they insist on the centrality of membership of a material or imagined community to healthy lesbian identity. Though her sample is restricted to three pamphlets\(^{18}\), two of which are produced, a decade apart, by the same organisation, the consistency of the form and content of messages between 1987 and 1997 remains noteworthy.

Koller (2008a) also assesses diachronic change in her recent critical exploration of lesbian-authored texts between the 1970s and the 2000s. Her interest is in the “discursive and cognitive repertoires” (p. 4) present in non-fictional US and British texts that set out to produce an image of, or define, lesbian community. She selects two texts from each decade, typically produced by activist organisations or editorial collectives, whose representations of lesbianism can be described as paradigmatic, and assesses the changes that take place over this time and why these changes might have occurred. Across her sample, Koller highlights a number of shifts: from the idea of lesbianism as the endpoint of personal development and a kind of safe-haven (yet which is under attack from heterosexual society); to a better differentiated sense of ‘us’ that entailed generational/class conflict; to more recent denials of community, which shift the focus of lesbian identity to personal social networks. All of these changes are related in Koller’s analysis to the altering social world.

I disagree with Koller’s view that only those texts that “are either explicitly programmatic or set one model of lesbian community and identity off...
against another”, “constitute valid data for the representation of community” (p. 23), an assertion that I hope my research will dispute. I also find her approach to analysis somewhat fragmented, producing a list of discourse features whose thematic relationships can only be explored so far. None of my criticisms detract, however, from the contribution Koller’s (2008a) study makes to our understanding of how non-dominant discourses (re)produce alternative realities (p. 19), which I intend my work to complement and stand next to.

2.4 Magazines as a particular site for gender, sexuality and community

*Magazines [exist as] a privileged and pleasurable cultural space within which the female subject is actively produced while simultaneously being described and entertained*

McRobbie (1996: 193)

As discussed earlier, media texts are especially salient in the discursive (re)construction of our sense of the world, and magazines are particularly prominent in this regard (Holmes 2007; Matheson 2005). Readers buy magazines, at least in part, in order to buy into the lifestyle on offer therein (Benwell 2003; Caldas-Coulthard 1996), their purchase signalling their allegiance to its recognised values (McKay 2006). As magazines have targeted smaller clusters of readers, their influence – as purveyors of expert knowledge (Matheson 2005) or a representative voice (Peterson 1964) – is potentially amplified. Below, the development of research into women’s magazines is discussed, before I turn to consider more recent scholarship addressing lesbian and gay print media.

Feminist critique of the media emerged alongside the women’s movement (Baehr and Gray 1996) and in response to a perceived ‘blind spot’ in media research, which demonstrated far greater concern for hierarchies of class than gender (Gill 2006). Feminist researchers were interested in, and motivated by, the absence of women from key roles in media products and media production, and the narrow and often negative nature of representations of women – what Tuchman (1978: 154) describes as their “symbolic annihilation”. Some of this early research, including Tuchman’s, has since been criticised for assuming that magazine messages were unthinkingly and directly absorbed by readers. Further, Tuchman and similarly influential feminist scholar Friedan (1963), were later criticised for their assumption that media images were not ‘real’, and worked to
undermine women’s ‘true’ femininity in order to keep them confined to the role assigned them by heteropatriarchy and from feminist enlightenment.

Into the 1980s, feminist researchers conceived of women’s magazines as less manipulative, and saw them instead as sites for ideological contest and negotiation (Gough-Yates 2003). Hebron (1983) led the way with her study of Woman’s Own and Jackie, while Winship’s (1987) influential book set out the relationship between changes to the content of British women’s magazines and the changing position of women in the second half of the 20th century. Her findings were critical to contemporary understandings of the ideological work of women’s magazines, suggesting that older narratives of feminine submission survived as alternative narratives were present yet constantly undermined. Ferguson (1983) too found that between the 1950s and 1980s, women’s magazines came to encompass a broader set of values, but that their apparent fondness for domestic themes served only to produce tension between ‘the good wife and mother’ ideal and the newer ‘independent woman’. Her express concern in the study was the apparent need to guide women in achieving womanhood, while men appeared to require no such instruction; the form and content of that tutelage (and more recently, of men too) has remained at the heart of the field.

Oullette (1999) considers 10 years of Cosmopolitan magazine under editor Helen Gurley Brown (1965-1975), focusing on what she calls the “gendered success myth” (p. 377), according to which women are encouraged to attain economic capital by using their sexuality to obtain marriage. Women’s mobility is premised on their performance for men, inhibiting identification with other women and providing no challenge to the dominant gender hierarchy. Machin and Thornborrow (2003) subject 44 international editions of Cosmopolitan to multimodal discourse analysis almost 40 years later and find that the same global discourse of sex-as-power operates across localised editions – and also find it across editions of Glamour and Vietnamese magazine Gioi Phu Nu (2006). Using low modality imagery, the magazines create a fantasy space in which women’s agency is bound up with sex and consumption; real power in real world settings is implied at the same time as it is undermined by a focus on sexuality and its signification. Durham (1996) analyses articles on the topic of sex and desire, identifying conflict between notions of self determination and submission to male desire, concluding that there remains a single dominant message presuming heterosexuality and a marriage-as-goal mindset. Similarly, Tyler (2004) finds that
lifestyle magazines frequently produce sex as something to be managed and improved for the benefit of self and other.

The schooling of sexuality has been particularly central in research on teen girls’ magazines; McRobbie (1982) opened the field with a critical analysis that suggested Jackie routinely constructed romance, fashion, beauty and pop stars as the most prominent girls’ concerns – the beginnings of the same ‘look good and get a man’ discourses identified above. Peirce (1990, extended by Schlenker et al. 1998) showed that from the 1960s to the 1980s, 60% of editorial copy in Seventeen magazine focused on domestic, woman-as-housewife topics such as beauty, fashion, cooking and decorating. Ostermann and Keller-Cohen’s (1998) critical work on quizzes in teenage girls’ magazines identifies conflict between the overt ‘be yourself’ message and the more implicit promotion of normative behaviour as ‘healthy’. The quizzes work, they suggest, as disciplinary instruments by producing ‘good’ and ‘bad’ girls.

Jackson (2005) suggests that problem pages also function to regulate adolescent femininity. She found that explicit discussions of sex in Australian magazine Girlfriend revolved around four dominant themes: pain, danger, safety and technique, with female pleasure notably absent. McLoughlin’s (2004) thesis finds almost identical themes in British teen sex specials. Taking a critical approach, she devotes attention to groups of ‘actual readers’, and suggests, importantly, that they read with an awareness of production processes and marginalised identities that might mitigate the impact of the discourses identified above. Frazer (1987), however, finds that though schoolgirls are able to read magazines critically and reflexively, when asked to discuss the same issues themselves they do so in precisely the discourse registers used by magazines.

Several researchers have asserted the importance of including readers in the analysis of magazines, though Ballaster et al (1991) still put aside their readers’ critical readings to highlight the remarkably consistent, yet contradictory and negative, messages that curtail female sexuality and citizenship. Similarly McCracken (1993) describes her readers as active and aware of the fantasy involved in consuming magazine imagery. She too, however, concludes that the dominant messages in US women’s magazines are so negative, stereotyped and consumerised that their function as an “authoritative grand narrative of reality” (p. 2) remains cause for concern. Hermes (1997) takes a significantly different stance by strongly advocating reader ethnography. For Hermes (following Radway
1984), meaning lies not in the texts but in readers, and finding that women describe magazines as casual ways of filling time, she suggests that magazine ideologies are effectively meaningless. I would suggest that it is not straightforward to assume that casual consumption negates entirely the persuasive potential of magazines – as Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks (1997) find in relation to readers of men’s magazines, their *professed* lack of investment is at times undermined by their *actions*, such as keeping every issue stored. Hermes’ deduction that because readers are unable to discuss their interpretations in interviews, no meaningful reading takes place, is also problematic.

Of course I accept entirely the notion that context is significant but, like Milkie (2002), I do not believe that individual critical readings translate into resistance and the necessary abandonment of textual interpretation. Milkie’s (*ibid.*) study of adolescent magazines demonstrates that resistant readings are often unsuccessful in changing dominant accounts. Milkie asks editors how they handle girls’ criticisms of magazine imagery. She reports that editors express sympathy with the girls and blame institutional constraints for their inability to alter images accordingly, yet also insist that the girls do not really want the changes they ask for (implicitly equating ‘real’ with fat and ugly), and are failing to read the magazine as it should be read: a fantasy. Her study is notable for successfully knitting together text and discourse practice in terms of both production and consumption. In these terms, Korinek’s (2000) work on Canadian magazine *Chatelaine* is hugely successful and admirable in scope. She combines the views of editors and readers with her own readings to provide a detailed history of the magazine, its readers and their journey through the 1950s and 1960s amid significant social change.

The recent proliferation of magazine research concerned with masculinity – best exemplified by Benwell’s (2003) edited collection and Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks’ (2001) volume – is a reflection of the insightful analysis of the (re)construction of gendered and sexual identities that research into women’s magazines has produced. Analyses of gay and lesbian magazines, however, have not emerged at the same prolific rate. The abundance of work on women’s and girls’ magazines in the 1990s did produce some work that considered homosexuality in that context: Gough and Talbot (1996) show how advice columns routinely assure readers that homosexual activity is ‘normal’, but only within an ultimately heterosexual trajectory. Rand (1994; see also Gadsden...
2002) also points to the ways in which *Cosmopolitan*’s representation of lesbians – “noteworthy non-*Cosmo* girls” (p. 125) – allows them to exist only partially. Lesbians are no longer invisible but, circumscribed entirely by heterosexual contexts and erased as a genuine option for 98% of readers, they are contained in a glass-doored closet. There is a dearth of work on lesbian representation in mainstream magazines and Rand (an art historian) does not focus entirely upon it, but there is dialogue between her findings and my discussion of the presence of bisexuals in *DIVA* (see Chapter Seven).

Those studies that have focused specifically on gay and lesbian magazines have often centred on effects. For example, Saucier and Caron (2008) and Morton and Duck (2000) both approach gay men’s magazines as possible sites of influence on body image and safe sex practices respectively; Smith, Offen and Malone (2006) assume that advertising in gay magazines may play a part in high smoking rates. Milillo (2008) considers differences between how advertisements in (American) mainstream women’s and lesbian magazines ‘do gender’. I generally advocate research into lesbian texts in their own right, but Milillo’s comparative work is useful in confirming that significant differences exist between these genres, and outlining the nature of those differences. Her conclusion that lesbian advertising better subverts hegemonic gender stereotypes and promotes community and connectedness (2008: 391) rather than individualist consumerism should, I believe, provide a starting point for future research on lesbian magazines. Especially since Koller’s (2008b) comparison of business and lesbian magazines also finds that the latter construct female executives not as exceptional individuals but as “supported by, and accountable to, their community” (p. 223).

Sender (2003), however, provides insight into the differences among gay media in discussions with publishers and editors about the lack of sexual adverts in (generally mixed or male) gay magazines. Editors spoke of the need to sanitise their magazines in order to attract – and keep – national advertisers, and the influence of stereotypes of gay men as hypersexualised and paedophilic on their decision-making. As I discuss in Chapter Four, Sender’s (*ibid.*) findings contrast with my own to suggest that gay male and lesbian publishers operate within overlapping but different pressures and obligations.

Driver’s (2007) analysis of a small sample of articles from *DIVA* and three US lesbian magazines in relation to youth consumption also offers a contrasting
reading: she claims the magazines provide a homogenised, white, thin, young femme lesbian image that I did not find in my sample (see Chapter Five). This may be down to the minimal overlap between our samples, Driver’s focus on advertising, or the transatlantic scope of her study. She makes insufficient provision for the differences between the US and British contexts, generalising her comments to apply to magazines in both, and often juxtaposing her reading of DIVA with comments from American girls who are unlikely to be discussing the same images. Her study is important, however, for its inclusion of girls’ descriptions of their needs and desires with regards to a lesbian magazine; they speak of lesbian magazines as a source of bona fide lesbian culture and information. Lewis (1997) also includes images from DIVA in discussing lesbian consumption of fashion imagery, and she too finds that readers approach lesbian texts with expectations of realism and a demand for positive iconography. The findings of both studies underscore the centrality of lesbian magazines, and specifically DIVA, in the process of lesbian meaning-making. My research contributes to a fuller understanding of the magazine itself, the kinds of identities, positions and topics produced, and the dialogue between magazine and context.

Nothing of this kind has been undertaken in relation to a British gay or lesbian magazine, though several larger-scale studies of single, US magazines have been produced in the last 20 years. Esterberg (1990) looks at the first 10 years of The Ladder\(^{26}\), assessing changes in its handling of professional discourses on homosexuality that run alongside the development of the gay rights movement. Similarly, Cutler (2003) highlights The Ladder’s changing construction of ‘the lesbian’ in attempting to overcome gender and sexuality discrimination. Streitmatter (1993) uses interview data and some lexical analysis to outline the goals of US male publication The Advocate’s founder, Dick Michaels, and the newspaper’s role in gay liberation successes pre-Stonewall. Esterberg and Streitmatter were among the first scholars to highlight the importance of analysing in-group texts like gay/lesbian magazines to get at self-understanding.

So far, however, only Sender’s (2001, 2004) study approaches a single magazine – US male publication The Advocate – in depth and as the site of the production of a “dominant gay habitus” (p. 73). She analyses issues from its first 25 years (1967-1992). As discussed in her (2003) work on gay advertising, Sender identifies tension between national appeal and a queer sensibility, and finds that the magazine gradually shifts towards national appeal by constructing a readership
of affluent professional males. Content is desexualised and involvement in community politics is sidelined in the production of the saleable gay consumer. Sender’s study is thoroughgoing and insightful, and since her results contrast strongly with mine, I hope that my work can extend the scope of our knowledge of enduring lesbian and gay media products and their contribution to ‘the gay community’.

2.5 Concluding thoughts

In a narrative account of three of the earliest US gay and lesbian magazines, Streitmatter (1995: 443) states that they “created a medium of communication that allowed gay women and men all over the country to converse with each other, thereby helping to build a national lesbian and gay community”. This community may only be imagined, but it functions in similar ways nonetheless, helping to (re)construct images of self and other, produce normative experiences and ways of being, and to counter prevailing outside discourses.

Above and in Chapter One, I have detailed a number of studies that focus variously on communities, on language or discourse, on identities. The overlap between ethnographic, linguistic and discursive approaches is limited, particularly with regard to lesbians. Long-term, diachronic attention is more prevalent in ethnographic approaches, and is typically concerned with charting the influence of feminism, gay liberation or AIDS. Work on lesbian discourse is predominantly focused on face-to-face interaction within a limited time-frame. My study will help to expand the spotlight of research in both.

In addition, our understanding of the gay and lesbian publishing industry is nothing like as sophisticated as our knowledge of its mainstream counterpart. Holmes (2007) laments the lack of magazine scholarship that is interested in magazines themselves; for Johnson (2007), too many academics look to magazines to ask and answer the same questions time and again. My aim with this study is to produce a critical account of DIVA and its institutional, industrial and social contexts that might satisfy Holmes’ (2007) and my own desire to see closer attention to paid to magazines as artefacts worthy of study in their own right. I also intend that my analysis of the (re)construction of identity, if it does not ask different questions, at least looks to different magazines, and provides alternative answers.
Fairclough and Wodak (1997) provide a sound account of CDA’s theoretical origins (pp. 260-262). Wodak and Meyer (2009) provide a more up-to-date consideration of these ideas.

Santa Ana (2002) also addresses the problem of anti-immigration sentiment by looking at press reporting with reference to California’s Latino community; Teo (2000) studies the marginalisation of Vietnamese immigrants in Australia; Richardson (2004) examines the treatment of Islam and Muslims in the British media; P Pietikäinen (2003) considers the representation of Samis in Finnish news reporting; Erjavec (2001) examines the naturalisation of discrimination against the Roma in Slovenia, and Harding (2006) assesses coverage of Canada’s aboriginal population in the 19th and 20th centuries. All suggest that negative reporting has material political consequences. Machin and Mayr’s (2007; 2008) analysis of a regional British newspaper, printed in a city with an ethnic minority population that accounts for around 50% of residents, suggests that the ‘positive’ coverage they identify is a result of commercial imperatives – branding the city to attract business.

In interviews with Frances Williams, founding editor of DIVA, it emerged that she had been inundated with requests from newspapers and women’s magazines wanting to write about lesbians.

Cameron (2005) presents an insightful delineation of early feminist approaches.

Hayes (1978) lists a number besides.


Cameron (2005) takes issue with this interpretation, preferring to differentiate early and later approaches according to the intervention of postmodernism, rather than constructionism, which she suggests was also present in earlier feminist research.

Prosser (2006), however, questions the ease with which gender performativity has been absorbed into queer, particularly transgender, studies.

Like Fairclough (1995: 54), I consider discourse a social practice, but also make use of the more Foucauldian concept of discourse as a count noun, discourses, to refer to particular constructions of knowledge/forms of reality.

Discussed in greater detail in Bucholtz and Hall (2006).


The fields remain largely divided, and I have also opted not to focus on gender within this project - though it becomes notably relevant at points (see, in particular, Chapter Eight).

According to Sedgwick (1990: 32), gender approaches are too often designed with difference in mind, thereby losing their “analytic bite” in same-sex relations. I also suggest, in line with Baker (2008) that ‘deviant’ identities are most salient to self and others and require more prominent ‘management’. In this case, therefore, at least in the act of reading/producing the magazine, lesbian identity is likely to be foregrounded.

A US, mixed-sex online mailing list.

By ‘in-group texts’ I mean (primarily written) texts produced by and for self-identified lesbians.

Alison Bechdel, Diane DiMassa, Ariel Schrag and Justine Shaw. See Chapter Eight for more on DiMassa.

Lesbia, a monthly magazine similarly priced to DIVA, is also distributed nationally – a “cultural icon” (Livia 2002: 191).

Baker (2003) does something similar with regards to personal ads in Gay Times, though he focuses on the changing desirability and definition of masculinity rather than exclusion or community.

In this particular paper, Chirrey (2009) discusses online self-help texts.

Queen (2009) agrees with this evaluation, as has Koller in personal communication.


The Feminine Mystique, Friedan’s feminist critique of women’s position in US society has been credited with lighting the blue touch paper of the women’s movement there, despite its analytical flaws.

See, for example: Schneider et al. (2008); Attwood (2005); Stibbe (2004); Alexander (2003); Mackinnon (2003); Mikosza (2003); and Law and Labre (2002).


Wong and Zhang (2001) and Nguyet Emi and Spires (2001) both focus their attention solely on Taiwanese magazine G&L, considering linguistic style, and the management of gay identity within normative family expectations in Taiwan, respectively. Their exclusive focus on one text produces
a detailed and sympathetic reading that serves as an account of the magazine itself, as well as the
discourses operating therein.
25 The similarities between Milillo’s (2008) and Koller’s (2008b) findings and my own are evident
in Chapters Four, Five and Six particularly, and suggest some consistent differences from
mainstream magazines as well as similarities across lesbian publications.
26 The Ladder was produced by the Daughters of Bilitis, the first US lesbian activist organisation.
It ran from 1956 until 1972, being distributed via a subscription list.
3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I detail my data and the methods adopted, outlining some key philosophical aspects of their use and setting out the procedures used to produce the substance of chapters Four to Eight. In Section 3.2, immediately below, I outline the nature and acquisition of my data, and explain the size of the sample of magazines used with reference to its appropriateness to my project and research questions.

I utilise a mixed-method approach, drawing upon content analysis, critical discourse analysis and semi-structured interviewing to address a decade of DIVA. Section 3.3 outlines my rationale for doing so and examines some of the potential philosophical tensions. Section 3.4 critically discusses the purposes, requirements and assumptions of content analysis, following which I detail and reflect upon its application here.

Section 3.5 sets out the objectives and methods of critical discourse analysis (CDA), and I discuss the congeniality of approaching a non-mainstream media product in this way. I also outline the way the textual analysis of DIVA was conducted. In addition to my analysis of the magazine itself, I set out to provide an account of its production; Section 3.6 therefore addresses semi-structured interviewing. I consider the selection and procurement of appropriate interviewees, ethical considerations, and interview design and transcription. I close the chapter with a brief summary of my approach and its pertinence to my research aims.

3.2 The data

The research focused on 10 years of DIVA, beginning with the launch issue of May 1994 and ending with the 10th anniversary issue of April 2004. The magazine was bi-monthly until May 1998, when Issue 25 became the first monthly edition. DIVA was published monthly throughout the period from May 1998 and April 2004, producing a sample of 95 magazines for this research. The sample was then divided into chronological groups; eight consisting of 12 magazines and the last consisting of 11 magazines. To have organised the
population around calendar years would have produced significant skewing in the quantitative data, since there were half as many issues before May 1998. These groups, equivalent to a year’s monthly issues or two years’ bi-monthly issues, still allow for analysis of changes and trends across the decade.

**Table 3.1 Chronological magazine groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 - 12</td>
<td>April 1994 – February 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>49 – 60</td>
<td>June 2000 – May 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>61 – 72</td>
<td>June 2001 – May 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>73 – 84</td>
<td>June 2002 – May 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>85 – 95</td>
<td>June 2003 – April 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The decision to look at the first 10 years of the magazine was not as arbitrary as it may seem. My aim was to open up a previously unexamined cultural resource and explore the identities and attitudes being (re)produced therein; being the first to critically examine this text with an interest in discourses of identity required the analysis of a substantial period of production. The 10-year sample enables comprehensive and diachronic analysis across an era of important social change. It bridges two very different decades, 10 years in which the British lesbian (to use an insufficient but expedient construct) underwent significant changes in terms of politics, legislation and her visibility in mainstream media (see Chapter One). For a piece of critically-motivated discourse analytic research, the period from 1994 to 2004 provides ample opportunity to look at the dialogue between the text and the rapidly-changing social context it both informs and bears witness to.

In more practical terms, April 2004 also marks second editor Gillian Rodgerson’s final issue in charge. Jane Czyzselska, the current editor, took over in May 2004, making changes which, I felt, had a significant impact on the magazine. This impact might have been under-analysed without the inclusion of a substantial number of Czyzselska’s issues, which I felt would be an unmanageable expansion of data. Although I selected a historical sample, I contacted *DIVA* regarding the project at the proposal stage and received a very positive response. Unfortunately, it was not possible to source back-issues through publisher Millivres Prowler, so the British Library’s collection was initially used to assess
the nature of the magazine (prior to my first contact with it in 1999) and thus to help me conceptualise the nature of the project. Given the limited nature of access to this archive, however, it was necessary to find an alternative source in order to carry out the bulk of the research. An advertisement was placed in DIVA’s letters page, and the required magazines were purchased from a reader¹.

3.3 A mixed-method approach

Broadly speaking, my aim in this research was to produce an overview of DIVA across 10 years; describing accurately the presence and/or absence of, or changes to, certain characteristics of the magazine’s content, and to explore the contexts of those characteristics and pursue a deeper, hermeneutic analysis of the substance of the magazine and its (re)construction of lesbian identity. To make adequate and meaningful inferences and to gain the broadest and deepest possible understanding of the text, I decided that a mixed-method approach was both appropriate and necessary.

Quantitative and qualitative approaches to research have historically been regarded as difficult, impossible, inapposite to combine (Bryman 2001; Krippendorff 2004), and there is continued antagonism between paradigmatic purists invested in the incompatibility thesis (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004) epitomised by Woolgar’s (1996:16) insistence that to adopt a research method is also to adopt the “epistemological commitments that are embodied in that method.” The problem being, in purists’ terms, the incommensurability of the key ontological and epistemological assumptions of the quantitative and qualitative paradigms: a quantitative (positivist) stance involves a belief in one true reality that is separate from the researcher and, practically speaking, requires a deductive relationship between theory and data, in which the researcher remains completely objective and aims to produce generalisable inferences from their analysis of the data. By contrast, a qualitative (interpretivist) ontology entails multiple, socially-constructed realities; analysis is characterised by induction, subjectivity and context-specific conclusions (see Guba & Lincoln 1989 for a full, purist account of these paradigmatic distinctions).

In reality, these distinctions are far less clear, and the incompatibilities between them contested. Pragmatists have questioned the verity of the quantitative/qualitative dichotomy, claiming that each paradigm is logically independent and that the demands of the research, rather than a paradigmatic
prescription, ought to guide the selection of methods (see Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005, for more on this empirical perspective). Similarly Miles & Huberman (1984) argued that since the debate was unlikely to be resolved, practitioners ought to abandon notions of philosophical purity and adopt those methods that got the job done. As the name suggests, this is the essence of a pragmatist approach to mixed-method research: to do what will work best without commitment to the resolution of any logical contradictions between the paradigms from which methods are drawn (see, for example, Patton 1988).

Defining the position adopted in my research requires another look at the question of the incompatibility of the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The claimed clash is founded on oppositional central tenets like objectivity versus subjectivity, induction versus deduction, realism versus relativism; dualisms that are anyway too simplistic, but certainly so in a critical discursive approach, which is better described as epistemologically intersubjective and abductive, and tends to adopt a critical realist ontology in which a natural world is taken to exist independently of human action, but exists in dialogue with a social world constructed by human action (Fairclough 2005). In this sense, the use of (largely quantitative) content analysis alongside more qualitative techniques may not involve the kind of flitting between paradigmatic perspectives of which Patton (1985) speaks, since the research stance appears already to confound the axiomatic dichotomy that would require such flitting.

In rejecting the paradigmatic binary typically found in discussions of mixed-methods I do not, however, adopt a (fully) pragmatist position. Though I may be pragmatic, I stop short of dismissing out of hand the epistemological and ontological baggage (Bryman 2001) that methods tend to carry. However lightly they may appear to travel, each method entails quality criteria prescribed by its traditional paradigm that must be considered, even if only to query or disavow their relevance (see, in particular, the discussion of content analysis below). The current approach, then, is more dialectical, maintaining the integrity of the methods employed by respecting, as far as possible, their usual quality criteria and application (Healy & Perry 2000), while balancing that with meeting the technical demands of the research questions (Greene & Caracelli 1997). So, while each was geared towards understanding the broader phenomenon ‘DIVA magazine between 1994 and 2004’, content analysis, a measure method rooted in positivism, investigated specifically ‘DIVA magazine’s structure between 1994 and 2004’. As
discussed below, this primarily addressed questions of topic and genre, and how the magazine’s make-up changed over time. Carney (1972) likens content analysis to a rake catching things in its teeth, but in the context of its employment here a more apt simile might be a flare struck by an explorer heading into uncharted territory: it throws into light the primary defining features of the terrain. In addition, the qualitative discourse analysis investigated ‘DIVA magazine’s discourse(s) between 1994 and 2004’ – specifically the construction of ‘us’ and ‘them’; the production of (in)authentic members of those groups; the marking of boundaries and so on. Further, my interview data allowed me to consider ‘Producing DIVA magazine between 1994 and 2004’, understanding the conditions under which the magazine was put together, the philosophies of its editors and the aims of editors and publisher.

Combining these approaches allows me to generate a fuller, more comprehensive and coherent account of DIVA by incorporating and blending the knowledge produced by each of the different methods (Moran-Ellis et al. 2006, Sale et al 2002). Of the research articles they analysed that justified their mixed-method approach, O’Cathain, Murphy & Nicholl (2007) found that 87% cited ‘comprehensiveness’: if we characterise paradigmatic differences in terms of the knowledge each claims to produce, it is possible to see their combination as making possible the discovery of both particular and general features of a phenomenon; of seeing the unusual and the representative; the range and the central tendency; of generating contextualised, local readings as well as more distant analysis; in short, we see things through both macro- and micro-lenses (Greene & Caracelli 1997: 13).

3.4 Content analysis

Having advanced rapidly since its role in early 20th century propaganda studies (for the most prominent examples, see Lasswell 1938, 1946), content analysis has long been associated with the investigation of mass communication. Indeed, it is still most widely used in order to document features of mass media/cultural material (Wimmer and Dominick 2005). Baker et al. (2008) note that CDA studies that address corpora tend not to carry out quantitative analyses. However, I decided that content analysis was the appropriate means by which to begin this research on the basis of four key features:
content analysis is able to make apparent things you would not otherwise see (Gerbner et al 1969), which is vital given the size of the population. It makes possible what Carney (1972) calls ‘the serendipity effect’ – the discovery of something quite unexpected.

content analysis speaks to the diachronic nature of the material under scrutiny, providing the means by which to make a record of trends over time (Bryman 2001).

it is a method designed to cope with the sheer volume of material to be analysed: “the purpose of content analysis is to quantify salient and manifest features of a large number of texts” (Deacon et al 1999: 116).

the method offers the project a certain rigour and integrity: “Content analysis is a way of asking a fixed set of questions unfalteringly of all of a predetermined body of writings” (Carney 1972: 6-7).

Berelson’s (1952: 18) definition of content analysis as a “research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantititative description of the manifest content of communication” remains the seminal account of the method and the one around which further definitions continue to position themselves. The key terms on which the definition turns are ‘objective’, ‘systematic’ and ‘manifest’, and it is these that later definitions often manipulate. ‘Replicability’ is often preferred to Berelson’s ‘objectivity’ (see Riffe 1998; Krippendorff 2004), but both revolve around the same notion: the precision and transparency with which the categories used are constructed and applied. The measures should be designed in such a way that another analyst might pick up the instruments and gather the same data from the same materials (Berelson 1952). Berelson’s idea of ‘systematicity’, which demands that researchers pay the same attention to all categories and all material in order to avoid being led by their own preferences, has sometimes been subsumed by the concept of ‘validity’. “Validity goes further, demanding that the researcher's processes of sampling, reading, and analysing messages ultimately satisfy external criteria” (Krippendorff 2004: 19). The greatest quibble, however, has been with Berelson’s limitation of the method to the quantification of ‘manifest’ features like numbers of words. Numerous practitioners (see, for example, Holsti 1969; Carney 1972; and Lindlof 1995) remove this requirement from their definitions, referring instead to ‘specified characteristics’, which include those intended to capture latent concepts like
meaning, experience and point of view. Neuendorf (2002: 10) encapsulates all these factors:

Content analysis is a summarising, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method… and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented.

According to this definition, the researcher attends to questions of objectivity, reliability, validity, replicability and works to an *a priori* design, one whose goal is to produce counts and measurements in order to end up with an accessible, generalisable, quantitative summary of key characteristics of the text under analysis. In line with the epistemic and ontological position outlined above, the content analysis carried out here attempted, as far as possible, the meet these ideals – though they were at times considered inherently problematic or less relevant to the work underway, as discussed at various points below.

It is useful to return to Berelson’s (1952) account of content analysis at this point in order to look at the assumptions he states that the researcher makes about the data she will produce in undertaking a content analysis, and how those assumptions are relevant to this research. Firstly for Berelson, the content analyst believes that what the analysis tells her will make possible valid inferences as to the relationship between the content and either the communicator’s intent or the effect on the reader. Though I believe that *DIVA* is potentially ideologically influential, I disagree that inferences as to cause and effect are possible from content analysis and do not set out to produce such a reading. In discussing patterns in the magazine’s content (see chapters Four and Five) I refer to interview data (see Section 3.6, below) as a means of putting content into dialogue with the editors’ intentions. As discussed in Section 3.5, below, I make no claims as to *DIVA*’s reception.

Secondly, Berelson (*ibid.*) states that content analysis works on the supposition that the analyst, the communicator and the audience share a ‘common universe of discourse’. That is, there is a strong likelihood that all three will ascribe the same or similar meanings to the variables coded. This is a problematic assumption given the polysemic nature of most texts and, if intentions and effects are not ‘visible’ in manifest features, there is no means of testing that this is the case. The variables used in this research were, in the main, manifest features that did not require ‘reading’ as such, and I do not consider the slightly intuitive nature
of some of the coding problematic; most content analysis will involve some measure of subjective judgement (Cicourel 1964; Peterson 1994). I believe my position among the magazine’s target readership makes me a competent reader; nevertheless, all judgements were made on the basis of (usually explicit) contextual cues (for example, in determining the referent of particular terms, see Section 3.4.3, below).

The third and final assumption set out by Berelson (1952) was that the counting of these variables actually means something. That is, that their presence and/or frequency tells the analyst something about the communication in which they appear. Below I set out in detail the content analysis carried out and what each variable was intended to ‘tell me’. So far the content analysis has been discussed as one process; in fact it was three, each taking a different unit of data collection. The first content analysis took each complete issue of DIVA as a unit (‘magazine as unit’); the second content analysis only the advertising included in the magazine (‘advert as unit’); and the third content analysis detailed all items of editorial copy (‘article as unit’).

3.4.1 Magazine as unit

I felt that the content analysis would best begin by addressing each magazine as a whole. Since content analysis seeks answers to questions, here I was interested in knowing: ‘What genres and texts constitute DIVA?’; ‘Which dominate?’; and ‘How does this change over time?’ By recording how much of each magazine was devoted to certain types of content, a picture of the magazine as a product was created. As well as allowing me to develop a greater familiarity with the material – from which more meaningful categories might be constructed in the later stages of content analysis – this structural overview was important in contextualising the analysis of advertising content and discussions of the DIVA brand (see Chapters Four and Five).

A brief pilot study revealed that the following five categories were sufficient to classify content across the entire sample: editorial, advertising, advertorial, classified and personal ads. Multi-content pages were usually designed in sections no smaller than quarters, therefore content was recorded as 1 (whole page), 0.75 (three-quarters of a page), 0.5 (half a page), and 0.25 (quarter of a page). This was deemed more than sufficient to record the way the magazine was constructed proportionally.
This stage of the analysis was relatively straightforward; the variables were few enough to make the process simple, the values were exhaustive having been constructed with reference to the material, and so the codebook and -sheet required no adjustment once the analysis was under way. The categories were designed to be broad yet relevant and therefore their application was unambiguous – that is, valid and replicable. Having completed this analysis, the project turned to smaller units: advertising and editorial copy.

3.4.2 Advertisement as unit

I undertook a content analysis of advertisements for several reasons. First, adverts are at the heart of the magazine industry, investing millions of pounds in publications that would otherwise struggle to survive. As sophisticated ideological tools, adverts contribute to the fabric of a magazine and its identity, and the readers’ experience of it (Bignell 2002). Thus they form an integral part of an investigation of this nature. And, just as content analysis was felt to be a useful facilitator in analysing editorial copy, so it was the case with advertising. It seemed pertinent to ask: ‘What is advertised in DIVA?’ ‘How often?’ and, ‘How big are these adverts?’ of the entire population – which totalled some 4318 adverts – in order to identify the products and services with which the magazine shared a relationship, what financial commitment companies were prepared to make (reflected in the size and frequency of their adverts), and any changes to this across the 10 year period.

Only adverts that appeared outside of the classified/directory pages were included, since they represented self-contained and uniformly sized units (from 1/16th – 1/8th – ¼ - ½ - 1 whole page). This meant they were easily identifiable and recording their size was unproblematic and never a case of interpretation. An open ended list of twelve categories was initially created to record the products or services being advertised by each unit, on the basis of observations made during the coding of ‘magazine as unit’. As the analysis progressed, this was expanded to 32 categories. I felt that this organic approach to categories was necessary in order to avoid large categories eating up smaller ones to the detriment of the nuanced feel for DIVA’s advertising across the decade under examination (Hansen et al 1998). As well as recording the issue number, size and product of each advert, I also recorded the page number on which it appeared. All the categories were...
clearly and robustly defined\textsuperscript{3} regardless of the stage at which they were created, in order that each advert could be unequivocally (i.e. validly) coded.

3.4.3 Article as unit

In all, 5979 articles were counted and coded. My first question was ‘What issues/topics are most important to DIVA, and how does this change?’ The question was addressed by recording the size, position and genre of each article, and assigning to each a primary and secondary topic from a list of 86 categories\textsuperscript{4}. At the pilot stage only 20 categories were listed but, as is common for content analytic research, these initial categories lacked a certain sensitivity to the varied nature of the material. According to Carney (1972), coding units according to topic has always been a ‘bugbear’. His advice is to “atomise them… [break] up a complex or nebulous theme into its more readily identifiable (and hence countable) component units” (p. 51). Through the piloting process, several of the categories created at the first attempt were ‘atomised’ in order that they produced a sharper picture of the magazine. In this way a broad and potentially limitless category like ‘politics’ became ‘housing’, ‘education’, ‘employment’ and so on. What started out as ‘relationships’ splintered into ‘home-making’, ‘break-ups’, ‘encounters’ and so on.

As previously discussed, there was an inevitable element of subjective choice to the coding of article genres and topics – as Bryman (2001: 191) observes, “it is almost impossible to devise coding manuals that do not entail some interpretation on the part of coders”. In order to ensure that this interpretation was guided as closely as possible by the manual, each topic category was very carefully defined, often with reference to related categories. Genres were similarly handled, with textual or formal features used as a guide. This meant that each coding decision, if subject to interpretation, was at least consistent, informed and not the result of there being ‘nowhere else to put it’. The point of this coding might also be called into question, and certainly, the research did not ignore the fact that the frequency of occurrence of a topic does not necessarily tell us, in itself, about the intensity or concern with which the topic is regarded (Holsti 1969). I felt, however, that over the course of 10 years, this data – when cross-tabulated with the data collected regarding article size, position and genre - might arguably present a picture worthy of discussion, offering some reasonably concrete ideas as to the issues of the day and trace their evolution.
My next questions were: ‘Who are we, and who are they? How are these groups referred to; what referential strategies are used?’ To answer these I recorded the occurrence of certain personal references, and to whom they are used to refer. By coding and counting these variables I aimed to be able to make inferences, however limited, as to who and how ‘we’ are represented, who and how ‘they’ are represented, and when (that is, in the context of which topics or in which type of article) the answers to these questions change. When, for instance, are ‘we’ lesbians, and when are ‘we’ women? How often and in what contexts are we ‘gays’? When does ‘women' include heterosexual and/or bisexual women?

Carney (1972: 87) suggests that “one way of probing into a man’s [sic] basic assumptions involves a detailed study of a strategically chosen group of the words he uses”. For, according to van Dijk (1991; 53), “the choice of one word rather than another to express more or less the same meaning, or to denote the same referent, may signal the opinions, emotions, or social position of a speaker”. Personal reference terms are frequently based on synecdochisation (Reisigl and Wodak 2001), a process by which single features are foregrounded as representative of the group. Asking these questions represented the first stage in understanding the individual and collective identities manufactured in DIVA – and the relationships between readers and others who identify with various of these groups.

Given the potentially intuitive nature of assigning certain nouns to certain referents, consideration of the reliability of this part of the analysis was paramount. The counting of (pro)nouns was very carefully delimited in the coding manual and thus presented little ‘trouble’. Assigning each instance to a referent required a little more work on the part of the coder. In order to do so consistently, and ensure that the coding produced valid results, I paid careful attention to contextual or visual indicators as to the type of person being pointed to – in other words, as far as possible, the coding relied on what was on the page in black-and-white. Often, perhaps more often than one would expect, this was straightforward. For instance, it is fairly simple to deduce from “Girls, you’re going to love Andrew Davies’ adaptation of lesbian classic Tipping the Velvet!” that the ‘girls’ in question are lesbians. The coding was flexible enough to admit ‘new’ referents - when the first term referring to the group ‘gay men and bisexuals’ appeared, this was added to the list of possible referents for coding. Inevitably there were instances where the evidence upon which a term might be coded was uncertain or
absent, and it was necessary to rely, to some extent, on intuition. ‘Men’ was regularly used without any clear indicator as to the sexuality of the men concerned. In such cases, the referent was coded as ‘generic men’, to maintain the integrity of the more specific categories of referent being recorded.

Along with a word’s mixture of shades of meaning, there is an associational field consisting of the word company it keeps, and the sort of contexts in which it tends to crop up. Thus a word will have a wide range of nuances, company and contexts. So will other major words with which it is linked. The question is: which does our man [sic] choose to stress, to notice and to ignore?

(Carney 1972: 88).

In the course of coding these nouns and their referents, I made a record of their immediate collocates where those collocates modified or qualified (and not where they merely quantified) the noun. For instance, “I saw this gorgeous butch dyke the other day” was coded as: noun=dyke, referent=lesbian, collocate (modifier)=gorgeous butch. These notes could not be processed in the same fashion as the other data (giving each different collocate a nominal value would have made handling and manipulating the statistics almost impossible), but were examined in the light of patterns in noun use produced after the event. By doing this I wanted to examine three areas of enquiry:

- first, the semantic prosody (Louw 1993) of certain (pro)nouns, particularly where they might be used interchangeably. For instance, does ‘dyke’ keep company (Firth, 1957) that ‘lesbian’ does not?
- second, where the same terms might be used to refer to different groups of people (for instance, ‘woman’ as applied to heterosexual v gay women), do they appear to move in differing semantic circles?
- third, overall, is there a difference between the kinds of words that act on lesbian/homosexual pronouns, and those that act on heterosexual/bisexual pronouns?

The collocates were later categorised according to their function (for example, one category grouped together age-related collocates such as ’33-year-old’, while another included all those alluding to the butch/femme aesthetic or manner of the referent under description, as in the phrase referred to above) and
the relative frequency and variety of different kinds of collocates were analysed with reference to the referents they described (see Chapter Six).

3.5 A critical discourse analysis

The answers that content analysis can provide are of a certain type: they are numbers. To invest in numbers an assumption of independence from the processes of their composition, or an assumption that by virtue of being numbers they represent some kind of objective truth, is dangerous. Numbers alone tell us little of the contexts in which they appear (Deacon et al. 1999). The content analysis made it possible to see what was there; it offered a survey of the terrain. In order to consider how and why it might be there, a further, qualitative approach was taken in order to ‘mine’ the terrain (McCracken, 1988): (critical) discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is both theoretically and methodologically diverse (see Wodak and Meyer 2009), and the separation of theory and method is by no means simple. For pragmatic reasons, however, this section will deal only with my methodological approach (refer to Chapter Two for a more theoretical account of CDA).

As set out in Chapter Two, CDA positions texts in relation to discourse and social practices; interpretation is hermeneutic, moving between and across these levels of discourse – set out in Fairclough’s (1995a) model, below. Fairclough, whose approach most directly influenced that taken here, is concerned primarily with a (Hallidayan) textual analysis addressing a text’s meta-functions. These three metafunctions are: the ideational function, whereby a text represents aspects of the world; the interpersonal function, whereby it affects relations between participants in the social world and the attitudes of those participants; and the textual function, whereby parts of the text are connected and made coherent.

He sets out three levels of analysis, including: “linguistic description of the language text, interpretation of the relationship between the (productive and interpretative) discursive processes and the text, and explanation of the relationship between the discursive processes and the social processes” (ibid: 97).
Analysis of what Fairclough calls ‘discursive processes’ (‘discursive practice’ in Figure 3.1) involves contextualising the text by looking at the routines of production and consumption of a given text, since it is here that the relationship between the sociocultural and the textual is mediated (1995b). This is especially significant in the case of media texts, which Fairclough (1995a: 50) positions in a “chain of communicative events” with the power to transform, produce and recontextualise other discourses. Analysis at the level of social practice is also a process of contextualisation; a consideration of the text and its discursive practices in light of the social structures of which they are part.

It is important at this point to consider the potential weaknesses of an approach that has been labelled ‘excessively ambitious’ by critics – CDA researchers have been accused of attempting too much, leaving them open to taking much for granted and leaving analysis incomplete (see Hammersley 1997; Widdowson 1995). Of the three levels of analysis set out above, discursive practice has been routinely under- or un-analysed (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002); in particular processes of consumption, in which many critical discourse analysts show a ‘relatively superficial interest’ (Riggins 1997). The lack of attention that readers’ interpretations tend to receive has been regularly defended on the grounds that understanding the texts themselves ought to take priority if research assumes that texts are powerful enough to limit the ways in which they might be
read (Fairclough 1995a). Taking these kinds of criticisms into account, van Dijk himself has conceded that a truly complete discourse analysis, certainly of large corpuses, is “totally out of the question” (2001: 99).

It is equally important to consider these criticisms in light of this research project, given that I do not attempt an analysis of audience reception. That is not to say that some discussion of processes of consumption is absent from the thesis; rather, that ideas relating to them are generated from the text, from the author’s competence as a member of the target readership and from interviews with the editors and various staff members which discussed, among other things, DIVA’s relationship with its readers and the role it performed (see section 3.6, below). Though I agree with Talbot (1995) and Mills (1995) that texts encourage certain ideal readings, in an ideal world, I would address processes of consumption in a full-scale reception analysis. Attempting to do so within this project, however, would have made it impracticable given the constraints of time and labour. The “somewhat unrealistic” (Wood & Kroger 2000: 208) nature of Fairclough’s model for analysis should not result in its demise, however, and typically, scholars have drawn from it those elements most pertinent to their research (ibid.). Since this research was concerned with DIVA as a cultural artefact the analysis here is, like much Faircloughian analysis, a (multimodal) textual analysis informed and enlightened by the concerns and philosophies of its producers and interpreted and considered in relation to the sociocultural context of the time.

That said, setting out a method for even the textual analysis is no simple task: analysis is a creative process that includes a multitude of categories, considerations and concepts, each more or less important to each practitioner (Wodak and Meyer 2009). For Wood & Kroger (2000) it is the analyst’s orientation to the text that is paramount. They set out a list of ‘sensitising devices’ before outlining several analytic concepts for the unpicking of the text. In order to provide a comprehensive (as far as this is possible) account of the analytic process I went through, the rest of this section will follow a similar structure. In fact, where sensitising devices are concerned, it may be helpful to provide (an abridged version of) Wood & Kroger’s list:
1. As you read through the text, ask yourself how you are reading it and why you are reading it that way. That is, consider your reaction and try to identify the features of the text, the devices that are employed that would produce your reading.

2. Do not ignore the obvious; it may be important.

3. Assume that a focus on the literal meaning of an utterance or text may be the least helpful analytic strategy; concentrate on what the writer is doing.

4. It is important to consider what is not there.

5. Consider whether the critical issue is that something is included, not what it is.

6. Play with the text. Ask how it would read if a particular item were omitted, phrased differently or combined with some other item.

7. Look carefully at how the text is structured, shaped and ordered.

8. Be alert to multiple functions of discourse.

9. Take nothing for granted.


This list, then, offers a brief but illuminating insight into how the text was approached and handled. It provides a break down of the disposition demanded by the assertion that analysis “requires the ability to examine discourse creatively in all of its multifarious aspects and an open-mindedness to entertain multiple possibilities” (ibid.: 91).

In approaching the text in this manner, various analytic concepts were important to my interpretations and in developing claims about the text. Wodak and Meyer (2009) systematically attribute various of the following list to varying incarnations of CDA, but I have utilised a mixture of them as and when their relevance and centrality to the message of the text became apparent, since each article will differ in the extent to which each level of analysis is helpful for a particular question. Given its creative and abductive nature, analysis is not always likely to flow in such an orderly fashion, but for sense and clarity the list below begins with microtextual elements and works towards macrotextual concepts.
This might include looking at things like evaluative meaning, labelling and categorisation (see Mautner 2008; also what Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, call ‘referential strategy’, which is particularly concerned with membership categorisation), and predication (see Richardson 2007; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

**Syntax**

Concerned with *transitivity* – ‘who does what to whom’, accountability and responsibility (Wood & Kroger, 2000); and things like idioms and clichés (see particularly the work of Jäger, as referenced by Meyer, 2001).

**Modality**

Looking at the construction of attitude – vagueness, commitment – toward or of subjects through modal verbs like ‘must’ or ‘might’, or other lexical options (Richardson, 2007; Mautner 2008).

**Presupposition**

What Jäger would consider the intrinsic logic of a text (Meyer, 2001); what is the reader required to know or believe in order to make sense of what gets said? Jäger also considers notions of implication.

**Perspectivisation**

Another of the discursive strategies central to Reisigl & Wodak’s (2001) work on racism, concerned with how events or utterances are framed and reported. Gee (1999) similarly talks about contextualisation signals, while Wood & Kroger (2000), citing Goffman (1981) urge the consideration of footing and the use of reported speech.

**Rhetoric**

Richardson (2007) outlines five core rhetorical tropes for analysis: hyperbole, metaphor, metonymy, neologism and puns. Analysis should be concerned with how these tropes, or various topoi, might be used in argumentation or as devices designed to encourage a level of rapport between author and reader.

**Narrative**

What Gee (1999) refers to as ‘discourse organisation’ – how is the text structured? Who or what gets foregrounded? How does the story make sense?

It was equally important to include some consideration of ‘non-verbal message components’ (Mautner 2008: 43); though Fairclough’s analysis is
typically predominantly linguistic, I accept van Leeuwen’s (2006: 292) assertion that critical discourse analysis should consider that “discourses are often multimodally realised” and attempted to integrate such analysis where possible. Machin’s (2007) discussion of the meaning potential of colour, typography and page layout was especially helpful in this regard, particularly in my analysis of the DIVA brand (see Chapter Five).

3.6 Semi-structured interviews

My primary concern in this research was to analyse DIVA magazine as a kind of subcultural artefact; for that reason, the absence of audience reception analysis was deemed a regrettable but permissible necessity. A similar lack of consideration of processes of production, however, would represent a significant flaw. And since the materials analysed are drawn from the past – most significantly, a period during which I was not engaged with the community targeted by DIVA, nor with the magazine and other media to any intellectual degree – the gathering of contextual information specific to DIVA was essential. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999: 62) advocate ethnographic work in discourse analytic projects in order to explore “the beliefs, values and desires” of participants. Investigating processes of production would, I hoped, document the evolution of DIVA from an insider’s perspective, providing explanation and perhaps evidence of the kinds of discourses and ideologies ‘behind’ the magazine.

As a result, I conducted (semi-structured) interviews with various key members of staff from the period under analysis. I hoped that these interviews would furnish the research with information regarding the founding of the magazine; its staff (roles, routines, regulations); the feelings and/or agendas of those in positions of power; the imperatives set out by the publisher; and the relationship between DIVA and its readers. I felt that qualitative interviews were the best means of accessing this kind of ‘archive’ because of their ability, when done well, to offer the data generated:

1. a certain level of nuance and subtlety
2. a feel for evolution and history
3. a fresh perspective
4. insight where no clear hypothesis is being tested
5. layers of discovery
6. spontaneity
7. richness and depth
8. specificity (see Rubin and Rubin 2005, and Kvale 1996)
3.6.1 Interviewees, and questions of ethics

With this in mind, four women were interviewed: founding editor Frances Williams, her successor Gillian Rodgerson, current deputy editor and long-time staff writer Louise Carolin and Kim Watson, who is now publisher for *DIVA* but served for many years in ad sales and marketing. I approached each interview somewhat differently, as discussed below, but each was conducted for the same reasons as highlighted above: all four women offered my research some insight into the way *DIVA* made it onto the shelves each month and, importantly, each offered her own unique perspective on those processes (Rubin & Rubin 2005). The key limitation here, of course, is that each woman was being asked about the past – a distinction likely to be most keenly felt by Gillian Rodgerson and Frances Williams, both of whom had parted company with the magazine some years before my research began and embarked upon alternative careers. Staff at *DIVA* were very helpful when it came to making contact with both women, which meant that I could contact both in the very early stages of the project. Both agreed to participate in interviews once the project was underway, and though the intervening period may not negate the ‘fuzziness’ of their recollections relating to the sample, it did present them with a period in which to reflect on their time with *DIVA*. Louise Carolin agreed to talk to me in the first year of the study, after a chance meeting thanks to her (unfortunately discontinued) thesis on lesbian magazines of the 1980s, and subsequently gave very generously of her time. Kim Watson was interviewed almost half way through the research, after recommendations from the other interviewees on the basis of her long-term involvement with *DIVA*. Fortunately, perhaps as a result of the novelty of this research, I was not called upon to persuade my interviewees to participate. That said, the value of the contribution each might make was frequently, and genuinely, reiterated.

Once research involves participants of this nature, rather than the products they have already released into the public domain, certain ethical considerations come into play. First and foremost, that of ‘informed consent’ – that is, the principle that participants are made aware of the purpose of the research and how it is being carried out, particularly where it might have some kind of impact on them (Kvale 1996). This is a much debated requirement, not least where research may produce findings that interviewees dislike, and is a difficult one to measure. In this case, disclosure was as full as possible regarding the overall outline aims of
the project and the approach taken. The timing of the interviews, however – Louise Carolin agreed to speak to the author eight months into the research; Gillian Rodgerson, Frances Williams and Kim Watson were interviewed after the content analysis was complete – meant that it was not possible to discuss with the interviewees the specific direction of the analysis, since this was only partially conceived of at the time, and even afterwards remained in a process of constant revision and refinement. Had full disclosure been possible, it may still have been avoided for this reason, and because semi-structured, conversational interviews were selected precisely because of their flexible and open nature; disclosure may have produced responses directed only towards those areas highlighted as being (currently) central to the analysis (Eisner 1991).

A further ethical consideration was that of the interviewees’ involvement in the use of their words, what one might call the ‘Can I see a draft?’ question. All the interviewees were made aware that the interviews were aimed primarily at obtaining contextual information rather than ‘data’, and most did not require the opportunity to verify that they were being quoted accurately. One interviewee was particularly conscious of her ‘clumsy’ and ‘unprepared’ constructions, and wished to see how her interview was used before the project was concluded. This was not, of course, a problem: though researcher and interviewee may disagree on the significance or otherwise of a particular view (and this was discussed as the interview was underway), the interviews were not gathered so that the resulting conversations might be used dishonestly. In this sense, then, the issue of consent was handled as an ‘ongoing dialogue’ (Lincoln 1990).

3.6.2 Interview design and execution

At the design stage, I set out moderately structured interviews to be conducted with editors Gillian Rodgerson and Frances Williams. I produced a similar schedule for each, with questions organised under the following headings: ‘your relationship with the magazine’; ‘day-to-day’; ‘advertising’; ‘readers’; and ‘a bit about you’. Each area of questioning and the questions belonging to it were designed to be as open as possible; I wanted to proceed with open questions and prompts to support and encourage answers, while being careful to listen attentively and pursue interesting tangents (see Wengraf 2001 for more on this approach). Although both interviews began by addressing the interviewees’ relationship with DIVA, no specific structure was determined ahead of the
conversation, and only where specific, factual information was sought were relatively closed questions used. In essence, the receptive strategy was to listen carefully enough to productively reinvent the interview as it was underway, being assertive enough to give direction when necessary, and passive enough to let the interviewee speak when they had a longer story to tell – a balance that was particularly important at the beginning of interviews, when attempting to establish a rapport (*ibid.*).

In reality, the establishment of rapport was not nearly so contrived. I had been in email contact with both editors for some time before speaking and the conversations were instantly friendly. At times even the thematic organisation of questions was abandoned as the conversation criss-crossed its way quite naturally across the page. Both of the (initial) interviews with the editors lasted around one-and-a-half hours and were conducted over the telephone. In the first instance this was a practical issue; Gillian Rodgerson lives in Canada and funding was not available to meet face-to-face. Once this interview had taken place, it seemed appropriate that the counterpart interview with Frances Williams should also be conducted over the telephone. Naturally, neither interview offered ‘visual data’ (Rubin & Rubin 2005), but since the transcript was not intended to be used as data, I concluded that this was not terribly detrimental.

By contrast, the conversation with Louise Carolin took place face-to-face, over the course of around an hour-and-a-half spent at her home. This was an almost completely unstructured meeting much more akin to the kind of ‘responsive interview’, or ‘extended conversation’ that Rubin & Rubin (*ibid.*) talk about, involving the mutual exchange of ideas – though the flow of ‘new’ information was predominantly from interviewee to researcher.

The initial interview with Kim Watson represents a further contrast, since it was carried out via email. I did not consider this the ‘ideal’ situation, but her position on the Millivres Prowler board meant that setting up time simply to speak on the telephone was difficult, to the degree that the choice was essentially between an email interview and no interview. Since the bulk of the questions specific to this interview dealt with factual matters – advertising revenue, circulation figures, page layout guidelines etc. – I decided that some information, however ‘managed’ it may have been in its delivery, was better than no information. Millivres Prowler themselves did not answer requests for historical data relating to *DIVA*’s circulation or finances.
With the exception of this information from Kim Watson, the interviews needed to be transcribed so that their contents could be easily accessed and incorporated into the thesis. The process of transcription, being inherently constructive, raises questions of reliability (Kvale 1996) – though, like the questions regarding ethics, these were less pressing in the context of the current research than they might have been, since they did not represent ‘data’. Nonetheless, it was essential that the transcripts were as accurate a representation of the conversations as possible to maintain the integrity of their interpretation. With this in mind, I transcribed each interview verbatim, including ums, ahs and reformulations, and where pauses were noticeable they were also recorded. This by no means produced a fully detailed, Jeffersonian transcript, since this was not necessary, but it did produce a full and meticulous enough ‘version zero’ (Poirier et al. 1983) from which to take an understanding of DIVA in its context, and to deduce and interpret, where possible, interviewees’ perspectives on elements of the magazine or their involvement with it. The process of transcription also offered me an opportunity to formulate some thoughts on what had been said, potential follow-up conversations and ideas for analysis, in what Wengraf (2001: 210) calls a “crucial interaction of active struggle with the transcript and active struggle of your mind as it remembers the original interview experience and also reflects on possible interpretations”. I was fortunate that most of my interviewees, in particular Gillian Rodgerson, made themselves available for follow-up questions and conversations via email.

3.7 Summary

Taking a critical realist approach, I use mixed-methods on a complementary basis. I began with a thorough quantitative analysis of the entire sample. Discourse analysis of a smaller sub-sample was informed and guided by some of the patterns highlighted in the content analysis. Certainly, there were aspects of the text that came to light quantitatively that might not have been picked up on through discourse analysis alone (the serendipity effect that Carney (1972) describes). My interpretations were enhanced and deepened by the insights offered by the magazine’s previous editors and key staff members. The project was designed to include as many dimensions of the magazine as possible, and I feel that this has indeed produced a thorough and insightful account of DIVA in its first decade.
1 With thanks to Kelly Egan for her generosity.
2 See Appendix A for the codebook and sheet.
3 See Appendix A for the codebook and sheet.
4 See Appendix A for full list of categories and definitions.
5 See Appendix A for the coding guidelines and sheets.
6 See Appendix A for the coding guidelines and sheets.
7 In particular Louise Carolin and Carol Keegan, who gave a lot of their time to getting the project off the ground.
8 The schedules used when speaking to Gillian Rodgerson and Frances Williams are included in Appendix A.
Chapter Four: Producing *DIVA*

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter and Chapter Five look at *DIVA* as a product, and how that product changed over the course of its first decade. While Chapter Five is concerned with the contents of the magazine itself, I focus here on the magazine’s production in order to generate an account of *DIVA* ‘from the inside’ and to consider in the light of that account the magazine’s commercial profile. Section 4.2 outlines the editorial philosophies of the two editors between 1994 and 2004, finding similarities and some interesting contrasts – most notably in their editor’s letters and their understanding of the typical *DIVA* reader. Section 4.3 considers the day-to-day running of the magazine: staff structures, planning, the effect of the lack of competitors, and the ‘editorial hand’ taken to *DIVA*. Section 4.4 is concerned with how and to what kind of budget the magazine was financed, looking in turn at the contribution made by publisher Millivres Ltd, advertising revenue, and small ads. The first two sections are based predominantly on interview data (see Chapter Three, Section 3.6), while the third combines interview data with figures provided by Millivres Ltd. All three sections include some analysis of the magazine itself. The chapter concludes with a brief summary, suggesting that editorial philosophy is as influential on financial decision-making as institutional setting, and often in spite of commercial imperatives.

### 4.2 The editors

Much of the analysis detailed in this chapter and the next is structured either around the significant redesigns that *DIVA* undergoes at issues 10, 25, 50 and 78; or by dividing the 95 issue sample into eight chronological groups (see Chapter Three, Section 3.2). It should be remembered, however, that there is a further significant line to be drawn through the sample. In Issue 17, founding editor Frances Williams’ tenure ended, and in Issue 19 Gillian Rodgerson began an editorship that would last until April 2004. Although there are many factors that influence the magazine in production, it is crucially important to consider the part of these two women: their motivation, how they felt about their role and their readers and, perhaps most crucially of all, their vision for the magazine. These
things add up to the magazine’s driving editorial philosophy (Johnson & Prijatel 2007).

Frances Williams was 25 when the first issue of DIVA went on sale in April 1994, and considers this moment as integral a part of her own personal history as of the magazine itself. At Liverpool University’s GaySoc several years earlier, she found friends among the “more political lesbians”, and became involved in the activities of the local anarchist centre. “We used to do things like write slogans on the front of Kwik Save saying ‘Lesbians are everywhere’, or jump on the map of Great Britain outside the This Morning studios.” Although her subsequent move from disaffected Liverpool to London’s affluent, conservative Chelsea was something of a culture shock, Williams continued her association with anarchist lesbians, joining up with Act Up, OutRage and the Lesbian and Gay Centre. She also began to get involved with the team producing Rouge, the ‘Gay and Lesbian Socialist Quarterly’ that began publishing in 1989. “I remember getting Rouge in Liverpool. It was quite groovy, there were articles on the miners and there was a proper Marxist slant. In London, I used to cycle to the editor’s flat every Thursday to help put the magazine together.”

Having finished art college, Williams did voluntary and freelance work until she saw an advert for an editorial assistant at Gay Times, Millivres’ flagship publication. She got the job and began writing news reports for GT and Him, an erotic gay male magazine². By now a couple of lesbian publications had appeared – Shebang and Lesbian London – but they “lacked the capital to make them regular and substantive,” according to Williams. As part of Britain’s biggest gay publisher, which had a greater capacity to produce a regular, ‘glossy’ lesbian magazine, Williams felt she had an opportunity and something of an obligation. “I used to look at American magazines and thought that we should have them in Britain. I remember Megan Radclyffe wrote an article in TimeOut saying there was a place for a lesbian magazine and wondering where it was. I cut it out and presented it.” The board at Millivres were sceptical, but reluctantly agreed to a trial issue. Soon Kim Watson, who had been responsible for Shebang, moved over to becoming Millivres’ marketing director, a boon for Williams. “Having a lesbian on the business side of the company certainly helped.”

Although she had privately committed to taking the magazine beyond a trial issue, Williams had no long-term plans for DIVA. “It was really more in the spirit of ‘have a go’. My mission was to promote homosexuality in a way that
made sense to women, in public. Beyond that I didn’t have any ambitions for it at all; it was more opportunistic than that. I didn’t know anything really, I learned on the job and I just desperately tried to do my best.”

Gillian Rodgerson took over as editor in 1997 and feels Williams deserves tremendous recognition for *DIVA*’s presence on the shelves: “Frances was the one who convinced Millivres it was a good idea, *DIVA* was her idea.” Rodgerson was respectful of what Williams had done but also had her own vision for the magazine. “When I began at *DIVA*, I saw its purpose as being a place where women could talk to each other, to build a community, and to make women feel happy and positive about their sexual choices. And to do shit-disturbing where necessary.” This vision was “directly inspired” by the newspaper at which Rodgerson’s journalism career began. In 1981 she abandoned a degree in religious studies to return home to Toronto and volunteer at *The Body Politic*, a lesbian and gay news magazine that began in the early 1970s. It saw itself as a participant in the struggle for gay rights rather than simply a medium of reportage; its writers were rarely trained journalists. In the six years she spent there, Rodgerson “learned pretty much any journalism that I know. I did various admin jobs, I co-ordinated classified ads, I co-ordinated the features department, I co-ordinated volunteers. It gave me a fairly good view of the overall shape of a publication and what you needed to do to make it successful.”

In 1987, having settled in England, Rodgerson got a job as a typesetter at *Gay Times*, and soon found herself working on *GT*’s international news coverage, as she had done at *The Body Politic*. As technology progressed and typesetting became a job for a designer, Rodgerson found herself writing more and more. In 1993 she was appointed as the first female editor of *Capital Gay*. She stayed for 18 months – during which time Williams founded *DIVA* – before leaving to spend more time with her family. Having continued to write international news for *Gay Times*, Rodgerson also became production manager for several Paul Raymond magazines, and began writing for *DIVA* on a freelance basis. When Williams decided to leave *DIVA*, Rodgerson applied successfully for the post.

The most striking similarity between the paths the two women took to the editorship of *DIVA* is their involvement in activism. Both women talk about their goals for the magazine in similar terms –Williams suggests *DIVA* was part of the new entrepreneurial approach to social change; Rodgerson describes her work in the gay press as activism: “Sometimes we wanted to make people get off their
bums and not be complacent about what they had, to realise that sometimes it took fighting for and that it might still take fighting for.”

4.2.1 Editor’s letters

In turn, the most striking contrast between the two editors is the way each felt about her part in the project. Williams was a reluctant ‘face’ whose increasing disillusionment with gay politics led to her departure after three years in charge of *DIVA*, while Rodgerson considered her appointment the achievement of a life’s dream, and she thrived on her opportunities to speak. The most prominent of those opportunities, of course, is the editor’s letter published in each issue, and it is here that the contrast is particularly noticeable.

Williams wrote an editor’s letter in 12 of her 17 issues. She found them difficult to begin with, “because I was a bit shy, really. I wasn’t very coherent about any mission statement. I was just finding out; I was on a huge learning curve.” Her discomfort with the genre is reflected in various ways, not least of all the appearance of the column. As part of the furniture of a magazine, editor’s letters tend to be aesthetically consistent (Johnson & Prijatel 2007), usually designed to foster a sense of familiarity between reader and producer. Williams’ letters, however, are printed in various inconsistent forms. This might also be down to her uncertainty about the magazine and its future.

**Figure 4.1 Changes to Frances Williams’s editor’s letters**

![Changes to Frances Williams's editor's letters](image)

In the first issue, the “Letter from the editor” occupies a whole page and is topped by a large, bright photograph of two women smiling broadly. The emphasis is on lesbians and *DIVA* – it is not ‘signed’ by, nor does it name or picture Williams, though her name appears on the masthead. The title “Letter
from the editor” suggests a certain formality, perhaps a kind of ambiguity as to the relationship between reader and writer (which again, is perhaps natural in a trial issue). Her pronominal selection also suggests that Williams lacks a firm grasp of her audience, and how she ought to address them. The first half of the letter is a first-person narrative detailing Williams’ thoughts and experiences relating to the 1990s slogan, “Lesbians are everywhere”, which she encountered before coming out. She refers only to herself and does not speak directly to the reader – although the tone is not strictly formal, this first section lacks conversational exclamations and so on. When this story ends, around halfway through the letter, Williams stops speaking for herself and begins to make statements, based on experience, common to the paradigmatic ‘lesbian’ that she was perhaps reluctant to do without first establishing her history and involvement with these ideas:

Extract 4.1 ‘Letter from the editor’ April 1994, p. 4
1 But let’s face it. Lesbians were never everywhere. In
2 margins and footnotes, hidden from history, the lesbian
3 has wandered through history, culture and society like a
4 pale ghoul on the loose, occasionally jangling the chains
5 of her oppression. So, if we are not everywhere, where
6 exactly are we?

At this point the editor and the reader become joined in first person plural pronouns. Line 1 not only includes reference to an ‘us’ that includes both reader and editor, but it is an imperative that engages the reader directly in the same way as lines 5-6. Thus the two parties are engaged in something closer to conversation and enjoy notions of some kind of common identity. When Williams moves to inform the reader of what will follow in this issue, and what DIVA in general will be about, however, she moves to third person pronouns (‘they’/‘them’) to describe lesbians, before reverting to inclusive first person plural pronouns once again:

Extract 4.2 ‘Letter from the editor’ April 1994, page 4
1 Diva will put lesbians centre stage. The spotlight will be
2 reserved for them alone. Anyone who is sitting in the
3 audience is free to applaud. As for all the sudden interest
4 in “lesbian chic”, as Mae West said “it’s better to be
5 looked over than overlooked”, and while we may not be
6 everywhere, we’re certainly getting somewhere.

The selection of ‘lesbians’ and ‘them’ moves the reader towards the opposite end of the pronominal distance scale (Rees 1983) – a move which is even more visible given how readily the sentence might read “Diva will put us / you
centre stage. The spotlight will be reserved for *us / you* alone.” At this point it seems that Williams may be writing with an outside ‘audience’ in mind; her use of ‘them’ shifts the relationship between herself and the reader and breaks the intimacy that had begun to be fostered. This manifesto for the magazine makes tangible the possibility of recipients beyond the realms of ‘us’.

As might be expected, consciousness of ‘others’ is not present once this moment of manifesto is passed; the editor’s letter switches to addressing the reader either directly as ‘you’ or as part of ‘us’. Williams continues to use personal (that is, first person) narratives to illustrate her points, but increasingly draws references from presupposed common knowledge or experience:

Extract 4.3 ‘From the editor’ April 1995, p. 5
1 Carollin Brooks… asks why lesbian dates can be so
2 peculiarly weird

Extract 4.4 ‘From the editor’ August 1994, p. 5
3 …the habitual clocking with primed antennae, the
4 presence (or absence!) of other lesbians.

In line 2, lesbian dates are characterised as “peculiarly weird”, presupposing the reader’s agreement and knowledge of what it is that is ‘peculiar’ to lesbian dates. Extract 4.4 presents a presupposition within a presupposition: “clocking” other women is a recognisable activity, within which readers will be familiar with not finding them; the predictability of their absence is emphatically underscored by its exclamation in parentheses.

These kinds of references, along with more intimate pronominal selection, bolster the sensation of in-group talk, of a kind of cosiness (Ballaster *et al.* 1991), and the letters also begin to make regular, if not extensive, use of constructions that invite an imagined dialogue with the reader. Though these tend to be limited to simple imperatives (“read up!” issue 2; “Enjoy!” issue 4; “Be there! Be seen! Be gorgeous!” issue 8) and/or questions (which appear later: “What does it mean to be visibly lesbian?” issue 8; “Have you noticed the advent of the killer lesbian?” issue 9), they represent some attempt to engage with readers. The title is also trimmed to the less formal “From the editor”, while “Frances Williams” appears at the bottom of the text in a serif font that mimics handwriting.

Seven letters include a picture of Williams. The first picture, in Issue 2, (see Figure 4.2, below), shows her looking away from the camera, inviting the reader to focus instead on the copy of *DIVA* in her hands. It is also a wide enough
shot that a poster advertising the magazine can be seen; the emphasis is clearly on the magazine rather than the woman producing it. This is altered in Issue 3, when the letter is topped by a closely-cropped headshot of Williams (Issue 4 features a more tightly cropped version). In it, the editor is smiling directly at the reader, but in Issue 5 Williams reverts back to a mirrored, cropped version of her original shot before dropping the picture altogether in issues 6 and 7. Issue 9 introduces a new and more dynamic shot that is far more welcoming than its predecessors.

**Figure 4.2 Pictures from Frances Williams’s editor’s letters**

![Pictures from Frances Williams’s editor’s letters](image)

Issue 2  Issue 3  Issue 5  Issue 9

The inconsistency and nature of these pictures again appear to reveal an editor reluctant to feature in this fashion. And while the appearance of the column settles down to look rather more like furniture – though the pictures change or disappear, the editor’s letter becomes a regular single column as part of the “Postbag” on page four or five – its structure shows a pattern of change. The letters in issues 1 to 3 are generally structured around a narrative related to the central point or thrust of the letter, which gives way to more details about what is in the magazine. From this point onwards however, the letters head towards the summary of contents with increasing speed; opinion gives way to “This issue of *Diva*...” by the third sentence in Issue 4 and the letters in issues 6 and 7 are composed entirely of details about the magazine’s contents. It is interesting that the letters in issues 8 and 9 reverse this trend by featuring, almost exclusively, opinion and comment and a more conversational tone, but that the first major redesign, in Issue 10 (for more on redesigns, see Chapter Five), sees the editor’s letter dropped. It reappears in issues 13 and 14, though these ‘letters’ in fact offer just a brief summary of the magazine’s contents. The format seems to be dropped entirely after this point; Williams’s ‘Farewell Note’ features among the news in brief section, and not on the Postbag or contents pages.
Throughout her tenure as editor, Williams appears to struggle with the genre and her uncertainty over what best to do with it. The disappearance of the letters at Issue 10 may have been influenced by her desire to avoid becoming the nominated spokeswoman for a community. “I could’ve become Miss Lesbian London, being seen on the town and having everybody know who I was, but I didn’t want that.”

As a mother, Rodgerson was no keener to become London’s lesbian It Girl, but the editor’s platform was attractive to someone who had “always wanted to be a magazine editor, ever since I was a little girl.” After working at The Body Politic, and spending a year and a half at the helm of Capital Gay, Rodgerson had arrived at her dream job as the new editor of DIVA. “I’d worked in the gay press for a very long time and I had always written about men and women. It was very exciting to be able to do something that was just aimed at dykes.” Rodgerson also had the comfort of knowing that she had inherited a success: DIVA had grown from a print run of 8000 to 30,000 in its first 17 issues, and its new editor loved the responsibility. “I’d wanted to be a vicar, so that should tell you something,” Rodgerson explains. “I really loved having the chance to put my five cents’ worth in, being able to have conversations with that many women.”

The editor’s letters that appear in each of Rodgerson’s 76 issues of DIVA reflect her enthusiasm for the genre and the sense of responsibility she attached to opening the magazine and shaping its interaction with the world around it. Some 47% of her letters comprise polemics or letters dominated by polemical discussion (which then gives way to some brief description of the contents to follow). Such letters tend to be structured thus:

Table 4.1 Gillian Rodgerson’s polemical letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Contains</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Person reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top 50-65%</td>
<td>Discussion of major topic</td>
<td>“Coming out is hard. It doesn’t matter if you’re an MP or the girl next door, coming right out and saying ‘I’m a lesbian’ is tough”</td>
<td>‘We’ tends to refer to ‘us lesbians’; ‘you’ tends to be an indefinite reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle 25-40%</td>
<td>Segue into contents</td>
<td>“Sophie Ward [cover star] hadn’t planned to tell the world she was a lesbian”</td>
<td>‘We’ tends to refer to DIVA; ‘you’ becomes a direct reference to reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final 10-20%</td>
<td>Directive for reader</td>
<td>“Just as soon as you finish reading this magazine, get to work”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The topics Rodgerson most frequently discusses in this kind of letter are discrimination and homophobia, most commonly in relation to Section 28, but she also takes on coming out (as in the example above), partnership legislation, feminism, parenting and a number of other challenging topics. Discussing the way readers use women’s magazines, Winship (1987) talks about secret moments of personal pleasure, the consumption of “mental chocolate” (p.160). If editor’s letters can be taken to help define the magazines they are prologue to, then DIVA appears to be some way from this model; as well as entertaining her readers, Rodgerson set out “to give women the information that they wanted, and to give them the information that we thought they needed.”

Rodgerson’s experience tells in her editor’s letters – certainly her apparent care for aesthetic consistency suggests a well-honed understanding of readers’ visual literacy and expectations. As well as sticking to recognisable structures such as that detailed in Table 4.1, Rodgerson fosters a sense of familiarity between herself and readers through the relatively consistent appearance of her letters, and the referential strategies and tone she adopts. On taking over from Williams, Rodgerson restores the editor’s letter to its original spot on the letters page. She includes a picture and concludes with her name from first to last, though she opted for a simple, capitalised sans serif font more suggestive of authority than a personal inscription.

![Figure 4.3 Gillian Rodgerson’s picture issues 19-78 issues 78-95](image)

The picture shows Rodgerson in a relaxed, open pose in strong contrast to Williams’ photos; her gaze meets the camera and her head is tilted up and back as if in welcome. The sense of welcome is enhanced by her wide, apparently genuine, smile. This picture remains the same from Issue 19 until Issue 78, despite the opportunity for change at Issue 50, when a major redesign took the editor’s letter off the letters page and onto a page of its own. At Issue 78, when DIVA’s final redesign of the sample takes effect, Rodgerson’s picture is replaced; the
magazine’s new look is matched by this updated image of the editor – a little older, but in a similarly welcoming pose.

The notion of ‘welcoming’ is central to Rodgerson’s letters – almost a quarter (22%) begin with some form of direct address to the reader, and more than 40% of those offer an explicit “Welcome”. Within the body of her letters, Rodgerson switches between a ‘we’ that refers to DIVA and a ‘we’ that refers predominantly to ‘us lesbians’, including the staff and readers (see Chapter Six). The switch serves a rhetorical function: in those letters or sections of letters earlier described as polemical, ‘we’ refers almost exclusively to ‘us lesbians’. It is also pivotal to Rodgerson’s ability to establish a rapport with her readers, particularly in those letters where ‘we’ finds an external counterpart in a hostile ‘them’, such as the church or government. That sense of rapport is further engendered through the use of questions and other conversational constructions, such as “Let’s do this again”. While any questions appearing in polemic letters tend to be rhetorical, text dealing with the magazine’s contents tends to contain direct questions that engage the reader:

Extract 4.5 ‘From the editor’ May 2001, p. 4
1 Are you out at work? Would you feel comfortable with  
2 your colleagues and secure in your job if your boss and  
3 your workmates knew you were a lesbian? If you work  
4 for yourself, would you feel you still had the respect of  
5 your clients or patients if you came out?

The use of the definite ‘you’ catches and holds the reader’s eye in the same way as Rodgerson’s photograph, “commanding both intimacy and identification” and helps to foster “some kind of sisterly relationship” (Leman, 1980: 63). Further, 65% of her letters end with at least one line that directly addresses the reader. This is often a simple “Enjoy”, or “Enjoy the magazine”, payoffs that are suggestive again of Rodgerson’s welcoming role, since it offers a bridge to the magazine proper. In line with her politically committed writing, Rodgerson’s direct closings often do more, however; calling for action from the reader. Sometimes this is nothing more strenuous than “Watch your local press for details of screenings”*, but often requires something more:

Extract 4.6 ‘From the editor’ February 2000, p. 4
1 Now it’s up to each of us to do our bit to make sure we  
2 win: lobby your MP, write to the members of the House  
3 of Lords, talk to all your straight friends and make sure
Rodgerson wanted to entertain women, to provide a place where they could talk about their lives without looking over their shoulders and where they could find pride in their sexual identities. These were things that still had to be fought for beyond the confines of magazines like *DIVA*, or lesbian bars, and Rodgerson felt bound to her readers by the desire to fight this fight. Looking at Rodgerson’s letters, her investment in gay politics, but in particular in *DIVA* – her very personal sense of responsibility and aspiration for the magazine – is clear. Like Williams, she sometimes uses first-person narratives to illustrate the topics her letters address. However, Rodgerson often refers to her own feelings when anticipating readers’ enjoyment of the magazine, using ‘I’ where one might expect to see ‘we’ (at *DIVA*) - even in letters where she also uses ‘we’ to describe the editorial team.

*Extract 4.7 ‘From the editor’ May 2000, p. 4*

1 I’m really excited about *DIVA*’s latest project. We’re
2 launching our first list of original fiction with Jenny
3 Roberts’ thriller, Needle Point.

For Rodgerson, editing *DIVA* “wasn’t just work; it was my life”. In her readers, she hoped to see her own commitment and enthusiasm mirrored.

4.2.2 The imagined reader

An implicit part of the process of writing – and editing – is creating a dialogue with an imagined reader. This is particularly the case for magazines; although *DIVA* does not fit comfortably into the ‘mental chocolate’ model (Winship 1987); it is ultimately a pleasurable consumption, which helps to fulfill readers’ desire for information and identification (Caldas-Coulthard 1996). This research must therefore take account of *DIVA*’s imagined reader, and how far writers go to address her.

While the hundreds of other women’s titles identify a readership (implicitly or explicitly) characterised by, for instance, age, class or race, *DIVA* readers have nothing greater in common than their attraction to other women. According to Louise Carolin, “It’s incredibly hard not having a defined readership. It’s a constant challenge, we have to try and squish in many different
kinds of lesbians.” As far as she could, Williams resisted the idea of having to represent the whole community in one magazine. “I never felt the need to be representative of ‘the community’; DIVA was a magazine you could buy if you wanted to and not buy if you didn’t like it,” she remembers. “That said, it did address a whole new constituency we didn’t even know was there. You’d get letters from people who hadn’t seen anything like it, and you thought, ‘Bloody hell, this is having an impact’. For so long, lesbians had been treated as these outsiders – the magazine was there to welcome them home to a warm, acceptable, public, visible place.”

In reality, Williams and Millivres had little idea of their readership demographic; although DIVA often had a presence at public events, Williams remembers rarely engaging in any marketing or readership surveys. “We had our subscription list, so I knew they were all over the place, but I never knew about the readers in a very focused way.” The magazine being so young, interaction between DIVA and its readers was rarely at the level experienced by subsequent editors while Williams was at the helm - “we were just grateful to get any letters at that point.” So Williams wrote according to her own vision of what the magazine should be about. “The reader I envisaged and wrote for was someone like me at the time: people that are politically engaged but aspirational at the same time. People who wanted to obtain equal rights but were also interested in gossip about lesbians and popular culture.” This supports McRobbie’s (1996: 179) suggestion that producers “consider themselves to be creating a product for themselves and their friends”.

Rodgerson also suggests she produced DIVA with someone like herself in mind but, by contrast, she had a very clear idea of her readership. She implemented biennial sex surveys, which as well as asking about their sexual activities and preferences, collected readers’ details. “I knew our readers inside and out. The average DIVA reader was a 36-year-old nurse, who lived in Bristol, and her girlfriend was a social worker, and she had some kind of pet. And she had a child and she and her girlfriend had been together probably between five and eight years.” Although such a precise picture of the average reader proved useful in certain contexts, such as selling advertising space, it did not, Rodgerson insists, direct her writing. “I didn’t really picture this nurse in Bristol. She was the average DIVA reader; those women who were nurses and teachers and social workers and local government employees were the bulk of our readers. But we
also had a huge range of readers. Our oldest reader was 82, and our youngest reader was probably 13.”

Rodgerson was able to grasp the full scope of DIVA’s readership thanks to the by-now busy lines of communication between reader and magazine. Because the magazine spoke to an audience that had previously been ignored, there was a great sense of ownership amongst readers of DIVA: “People cared so much about what went into the magazine and what didn’t; I really was entrusted with this tremendous thing,” says Rodgerson. Readers’ suggestions enabled her to gauge how successful DIVA was in reaching and inspiring the large numbers of women who felt entitled to be addressed by the magazine. Like Williams before her, Rodgerson was well aware that her readers might come from any walk of life and “tried not to make assumptions. I tried to reflect a range of ways of living.” In order to ensure DIVA included racially diverse images Rodgerson, like Williams, used photographers from diverse racial backgrounds; commissioned copy to appeal to young and old; and that might mean something to, or at least interest, both those women enjoying the London scene and those in more isolated, rural locations. She wanted to package lesbian identity as something everyone could enjoy, regardless of their wealth or education. “DIVA had to be all things to all readers and they all got angry if they felt ignored. Women had to find at least one thing in each issue that would make them feel it was worth picking up.”

That, it seems, was the biggest challenge for both editors, however well they knew each and every reader. DIVA needed to make sense to the 36-year-old nurse in Bristol as much as to the teenager and the octogenarian. This is reflected in the eclectic mix of topics covered by DIVA across the course of its first decade – in total 86 discrete topics were identified during content analysis (see Chapter Five). According to Rodgerson, “there was no consensus on what people wanted from DIVA. They wanted everything.”

4.3 Routines and practices: the day-to-day production of DIVA

Beyond considering the editors, their goals and who they produced DIVA for, it is important to consider the circumstances in which it was produced, taking into account the “chronological and sociocultural anchoring” (Blommaert 1999: 6) of the texts and discourses under analysis. In the case of DIVA, that anchor is made up, in part, of the institutional setting of publishers Millivres Prowler, and
the norms, routines and practices that make up day-to-day professional life (Fairclough 1995a).

Although *DIVA* was launched as a commercial venture by Millivres, its production was limited by the resources the company was prepared to invest in it. When Millivres agreed to a trial issue, Williams was employed full-time as a news reporter for *Gay Times*; she would have to put at least the first issue together in her own time. “It was really only me, my mates, and a lot of goodwill [that got the magazine off the ground].” Williams worked alone a lot of the time, was rarely able to plan future issues and, like her predecessors in lesbian publishing (Chapter One), relied to a certain extent on her existing support network – the first cover image was shot by Williams’s housemate, a commercial photographer.

In this instance, she was pleased with the strength of the resulting image. Often, however, Williams was left frustrated by the gap between the magazine she wanted to produce and the one she was able to produce: she had hoped *DIVA* would match other professional magazines but found that impossible to achieve within budget. “There were never enough resources; it was all done on a wing and a prayer.”

![Figure 4.4 First cover](image)

The small staff usually consisted of freelance contributors and other members of the *Gay Times* team: “[Millivres] used the staff there, so that they didn’t incur any extra costs. It amazes me now to pick up the magazine and see how many people are working on it, how much it’s expanded.” When Williams asked for a designer, she was given *Gay Times*’s advertising layout co-ordinator. “She was pretty much in sole charge of the layout. She did a great job, but she wasn’t a designer. It bugged me that she wasn’t a professional designer.” Williams was also aggravated by the inevitable number of errors that turned up in a magazine so sparsely staffed. “After each one came out I couldn’t bear to look at it for at least a year. I always saw the faults and I always wanted it to be better.” Another consequence of this small-scale production was that saying ‘No’ to copy was virtually impossible. “The magazine was being produced on a shoestring by a very, very small group of people,” remembers Carolin. “It wasn’t always as consciously edited as it is now. I almost never, when I pitched an article, had it knocked back.”
These factors play as important a part in analysing and interpreting the magazine as they did in its production at the time; editorial decisions are not straightforwardly considered ‘choices’. Another key factor was the lack of competition: *Phase*, a gay and lesbian magazine launched at the same time as *DIVA* by a collection of well-financed writers, lasted a handful of issues before folding. *Shebang* had been launched by then rival publishers *The Pink Paper* in 1992 but collapsed by the mid 1990s, as did *Lesbian London*. When Rodgerson was editor of *Capital Gay*, she enjoyed an “intense” rivalry with *The Pink Paper*; the resulting one-up-manship helped each publication to chase bigger and better covers and content.

Eventually, Williams tired of the time and energy *DIVA* demanded. “It got on top of me, all the work. I just sort of bummed out.” Williams’ departure prompted little change in the way Millivres produced *DIVA*, however; succeeding editor Rodgerson continued with a small team. “When I started there was me, Elizabeth Grant, who did all the design and layout, and Kim Watson, who did all the ad sales and stuff like that. We did the magazine for quite a long time just the three of us.” The small team meant that, like Williams before her, Rodgerson assumed a lot of responsibility for putting the magazine together. “Millivres trusted me entirely. *DIVA* was my baby, and I made the decisions. And of course I was responsible for those decisions – if they’d gone wrong, I wasn’t going to take all the freedom without the responsibility.”

Rodgerson relied on a growing pool of contributors, which limited the scope for editorial intervention or the enforcement of a style guide. “We had so many contributors that on the whole it had to be a fairly light editorial hand on a lot of the copy.” Like Williams, Rodgerson chose contributors whose take on certain subjects would offer something new or interesting, but found the still-tight budget something of a hindrance. “If I had to do it over again it would be different,” she says. “I would have gone out and found more people, asked more people to write for the magazine. But I had to find writers who would write for the rates that we could pay, and they were pretty damn low.” With copy coming from several places for each issue, planning remained difficult; Rodgerson could plan two issues ahead, even once the magazine went monthly in May 1998. “The planning was tough. I’m notoriously bad at forward planning, as my colleagues would tell you. There were a few issues that we did every year: the film issue, the sex issue, the breast cancer issue, and we certainly planned those in advance.”
Although DIVA was filled by contributors for the most part, Rodgerson rarely committed to regular lifestyle columns, because “that’s a chunk of editorial space that you’re giving somebody else responsibility for.” As the magazine grew older, more regular columnists did appear and overall the staff, and the magazine, grew larger. Today DIVA is put together by a team of 22\textsuperscript{10}, but before 2004 the magazine’s success rested on the shoulders of relatively few people. The future was always dependant on the magazine’s continued financial wellbeing. According to Rodgerson, “DIVA always pulled her financial weight. She wouldn’t have survived if she didn’t.”

### 4.4 Financing DIVA

Though both editors characterise DIVA as a kind of gift to British lesbians starved of positive media representation and social networking opportunities – “DIVA belonged to the community” according to Rodgerson – the magazine was always expected to make money to guarantee its longevity. Williams was aware from the moment her employers agreed to a pilot magazine that financial success “was the reason for its existence.” Although Williams suspects that DIVA was able initially to make money as a result of the free labour that she put into the magazine, she felt it was important that DIVA operated on a commercial basis. “At that time, there was an assumption that anything to do with lesbians would be free because they didn’t have any disposable income. I thought that was disempowering, like we didn’t deserve anything you might have to pay for. We always got bad commercial realities, and that poverty mentality limited the scope of expectation.\textsuperscript{11}“ She adds that, “Capital and resources were key and Millivres had those in place for us to commandeer.” Though Rodgerson emphasises and applauds Williams’ initiative and vision, she too recognises the significance of being part of Millivres in DIVA’s unprecedented success. “Millivres’ money allowed DIVA to hit the ground running,” she says.

Table 4.2 (below) shows the cost of producing each issue of DIVA based on annual averages: the income generated by magazine sales\textsuperscript{12}; income generated by ad sales\textsuperscript{13}; and the average difference between cost and income per issue. Millivres launched cautiously, spending relatively modestly\textsuperscript{14} on their new title, which broke even within three years (Figure 4.5). These figures are estimated averages, and do not take account of moderate income from subscriptions and mail order\textsuperscript{15}, but highlight a fairly significant financial shortfall, around 90% of
Table 4.2 DIVA production costs and income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average cost per issue</th>
<th>Income from:</th>
<th>Cost/income differential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cover price</td>
<td>Ad sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
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<td>8569</td>
<td>3840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>22000</td>
<td>11787</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>2004</td>
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</table>

Figure 4.5 Showing DIVA’s profitability
which was met by the publisher. Unlike the collectives who had previously published lesbian or alternative magazines\textsuperscript{16}, Millivres was in a position to play a long game, investing around £384,000 in \textit{DIVA}'s first three years in print at a loss of around £96,000 (25\%). They were encouraged in this endeavour by the first issue selling out 8000 copies, and circulation almost doubling to 15,000 within two years. The move to monthly publication appears to be related to an increase in profitability in 1999. According to Watson, “In terms of marketing and distribution, it’s so much more logical to [publish monthly]. \textit{DIVA} really built up momentum from that moment on.” By 2001, \textit{DIVA} was making a profit of around at least £13,000 per issue and the upward trend after a huge increase in production costs in 2002 (Figure 4.5) appears set to continue.

\textit{DIVA} is currently able to meet around half of its production costs through advertising sales, which is typical for consumer and lifestyle magazines (Bignell 2002), but this has not always been the case. In 1994, \textit{DIVA}'s advertising income accounted for 16\% of production costs, rising to 42\% by 2004 (Figure 4.5).

\textbf{Table 4.3 How \textit{DIVA} is constituted}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Editorial (Mean) % / pages</th>
<th>Advertising % / pages</th>
<th>Advertorial % / pages</th>
<th>Classified % / pages</th>
<th>Personals % / pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04/94 - 02/96</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/96 - 02/98</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/98 - 05/99</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/99 - 05/00</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/00 - 05/01</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/01 - 05/02</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/02 - 05/03</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/03 - 04/04</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 breaks down \textit{DIVA}'s content, classified by function, across the sample; the first column shows mean percentage space per issue, the second, mean pages per issue. Typically, women’s/consumer magazines feature adverts in a 1:1 ratio with editorial content (Gill 2006); the ratio of advertising to editorial content in \textit{DIVA} does not initially meet typical levels (beginning in 1994 with
over 70% of space devoted to editorial copy), but gradually rises towards matching them in the last two years of the sample. In contrast, the percentage of the magazine devoted to advertising remains reasonably steady. However, the magazine grows from 64 to 100 pages in this time, a 55% increase. Editorial content, therefore, in fact remains reasonably constant – 46.6 pages on average between 1994 and 1996, and 49.4 pages between 2003 and 2004. By contrast, advertising (considered separately to classified ads and so on), occupies 14 pages of the average issue before February 1996, a figure that gradually swells to 23.5 pages by June 2003.

A pattern of growth is perhaps predictable for the period in which a newly-launched title establishes itself, its brand and the identity of the consumers available to advertisers. Attracting advertisers, however, has long been crucial in providing magazines with revenue (Gough-Yates 2003; Winship 1987); the gradual growth that DIVA shows, and the high proportion of editorial content that it begins with seem to reflect something unique to a lesbian magazine at this time. Launched at the same time as DIVA, gay and lesbian magazine Phase was able to attract major advertisers. “We were always a bit jealous,” recalls Williams. “Few mainstream advertisers came on board with us.” Although the pink pound aroused huge corporate interest in the 1990s, advertisers quickly decided gay men had the more attractive income profile (Fejes 2003). In her time as editor, Rodgerson was unable to persuade Tampax, owned by the UK’s highest spenders on women’s magazine advertising Procter&Gamble\textsuperscript{17}, to advertise in DIVA, and French Connection long refused to supply their clothes for photo shoots. Even now, according to Watson, advertisers see the lesbian market as a niche of the gay market in general.

For potential DIVA advertisers there was the added disincentive of the editors’ refusal to guarantee what Gloria Steinem, the founder of Ms. magazine who experienced similar difficulties, calls “complementary copy” (Steinem 1994: 223). Plus, Rodgerson at times argued against advertising certain products typically seen in women’s magazines. “There were choices I could have made that would have brought more money in,” she says, “but I didn’t want to make them. I didn’t want diet products in the magazine because I think they make women feel bad about their bodies.” The collective launching feminist magazine Spare Rib in 1972 decided against including advertisements at all, precisely because of their tendency to “undermine the stance of [feminist] topics and conjure up a world
where women’s consciousness is unchanging” (Rowe 1982: 20). As part of a commercial publisher, however, DIVA had to generate some larger scale advertising income. Standard advertising space was occasionally bought by large, mainstream – in particular alcohol and tobacco – companies, but this space was overwhelmingly dominated by smaller companies operating within the gay market. Five categories of advertiser purchase most space, most frequently across the sample: ‘days and nights out’; ‘arts and culture’; ‘financial/legal/residential’; ‘travel’; and ‘sex accessories’.

These account for 67.5% of advertising in DIVA’s first decade. Mastin et al. (2004) found advertising in women’s magazines in the 1990s dominated by products concerned with personal and domestic appearance. Adverts for financial services and the like are conspicuous by their rarity; the authors conclude that despite their changing social roles, women are still treated by magazines and their advertisers as having no responsibility for “important product purchase decisions” (ibid. 229). In the year July 2007-2008, 74% of money spent on advertising by the 50 biggest spenders in British women’s magazines was spent by companies whose brand portfolio revolves solely or predominantly around toiletries (cosmetics, fragrances, skincare) and apparel and accessories. By contrast, just over 2% of advertisements in DIVA were coded as selling “fashion/beauty” products. In her recent work on magazine advertisements, Milillo (2008) found those in lesbian titles were “more likely to sell products that engendered community…whereas mainstream advertisements more often sold products that emphasized the self” (p. 381). The dominance of these five categories in DIVA, though they are not entirely divorced from consumption, suggest that here, readers are also targeted as women in control of their lives, with disposable income to spend on participation in public (sub)culture rather than their appearances.

The graphs below break down the top five categories of advertisement chronologically by frequency (Figure 4.6) and by size (Figure 4.7):
They show two noteworthy trends. First, adverts for financial/legal services peak (frequency) in 2002, with 17% of all adverts. This was a time of relatively rapid legislative change, with immigration policy, workplace codes of practice, the military ban on homosexuals, adoption rights, tenancy rights, age of consent laws and same-sex partnership registers being changed, repealed or created. This is also when recruitment advertising peaks (ranking sixth by frequency and size), and when adverts for adoption and insemination services leap from virtual non-existence to a 4% ad space presence. These coincidences suggest
that *DIVA* readers are targeted not just as consumers of goods, but as active citizens in a changing democracy.

Second, the presence of adverts for sex accessories in the top five reflects a reasonably consistent presence; even in 1994-1996 they account for almost 10% of adverts. Their inclusion in significant volume is not unrelated to the reluctance of some mainstream advertisers to buy space in *DIVA*, but Rodgerson refused to sanitise the magazine in return for corporate revenue. “I didn’t want people putting on their white gloves and pretending sex didn’t exist.” There were also readers who objected to the adverts, some of which showed models posing in harnesses with dildos (Figure 4.8)

“Those adverts were a big issue,” remembers Rodgerson. “People would say that they didn’t want them because it meant they couldn’t show it to their mum or their kids. My attitude was, ‘I’m really happy if your mum or your kids want to read *DIVA*, but I’m not publishing it for them’.”

**Figure 4.8 Advert placed by Babes-n-horny**

Always focused on *DIVA*’s role as an information provider in a community that could be difficult for women to find otherwise, Rodgerson was also conscious that *DIVA* might be the only means by which women were able to explore their sexuality. “Where the heck else are you going to be able to buy that kind of stuff? Sex is an important part of lesbian identity, and I wasn’t going to marginalise those lesbian-owned, lesbian-run businesses who performed a tremendous service in the community.” Rodgerson’s stance contradicts findings by Sender (2001; 2003) and Driver (2007), who suggest that gay magazines desexualise their products to attract and keep national advertisers.21

In order to mitigate the impact of major advertisers’ reluctance to buy space in *DIVA*, its makers devoted increasing pages to small classified and personal ads – from 3.8% to 23.4% of magazine space in 10 years. Of the 36 pages the magazine gains in its first decade, 20.7 are given over to small ads (Table 4.3, above). The ‘*DIVA* directory’ typically housed advertisements or listings for services, publications and groups targeted very specifically at the
lesbian market. These adverts allowed *DIVA* editorial freedom: “If you have a really broad ad base with lots of small ads, no one advertiser controls you,” says Rodgerson, “You don’t want to be in a position where you can’t afford for that company to go bust.” Her preference was not entirely motivated by fiscal pragmatism, however. She also felt that small ads would better connect and serve readers. Classified adverts allowed small-budget, gay-run businesses to “contribute to the conversation amongst the community”, a feature that Rodgerson considered “really, really important.”

Conversation was also at the heart of the growth of personal ads in *DIVA*. When the magazine began, personal ads barely featured: of the 1254 pages that make up *DIVA*’s first 19 issues, personal advertisements occupy a cumulative total of one. In issue 20 there are 1.5 pages of personal ads; *DIVA*’s second 19 issues contain 73 pages of personal advertisements – an average of 3.8 pages per issue. Although these pages created more work, Rodgerson was committed to the genre. “It takes a certain amount of administration but I felt it was entirely worth it,” she says. “The personal ads were a really good way for women to meet each other who maybe didn’t want to go to bars, or were a bit isolated, or just wanted to broaden their base of friends.”

### 4.5 Concluding thoughts

This chapter began by discussing the philosophies of the two editors, finding similarities in their commitment to activism and to creating a magazine that would challenge society and sometimes its own readers. Both Williams and Rodgerson wanted lesbians to enjoy their sexuality but to assume some responsibility in the ongoing fight for equality. The women differed, however, in their comfort with the editor’s role. While Williams was shy about becoming a spokesperson for *DIVA*’s readers, Rodgerson relished the responsibility. This contrast was shown to be particularly prominent in their respective editor’s letters, where Rodgerson took the opportunity to opine on topical issues and encourage action from readers while Williams increasingly focused on the magazine’s content before dropping the format altogether. Both, however, wrote for women like themselves – committed to social change and looking for lesbian culture.

The institutional context in which the two put *DIVA* together changed little over 10 years, each working with a small team, limited resources and a host of contributors prepared to accept their low rates. Over the course of the decade,
DIVA made more money from advertising, favouring classified adverts because they were easier to secure and provided a service to the community. The products and services advertised show DIVA in contrast to typical women’s magazines – readers are targeted by companies promoting goods or services involving important purchase decisions, and fashion/beauty advertising is minimal. It is somewhat ironic that at a time when lesbian iconography featured in mainstream fashion spreads (Clark 1993), DIVA seems to reject consumerism. Overall it seems DIVA readers are addressed as citizens, as participants in a culture rather than simply consumers of it. DIVA itself mirrors this; produced as much for love as for financial reward, its editors consider the magazine a valuable service as well as a pleasurable read.

1 Helen Sadler, DIVA’s books editor, covered the role for Issue 18.
2 Which featured new on events such as Operation Spanner, carried out by Manchester police, in which 16 men who participated in consensual BDSM activities were charged with ABH.
3 A free weekly London newspaper published by Stonewall Press.
4 Paul Raymond Publications produced several ‘softcore’ pornographic titles such as Razzle.
5 One in each of the first nine magazines, a note on the contents of issues 13 and 14 and a farewell note in Issue 17
6 See Appendix C for a list of topics.
7 Rodgerson’s thoughts echo those of Dick Michaels, founder of The Advocate, who describes his focus on “what people needed to know” (see Streitmatter 1993: 96).
8 ‘From the editor’ August 1997, p. 4
9 The company was subsequently bought out by Millivres.
10 Names listed on masthead of September 2008 issue.
11 Interestingly, Williams’s feelings provide a further echo Dick Michaels. He insisted that The Advocate be sold rather than distributed from its inception in 1967 in order to earn people’s respect (see Streitmatter 1993: 95).
12 Based on 50% return from cover price, multiplied by annual average circulation.
13 Annual per-issue average.
14 Leading publishers typically operate with budgets in hundreds of thousands per issue. In 2006, Hachette Filipacchi, publishers of Elle and Red, spent more than £51m producing their portfolio of eight magazines (totalling 140 issues).
15 Only 1994 figures available. At this time subscriptions generated approximately £1200, with mail order generating a further £250, per issue.
16 Spare Rib, for instance, was launched with a pot of £2000 – equivalent to less than £20,000 in 2009.
17 In 2007-08, Proctor&Gamble spent more than £22.6m, compared to £16.6m by the next highest spender. Information released on request by Nielsen Media Research.
18 See Chapter Three and Appendix A for more on these categories and their coding.
19 See Appendix B for a full breakdown of advertising by frequency and space. The figure 67.5% represents an average; these five categories of advert account for 67% of adverts, and 68% of advertising space, across the sample.
20 Of £158,871,071 spent, £117,857,834 was spent in this way. Information released on request by Nielsen Media Research, August 2008.
21 In fact, a spokesman for gay.com tells Sender (2003: 340) that the company distances itself from sexual advertisements precisely because they are “in the business of community”. Sender (2001) also notes that though they refused erotic advertising, American lesbian magazine Deneuve (now Curve) still struggled in the mid-1990s to attract advertising revenue from national corporations.
5.1 Introduction

Having looked at the production of *DIVA* in Chapter Four, this chapter focuses on the product: what does the magazine look and feel like? What kind of imagery and messages are present? What gets written about in *DIVA*, and how does it get written about? In short, how can we describe the *DIVA* ‘brand’? Section 5.2 begins by considering the magazine’s launch and the goals that founding editor Frances Williams set, but finds that the magazine in fact took some time to be able to match its wealthier mainstream counterparts for high-gloss, high-colour design. Section 5.3 looks at the redesigns that drive this evolutionary process, assessing the changes made at each and their impact on the magazine. Often, significant changes are made to the front covers, a magazine’s biggest advertisement for itself (McCracken 1993), and it is this key component that I analyse in Section 5.4, including cover models, colour and imagery, and cover text. *DIVA* is found to deviate from what is typically expected of mainstream women’s magazines in several ways – though its covers are not entirely different from some norms. Section 5.5 offers an analysis of the magazine’s editorial content, looking at topics and genres, and their combinations, to attempt to open up discourses central to the *DIVA* brand. In Section 5.6, I conclude that *DIVA* is focused on the exchange of information and the building of a community of readers.

5.2 Launching *DIVA*

In keeping with her dislike of the ‘poverty mentality’ that surrounded much lesbian enterprise (Chapter Four), Williams wanted to set the bar as high as possible for *DIVA*. Though she had no long-term plans for the magazine, her immediate hope was to create something of substance for lesbians in Britain. “There was an element of titillation, because Millivres sold everything on sex,” she says. “But I always wanted a bit of mind and body in there. I wanted it to reflect people’s concerns at the time. I wanted *DIVA* to grapple with ideas, with the issue of the day.” Williams was also determined that *DIVA* would be a magazine at home amongst its peers on a newsagent’s shelf. “I was quite keen that
it should have all the elements that a professional magazine should have. I wanted it to be pleasurable and attractive. I didn’t want pictures of dykey lesbians holding up their pints, I wanted it to be aspirational.”

This is reflected in the selection of the magazine’s title, which needs to capture, in as few words as possible, the image and identity of the magazine, and act as a statement of attitude and intent (Johnson & Prijatel 2007). Since it is repeated on the front cover of every issue, the statement the title makes is one that labels both the magazines and its readers (McCracken 1993). Having rejected a number of names, Williams settled on ‘DIVA’ because it was “oblique enough not to sound like ‘dyke monthly’, and lent a certain flavour of power, self-definition and glamour. As in, ‘she’s a real diva’: a woman who earns respect.” Her choice suggests a concern that some readers would be reluctant to be ‘outed’ by their purchase, but that the title must simultaneously offer positive self-identification; ‘DIVA’ reflected the feeling of empowerment that the rest of the magazine aimed to engender. The decision to opt for a short, single word means DIVA’s title stands big and bold atop each cover, its squat, assertive lettering reassuringly proud and forthright. Williams wanted to create a professional, ‘mainstream’ publication that would stand out amongst the photocopied newsletters and small-scale magazines that characterised lesbian publishing. Women were hungry for gloss and glamour because, according to current deputy editor Louise Carolin, “up until then all we’d had was very home-made and not very aesthetically pleasing”. Lesbian author Stella Duffy recalls surveying the shelves and finding that British lesbian magazines “were still practically Xeroxed, you could almost see someone standing there with a Gestetner”.

DIVA’s glossy ambition therefore represented a huge breakthrough, even if, in reality, it took some time before the magazine was able to meet its aesthetic aspirations. To begin with, the magazine features relatively little advertising, and tends towards classified advertisements in the advertising content it does feature, which sets DIVA some way from the typical glossies (Chapter Four). The magazine looked and felt different to typical magazines at this stage, too. DIVA was bound using saddle-stitch initially, in common with cheaper weekly magazines like Prima or Take A Break; it was not until Issue 10 that it is perfect-bound, as monthly magazines with higher production values like Cosmopolitan or Good Housekeeping tend to be. Where these magazines make use of the spine to feature the title, issue number and sometimes contents, jokes or riddles, DIVA’s
spine is generally plain, usually black or white, until issue 63 (August 2001), when the issue number begins to appear. It is not until issue 83 (April 2003) that the spine becomes a design feature incorporating more information and, at times, graphics.

Colour pages are generally more expensive to print than monochrome pages, so colouration is a reasonable indicator of production values. As Figure 5.1 (below) shows, *DIVA*’s tight budget is visible inside the magazine too. In its first two years, an average of almost 60% of *DIVA*’s pages are printed in black-and-white. That figure shrinks to an average of 39% in five of the 10 years sampled here, between 1996 and 2001, dropping sharply to just 3% by 2003. In the final year of the sample, there are no monochrome pages in *DIVA*. In 10 years, the percentage of the magazine printed in colour grows in steady increments from 28% to 81%. The charts also show a percentage for spot colour[^5], which grows from 6% before 2001 to around 20% thereafter. This figure perhaps best reflects the struggle for aesthetic appeal on a low budget; pages in spot colour cost less than full-colour pages but offer some (limited) sense of vibrancy and design.

**Figure 5.1 Mono/spot/full colour pages in *DIVA***

1994-1996

- Mono: 28%
- Spot: 13%
- Full: 59%

1996-2001

- Mono: 55%
- Spot: 6%
- Full: 39%

2001-2003

- Mono: 77%
- Spot: 20%
- Full: 3%

2003-2004

- Mono: 81%
- Spot: 0%
- Full: 19%
These kinds of figures, as did those relating to editorial and advertising (Chapter Four), show a broad pattern of change; of evolution.

5.3 Redesigns: freshening the brand

Changes to DIVA in its first decade, like any other magazine, are ongoing – some so small or subtle that most readers would not notice them. That steady evolutionary process is punctuated, however, by redesigns on a larger scale, facelifts that both respond to changes around the magazine and also send out a message of improvement to readers and advertisers alike. The existing literature characterises redesigns as a response to factors such as: the audience (changes in demographic, attitude and subscriptions – Machin and Niblock 2006); society (for instance, ‘movement’ magazines must respond to changes in the popularity or tenability of their cause: Johnson & Prijatel provide an expansive account of the changes undergone by The Mother Earth News, a US back-to-the-land publication, 2007: 157-161); and advertisers, who wish to be associated with modernity and up-to-the-minute aesthetics (McKay 2006).

5.3.1 The first redesign: Issue 10

In the case of DIVA, and perhaps similar magazines, it may be pertinent to add opportunity to this list of factors. The founding of the magazine made no promises of a future and relied on cautious funding; DIVA’s first significant redesign, effective from Issue 10, might thus be taken as a signal of being in a position to take advantage of the new possibilities offered by an improved budget and greater security. Certainly the signs are that this is a magazine that has finally landed a permanent post and has the crisp new suit to prove it. The changes in October 1995’s issue mark a moment of maturation, of a magazine establishing itself: it is the first edition of DIVA to be perfect-bound (Section 5.2), giving it a thicker feel and more professional look. This is in part down to the four extra pages the magazine gains, but is backed up by a revitalised masthead more akin to mainstream women’s/consumer magazines (now featuring as a side panel on the contents page), and greater use of colour in the first section of the magazine. Issues after this point also show greater attention to detail – the bottom of each page now features not just the page number, but the magazine’s title and the month and year of issue. There is more signposting for readers – articles increasingly have page-toppers indicating, broadly, their subject.
Figure 5.2 DIVA covers, issues 9 and 10

Figure 5.2 shows the external changes. The logo is no larger, but the heavier type allows it fill the space it occupies; the removal of the shadow gives it a sharper edge. The strapline, barely visible beneath the logo on Issue 9, is reformulated simply as “LESBIAN life & style” on Issue 10, bold and clear on the left. The coverlines are also given a weightier typeface, and are placed and coloured in such a way as to be more visible. The new DIVA feels more confident with its assertive logo and coverlines – sure of its place on the newsagents shelf. The cover, like the magazine inside, displays a greater design sense. Redesigns rely on the visual literacy of readers, on their ability to decode the connotative power (however arbitrary the connections) of these kinds of changes. Several letters in Issue 11 suggest readers responded positively to the new-look DIVA and did read in the changes a new confidence: “It’s nice to see a design conscious lesbian magazine”; “At last a lesbian magazine that looks like a ‘real’ magazine”; “It looks so professional it makes me proud to be a lesbian”.

5.3.2 Redesign two: Issue 25

The changes to DIVA between issues 24 and 25 are significant enough to qualify as a redesign, but are not quite as far-reaching as those at Issue 10. Wordy features make way for more expansive arts reviews and a new monthly horoscope page, but the front cover does not change and the magazine does not gain pages. This is a redesign of consolidation: Issue 25, published May 1998, is the first monthly issue of DIVA. The editorial team use the occasion to have a
spring clean - signposting elements like topic headings and page numbers are altered – but there are some more significant changes to the look of *DIVA*. The first page of copy, the ‘Letters’ page, is rearranged and given a generous splash of colour. Once again the contents page gets a makeover, giving readers more colour and more information; and ‘Lookout’, the front section of the magazine given more colour at Issue 10, gets even more colour and a new look. The following ‘News’ section goes from being largely black and white to being entirely full- or spot-colour. The attention paid to these foremost sections suggests a desire for maximum impact on readers – and, crucially, potential subscribers.

5.3.3. *The third redesign: DIVA hits 50*

If its second redesign saw *DIVA*’s staff *consolidating* what they’d created in the past four years, its third is about *celebrating*: July 2000 marked the magazine’s 50th issue.

Extract 5.1 ‘From the editor’ July 2000, p. 4

1 Notice anything different? Well, you’d better. It’s our
2 fabulous 50th issue and we’ve changed our look. We hope
3 you think it suits us. We’ve put on some weight (eight
4 whole pages, actually) and we’re using a new palette of
5 colours (we decided we were more spring than autumn
6 girls). As well as the cosmetic changes, we’ve rearranged
7 the inside of the magazine. Our listings and cultural
8 information should now be much easier to use, we’ll be
9 bringing you more photos, more news from the scene and
10 lots of great interactive features.

As well as putting on eight whole pages, for the first time *DIVA* gained a little in price: an increase of 12.5% to £2.25. Although some of the most visible changes are once again made at the front of the magazine – *DIVA*’s contents and letters pages are further reworked – this redesign feels somewhat more substantial. The way Gillian Rodgerson describes it, above, suggests the bigger changes come as a result of reader feedback – “easier” (line 8) and “more” (twice, line 9) imply a previous lack – and in an effort to respond to external changes. Her promises indicate a move away from the text-heavy, informative *DIVA* of the 1990s towards a magazine for the new millennium: something easy to pick up and put down, increasingly reliant on images to convey its message, which reflects the greater social opportunities and technologies at its readers’ disposal. It also reflects *DIVA*’s desire to stay current in the magazine market. “We spent a bit
more as we made more,” says Rodgerson. “You have to look good to bring in advertisers and readers. The days when you could have lots of political cred because you were printed on a Gestetner were gone. It’s self-respect as well; I wanted *DIVA* to look comfortable with other women’s magazines. Lesbians don’t deserve second-best.”

5.3.4 Redesign four: Issue 78

In contrast to *DIVA*’s third redesign, the fourth (and final) redesign of the sample appears to be about rejuvenation – change for the sake of keeping the magazine fresh. As well as gaining another eight pages, most changes are cosmetic; according to Rodgerson’s letter (p. 4), *DIVA* has “a gorgeous new look, and we’ve changed things around a bit, just to keep things interesting”. The result is the best-looking *DIVA* so far: where a variety of typefaces had previously been used, seemingly indiscriminately, a single font family remains. A new pastel palette and greater consistency in furniture like signposting - each article now ends with a ‘D’ dingbat - add to a feeling of conscious and well-conceived design, down to the smallest detail. These changes are echoed on the new-look *DIVA* cover, where the furniture (date, price, website and barcode) has been gathered together in one place for the first time. Other changes to the cover represent a rather more dramatic departure: the new *DIVA* resembles typical mainstream women’s magazines more closely than at any previous point.

**Figure 5.3 DIVA covers, issues 77 and 78**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue 77</th>
<th>Issue 78</th>
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![DIVA Issue 77](image1.png)  
![DIVA Issue 78](image2.png)
DIVA’s cover imagery across the sample is diverse (Section 5.4), however at this point the cover image matches magazines like Cosmopolitan or New Woman with an upper-body shot of a smiling, conventionally ‘feminine’ model against a light background (McCracken 1993). Of course, subsequent cover images do not necessarily conform to this type, but its use in this issue, alongside other key changes, is important. The usually stocky DIVA logo is slimmed down to occupy barely two-thirds of the width of the cover, its slight new lettering instead given added height. Connotatively, these changes suggest a move away from an ‘in your face’ identity, swapping assertiveness for elegance and light-heartedness. The lessening of the logo’s visual, spatial impact might also suggest that its function as a powerful, positive label claimed by readers has become less important. This inference is more compelling when considered alongside the change in DIVA’s strapline.

**Figure 5.4 Changing straplines**

One of the ways in which we typically interpret bold type is to understand it as a reference to increased salience or emphasis, especially where only particular words appear in bold (Machin 2007). DIVA’s strapline between issues 10 and 77 suggests, then, an emphasis on the magazine’s, and the reader’s, lesbian-ness. The new strapline at Issue 78 offers no such emphasis. According to Rodgerson, the change of strapline came after years of debate about the exclusiveness of the lesbian community, particularly where bisexuals were concerned. The new strapline made space for bisexuals – that part of them that desired women, at least. “It was for any women who had any interest in having sex with women,” Rodgerson explains. “And it was kind of a dirty double entendre as well. It still makes me laugh.” The de-emphasised, humorous strapline, allied with the new bright and breezy cover text and imagery seems to engage less with a restrictive, holistic notion of identity readable in previous...
DIVA iconography and more with fluid notions of sensibility, reflective of and apparently responsive to a changing, new millennium sense of sexual self.

5.4 Front covers

The previous section has shown front covers to be central to DIVA’s identity and brand. Covers are a magazine’s “primary advertisement” (McCracken 1993: 97) – because 80% of single-copy sales are guided by the cover and readers dwell for just a few seconds in making their decision (Johnson & Prijatel 2007). DIVA’s attempts to persuade browsers were perhaps less urgent and complex than titles operating in the saturated, mainstream women’s market, since it was (and still is) the only lesbian magazine on the shelf. According to Carolin, “some women literally just bought it because it was a lesbian magazine and they were a lesbian.” Of course the cover needed to persuade (at least some) readers that this particular issue was worth their money but, this is a quite a different kind of persuasion. Speaking about finding The Ladder in the late 1950s, Lynch (1992) says: “I sensed that its very existence proclaimed a kind of healthy survival I hadn’t imagined possible… The Ladder allowed entry into a legitimate universe” (p. 45). Rodgerson describes similar goals for DIVA: “Essentially, DIVA’s role was to make women feel really terrific about being lesbians”. Of the palette of a dozen colours used across the sample, 38% of cover logos are printed in bright, saturated pink, red or orange (Figure 5.5). Connoting fun, passion, and strength, the consistent use of these colours helps to create a brand discourse loaded with emotional temperature appropriate to that goal.

Figure 5.5 DIVA covers: fun, passion and strength

McCracken (1993) also suggests that women’s magazine covers are designed as much for advertisers as for readers, offering images of the ‘ideal’
women companies are hoping to reach. Again, the case of *DIVA* offers a departure from this story, since the relationship both editors describe with advertisers does not follow the power-flow typical in the mainstream. Williams would not get involved in advertising decisions precisely because of the possibility that companies might ask for or expect preferential copy; Rodgerson refused to make *DIVA* a hostage to its advertisers. The covers were however, to a point, hostage to the magazine’s financial circumstances. “Cover ideas were dictated by our budget,” recalls Rodgerson. “Sometimes we’d want something to go with our biggest feature, sometimes a photographer would have an idea, but a lot of the time it was down to our budget. Our first studio photoshoot wasn’t until our first monthly issue – before that we just used what we could get.” Deciding on the final design was Rodgerson’s responsibility, though members of the *DIVA* and *Gay Times* teams were able to contribute to the process. “Often I would walk around the office showing people two or three cover designs, polling them. I would make the final decision, but it was always interesting to hear who liked which one better.” Keeping in mind these circumstances and the fact that the magazine’s designer was not, technically speaking, a professionally qualified designer, a rather different set of considerations appears relevant in looking at *DIVA*.

### 5.4.1 Cover models

The cover’s most instant message comes from its imagery, notably the cover model. Previous work on (mainstream) women’s magazine covers has pointed to a pervasive discourse of aesthetic perfection (attainable through purchase of the title), since they tend overwhelmingly to feature flawless, beautiful women and rely for their impact on the reader’s feelings of inferiority and desire to become more like the model, or at least to indulge in the fantasy that it might be possible. As Ferguson puts it, these faces say “Buy me and be like me” (1980:219; see also McCracken 1993; Talbot 1992; Malkin, Wornian & Chrisler 1999), their presence on the cover an implicit promise that the magazine’s contents will aid the necessary transformation. In the case of *DIVA*, the magazine’s value lies not in pointing to a possible future self, but in holding a mirror to the present and allowing readers to see themselves as they are in a way that often still sees mainstream media balk.

Where the mainstream cover model stares blankly out of the page (her apparent indifference confirming for the reader the need for improvement,
according to McCracken 1993), 57% (n. 54) of DIVA cover models appear to look directly at the reader, their eyes, expression and/or pose offering engagement (Table 5.1). Such gaze acts as a kind of personal address, a visual ‘you’ (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006), allowing the magazine to open up a dialogue with readers from the moment they pick up the issue.

Table 5.1 DIVA cover models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gaze</th>
<th>% (n.)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>% (n.)</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>% (n.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking at reader</td>
<td>57 (54)</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>36 (34)</td>
<td>“Skinny”</td>
<td>8 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking through</td>
<td>23 (22)</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>57 (54)</td>
<td>“Normal”</td>
<td>89 (85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking away</td>
<td>16 (15)</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>7 (7)</td>
<td>“Overweight”</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes closed/hidden</td>
<td>4 (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some 23% of covers do show women with an absent or distant look, though more than one third of these are celebrity covers, which may not have been shot specifically for DIVA (more on celebrity covers below). A clear majority (57%) of models appears to be aged between 30 and 40, with a further 36% appearing to be under-30, and the vast majority (89%) of models appear to be in the ‘normal’ weight category. Judging the weight of models was subjective, since no objective means was readily available, but even allowing for error, this percentage suggests an overwhelming trend towards showing women who do not conform to typical model ideals on the cover of DIVA. These “real” women appear to have been carefully matched with readers: Rodgerson recalled her average reader was “a 36-year-old nurse” (Chapter Four); using cover models between 30 and 40 years old, of average build and who look the reader in the eye enables buyers to read DIVA not with envy but with a sense of identification and empowerment.

The representativeness of DIVA’s covers is further enhanced by the fact that 20% (n. 19) of covers feature at least one non-white model. For comparison, in the first 40 years of Cosmopolitan (1964-2004), only five black women featured on the cover (Schooler, Ward, Merriweather & Caruthers 2004). This is not a figure skewed by history: between 1994 and 2004, the period sampled here, only one black woman was shown on Cosmopolitan’s cover; Halle Berry in 2002. Her predecessor was Naomi Campbell, 12 years earlier in 1990 (Carr 2002). The selection of models from a variety of ethnic backgrounds for DIVA covers reflects
a concern on the part of both editors that the magazine should not make assumptions about the women reading, and that DIVA offer as many women as possible the opportunity to identify with the magazine. In the case of Cosmopolitan, black women appear by virtue of their huge celebrity and currency; in DIVA, only four of the covers featuring non-white models show celebrities. “We often used black writers, wrote about black women and used black models on the cover,” says Williams. “I wanted to avoid doing it in a tokenistic way.”

DIVA covers do not offer a complete departure from mainstream norms, however. Since the 1970s, the dominant cover image in women’s magazines has featured a head-and-shoulder shot of a single model (McCracken 1993; Ferguson 1980) and more than half (52%) of DIVA’s covers conform to this standard (Table 5.2). That 43% of the magazine’s covers also feature models attired and made-up in such a way as to be readable as “femme” also suggests a certain level of conformity to magazine norms – though covers featuring “butch” women, or models offering mixed gender signals, combine to account for a small majority (53%).

Table 5.2 DIVA cover models II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pose</th>
<th>% (n.)</th>
<th>Gender signals</th>
<th>% (n.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head &amp; torso</td>
<td>52 (49)</td>
<td>Mostly ‘femme’</td>
<td>43 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full body</td>
<td>15 (14)</td>
<td>Mostly ‘butch’</td>
<td>24 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In your face”</td>
<td>15 (14)</td>
<td>Mixed signals</td>
<td>29 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>19 (18)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ferguson (ibid.) identifies four categories of pose in her analysis of Woman, Woman’s Own and Woman’s Weekly, each differing according to the model’s smile and expression and orientation to the camera. These categories did not prove adequate to code the poses of models on DIVA, however. For example, the “super-smiler”s that accounted for almost a third of Woman’s Own covers between 1975 and 1978 were extremely rare, while Ferguson’s description of “romantic or sexual” covers did not seem to do justice to the post-coital coyness or sheer sexuality of some of DIVA’s cover imagery. The ‘in-your-face’ sassiness of some of DIVA’s cover models also goes unaccounted for in Ferguson’s categories. This discrepancy might be put down to several factors, not least of all the gulf, in terms of era, production and purpose, between the
magazines analysed by Ferguson and that analysed here. According to Rodgerson, *DIVA* rarely featured a specially scheduled studio cover shoot before May 1998; the agency images bought in had to be, before all else, affordable. This meant that the photographs of celebrities or generic models, often shot for quite another purpose, did not always match the wide-grinning images adorning typical magazines. As mentioned above, *DIVA*’s goal was to make its readers feel happy about and comfortable with their sexual identity: engendering courage and pride was a key (and unique) part of the magazine’s agenda and this is reflected in several of its covers, coded here as ‘in-your-face’.

**Figure 5.6 DIVA covers: ‘in-your-face’ and sexual categories**

The ‘sexual’ images, which seem out of kilter with Ferguson’s (1980) categorisation of sexual covers on 1970s women’s magazines – she talks of “dreamy, heavy-lidded” models and possible availability (p. 227) while those *DIVA* covers coded as sexual show, for instance, pre- or post-coital women – also reflect a role uniquely *DIVA*’s: to represent simultaneously the self and the desired other. Its images must merge object identification with object cathexis (Baker 2003). And since lesbian desire had been so poorly recreated elsewhere in the media, *DIVA* covers are charged with expressing an authenticity beyond dreamy looks or a twinkle of availability. Where women’s magazines often communicate the possibility of sexuality via the hidden but implicit presence of the *male* gaze (Wykes & Gunter 2005), *DIVA* makes visible and celebrates a *female* gaze.
5.4.2 Celebrity covers

One of the ways in which DIVA appears to balance the functions of identification (i.e. in the service of the self) and cathexis (i.e. offering a desired/desirable other) is the use of celebrities on the cover: 45% (n. 43) feature recognisable personalities\(^{17}\). Some, like Issue 56 (Figure 5.7) featuring Cameron Diaz, offer most explicitly an image of a desired other; they are designed less for identification and more for idolisation. They show women ‘we’ find attractive (for more on the ‘we’ of the cover, see Section 5.4.3, below), despite the fact that they may identify as heterosexual (and are therefore ‘unavailable’ and not ‘one of us’). Alternatively, Issue 40 features Chastity Bono, a personality whose lesbian sexuality is known and which explains and justifies almost entirely her inclusion in the magazine. Though readers may find Bono attractive, she is offered not as an object of attraction but primarily as a recognisable figure from ‘our culture’, someone who represents ‘our’ interests in heterosexual society and who deserves our (intellectual) admiration on those grounds.

Figure 5.7 Celebrity covers in DIVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue 56</th>
<th>Issue 40</th>
<th>Issue 81</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adulation</td>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>Adulation and identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Angel face” – highlights physical attractiveness</td>
<td>“Belts back… out loud” – highlights role in community</td>
<td>“We love… sexiest celeb” – highlights ingroup identity and attractiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third type, exemplified by the cover of Issue 81, above, does both. The image of Rhona Cameron, a lesbian actor and comedian, provides a focus for readers’ adulation and identification. Covers serving either, or both, function(s) are an important part of the DIVA brand. Rodgerson was aware that the magazine
would always have a (perhaps significant) number of readers who had yet to come to terms with their sexuality, or who were still looking for role models. “I felt it was so important to have women who were famous who were out, desiring other women,” she says. “I absolutely felt that DIVA was part of helping people come out.” At times design concerns gave way to this imperative, and bad shots of ‘good’ celebrities – those who spoke publicly about their sexuality – were used. “We agonised over one Angelina Jolie cover,” Rodgerson recalls. “The photo quality wasn’t very good but, it was exclusive.”

5.4.3 Cover text
Images only tell half the story of DIVA’s covers, however, since it is here that they must combine with language compellingly to tell readers what is inside and why it matters to them (McKay 2006). Coverlines highlight certain features of the magazine they adorn; they are a way of telling potential buyers enough about the magazine’s contents in a few seconds that they make a purchase (Gough-Yates 2003). DIVA did not have any direct competition and was thus under less pressure to produce coverlines that persuaded readers that their guide to getting rid of cellulite was better than anyone else’s. To presume that this is the coverline’s sole task is lacking, however: coverlines sell the particular issue, but they also sell every other issue of the magazine. When potential readers pick up any magazine, they are looking for signs that it knows their problems; further, that it understands them. Further still, that it has the answers (Grow 2002). This has given rise to the prevalence on women’s magazine covers of problem-solution formulas (Machin and van Leeuwen 2003).

By contrast, DIVA covers appear to pose more questions than they answer: on 95 covers, only two coverline questions fit the question-and-answer formula (for example: “Overdraft over your head? How to get out of debt” May 2000). More commonly, coverlines outlined the question posed by the related article: “EFF-OFF! Do young dykes shun feminism?” (October 1995); “What do lesbians do in bed?” (October 1998); “Is country life all it’s cracked up to be?” (June 2000). Morrish (2003) discusses the role of coverlines in tempting the reader, “to intrigue and invite closer scrutiny” (p. 174), and certainly DIVA’s use of questions without answers invites curiosity that can only be sated by reading the magazine. Viewing these kinds of constructions in solely these terms ignores another potent function served, however. The questions offer an opportunity for the magazine’s
writers and readers to interact before a page has been turned. Often referring to a definite ‘we’ or ‘us’ readable as ‘all of us’ (see Chapter Six), these questions invite the reader into a relationship with the magazine, its community of readers and the group – ‘lesbians’ – that those two sub-groups entail. *DIVA* coverlines also address a definite ‘you’. According to Leman (1980), direct address like ‘you’ establishes a sense of intimacy between an individual reader and magazine akin to a “sisterly relationship” (p. 63). *DIVA* questions seem to offer readers the chance to contribute to a debate with the magazine and other readers, as well as establish a relationship with the magazine.

Coverlines on mainstream women’s magazines most often relate to sex, relationships and appearance: Malkin, Wornian and Chrisler (1999) analysed 12 women’s magazines and found that 78% of covers featured at least one message relating to bodily appearance (p. 651). These messages were often positioned adjacent to text on improving relationships or creating a better life, their co-textuality offering a plausible merged reading implying that changes in bodily appearance may facilitate better relationships or lifestyles (p. 653). In order to assess the relevance of these kinds of topics in *DIVA*, all coverlines were coded for topic reference. This did not, of course, offer a direct comparison with previous research, but highlighted those features frequently used to ‘sell’ *DIVA*.

**Figure 5.8 Most frequent topic references in coverlines**

As Figure 5.8 (above) shows, messages frequently relate to personalities – 20% of all coverlines were coded in this category. Sex and relationships, if combined, account for 11% of coverlines coded, while events (*n.* 29) and appearance (*n.* 20) account for 6% and 4% respectively. This ‘top five’ suggests
that while celebrities and events (like Pride) predominate on *DIVA* covers, messages around sex, relationships and appearance also play a part in branding *DIVA*. Given that cover text is further differentiated by size and position, the most prominent coverline of each issue\(^{21}\) was then identified and coded in order to better understand the way these coverlines are used – are infrequent categories in fact the biggest selling tool on fewer issues? The figures in Table 5.3 (below) show that *DIVA* is dominated by celebrity coverlines both in terms of frequency and prominence: 40% of the decade-long sample features a large or well-positioned reference to a personality (these are often expansive, banner coverlines occupying the width of the cover). Again, appearance, sex and relationships find their place among the largest coverlines, to which 17% (collectively) relate. From this we may perhaps surmise, then, that these are central topics in women’s magazine discourse, irrespective of the sexual orientation of the target readership.

**Table 5.3 Prominent coverline topics in *DIVA***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Percentage ((n.))</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personalities</td>
<td>40% ((n. 38))</td>
<td>“Nothing compares to her: Sinead tells all” (August 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td>7 (7)</td>
<td>“Playing gay: our exclusive preview of the 16(^{th}) London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival” (April 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>7 (7)</td>
<td>“Tomboy banned? Are the image police on your trail?” (May 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>6 (6)</td>
<td>“Loved up. Not so dirty, not so secret: our sex survey results” (February 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
<td>“Passionate gaze: photos by Phyllis Christopher” (May 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>4 (4)</td>
<td>“Inside story: on set with the Bad Girls (April 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>“How I met my lover: where do women find each other?” (September 2001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remaining three categories in this list of prominent coverline topics, however, suggest that *DIVA*’s repertoire of saleable features is, if not entirely different, perhaps a little more extensive. A further 17% of the covers coded feature prominent coverlines referring to film, art and television, or what might collectively be termed ‘popular culture’. These are not topics the women’s magazine market generally uses to sell magazines, focusing instead on sex, fashion, careers, relationships, health and money; in short, what former *Company* and *Cosmopolitan* editor Mandi Norwood calls the “ingredients [that] encompass
every area of… readers’ lives” (Norwood, quoted in Coles 1995). Their (not insignificant) presence in selling DIVA, then, tells us something particular about the basis of its brand: the magazine tends to the same personal elements as its mainstream counterparts, but is also concerned with its readers’ cultural interactions. On sale, then, is not just an individual identity but an identity that references an awareness of, consumption of, and participation in, a group or subculture. DIVA is sold on promises to nurture both the self and a sense of self conscious of its place in a greater collective or community.

5.5 Between the covers: editorial content

All of the areas addressed so far help to create, shape and, importantly, disseminate the DIVA brand. In this section I look at that most substantial of brand elements: editorial content. Analysing the substance of DIVA poses two central questions: what kinds of article are found in the magazine? And what topics do they address? Those genres and topics then need to be considered in terms of their proportionate presence, changes in their regularity across the sample, and the correlations, where significant, between genres and topics.

5.5.1 Genre

The types of articles used by a magazine provide two opportunities for insight: first, if used consistently to handle particular topics, inferences as to editorial regard for those topics are possible; second, the genres most (and least) commonly used by a magazine, irrespective of topics handled, say something of the way its makers envisage its role, its readers’ needs and desires, and the best way to fulfil those. Figure 5.9, below, shows those genres present in DIVA between 1994 and 2004. Immediately visible is the dominance of four categories: features and interviews, news, reviews, and letters, which together account for 81.3% of articles across the decade studied.
Figure 5.9 Genres present in *DIVA* between 1994 and 2004

Figure 5.10 (below) shows the presence of the same groups of genres, this time reflecting changes across the decade. They are shown in the order in which they appear in the typical issue of *DIVA* – though certain genres appear only after 1996 or later, the overall structure shown remains typical throughout the sample.

**Figure 5.10 Chronological breakdown of genres present**

Such structural consistency suggests a concern with maintaining familiarity and brand stability; as further genres become part of the *DIVA* mix (the first advice column appears in issue 20, four issues later the first horoscope is
published), they tend to be slotted into the rear of the magazine, between the features and interviews that readers are accustomed to seeing in the body of the magazine, and the reviews and comment pieces with which *DIVA* usually closes. What both graphs suggest is a brand founded on the dissemination of information: on average, each issue of *DIVA* contains 62.9 articles, 11.2 of which tend to be (p)reviews and 17.7 of which tend to be news articles. That is, an average of 28.9 articles per issue – 45.9% of articles published between 1994 and 2004 – were concerned primarily with imparting information, or what has been termed ‘service journalism’. “Service journalism is needed information delivered in the right medium at the right time in an understandable form, and intended for immediate use by the audience” (Scott 1987, quoted in Johnson and Prijatel 2007: 224). Service journalism in women’s magazines has typically come in the form of advice columns (Johnson & Prijatel 2007), which Figure 5.10 (above) shows to be a small part of *DIVA*’s content in its first decade. Table 5.4 (below) shows that *DIVA* advice columns are not atypical in content, tending strongly to focus on matters of the heart and the self. It also shows why the significant presence of news and (p)review articles can be interpreted as a trend for service journalism – even didacticism – in *DIVA*.

**Table 5.4 Top 3 primary topics handled in ‘service’ genres**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advice</th>
<th>News</th>
<th>(P)reviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships (44%)</td>
<td>Events (17%)</td>
<td>Literature (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming out (19%)</td>
<td>Support organisations (9%)</td>
<td>Performance (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The scene (8%)</td>
<td>The scene (6%)</td>
<td>Music (13%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relatively low percentages attributed to the top three primary news topics suggests that this is a diverse category, but that topics such as events, support groups and the scene top the list – attractions and performance are the fifth and sixth most common behind personalities – remains significant. Especially when one considers that ‘hard news’ topics partnership legislation, employment and Section 28, even combined, would still rank third. News in *DIVA*, then, not only tells readers ‘what is going on in the world’ but about things they can or should get involved in and services available specifically to them. To Scott’s (1987) definition of service journalism, Autry added the notion that readers “will *do* something as a result of the reading” (cited in Fiori 1992: 1). That (p)reviews centre on (sub)cultural consumables and events such as books and
plays is perhaps unsurprising, but nonetheless this genre too offers (frequent) opportunities to find out about (subculture-specific) means of participation.

The dominance of these didactic genres, and the relative paucity of interactive features such as quizzes and surveys (0.6% of articles in the sample were categorised as either, with a quiz featuring every 12 issues on average), suggest a one-way flow of information from magazine to reader. However, this is balanced by the proportion of editorial devoted to readers’ letters: 18.6% of editorial units in the sample were readers’ letters, occupying two pages of the typical issue. Further, the advice column that appears from Issue 20 features standard advice requests, but these are answered in subsequent issues by other readers, rather than the magazine. These genres, which allow readers to communicate with the magazine and one another, is key to the construction of a sense of community amongst readers. It is an important dialogic element in DIVA that helps readers “become a family: connected, supportive, and, occasionally, bickering” (Johnson & Prijatel 2007: 158). Connection and support are inferred in the most prominent topics of readers’ letters across the sample: one fifth come from readers asking other readers or DIVA for help in completing a research project and a further 23% offer praise or criticism of the magazine – often in response to criticism or praise from other readers. The opportunity to ‘bicker’ was, according to Rodgerson, central to DIVA’s remit. “That was what was very, very important about DIVA; to promote conversation amongst, primarily, British lesbians and anybody else who wanted to join in. We got so many letters. It was an incredible, constant conversation.”

The genre profile of DIVA, then, offers a picture of a magazine focused on the exchange of information, and of bringing readers together. According to Carolin: “When DIVA launched it wasn’t just an opportunity to showcase lesbian culture, or make a bit of money, although it did those things. It was also recognised as really important by everybody working on it that part of its remit was to provide a focus for lesbians all around the country. It was a voice and a forum.” This is again in contrast with Winship’s (1987) mental chocolate model of magazine readership, which has readers relatively isolated from one another, safe in the knowledge that they are the same as their magazine’s other readers, but also that the magazine speaks to them as a personal ‘mentor’. Instead DIVA is closer to the alternative press, which Spiers (1974: 21-22) suggests “functions as
an organising base for... groups in social struggles”, with titles acting as “two-way switchboards”.

5.5.2 Topics

In total, 86 categories were used to code the primary and secondary topics addressed in each editorial unit. Table 5.5 shows the primary topics ranked by the percentage of all articles they account for, while Table 5.6 shows them ranked by the percentage of total editorial space they occupy between 1994 and 2004.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.5 Primary topics: frequency</th>
<th>Table 5.6 Primary topics: size²⁶</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary topic</strong></td>
<td><strong>Count (%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>531 (8.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>444 (7.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalities</td>
<td>411 (6.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialising</td>
<td>275 (4.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td>255 (4.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research request</td>
<td>246 (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>245 (4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>203 (3.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>202 (3.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support groups</td>
<td>197 (3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine praise</td>
<td>158 (2.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>149 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>144 (2.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places/attractions</td>
<td>135 (2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Real' people</td>
<td>135 (2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>125 (2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion/beauty</td>
<td>109 (1.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine criticism</td>
<td>104 (1.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>85 (1.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art/photography</td>
<td>80 (1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>80 (1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership leg.</td>
<td>75 (1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activism</td>
<td>67 (1.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>60 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming out</td>
<td>60 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1404 (23.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5979 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highlighted in each table are the 10 topics whose frequency and size combine to give the 10 highest average percentages: it is notable that the topics afforded most editorial space also tend to be those handled most frequently.
Before discussing these, however, there are several primary topics that are of ideological if not numerical importance that merit attention, if only for the difference they suggest between typical women’s magazines and the DIVA brand. In their analysis of (mainstream) women’s magazines between the 18th and 20th centuries, Ballaster et al. (1991) conclude that readers are routinely situated in or around the domestic sphere. “Conspicuous by its absence and in contrast to the pervasiveness of the motif of domesticity is the theme of public and civic life” (p. 13). Although they concede that not all the magazines ignore these kinds of topics all of the time, Ballaster et al. describe coverage of these topics as being typically considered in the context of their relationship with women in a domestic setting – for example, maintaining a work-life balance. By contrast, politics and civic life feature relatively prominently in DIVA. Although many topics in this area account for less than 1% of magazine content on their own (and are therefore omitted from the tables above), 627 articles (10.5 % of all articles in the sample) feature primary topics that can be categorised as relating to civic life, legislation and crime, work, and politics27:

**Figure 5.11 Public sphere topics in DIVA**

![Pie charts showing distribution of public sphere topics in DIVA](image)

Some of these topics – employment and careers for instance – are unlikely to represent a significant deviation from topics found in mainstream women’s magazines. However, with 226 articles on legislation and crime it is also possible to read differences in the magazine’s take on their readers’ relationship with public life. Given that certain sex laws, Section 28 and various incarnations of the Civil Partnership Act were under review at various points in the sample, this coverage may not seem all that surprising, nor represent such a striking contrast with mainstream women’s magazines – heterosexual women, after all, rarely engage with legislative change on such a scale. The distribution of these articles
across the sample is interesting, however; maintaining an average of at least two per issue between 1996 and 2004 while showing spikes at those times during which significant changes were made. Coverage of partnership legislation, for instance, averages at least one article every other issue, except between June 2001 and May 2002, where it averages almost two articles every issue (23 articles in 12 issues). In this period the first same-sex partnership registers were being introduced in London and other large English cities. Clearly this is a readership-relevant issue, but the magazine’s reaction to the political world around it suggests not just a concern for those matters affecting ‘us’, but an active engagement with processes of change or what Ballaster et al (ibid.: 13) call “political progress”. This appears to set DIVA apart, however slightly, from its mainstream counterparts.

In assessing the substance of a magazine it is inevitable, however, that those topics featuring most often and at the greatest length tell us more about the publication. Tables 5.5 and 5.6 (above) highlighted 10 subjects that dominated in terms of frequency and size, and Figure 5.12 (below) shows these ‘big topics’ in more detail.

**Figure 5.12 Top 10 topics when size and frequency are combined**

The topics shown seem to suggest three core functions or foci in the bulk of the magazine’s content:

a. “Subcultural artefacts” - articles about literature, film, music and theatre, for example, offer information on objects or events that contribute to lesbian subculture; their consumption, and an awareness of their place in
this subculture, might be likened to membership criteria (though these may or may not be ‘enforced’).

b. “Being” - articles about personalities, ‘real’ people and relationships offer readers information about role models, or others ‘like you’ and how they go about their lives and relationships; they offer ‘ways of being’. This is borne out by the topics’ relationship with several secondary topics: of the articles in this group coded as having a secondary topic, 21% featured careers (8%), coming out (6%), or sexuality/sex (7%). The topics’ relationship with certain genres is also revealing: articles about people, whether ‘real’ or personalities, tend to be interviews rather than profiles – allowing subjects a voice and the chance to ‘speak to’ the reader. Most frequently, articles primarily about relationships come in the form of advice columns or horoscopes (39%), while a further 11% were fiction pieces. Horoscopes and fiction articles in particular are genres that encode a magazine’s expectations of its readers dreams and desires (Eggins & Iedema 1997), often offering judgements of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ life choices (McLoughlin 2000).

c. “Participation” - articles detailing events, news from the lesbian social scene and travel destinations offer information enabling readers to participate in the (sub)culture around them. All three categories tie in with the notion of service journalism highlighted earlier.

**Figure 5.13 Top 10 topics showing change between 1994 and 2004**
Figure 5.13 shows “participation” topics (events, socialising and travel) in a pattern of overall growth as DIVA gets older, with coverage of events showing the most marked increased in the last two years of the sample. Similarly, though coverage of personalities is reduced as the sample goes on – this is down largely to the proliferation of topics covered in total; personalities remains in the five ‘biggest’ topics in every year from 1994 to 2004 – editorial dealing with relationships and ‘real’ people, the remaining “being” topics, increases in the later years of the sample. By contrast, the topics categorised here as relating to “subcultural artefacts” decline as the sample progresses – collectively claiming a 20% share of the editorial space between 1994 and 1996, this shrinks to 12.7% by 2003-2004.

**Figure 5.14 Highlighting differences between 1994 and 2004**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary topic</th>
<th>94-96</th>
<th>03-04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>10.87</td>
<td>5.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>7.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real People</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalities</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The scene</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>9.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These patterns suggest some interesting shifts in the nature of DIVA’s most prominent content over the course of its first decade in print. Taking an average of topic size and frequency (as a percentage of the magazine as a whole), Figure 5.14, above, shows a reduction in discussion of literature, film, music and theatre of 36%; a 31% reduction in coverage of ‘being’ topics (though this is inflated by the 61% drop in celebrity content; content dealing with relationships in fact rises by 345%); and an 80% increase in content relating to travel, the scene and events. That is, an apparent move away from content focused on subcultural artefacts towards that focused on subcultural participation. Alongside this,
interest in celebrities appears to decrease as discussion about ‘our’ own lives rises dramatically.

In her discussion of the production of meaning in subcultures, Thornton (1995) borrows from Bourdieu (1986) to term as “subcultural capital” those things, embodied or objectified, by which members of subcultures display their membership or judge that of others. The term “artefact” is here preferred to “capital” because the objects under discussion – books, films, albums etc. – do not necessarily involve the notions of value and exchange that “capital” implies. “Artefact” also carries historical connotations that are important in this context – it describes items that may carry what Straw (1998) refers to as “extra-somatic memory: memory held outside the body” (p.1). In all other ways, however, “subcultural artefacts” might be similarly regarded: items or knowledge of items that construct, reinforce and circulate some notion of a subcultural identity and, importantly, heritage. When Esme Langley began Arena Three, she was responding to the historical writing-out of history of lesbian culture. Even 30 years later, Williams launched DIVA by describing the paradigmatic lesbian as a “pale ghoul” (1994: 4) wandering through history, robbed of her place in it. Lesbians had previously found a sense of collective identity in (often small) social situations (Hamer 1996), but DIVA offered a far more expansive social network. In this context the predominance of topics categorised here as relating to subcultural artefacts appears to be doing important work in helping to construct and define the subculture of which they are part: objects and histories whose connection with the group have historically been ignored or erased are reunited, and the very existence of the subculture is affirmed for insiders and outsiders alike (Weeks 1981). In the mid-1990s, surrounded by a mainstream culture curious about lesbians, these articles helped to establish the norms and boundaries that kept ‘us’, ‘us’.

The gradual shift away from these kinds of topics (though they never disappear, simply become less dominant) towards participatory subjects appears to be very much tied to the era in which the sampled issues of DIVA were produced. The sample studied begins and ends in very different times, and as the millennium began to loom on the horizon, and after it had passed, the world around and amongst ‘us’ changed rapidly. Readers of DIVA were by now accustomed to perceiving themselves as part of a substantial, if still minority, culture. Further, their increased freedom from oppression by mainstream culture
(Chapter One) meant that they were better able than ever to enjoy public and social events. As Williams comments: “DIVA reflects the trajectory of gay politics over a period where something was aimed for, gotten and then consolidated.” This consolidation centres on the affirmation of a vibrant contemporary subculture, becoming less tethered to the reaffirmation of its heritage.

5.6 Concluding thoughts
In this chapter I have examined the DIVA ‘brand’ by looking at several key elements of the magazine in turn. Having touched upon the notion of editorial philosophy in Chapter Four, Chapter Five began by considering the goals and expectations with which founding editor Frances Williams set out. These were geared towards a reader looking for positive self-identification and expecting to find in a lesbian magazine the components and production values she would see in its mainstream counterparts. In reality, DIVA took some time to look and feel like better-resourced magazines; this aesthetic evolution was discussed in terms of the four major redesigns that occurred between 1994 and 2004, milestones that marked DIVA’s increasingly certain future, its expansion after 50 issues and its market-savvy rejuvenation. As a significant indicator of these (and more subtle, on-going changes), front covers were also analysed for the messages readable in their design, images and coverlines. DIVA models were found to show greater diversity, and match more closely the image of the typical reader than mainstream women’s magazines – though the magazine showed a similar taste for celebrity models. And while mainstream covers tend to promise readers solutions to ‘problems’ relating to appearance, relationships and sex, DIVA makes some reference to these topics without making such metamorphosis promises; most coverlines highlight articles on popular (sub)culture. Their modes of address encourage not only a sense of a relationship between reader and magazine, but also between reader and reader.

Finally, this chapter moved inside the covers, looking first at the types of articles DIVA featured and second at the topics those articles tended to be about. I found that didactic or ‘service’ genres featured heavily but that the balance in the flow of information was redressed somewhat by the relative prominence of readers’ letters, suggesting a magazine centred on the exchange of information and the building of a reading community. The topics discussed showed DIVA to be different to many mainstream women’s magazines in its positioning of the
reader outside of the domestic sphere and active within the public sphere. The dominant topics in the sample, however, revolved around three things: subcultural artefacts, ways of being, and subcultural participation. The importance placed on each varied across the decade, shifting from artefacts, which tend to affirm identity through the building of knowledge and heritage, towards participation in an increasingly visible subculture. This is not without its tensions, however. In the chapters that follow, I consider the construction of a reading community, the management of its boundaries by magazine and readers alike, and *DIVA*’s handling of ‘others’. These processes are fraught with the tension of inclusion and exclusion, with validation and rejection.
Identified as gay (from being forced ‘out of the closet’)

Speaking at ‘15 years of DIVA’ event at the Women’s Library, 19 February 2009

Perfect-stitch binding involves placing pages inside one another, and stapling at the seam.

Perfect-bound magazines tend to use high quality paper, and have more pages (McKay 2006).

Redesigns were classified according to the volume and the scale of changes made. This was also guided by the magazine itself; the four redesigns identified here were all treated as such by the editors (and readers) at the time.

Rodgerson’s message appears to be borne out in the sample: issues 49 to 95 feature 20% more pictures than issues 1 to 48.

A ‘dingbat’ is a symbol or design positioned at the bottom of an article signalling its end.

‘Single-copy sales’ refers to one-off purchases from retail outlets and newsstands, as opposed to subscriptions.

Only in the case of celebrity covers was this figure verifiable. These figures are suggested ages, judged using criteria cited by Ferguson (1980: 230): physiological features, emotional expression, clothes and accessories.

This is also a suggested measure.

Most of those coded as being under-30 suggested an age over 20, but this was very difficult to decipher for a handful of models, so ‘teens’ were not coded as a separate category.

Models on mainstream women’s magazines, discussed in news discourse as ‘too thin’ were used as a guide to categorising models as ‘skinny’.

Like signifiers for age and weight, this was judged according to cues in the image, such as make-up, clothing, props and pose. Of course much of this relies on in-group competence, and is therefore somewhat normative, but does offer some indication as to gender signals.

I did not double code, though this could have been done. “In your face” and sexual poses were coded first. If an image was sexual, it was coded as such regardless of whether the picture was a full body or head and torso shot.


Cover models were coded as personalities either where their celebrity was irrefutable – Jodie Foster, for instance – or where their handling by the magazine suggested an expectation that readers would or should know who they were, e.g. singer Jennifer John.

Across 95 covers, DIVA makes 33 references to ‘we’ or ‘us’, 22 of which index a group including the reader, whether as part of the community of readers (n. 8), or as part of the group ‘lesbians’ (n. 14)

‘You’ appears 35 times.

Using the same list of topics outlined for editorial content analysis in Chapter Three. Please refer to Appendix A for further explication of these categories.

The most prominent coverline was judged to be the one printed in the largest type. Where all coverlines were the same size, the one printed in the uppermost position was selected.

Several categories have been amalgamated for presentation, in part because of their similarities (e.g. competitions and quizzes), and in part because they routinely appear alongside one another (e.g. letters and administration). Appendix A contains a code sheet featuring the original, individual categories.

Percentages shown in both graphs take into account the frequency and size of each genre. This was calculated by averaging the percentage of all articles categorised in each genre and the percentage of total editorial space occupied by each genre. For example, comment pieces (above at 4.9%) accounted for 3.4% of all articles, occupying 6.4% of editorial space between 1994 and 2004.

This structure is based on the modal page number of each genre. For example, letters and administration appear most often on page 5, while comment pieces feature most often on page 66.

Categories accounting for less than 1% of articles have been grouped together as ‘Other’ at the foot of each table.

See Appendix B for breakdown of civic topics.

Once again, the percentages shown are an average, calculated by combining each topic’s percentage share of editorial space and total articles.
Chapter Six: Constructing ‘us’

6.1 Introduction

Founding US lesbian magazine *Vice Versa*, Lisa Ben¹ said: “Even though my readers may actually never become acquainted with one another, they will find a sort of spiritual community through this little magazine”. Her thoughts (quoted in Chasin 2000: 91) resonate with Anderson’s (1991) elaboration of the nation as a community whose members remain largely unknown to one another except in their communal imagination of their fraternity [sic]. Anderson discusses publishing as a means of representing and imagining the nation, and this is taken up by Hall (1996b: 612-613), who describes the nation as a symbolic community: “[people] participate in the idea of the nation as represented in its national culture… [which is] a discourse”. Fine (1995: 128) produces an almost identical account, not of nations but of social movements as “bundles of narratives”. For both scholars, these narratives (re)construct the nation/movement and attend to members’ sense of cohesion.

In this chapter I analyse the ways in which *DIVA*’s construction of lesbian community is realised, and suggest that their contents often resemble the major themes of national identity set out by Wodak *et al* (1999: 30-31):

1. the linguistic construction of the *homo Austriacus*² and *homo externus*
2. the narration of a common political past (myths of origin)
3. the linguistic construction of a common culture
4. the linguistic construction of a common political present and future
5. the linguistic construction of a ‘national body’ (space)

Though scholars such as Rubin (1993) have noted the increasingly ethnic structure of gay identity, and an argument for gay nationalism has been made (Walker 1998), my use of discursive approaches to national identity here is to suggest only that significant similarities exist between them and the construction of lesbian collective identity in *DIVA*. Koller (2008a), too, notes the overlap between constructionist definitions of the nation and of community. My analysis is focused on the story of the collective self produced by *DIVA*, in which the telling, form and content all play their part in producing ‘us’ (Kraus 2006).

¹ Ben
² Austriacus
I begin in Section 6.2 by considering referential strategies, focusing on the use of ‘us’/‘we’ to index an inclusive, ‘lesbian’ group, and the use of closed anthroponyms to ring-fence insiders and outsiders. Section 6.3 looks at predicational strategies, focusing on the attribution of group qualities via collocational adjectives. In Section 6.4 I focus on the activated entailments of the four major conceptual metaphors for ‘us’ identified in the sample. Elements of all of these sections contain content across Wodak et al’s (ibid.) themes. In these, as in Hall’s (1996b) and Fine’s (1995) work, tradition and history underscore the construction of a contemporary collective identity. In Section 6.5 I consider the prominence of collective and individual narratives of the past in DIVA and the ways in which they produce meanings for group identity. Section 6.6 draws the chapter to a close with a brief summary, considering the desirability of constructing a collective identity similar to nationalist models in texts like DIVA, and the desire for community itself in postmodernity.

6.2 Referential strategies

Identity categories are performative (Barrett 2002): naming is a fundamental means of constituting group membership (Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Bourdieu 1991). In this section I consider the encoding of identification in: person deixis, which can be especially powerful in this regard (Wodak et al. 1999; Zupnick 1994); and anthroponymic labels, which represent and evaluate the social actors to whom they refer (van Leeuwen 1996) and construct conceptual boundaries between social actors (Lamont & Fournier 1992).

6.2.1 Addressing the reader as ‘one of us’

Reading the sample, I was struck by the use of the collectivising (van Leeuwen 1996) first-person plural pronoun ‘we’ across genre and topic in DIVA to refer to the group ‘lesbians’ or ‘gay people’. I elected to analyse the use of the pronouns ‘I’, ‘we’ and ‘you’ (and their related terms, such as ‘me’, ‘ourselves’ and ‘yours’) in each editor’s letter, since they serve as a kind of welcome mat for the magazine – making the encoding of membership particularly significant – and since the editor typically speaks on behalf of ‘we’ the magazine and directly to ‘you’ the reader (as Table 6.1 shows). The use, shape and nature of an inclusive ‘we’ here is therefore important.
Table 6.1 Pronoun use in editor’s letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I/me/my</th>
<th>Us</th>
<th>You</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>Lesbians</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Gay/queer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg / letter</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 highlights an average of 2.66 references to ‘us lesbians’ per letter. Each letter also contains, on average, one reference to ‘us gay people’. By contrast, the use of ‘us’ to invoke ‘all women’ (less than one reference in every nine letters) or ‘all people’ (less than one reference in every four letters) is markedly less frequent. These figures suggest DIVA may often be framed as something to be read as ‘one of us’. It is therefore worth considering the use of ‘we’ in context:

**Extract 6.1 ‘Contents’, October 2003, p. 4**
1 28: Out and proud: London was wet, Brighton & Hove
2 was hot. We marched, we danced, we drank champagne.
3 PAM ISHERWOOD and KATE FORREST were everywhere.

**Extract 6.2 ‘From the editor’, December 2001, p. 3**
6 Besides sex (and possibly bars), it’s our literature that gives
7 lesbians a sense of community. Many of us will have met
8 other lesbians for the first time on the pages of a book.

**Extract 6.3 ‘Lesbianism without the tears’, January 2001, p. 6**
9 Today, we are allowed to be not just visible, but
10 fashionable. We can admit to our identities, socialise in
11 daylight, and even - if we are brave - sneak a kiss in public.

In Extract 6.1, ‘we’ (line 2) does not appear to refer to the editorial desk, since individuals in that group are highlighted in line 3. Instead, since the extract describes Pride parades, the groups available appear to be ‘lesbians’ or ‘gay people’, and the use of pictures featuring groups of women further restricts the index. The repetition of ‘we’ offers an intertextual echo of Julius Caesar’s famous tricolon, ‘I came, I saw, I conquered’, connoting a sense of unity. Significantly, line 2 offers readers a participatory group identification; the public gathering of some lesbians stands for an event of which all lesbians are entitled to feel part. This feeling is reinforced by the homophoric reference in line 1 to London and Brighton & Hove. Readers’ knowledge of ‘the lesbian calendar’ (which is itself constructed and traditionalised in this kind of text) is necessary, whether these events are part of their personal plans or not.
Extract 6.2 explicitly describes a common culture, presupposing that ‘we’ have a body of literature specifically ‘our own’ – the possessive in line 6 is striking. Less explicit is the presupposition that we share common past experiences directly relevant to our membership of the group; described in this way lesbians’ first literary encounters are configured as rites of passage that shape and validate individual identity and group belonging (I discuss individual past experiences in Section 6.5). Similarly, the liberties described in lines 10-11 are those enjoyed as individuals, but they are constructed here as liberties enjoyed collectively (now, and collectively denied in the past – “Today”, line 9). The emphasis on communion may serve a purpose in itself, encouraging the kind of bravery of which the passage speaks by suggesting that readers act not alone but as ‘one of us’\(^6\). Together, these extracts construct an ‘us’ that often entails shared cultural knowledge and experience (Wodak et al’s 1999 themes 2-4), and emphasises internal similarity while suggesting external difference (theme 1).

6.2.2 Labels for ‘us’ (and ‘them’)

Anthroponyms not only name but bring into being the categories to which they refer (Hacking 2000). They offer implicit descriptions, judgements and relationships, marking similarities and differences (Jenkins 2000) and confirming or denying group membership (Watson 1987). Essentially, the categorising function of labels allows people to “parse” their environment (Galinsky et al. 2003). Previous research has suggested that labels are particularly important in lesbian and gay communities thanks to their perceived encapsulation (and display) of sexual identity (Creed 1995), their connotative (political) solidarity (Ponse 1978), and demarcation of gay ‘world’ from straight (Warren 1974). Fundamentally, “naming confers existence” (Kulick 2000: 244), and terms naming lesbian and gay people have, virtually from their inception, produced struggles over “which words capture us” (Gamson 1996: 403). For this reason I consider below \textit{DIVA}’s selection of labels, primarily for the group ‘lesbians’ (or what I have suggested constitutes ‘us’), but also, more briefly, for ‘gay men’, ‘bisexuals’ and ‘heterosexuals’.

Table 6.2 (below) shows that \textit{DIVA} most often features the closed terms ‘lesbian’ or ‘dyke’ as labels for gay women across much of the sample – they account for more than 50\% of references in six out of eight year groups, and never for less than 46\%. These terms very clearly delimit to whom they may refer,
Table 6.2 Anthroponyms by referent: totals between 1994 and 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term/year</th>
<th>94-96 (%)</th>
<th>96-98 (%)</th>
<th>98-99 (%)</th>
<th>99-00 (%)</th>
<th>00-01 (%)</th>
<th>01-02 (%)</th>
<th>02-03 (%)</th>
<th>03-04 (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Referring to lesbians</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>972 (42%)</td>
<td>887 (39)</td>
<td>918 (43)</td>
<td>757 (41)</td>
<td>730 (39)</td>
<td>632 (36)</td>
<td>675 (39)</td>
<td>520 (42)</td>
<td>6091 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>694 (30)</td>
<td>813 (36)</td>
<td>750 (35)</td>
<td>633 (34)</td>
<td>665 (38)</td>
<td>655 (38)</td>
<td>616 (35)</td>
<td>343 (28)</td>
<td>5169 (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyke</td>
<td>444 (19)</td>
<td>373 (17)</td>
<td>254 (12)</td>
<td>250 (13)</td>
<td>202 (11)</td>
<td>174 (10)</td>
<td>171 (10)</td>
<td>145 (12)</td>
<td>2013 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>185 (8)</td>
<td>179 (8)</td>
<td>205 (10)</td>
<td>207 (11)</td>
<td>245 (13)</td>
<td>273 (16)</td>
<td>273 (16)</td>
<td>223 (18)</td>
<td>1790 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Referring to bisexuals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>3 (18)</td>
<td>9 (41)</td>
<td>40 (53)</td>
<td>14 (38)</td>
<td>12 (41)</td>
<td>13 (38)</td>
<td>27 (45)</td>
<td>19 (31)</td>
<td>137 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>11 (65)</td>
<td>9 (41)</td>
<td>31 (41)</td>
<td>21 (57)</td>
<td>13 (45)</td>
<td>18 (53)</td>
<td>31 (52)</td>
<td>37 (60)</td>
<td>171 (51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>2 (12)</td>
<td>4 (18)</td>
<td>3 (4)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>3 (10)</td>
<td>3 (9)</td>
<td>1 (0.2)</td>
<td>6 (10)</td>
<td>23 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>1 (6)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>2 (3)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0.2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Referring to lesbian and bisexual women</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>10 (100)</td>
<td>21 (75)</td>
<td>40 (98)</td>
<td>27 (100)</td>
<td>40 (82)</td>
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<td>0 (0)</td>
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<td>1 (7)</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>70 (78)</td>
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<td>76 (83)</td>
<td>70 (81)</td>
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<td>12 (10)</td>
<td>20 (22)</td>
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<td>16 (17)</td>
<td>16 (19)</td>
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<td>122 (98)</td>
<td>119 (92)</td>
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<td>125</td>
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<td>139</td>
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Referring to gay men

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<th>Boy</th>
<th>Gay</th>
<th>Homosexual</th>
<th>Queer</th>
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<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>33 (79)</td>
<td>22 (7)</td>
<td>16 (6)</td>
<td>18 (7)</td>
<td>28 (12)</td>
<td>18 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
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<td>25 (9)</td>
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Referring to lesbians and gay men

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<th>Gay</th>
<th>Queer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 (24)</td>
<td>19 (76)</td>
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<td>25 (37)</td>
</tr>
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<td>19 (49)</td>
<td>13 (33)</td>
<td>11 (18)</td>
<td>26 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>16 (62)</td>
<td>6 (23)</td>
<td>4 (15)</td>
<td>30 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21 (68)</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
<td>6 (19)</td>
<td>31 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>21 (70)</td>
<td>2 (7)</td>
<td>7 (23)</td>
<td>22 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>10 (45)</td>
<td>8 (36)</td>
<td>4 (19)</td>
<td>10 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 (10)</td>
<td>5 (50)</td>
<td>4 (40)</td>
<td>220 (220)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

unlike ‘woman’ or ‘girl’, which instead are the most frequent terms for bisexual and heterosexual women. This suggests a preference for clear distinction between lesbians and ‘others’; further, ‘lesbian’ and ‘dyke’ are twice as likely to appear on the front cover, home to a magazine’s ideal readers (McCracken 1993), as ‘woman’. Discussing DIVA’s straplines, Gillian Rodgerson says that the use of ‘lesbian’ on the cover was an important assertion of lesbian presence directed at “the non-gay world”. It also functions to encourage readers to engage with DIVA primarily as lesbians (rather than, say, gay people, or women) – in 11 of 23 genres, ‘lesbian’ features more than any other term. Though the relatively open term ‘woman’ accounts for 34% of references to lesbians over the course of the sample, this should be considered in contrast to its dominance in naming ‘other’ women – 52% of references to bisexual women, 79% heterosexual and 90% lesbians and bisexuals collectively. Chirrey (2007) and Murphy (1997) suggest that the consistent use of a word like ‘lesbian’, which implies a single category, is preferred because it seemingly denotes a stable, homogenous and exclusive group.

Gamson (1996) also points out that lesbians, having made political ground on the basis of this apparently solid category, have often been reluctant to relinquish it to more fluid, permeable categories. It is interesting, then, that between 2001-02 and 2003-4, anthroponyms indexing only lesbians drop by 29%, but those referring to bisexual women, though still relatively infrequent, increase by 82%. Labels that include lesbians and bisexual women appear almost twice as often in 2003-04 as in 2001-02, a period that also shows a falling off in
the use of ‘dyke’. These figures suggest a declining emphasis on differentiating lesbians from bisexuals, and a move towards a more inclusive frame of reference – and/or increased coverage of topics relevant to lesbian and bisexual women.

In contrast, anthroponyms for gay men, and lesbians and gay men collectively, become less frequent as the sample goes on. It is perhaps significant that ‘lesbian’ and ‘dyke’ refer specifically to female homosexuals: the open nouns ‘homosexual’, ‘queer’ and ‘gay’ feature so rarely for gay women that together they account for only 0.1% of references. From this it is possible to infer that *DIVA* typically opts to combine singular nouns (i.e. “lesbians and gay men”), which maintain the difference between the two. This may be produced by, or reflective of, the particularly intense struggle for and over words to describe homosexuals that did justice to specifically lesbian existence. *Sappho* founder Jackie Forster insisted in interview with *Spare Rib* in 1982 that she did not “feel gay. When people talk about ‘gays’ I think of men”. ‘Queer’ was later deemed similarly masculine (Cottingham 1996). The rehabilitation of ‘queer’ turned derogatory labelling on its head, loading the term with positive, self-produced meaning (Sinfield 1994; Galinsky *et al*. 2003). However, “if one of [queerdom’s] virtues is the warm welcome bestowed upon all outlaws and outcasts, one of its vices is the obfuscation of actual differences between its inhabitants” (Humphrey 1999:226). *DIVA* instead makes clearly visible the lines between (and among) ‘us’ and ‘them’: as Rodgerson writes in Issue 47, “the label ‘lesbian’ is a good one for showing which side you’re on in situations where you’re forced to pick”.

6.3 Predicational strategies: the relevant thing about ‘us’

Firth (1957:11) states that “you shall know a word by the company it keeps”, and Silverman (2001) too asserts the fruitfulness and import of considering co-occurring words when studying the invocation of categories. Membership categorisation analysis (MCA) is concerned with the way people use social categories in discourse, making relevant characteristics, knowledge and activities that are bound to and that generate those categories (see Hester and Eglin 1997 for a detailed introduction). The analysis below borrows several concepts from MCA to consider patterns in the way categories are routinely determined and described, by looking at the adjectives that modify and qualify the anthroponyms discussed above.
Though the quantitative data offer a decontextualised glimpse of the association between words, the frequency with which adjectives are repeated across the corpus reveals their cumulative part in the discourses surrounding each of the relevant groups in *DIVA* (Baker 2008a; del-Teso-Craviotto 2006). Frequently used adjectives or term-pairings become naturalised in discourse, and the relevance of properties to the categories to which they are attached is taken for granted (Baker 2000). That is, a cluster of features emerges that members normatively associate with each category (Jayyusi 1984) – features that ‘matter’ in talking about ‘us’ and ‘them’, since these become predicates implicitly imputed from the given membership category (Watson, 1978). In short, considering the co-occurrence of the category nouns with other descriptive terms helps to reveal *the relevant thing about* ‘us’ (cf. Edwards 1998) in *DIVA*.

Figure 6.1 (below) offers a visual representation of the frequency of terms counted in collocation with nouns referring to each of the relevant categories: immediately obvious is the plethora of words associated with nouns referring to lesbians and the relative dearth of collocates for ‘others’. Significantly, references to ‘others’ are most frequently qualified by reference to sexual orientation\textsuperscript{10} – that is, their ‘otherness’ – while lesbians are described with reference to a relatively diverse pool of characteristics including age, race, appearance, personality, sexuality, pride and gender. No one group of collocates dominates, though demographic categories such as age, nationality, religion and race collectively account for just over one third (36%) of assignations. This distinction is particularly interesting given that only around 25% of nouns referring to lesbians were counted as being modified or qualified at all, compared to 34% for heterosexuals, 53% for bisexuals and 69% for gay males.
Collocates of nouns referring to lesbians
Collocates of nouns referring to bisexuals
Collocates of nouns referring to heterosexuals
Collocates of nouns referring to gay men

Figure 6.1 Collocate clouds
Among the lesbian collocates shown in Figure 6.1, there are several groups of salient characteristics: ‘outness’ (i.e. a person’s willingness to be identified as lesbian); masculinity or femininity; and ‘authenticity’/status. Of all collocates in the company of lesbian-referring terms, 4% involve outness, 9% masculinity/femininity and 7% authenticity and status. Their salience appears to increase in relation to the term “dyke”, in which case, these figures rise to 6%, 17% and 16% respectively; according to Zwicky (1997), the distinction between “lesbian” and “dyke” is one between behaviour and identity, much like Widdicombe and Wooffitt’s (1990) notions of “doing” versus “being”. As well as other descriptive work, these discourses all provide some kind of measure relative to the subject’s sexuality, and their prosody (Table 6.3) provides some clues as to the preferred values.

### Table 6.3 Discourses surrounding lesbians in DIVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outness</th>
<th>Masculinity/femininity</th>
<th>Authenticity/status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Out</td>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>Butch</td>
<td>Baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeted</td>
<td>Femme</td>
<td>Veteran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Diesel</td>
<td>Real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big honking</td>
<td>Boyish</td>
<td>Hardcore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obvious</td>
<td>Lipstick(^{13})</td>
<td>A-dykes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Androgynous</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unashamed</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Uber-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.1 Outness

There appears to be an association between being ‘out’ and pride as a lesbian, which constructs disclosure – and ongoing display, note ‘obvious’ and the audio-visual qualities of ‘big honking’ – as preferable. Words such as ‘open’ and ‘unashamed’ implicitly judge women who are not out, positioning them as secretive and ashamed. This is reinforced by the words that explicitly describe them: the metaphorical term ‘closeted’ conjures up images of women hiding, and in October 1995 (Issue 10), kd lang is described as “keeping quiet about her sexuality” when her career began. Interestingly, of course, both cases involve ambiguous agency – hiding and keeping quiet are activities we might engage in out of fear of (heterosexual) ‘others’.

The importance of being out appears to be predicated on the notion that those who are out are active on behalf of the community. As one reader writes in
June 1998 (Issue 26), “showing people that we are all over the place will enable closeted dykes to feel accepted in society”, and this stance is taken up regularly across the sample. Having recently been ‘outed’ by the press, comedian Sandi Toksvig tells DIVA in December 1994 (Issue 5) that she wanted her contribution to a major lesbian and gay event to be “a sort of gift to the community”, to redress her previous silence. Though DIVA is consistently positive about celebrities with some kind of connection to lesbians, the notion of community service appears to have some effect on who is and is not accepted.

Extract 6.4 ‘Why Sinead?’ September 2000, p. 5
1 Are we so desperate to find a lesbian role model that you
2 devote five pages to Sinead O’Connor, a celibate priest?
3 […] a confused, misguided insignificant musician who just
4 happened to say she likes sleeping with women, but who
5 has done nothing for the image, or rights, of lesbians.

Extract 6.5 ‘Readers’ survey: the results’ February 1997, p. 5
6 Jodie Foster has beaten off all comers (as they say) to win
7 our readers’ poll, and is DIVA Woman of the Year. You
8 gave the ever-talented and gorgeous Jodie 21% of your
9 votes – although she’s never claimed to be a dyke – with
10 poor kd coming in second with 18%.

In Extract 6.4, a reader questions O’Connor’s appropriateness as a feature subject (and cover model) on the grounds that her coming out was an off-the-cuff remark (line 4) and has not served the interests of the community (line 5). If “the selection of descriptor is occasioned by the circumstance in which the description is done” (Baker 2000: 102), “poor kd” (line 10) seems to suggest that her visibility as a lesbian ought to earn her first place ahead of Jodie Foster, who, despite long being taken for a lesbian, had not then publically come out (and in doing so deflected her popularity in the direction of ‘her community’).

6.3.2 Masculinity/femininity

Some 9% of collocates of lesbian nouns describe the masculinity or femininity of the referent, with the majority of those (64%) stressing a woman’s masculinity, or ‘butchness’. The frequency with which butch references occur does not speak, per se, of a preference on the part of DIVA (or its readers) for butch women, but indicates that butches feature or are talked about more often. Though ‘lesbian looks’ proliferated in the late 20th century (Myers et al. 1999), the foremost stereotypical image (within and without ‘the community’) remains...
that of the short-haired, masculine woman (Hammidi & Kaiser 1999). This is
played out in the magazine in a number of ways: on a number of occasions,
references such as “long-haired lasses” are used to denote (implicitly, via co-text)
heterosexual women. This is matched by talk of “short-haired” or “shaven-headed
women” who are readable only as lesbians. In the extracts below, short hair and
presentational features such as stance (line 1) and attire (line 5) help to construct
criteria for looking ‘like a dyke’ (or at least, not straight) that is largely butch.

Extract 6.7 ‘Cool waves’ January 2003, p. 54
1 Standing square on the bow of her boat, short hair shot
2 through with spray, Ellen MacArthur couldn’t look more
3 like a dyke if she tried.

Extract 6.8 ‘Lea and all that jazz’ December 2001, p. 47
4 ‘I couldn’t be more out. I couldn’t be queerer. Look at me.’
5 I see what she means: leather trousers, perfectly pressed
6 bowling shirt, shades, quiff. No way is this woman straight.

By contrast, (femme) women complain of being marginalised by other
lesbians for “not looking gay”; a comment piece in March 2003 (Issue 82)
describes one woman’s efforts to “establish [her] credentials as a lesbian: no one
believed [her] at first, because [she] had long hair”. The suggestion in this kind of
talk is not that femme presentation is not lesbian, but that it is somehow less
lesbian. DIVA appears to be attempting to counter that notion by publishing
articles about femmes – interviews with femme women appear periodically during
the sample - but this form of coverage may exoticise, rather than naturalise, femme.

Extract 6.9 ‘The DIVA sex report part 2: in your dreams’
March 2001, p. 10
1 Also incorporated into your sex play were blindfolds, food,
2 military uniforms, femme drag like stockings and high heels.

Extract 6.10 ‘Signage on the body’ September 2000, p. 10
3 Opie is clearly no assimilationist, and so, at first, I fail to
4 recognise her in the smiling portrait of a long-haired
5 Californian “girl”. The last time I met her, she was shaven
6 and dotted with multiple piercings. She laughs. “That’s me
7 too. But the only piercing I have left is on my nipple.” Does
8 she feel like she’s in disguise? “I’m still pretty dykey. I’ll
9 always have that dagger swagger.”
In Extract 6.9, displays of femininity are constructed as dressing up, transforming the wearer from their authentic selves by means of a superficial and transient performance. The use of “femme drag” (line 2) and “disguise” (line 8) flags up explicitly the notion of performativity, which may serve to enforce a kind of subaltern gender normativity by highlighting a supposed disjunction between norm and performance (Bucholtz & Hall 2004; Butler 1990). The image in lines 4-5 is apparently at odds with anti-assimilationalism – and note the use of inverted commas (“girl”), suggesting that there is something inauthentic about the application of the word to the subject. Such constructions may implicitly regulate and admonish traditionally feminine presentation, or, alternatively, index a specifically lesbian femininity. Traditional femininity is not ‘ours’ but something that might be forced upon ‘us’, that we might reject, or play with, which contrasts with the idea of butch presentation as naturally or inextricably ‘dykey’.

In Extracts 6.8 and 6.10 the link between butchness, or ‘looking gay’, and being out is clear – Lea De Laria constructs her outness as unavoidable on account of how “queer” she looks; Catherine Opie’s new, less visible sexual orientation is a form of “disguise”. Markers of lesbian style have served not just to reject traditional (read: heteropatriarchally-defined, designed and oriented) femininity (Zipkin 1999; Myers et al 1999) but to make women identifiable (Rothblum 1994) and produce a virtual space in which women can safely interpret and approach one another (Eves 2004; Cogan 1999). Since butch women are typically read by people gay and straight alike as lesbians (whether they are or not), lesbians who opt for a butch aesthetic are particularly visible. It is this constant and unequivocal outness (and the associated bravery and credibility) that has, in theory, elevated the butch dyke above her femme counterpart (see Hammidi & Kaiser 1999). The pleasure of the visibility of other lesbians is highlighted in numerous references in the sample to “dyke-spotting”, with one author (‘N is for Naming’, January 2004) discussing her desire to find a word “for that weird thrill that you feel when you spot an obvious dyke in a really remote place.”

6.3.3 Authenticity and status

That some women might be more central to what constitutes ‘us’ further suggests itself in the 7% of collocates that speak of authenticity and status. As Table 6.3 (above) indicates, this discourse circulates in a substantial number of different terms, the implications of which divide them into two strands: those
denoting age/length of time since coming out, and those on a continuum between the ‘real’ and the ‘unreal’ lesbian. In the first, women who are newly out are termed “baby dykes” or “nursery-grade lesbians” – though these are not always young women; a reader published in February 2000 (Issue 45) describes herself and her partner as “two very old baby dykes”. Her assessment of their status appears to be predicated upon the notion that even where women have long self-identified as lesbian, it is only upon coming out that they adopt the identity. Chirrey (2007: 228) also notes that lesbian literature constructs coming out as a “necessary ritual” for group membership. Terms for women who have long since undergone that ritual - “fully-fledged” and “seasoned” – suggest a kind of professionalist discourse, and on several occasions women refer to their “lesbian career”. Configured in these terms, “veteran” dykes enjoy an implicitly elevated status that, by extension, should be the goal of “new” and “would-be” lesbians.

In the second strand, of which the first is seemingly a part (if we infer that “new” lesbians have yet to earn the authenticity of lesbian experience), reference is made to “real”, “quintessential” and “ortho-” dykes. Eves (2004: 485) identifies in her interviews with lesbian and bisexual women a “repertoire of authenticity” that is also visible in DIVA.

Extract 6.11 ‘Simply Alison’ August 1996, p. 10
1 I’ve been sent along on Mission Impossible, to try and drag  
2 her out of any closet she may possibly be occupying […] in  
3 answer to my none-too-probing questions she tells me, with  
4 a perfectly straight face, that she lives in Hackney, loves  
5 her cats, and adores Japanese food (sushi?). After this  
6 interview she’s off to wire in her mother’s new fridge. (“I  
7 look after all her electrics”). Alison Limerick isn’t a  
8 lesbian. I believe you, Alison. Thousands wouldn’t.

The author in Extract 6.11 produces a list of attributes designed to construct and confirm her interviewee’s gayness. The stereotypical image of a lesbian surrounded by cats and capable of DIY is activated; living in Hackney is rather London-centric but no less a stereotype, even now; and the parenthetical question about sushi, implying a taste for fish, appears to be a play on the relationship between lesbian sexuality and cunnilingus. Since ironic propositions such as that in lines 7-8 rely on the reader’s activation of ‘truths’ to decipher the counter-code (Nash 1985), we can take the list to be a kind of reminder of authentic lesbian traits, all of which happen to belong to Limerick. Of course, this
is done rather playfully, but the use of humour, and humorous genres, in circulating these kinds of discourses may be important.

Nilsen (1999) identifies status play and group bonding as functions of humour, which can demarcate what we members find (in)appropriate (Powell 1977), and is thus telling of a group’s values and beliefs (Hopen 1977). On a number of occasions humorous genres such as quizzes and polls ask ‘How lesbian are you?’ (October 2002, p. 82), or ‘So, you think you’re a lesbian?’ (December 2000, p. 74). If we accept that humour is often used in the service of group cohesion – what Khoury (1985: 160) calls humour’s “confederating property” – the selection of such scenography may be significant: quizzes classify different responses as more or less appropriate. The staging of utterances imposes upon readers’ interpretations of what is being said (Maingueneau 1999); in this case, the quizzes’ power to discipline ‘bad’ behaviour and normalise ‘good’ behaviour (Osterman and Keller-Cohen 1998) may go unrecognised.

Extract 6.12 ‘So, you think you’re a lesbian?’ December 2000, p. 74
1 Under 150: Call yourself a dyke? Get thee to a nunnery! Or
2 run to your local pub and find yourself a man. You are a
3 disgrace to the lesbian community.
4 160-250: Baby dyke! Well, you’re getting there, baby. Find
5 an older woman and latch on until you have the proper
6 knowledge to run amok on your own.
7 260-350: Adolescent dyke. You’ve been at it for a while, but
8 clearly not long enough. Do more reading deary; consider
9 subscribing to DIVA.
10 360-450: Busy dyke. Well you are certainly well informed
11 and know your stuff but not enough of it. Been too busy
12 shagging, I guess? As you clearly have an interest in trivia
13 you might like to consider topping it up. A nice class in
14 lesbian history wouldn’t go amiss.
15 460-510: Old time dyke. My god you are knowledgeable.
16 You must have been doing this a while. I’m guessing you
17 use some of that knowledge to pull – I know your sort. Seek
18 out someone who scored 160-250 and put some of that
19 energy of yours into the younger generation (ooer).

In the scoring system above, the notion of a learned culture, a knowledge requirement, is prevalent, as is the idea that failure to reach these standards might strip you of your membership (line 2) and negatively affects the community as a whole (line 3). Each category features imperatives that direct the reader towards future action with the goal of remedying their (or others’) deficiency. Resistant readers may reject the notion that their sexual identification might be founded on
these external, even trivial, factors, but the use of humour mitigates this by casting such resistance as inappropriate or over-the-top. The tongue-in-cheek nature of the extract functions to allow the implication that cultural knowledge produces better, or more proper, lesbians to be said and yet unsaid: “the message is at once received and denied” (Machin and van Leeuwen 2005: 592).

DIVA’s labelling and description of ‘us’ helps to produce normative style, knowledge and ideal performances. Though lesbians of various ilks are not excluded – the almost constant coverage of coming out implies a diverse imagined readership; for all the talk of butchness as somehow genuinely lesbian, femme women are regularly given a voice – a picture of ‘us’ emerges in which the out, proud, knowledgeable and experienced “dyke” stands out as a kind of apotheosis – or what Wodak et al. (1999) might call homo lesbius.

6.4 Imagining the collective: conceptual metaphors for ‘us’

Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) seminal work on conceptual metaphors suggests that their importance lies in their ability to help shape social reality and validate certain actions over others. At the very least, metaphors show us how a speaker thinks about what she is describing (Knowles and Moon 2006) and what she wishes to emphasise and suppress in so doing (Srivasta and Barrett 1988). Metaphors “express the quiddity or ‘essential quality’ of an object, person or event from the speaker’s point of view” (Millar and Heath 2004: 156); that is, they are a pertinent means by which speakers reify abstract notions such as ‘Who are we?’. In this section I consider the entailments and characteristics activated in DIVA’s use of four conceptual metaphors for ‘us’: US AS FAMILY, US AS TEAM, US AS RELIGION and US AS PLACE. If ‘the lesbian community’ is imagined, then in examining these metaphors, I hope to get at how that community is imagined in the text.

Though each of the four metaphors listed has its own core notions, and may be used differently by DIVA, it is possible to highlight cross-metaphor coherences that suggest they constitute a kind of conceptual metaphor system (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Though I am wary of overworking the comparison, I suggest the system, like a number of the strategies discussed above, shows some parallels with Wodak et al’s (1999) national identity discourse (Figure 6.2, below). Indeed, one of the most prevalent versions of the US AS PLACE metaphor imagines that place as a country or nation.
6.4.1 US AS FAMILY

DIVA primarily constructs ‘us’ as a family through the use of ‘sisters’ to refer to group members, or the term ‘sisterhood’ for the imagined community. Though this is clearly evocative of feminist discourses, the family metaphor is the one most likely to include gay men – who are, at times (though far less frequently), referred to as (our) brothers. In the 1970s, when the Gay Liberation Front used kinship terms for its members, it followed other civil rights movements that had sought to emphasise solidarity against oppression. In DIVA, that still resonates; it is the family’s enduring bonds that instances of the metaphor commonly transport from one domain to the other (Kövecses 2002).

Extract 6.13 ‘Scary sisters’ May 1999, p. 32
1 We all know them. We’ve all crossed the street to avoid
2 them. Every family has its annoying relatives and the
3 lesbian family is no exception.
Extract 6.13 not only uses the ‘family’ metaphor, but attempts to stabilise the lesbian family as typical, implicitly activating the proverb “You can’t choose your family” to stress that personal differences are insufficient to break the ties between ‘us’; ‘sisters’ remain ‘sisters’ whether we cross the street or not, in a way that also suggests some concept of the *homo lesbius*. Further, family is conventionally associated with the notion of *home*, of a place of origin to which, typically, we can always return and seek nurture. In Extract 6.14, below, the author seems to draw on these ideas to produce Pride events as a (temporary) home offering respite:

**Extract 6.14 ‘Brighton rocks’ October 2001, p. 54**

1 My family, your family, our family […] 60,000 queers and
2 their dears coming together to celebrate. Celebrating with
3 dancing, prancing, performing, communing, chilling and
4 loving. Celebrating life.

The event is explicitly framed within the family metaphor by the repeated reference in line 1 and the use of “dears” (line 2). The description of the pleasure of Pride, and its reiterative stress on gathering (lines 2-3), is evocative of family get-togethers, emphasising the idea of home as a place where we can reveal and revel in our ‘real selves’ with people we love (Eggen, Hollemans and van de Sluis 2003). Reports from Pride and similar events feature more photographs than articles on other topics, and reports from Mardi Gras are described as “family albums” on front covers in both 2001 and 2002. The label highlights their role as mnemonic apparatus (Cubitt 2007), and thus the enduring significance of the past and its preservation (see Section 6.5)

Minority or advocacy presses have been noted for their role in creating a sense of fraternity (Streitmatter 1993; Tripp 1992). For Manasse and Swallow (1995), gay communities enjoy the notion of family as antithetical to the force of homophobia, and I suspect it is no coincidence to find this metaphor used prominently in relation to Pride events. *DIVA*’s use of kinship terms helps to construct a collective identity in which a sense of home, enduring bonds and shared memories are embedded, whether they are explicitly activated or not.

**6.4.2 US AS TEAM**

Generic team metaphors are commonplace – we talk about employees as teams regardless of their structure – and sexual orientation is also recognisable as
a domain that lends itself to description in these terms, for instance in the use of “batting for the other team” to denote being gay (Weatherall and Walton 1999). Though its figurative value might thus be somewhat compromised, I argue that the metaphor is not ‘dead’ (Orwell 1946/2000), but is used, in DIVA, in ways that activate notions of loyalty, support and opposition from the team domain.

Extract 6.15 ‘She left me for him’ January 2002, p. 20
1 For many women, coming out is hard enough without your
2 partner, who you may consider your ally, your soulmate,
3 leaving you for the ‘other team’.

Extract 6.16 ‘Top 10 Celesbians’ April 2004, p. 52
4 While not exactly full-time members of our team, these
5 ladies have expressed a certain ‘interest’ in things Sapphic.

Here, the use of ‘the other team’ (line 3 – note the use of inverted commas, an intertextual link to mainstream discourse in which ‘we’ are ‘the other team’) stresses the enabling/support function of team structures by implying that one partner’s decision to leave the team impacts on the other’s ability to function as part of it (line 1). Implicit in this talk is the notion of teams working towards a common goal or participating in a joint action. Interestingly, bisexual women are cast as (only) part-time members (line 4), a phrase that questions their dependability in this endeavour (see Chapter Seven). It more strongly connotes a lack of commitment than phrases like “bats for” (which, conversely, denotes a positive contribution). Both the headline portmanteau and line 5 seem to be further signals of part-timers’ limited stake in, and loyalty to, ‘our’ team.

Further, framing a woman’s new heterosexual relationship as a move to the other team (Extract 6.15) activates the notion of opposition that is central to the team domain. In line 2, this opposition is such that a partner is described as an ‘ally’ – typically used for aides in enemy conflict – before she is a ‘soulmate’; members’ contribution to the whole is foregrounded. By constructing her decision in this way, the passage also invokes a sense of loyalties being abandoned to render both the individual and the team victims.

DIVA’s use of the team metaphor, then, though it is not especially prevalent, imagines ‘us’ in terms that invoke a sense of ongoing investment in ‘our’ unity, of a support network and of ‘us’ in opposition to ‘them’.
6.4.3 US AS RELIGION

According to Durkheim (1971), religion is a system of beliefs and practices based around devotion to something sacred, which unites observers into a kind of moral community; it serves primarily social functions by encouraging cohesion and support, discipline and respect. This sense of religion – of societies – remains influential (Davie 2007), and DIVA’s use of the domain to imagine ‘us’ draws on these ideas in interesting ways.

Extract 6.17 ‘Around the kitchen table’ March 2000, p. 26
1 Help! I’m 27 and have just realised that I fancy women
2 madly… are there things I should know? Is there much
3 jargon, or a ‘bible’ I should read?

Extract 6.18 ‘A-Z of Dyke Life: B is for Bi-Curious’
December 2002, p. 12
4 … bi-curious is one of the biggest jokes on the block and
5 why the term will mean certain social suicide if mentioned
6 in orthodox lesbian circles.

Extract 6.19 Book review August 2002, p. 46
7 Specifically dedicated to that old lezzer sacrament, The
8 Ultimate Guide to Cunnilingus by Violet Blue is a detailed
9 look at the dos and don’ts of doing the do.

In Extract 6.17, a (new) reader requests help in developing her newly discovered sexuality by suggesting that there might be a central text detailing beliefs that would help her to become a member proper. Though her use of inverted commas (line 3) suggests the self-conscious use of the metaphor, the request is premised on her belief that self-acknowledgement may not be sufficient for group membership. This notion is reinforced by Extract 6.18, which features predicational work revolving around authenticity (line 6) and status evaluations (line 5). Whether or not the writer considers herself or DIVA to belong to such a circle, the article is premised on their existence and thus on there being an ‘orthodox’ lesbian life to be led. Its doctrines go unwritten in the article, though we can infer that bisexuality constitutes some kind of rule-break (see Chapter Seven).

Extract 6.19 elaborates by describing a specific sex act as something of sacred significance not only to the writer but to all those denoted by the reference ‘lezzer’. Given the referential strategies discussed above, this can be taken to (assumed to) include most readers, and the use of a slang term is especially
cohesive (de Klerk 1990). That it is prefaced by ‘that old’ (line 7) implies that the definition of cunnilingus as an in-group specific, important and even sacred act is a time-honoured, recognisable and unarguable definition. It might be inferred that this is the lesbian sex act (potentially rendering sexual relationships which do not involve cunnilingus somehow less authentic), which comes complete with a set of rules (line 9) that add questions of legitimacy to its enactment. This is in addition to positive modals in lines 4-5. Elsewhere in the sample, the term sacred was also applied to hairstyles; these examples together tentatively suggest, as did some of the predicational work discussed in Section 6.3, that the lesbian community, imagined as a religious community, traditionalises certain behavioural and stylistic practices, and that these preferences are (perceived to be) ‘enforced’ by some kind of moral community.

6.4.4 US AS PLACE

Expressions of this metaphor cast ‘us’, or lesbianism, as a world, planet, country, nation, and town or some smaller space, ranging from talk about “our world and yours” through generic references to “the dyke world” to nominalisations such as “Lesbian Land” and “Dykesville”. A number of references to “the Lesbian Nation” also feature. This is not necessarily exceptional: “Lesbian Nation” has featured in lesbian vocabulary since the 1970s16, and spatial metaphors are cardinal, since our understanding of the world is defined by space (Jones 1982). My interest, however, is in DIVA’s activation of specific aspects of the domain: internal sameness/external difference; borders (and their entailments); and journeys.

Extract 6.20 ‘Another country?’ February 2003, p. 36

1 “You’ve really left us, haven’t you?” said Lucy. “You’re never coming back.” She meant: you are no longer a lesbian. Your relationships with men have removed you to a different place, another country. I didn’t want to agree with her, but I understood. When I came out at 19 I never dreamed that one day I’d be traversing the borders of the lesbian nation-state again […] I am not alone in my adventure; there has always been a busy two-way road between heterosexuality and lesbianism […] “There was massive animosity towards men, which was extended to me. It was as if I’d betrayed them, forgotten the rules.”

[...] Of course, many women experience this dyke-flight from a lesbian perspective. Like my friend Lucy, they may feel abandoned, even if the brave new bisexuals
think they have not really left. […] Seeing your friends
defect to what may seem a safer, simpler life can foster
feelings of insecurity in the most self-assured dyke. […]

Extract 6.20 comes from an article which is entirely structured around an
expression of the place metaphor in which lesbianism is a country, and its use
here hinges on the articulation of difference. The headline questions not the use of
the metaphor, but the extent of the difference and/or distance between the two
countries, lesbianism and bisexuality. Earlier in the sample, one writer describes
her heterosexual friends’ “world as an alien environment”. This simultaneously
emphasises understanding and belonging amongst and within ‘us’. Referring to
lesbian celebrities as “home-grown talent to rival anything the straight lot have to
offer”, one reader suggests that the metaphor is ‘natural’ amongst ‘us’, and that
this sense of a homeland is a source of identification and pride.

The extract makes explicit reference to borders, but they are implicit
throughout the use of this metaphor in the sample, and appear to be manned.
According to an article in January 2002, ‘new’ lesbians would benefit from an
experienced lover who can “negotiate entry” with them; in April 2004 “loyal” bi-
curious women are offered a “passport to the Lesbian World”. Significantly,
members may also be expelled. Here, relationships with men are (automatic)
grounds for deportation (line 3); just as sex acts figure in the religion metaphor, so
they appear in a disciplinary role here. This does not appear to be a conceit simply
convenient to this article; a film review in December 1997 refers to being “secure
in the knowledge that there are as many recruits as there are defections from the
lesbian nation”. The use of the place metaphor therefore appears to invoke not just
allegiance but its converse, (at least symbolic) treason (van Dijk 1998: 119).

The construction of ‘us’ in spatial terms also makes relevant temporal
notions; places must be travelled to or from, and this journey is cast, in Extract
6.20, as one from heterosexuality to homosexuality. In June 2001, an interviewee
describes being “[set] on the long, lovely road to lesbianism”, a journey that saw
her “on a one-way ticket to Lesbianville”; in February 2003, women embracing
their (often long-held but hidden) lesbian sexuality later in life as called “late
arrivals”: lesbianism is our destination and destiny, and coming out is thus
configured as coming in.
6.5 Standing on shoulders: talking about the past

Theorists of collective or cultural memory suggest that sharing recollections of events that at least some of ‘us’ have experienced reinforces group solidarity (Durkheim 1973; Halbwachs 1992). This is because “cultural memory preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity” (Assman 1995: 130); it is at the heart of ideas of who ‘we’ are. In other words, remembering the past provides ‘us’ with meaning valuable in structuring the group today (Schwartz 2000; Keightley 2008). Wodak et al (1999: 24) found this to be the case in Austrians’ constructions of national identity, in which they found “repeated references in all discussions to a perceived common past” in which particular events stand out as especially formative or important. If cultural memory is “that body of texts, images, and rituals specific to each society” (Assman 1995: 132), and this requires cultivation - a kind of “mnemonic socialisation” via which people ‘learn’ what should be remembered and what forgotten of the group’s past (Misztal 2003: 15) - the pivotal role that texts such as DIVA play becomes apparent. On average around one article in every issue between 1994 and 2004 takes history as its primary or secondary topic, though in fact these are primarily concentrated in the 80% of the sample edited by Rodgerson. This statistic reflects the fact that founding editor Frances Williams launched the magazine because “there was so much happening, so much to write about” at the time. As a ‘queer’ activist, her interest was in new politics and the potential of the 1990s. By contrast, Rodgerson “loved” history pieces and would have published more had she not been concerned about balance and the heterogeneity of her readership.

6.5.1 ‘Our past’

In the discussions they analyse, de Cillia et al (1999) highlight topoi such as learning from the past and interpersonal similarity/difference, while Misztal (2003: 15) sees memory “employed as a reservoir of officially sanctioned heroes and myths”. Remaining cautious about asserting too strongly the links between work on national identity and my own analysis, I note historical articles in DIVA generally: offer new knowledge about the past, commemorate important events or, particularly, (re)claim heroes. Past periods or trends are evaluated according to their contribution to ‘lesbian heritage’ – at times this contribution is one only retrospectively appreciated or claimed as such. The opening of ‘legendary’
venues, the founding of key groups, or more political moments, are remembered and reconsidered in the current context. Most often, lesbian writers, poets and artists from the past two centuries are profiled; the (potential) lesbian traits or affairs of famous figures unearthed and analysed.

Extract 6.21 ‘Burning Sappho’ July 2000, p. 10
1 What does the original lesbian mean to modern dykes? …
2 Somehow we all know that she’s somebody to do with us…
3 “It’s about identifying as a lesbian and contextualising yourself in history”

Remembering the past is important but ascribing to that past current relevance is particularly so; figures from the past are not simply valued by those interested in history (line 2). This is elaborated not just by DIVA but in the readers’ vox pop (lines 3-4). At other times, the women featured have not previously been widely acknowledged as lesbians and the likelihood that they lived as a lesbian is investigated:

1 Colette, one of the greatest French writers of the last century, was an expert in affairs of the heart, and lesbian love was certainly part of her repertoire.

Extract 6.22 shows this claiming at work; interestingly, in this and a number of other articles, women likely to be labelled ‘bisexual’ today are featured. Only their affairs with women tend to be discussed, however, and these are enough to make some claim on them belonging to ‘us’ (an interesting contrast with the handling of bisexual women discussed in Chapter Seven). These articles provide a sense of self moored to similar others, and the past having produced the conditions of and for the present. “I didn’t want the women who were coming out then to forget whose shoulders they were standing on,” said Rodgerson.

Extract 6.23 ‘Well done, sister suffragette’ August 2003, p. 32
1 These early 20th century feminists who fought for us displayed unrivalled enthusiasm and optimism.

Extract 6.24 ‘Effing and blinding’ October 1995, p. 37
3 I grit [my teeth] because even young lesbians don’t know any more how their history, their scene, their freedom to wear freedom rings and express their sexuality any damn way they want is bound up with the history, struggles and successes of feminist women.
Extract 6.23 comes from an article commemorating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Women’s Social and Political Union. The addition of “for us” (line 1) is unnecessary, but emphasises that ‘we’ owe a debt of gratitude to the women who preceded ‘us’. This is at play in a number of articles, but it is in talk about feminism that the past becomes particularly important. Extract 6.24, from an article examining the state of feminism among young women, shows one author’s frustration at the lack of appreciation shown for the past. In line 1, “even” puts a stress on “lesbians” to suggest that the importance of feminism’s past trials and triumphs should be more keenly felt by DIVA readers than by other women; regardless of the (dis)continued relevance of second-wave feminist ideals, they represent a past that ought to be treasured as part of ‘our’ evolution. They are further landmarks that help to map out ‘our’ timeline.

DIVA’s apparent concern with marking the “temporal horizon” (Assman 1995: 129) – also suggested by the presence of ‘Timelines’, a monthly feature beginning in November 2002 charting significant media, legal and commercial events of the previous 15 years – likely reflects resistance to the writing out of lesbians from history by dominant discourses (Mills 1995; Misztal 200; Zimmerman 1984). The mapping of a past that contains and belongs to us produces “a visible world in which lesbians exist, [and] go on existing” (Sedgewick 2006: xxii). By appropriating events in the past as ‘ours’, the image of ‘us’ that emerges from DIVA is “transhistorical, and thus eternal” (Wodak et al. 1999: 1).

6.5.2 Personal pasts as group mnemonic narratives

Though collective memory is, necessarily, about more than a number of personal experiences recollected (Zerubavel 1997), one of the key features of a sense of belonging is the recognition that others have shared common experiences by virtue of their group membership, however dissimilar members’ backgrounds may otherwise be (Walker 1998). In DIVA, ‘coming out’ experiences are often recollected, and appear to function as part of ‘our’ collective memory and identity.

‘Coming out’ is a central experience in lesbian and gay identity; according to Creet (1995), gay identities are entirely predicated on this speech act. Repeated many times, each occasion is both disclosure and reinforcement of that identity. One’s initial coming out, however, is an important mnemonic marker between the old (closeted) self and the (out) new. Certainly, when one reader says “I’ve only
recently come out as a lesbian… I’m scared that I don’t know what to do!”18, “come out as” appears to be synonymous with becoming.

Sharing recollections of coming out appears to be almost as central as the act itself in DIVA: 60 articles in the sample focus primarily on the topic, and, according to Rodgerson, “we could have done every issue just on coming out.” Only one article coded as dealing primarily with coming out appears before Rodgerson’s arrival as editor. “That was always part of my image of the magazine,” she says. “Coming out can happen at any age in your life, I absolutely felt that DIVA should help facilitate that process.” In her work on women’s talk, Coates (1997) discusses the benefits of hearing other people’s stories in making sense of one’s own situation, and Fine (1995) also suggests that narratives of individual experience enable identification for multiple others. If collective identities cannot survive without mobilising emotion (Melucci 1995), it is perhaps in coming out stories that this is most noticeably done. According to Walker (1998), lesbian and gay communities, whose members tend to be more remote from one another, rely particularly on shared narratives. The sharing of coming out stories, which can involve negative and positive consequences, enables members to perform their “duty of rescue” (ibid.: 529) to new members, assuring them that others have overcome this obstacle, and that they are ‘there’ in number to support them. This suggestion, which Walker advances without empirical evidence, appears to be borne out in DIVA, where 77% of articles on coming out involve interaction between readers, rather than between reader and magazine: 53.5% were readers’ letters and 23.5% were part of a problems column called ‘Around the kitchen table’ (which itself supports the family metaphor). In these articles readers ask questions as they would of an agony aunt, but responses are sent in from other readers rather than given by a DIVA expert.

These exchanges, regardless of genre, typically fall into three categories: requests from readers looking for advice on coming out; the (re)telling of personal coming out stories including encouragement of other readers to come out; and thanks directed either at the magazine or its readers for help in coming out.

Extract 6.25 ‘Coming out in Derby’ October 1997, p. 4
1 I just need to know if there’s anyone around my area who
2 wants to be friends, someone who understands what I’m
3 going through.
The reader above contacts *DIVA* as a means of accessing members’ memories and experiences in order to (re)frame her own situation. The request suggests that the experts, counsellors or friends and family to whom we typically turn in times of emotional need are somehow insufficient compared to readers’ memories. In considering letters from readers narrating their own coming out, it is possible to see why this might be the case – in the extracts below, readers describe the positive reactions they received on coming out. Implied in both is the sense of foreboding experienced before the event:

**Extract 6.26 ‘Out and proud at Tesco’ July 1999, p. 5**
1. All my workmates are very supportive, as are my family. I wish I had done it 18 years ago. Be proud of who you are.

**Extract 6.27 ‘Why come out?’ August 1998, p. 5**
3. I came out to my friends a few months before my 16th birthday, and I was so shocked by their reactions. They were all really good about it.

What these recollections appear to do, then, is provide not just an account of an event, but assurance that no one struggles with these fears alone, and that as well as community support before, during and after coming out, loved ones may remain available even where this is not anticipated. In these narratives, imperatives (line 2) carry the weight of lived experience with happy endings. Signs of success are available throughout the sample, as readers contact *DIVA* to thank the magazine and its readers for help in coming out. At times, others’ recollections of coming out simply provide comfort to others with similar memories:

**Extract 6.28 ‘Coming out stories’ October 1999, p. 4**
1. It’s nice to know you’re not completely alone in the world. 
2. […] More people should share their positive stories.

**Extract 6.29 ‘Hello to Tracy’s mum’ May 2002, p. 5**
3. I just wanted to share my coming out story with the lezzies of Britain. Thank you everyone.

In these letters, readers orient to the feeling of safety in numbers provided by the shared memories detailed in others’ coming out stories, and in the latter the reader is moved to share her own story as a result, perpetuating this group ‘rescue’ achieved via shared memories. Readers’ feelings of isolation are eased enough that they do not feel ‘completely alone’ – in fact one reader now apparently feels
able to identify as a member of the group “lezzies of Britain”, and sees DIVA as
the forum through which they can be reached. The term forum is used deliberately
here; DIVA’s handling of coming out positions it as a conduit for continual
dialogue between group members. “I never considered having an agony aunt,”
says Rodgerson. “Agony aunts dispense wisdom to the ignorant, but many women … just needed other lesbians to talk to.”

Coming out is a performative speech act but analysis suggests that in
DIVA, its recollection and retelling also constitute a performative narrative: the
narration of one’s own history producing a sense of similarity and common
ground (it is becoming impossible to escape notions of journey here). It posits
each member as having been on a similar journey, from disparate starting points,
to reach ‘here’. Through the sharing of these memories, ‘here’ begins to mean
something similar to all of ‘us’ – that is, as a destination and one often hard-
fought to reach – and identity and belonging is (re)claimed and conferred.

6.6 Concluding thoughts

This chapter began its analysis of DIVA’s construction of ‘us’ by looking
at referential strategies – namely the use of first-person plural pronouns ‘we’ and
‘us’, and anthroponymic labels. The magazine, in particular editor Gillian
Rodgerson, uses ‘we’ and ‘us’ inclusively, inviting women to read the magazine
as ‘one of us’. This inclusive frame meant that some lesbians could be
representative of all lesbians; belonging was thus not dependent on individual
participation in specific events. Meanwhile labels were chosen that often clearly
delimited their potential referents: lesbians were most often labelled ‘lesbians’ or
‘dykes’, while relatively open gender- or sexuality-based anthroponyms such as
‘women’ or ‘gays’ were generally preferred for others. Similarly, DIVA’s
predicational strategies defined ‘others’ largely by their sexuality – i.e. their
difference from ‘us’ – while drawing on a diversity of characteristics to describe
in-group members, who were varied by age, race, nationality and other more or
less demographic features. A repertoire of particularly salient qualities was,
however, identified: these defined referents’ ‘outness’, masculinity and status or
authenticity. I suggested that the discernable ‘preferences’ in these categories
produced a core image of ‘the lesbian’ as an out, proud, knowledgeable and
experienced “dyke”.

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The second half of the chapter shifted to focus on the ways in which the collective was imagined, through the use of conceptual metaphors and historical narratives. I found a system of metaphors – FAMILY, TEAM, RELIGION, PLACE – that emphasise communion and commitment, encouraging a sense of one’s place and function in a support network that requires certain knowledges and perhaps obligations. Correll’s (1995) interviewees also attach a sense of family to their participation in a lesbian internet café, and though Murray (1992: 123) works with gay men in San Francisco, he too identifies a sense among participants of the community’s “central moral imperative”. The metaphor of lesbianism as a bounded space to which ‘we’ journey was most prevalent in DIVA, and Koller (2008a: 37) identifies the same metaphor in lesbian feminist discourses of the 1970s, which she defines according to their emphasis on “creating a community”. Where Koller finds an emphasis on enlightenment (which she likens to national ‘awakening’), I suggest DIVA’s expressions of the metaphor bond readers by evoking a sense of destiny and shared experience. This is reflected in the prominence of coming out stories, which narrate members’ journeys to ‘us’, serving the cohesive functions identified by Fine (1995) as well as the duty to those still on their journeys (Walker 1998). Group historical narratives, which produce ‘cultural memory’, (re)place ‘us’ in history – a kind of temporal mooring – and tell a story of ‘our’ ethnogenesis.

My suggestion, in this chapter, is that DIVA’s construction of ‘us’ resembles in significant ways the kinds of identity work found in discourses of national identity (e.g. Wodak et al. 1999) – and indeed at times makes use of national models. ‘Nationalism’ offers a notion of belonging, a sense of peoplehood, a sense of ‘us’ as existing together in the present having existed together in the past. It is perhaps inevitable that using such a concept stabilises characteristics, beliefs and experiences as somehow essential. DIVA’s construction of ‘us’ in this way is not a failure to recognise difference and heterogeneity – the diversity of collocational attribution (Section 6.3) tells us as much, even without considering the enormous range of topics featured in the magazine’s first 10 years (Chapter Five). Rather, it is a means of modelling heritage – or what Phelan (1989: 63) calls “cultural etiology” – for readers who find lesbians isolated in or, more commonly, absent from history. DIVA “distils the past into icons of identity, bonding us with procurers and progenitors, with our own earlier selves, and with our promised successors” (Lowenthal 1994: 43).
1 *Vice Versa* was the first US lesbian magazine. It began in 1947 and ran for nine issues, distributed among a relatively small group in Los Angeles, where Ben worked. “Lisa Ben” was a pseudonym, an anagram of “lesbian”. *Vice Versa* has been credited with setting the template for 20th century lesbian and gay magazines.

2 Wodak *et al.* (1999) focus specifically on Austrian national identity.

3 It was impractical to count pronouns and code their referents across the entire sample.

4 The sample includes 87 editor’s letters.

5 Homophoric references rely on extra-linguistic knowledge for their (correct) interpretation. In this instance, ‘London’ and ‘Brighton’ are intelligible as English cities, but the terms in fact refer to Pride events, which requires reader knowledge (or the reading of the article to which it points).

6 In this extract those who are ‘not us’ are an absent-presence made visible through the modality of terms such as “allowed”, “admit” and “sneak”, which introduces a certain level of polyphony (Nølke 2006) by highlighting a point of view that is not the same as ours.

7 This includes readers’ letters, suggesting a shared preference for this term.

8 At this point, there is also a 26% drop in the total number of nouns counted.

9 With drops of 63% and 74%, respectively, between their peak and lowest frequency.

10 87% of anthroponyms referring to gay men are qualified by reference to their sexuality; 67% of references to bisexuals, and 53% of references to heterosexuals. Figure 6.1 also hints at the relative prevalence of references to heterosexuals’ marital status (further marking difference), which account for 9% of collocates of nouns referring to heterosexuals.

11 Size and depth of colour reflects frequency of word relative to all collocates for noun referent. Maximum 40 words shown, with minimum frequency of five. Generated using www.tagcrowd.com

12 Together these therefore account for 20% of collocates. Of the remainder: 16% describe the referent’s personality; 15% their age; 12% nationality; 8% race; 8% looks; 7% highlighting sexuality; 2% wealth and work; 2% disability and health; 2% fame; 2% sexual proclivity; 2% marital status; 1% activism; 1% religion.

13 Although “lipstick” is strongly associated with lesbian chic, rather than ‘authentic’ lesbianism (see Chapter Eight), it is typically used in DIVA in reference to feminine lesbians, and not as a means of suggesting inauthenticity.

14 Originally an act of political solidarity by slaves who faced enforced family fragmentation, the use of kinship terms was repeated by black rights activists, trade unionists, feminists and gay rights campaigners. The GLF manifesto 1971 began with the words: “To you, our gay sisters and brothers”.

15 In total, coverage of Pride events features 872 pictures between 1994 and 2004 – more than four times as many as coverage of a visual medium like art and photography (204).

16 ‘Lesbian Nationalism’ emerged from radical feminist debate, crystallised in Johnston’s (1973) manifesto for a utopian, man-free lesbian cultural space. It was most prominent in the US (Munt 1998), but became part of global feminist consciousness.

17 ‘The twilight world of the heterosexual’ DIVA, October 1997, p. 50.

18 ‘Around the kitchen table’ DIVA January 2003, p. 38.
Chapter Seven: Boundary management

7.1 Introduction

It is evident in Chapter Six that that which helps to define ‘us’ must also help to define what is not ‘us’, since “identities are constructed through, not outside, difference” (Hall 1996a: 4). In Chapter Eight I will address DIVA’s construction of ‘them’; in this chapter I consider the discursive gatekeeping that goes on to keep these groups separate. Boundary management is salient in collective identity construction, and Eves (2004) suggests this is particularly the case for lesbians as a defensive response to their exclusion from the mainstream.

In any case, the desire for distinction cannot help but produce the policing of who may or may not be accepted, and invest in ‘others’ a sense of threat (Rutherford 1990). Douglas (1966) discusses in detail the human need for order and unity of experience that sees us attempt purification, a kind of tidying up of society, by recourse to notions of contagion and pollution. Much of Douglas’s thesis revolves around morality and religion or belief, and their function in maintaining social structure and discouraging transgression, and it is interesting that in her discussion of social control in a lesbian community, Robinson (2008) also highlights the ideas of deviance and trouble. One of the most troublesome aspects of lesbians’ discursive wall-building has been the bisexual woman, whose transgression of ‘our’ boundaries threatens to dissolve both the boundaries and the identities they delineate.

In Section 7.2 I outline some of the perceived tensions between lesbians and bisexuals, and consider how these are played out in DIVA. Section 7.3 focuses specifically on readers’ arguments about bisexual inclusion as they appear on the letters pages of the magazine. I consider their editorial handling, their topical structure and the rhetorical, argumentative moves readers make as they endeavour to produce a more or less inclusive definition of ‘us’ and ‘our’ boundaries. In doing so I make use of argumentation theories and of Bucholtz and Hall’s (2004: 494) tactics of intersubjectivity, linguistic strategies that “may position the self, the other, or (most often) both” by constructing as similar, real and legitimate certain properties while rendering others different, artificial and illegitimate, in often polar opposites. Finally, I conclude that DIVA’s ambiguous handling of
bisexuality reflects the struggle to stabilise constructed boundaries against the pull of fluid, and thus threatening, margins.

7.2 The pollutant bisexual

In the 1970s and 1980s, lesbian feminists quarrelled over definitions of lesbianism that appeared at times to include bisexuals (see Rich’s (1980) lesbian continuum, which ultimately elided any perceived distinction between exclusively lesbian sexual activity and ‘woman-identification’) and by turn to make the “infiltration and exploitation of the lesbian community” by those who do not live a lesbian life impossible (Zita 1982: 164). The ‘issue’ of bisexual inclusion became increasingly visible as the gay liberation movement abandoned a constructionist critique of sexuality and gender categories and opted instead for an essentialist, quasi-ethnic homosexual identity. The idea of being ‘born gay’ problematised homophobic arguments revolving around choice to produce campaign gains but, simultaneously reinforced the homo-hetero binary (Epstein 1987; Evans 1993; Udis-Kessler 1990). In this way, an ethnic gayness rendered bisexuality indefinitely liminal; outside of both heterosexuality and homosexuality and claimed by neither.

It is precisely the imagining of bisexuality as something (constantly flitting) between these two supposedly immutable realms that appears to be at the root of any ‘trouble’. Bisexuality has been conceived of by members of the gay community as a ‘stage’ between rejecting a heterosexual identity and ‘coming out’ as homosexual; those who try to claim it on a permanent basis have been derided as cowards who are ‘really’ gay but unable to face losing their heterosexual privileges (Esterberg 1997; Evans 1993). Bisexuality is thus derogated as an illegitimate sexuality (McLean 2008), and is imagined as an alternation between two separate worlds. It is the idea of such repeated comings and goings that has provoked accusations of promiscuity as a necessary condition of bisexuality from the gay, and particularly lesbian, community (Klesse 2005). Both like and unlike ‘us’, the bisexual woman is able to move in either realm, an ‘amphibian’ (Babcock-Abrahams 1975) whose transgression between categories threatens boundaries and the identities constructed and maintained within – an “awkward reminder” (Baker 2008a: 145) of internal difference and potential inter-group similarities where (the illusion of) the opposite offers comfort and validation (Taylor 1998). The links they forge between the constructed lesbian
and heterosexual worlds allow bisexuals to “infiltrate the lesbian and gay community, use its facilities for their own gratification, and then retreat into the sanctuary of heterosexual normalcy” (Humphrey 1999: 233). They have been denigrated as neither committed to gay politics nor oppressed enough to be ‘our’ concern (Evans 1993; Ochs 1988). Further, by linking the lesbian and heterosexual worlds, bisexuals form what feminist lesbians consider a conduit through which ‘our world’ is contaminated by contact with men (see Wolf 1979). Bisexuals are thus dangerous pollutants, in Douglas’s (1966) terms.

Many of these ideas have been circulating since the 1970s but continue to find currency and relevance in gay communities. As DIVA was beginning, Ault (1994, 1996) and Rust (1992, 1993) encountered negative attitudes towards bisexuals among US lesbian interviewees, and more recently such attitudes were still found to be at work in lesbian texts in both the US (McLean 2008) and British (Baker 2008a) contexts. Discourses stemming directly from the fears and stereotypes of three decades ago were found: bisexuals as carriers of disease, as compromised homosexuals, as promiscuous, as scandalous, and as indecisive and untrustworthy. In this section I consider the use of these kinds of stereotypes in DIVA and the presence (and success) of counter-discourses.

DIVA refers to bisexuals relatively infrequently – across 95 issues, 337 anthroponyms were coded as referring to bisexuals. By contrast, 15117 (x45) pro-terms referred to lesbians, 1840 (x5.5) to gay men, and 2175 (x6.5) to heterosexuals. A similar pattern was noted by Baker (2008a) in his analysis of talk about bisexuals and bisexuality in the British and American national corpuses. My analysis also suggests that, where events or groups are initially (or officially) titled lesbian and bisexual, they are gradually alleviated of their bisexuality, for instance when, in a news report in issue 68, “Breast Cancer Care launched its Lesbian and Bisexual Volunteer Network, to support gay women”. DIVA’s typical use of ‘gay’ denotes only lesbians and gay men; its use here elides bisexual women as beneficiaries of a new support network and writes them out of the imagined readership – readers’ imagined concern is with services aimed only at gay – that is, lesbian – women. This suggests some ‘erasure’ of bisexuality, which threatens the construction of a coherent lesbian culture in binary opposition to heterosexuality, by ignoring or sidelining it (Ault 1994). Where this is not the case, there appears to be a tension between ‘lesbian’ – apparently denoting the
‘us’ category – and ‘bisexual’, which appears to refer to a category of people who are ‘not us’.

Extract 7.1 ‘For the girls: what’s on offer in this year’s Lesbian and Gay Film Tour package?’ June 1998, p. 10
1 Card-carrying lesbians should get very angry watching Slaves to the Underground. For some reason, I really liked it (and last time I checked, my lesbian ID card was still in my back pocket), despite its flaws. […] Basically, this is a feature film for the bisexual crowd, so take your straight and bi friends.

Line 1 refers to “card-carrying lesbians”, a collective of apparently ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ lesbians who are separate from “the bisexual crowd” (line 4). A film ‘for’ bisexuels is likely to displease and anger them – more, it ought to do so (note the deontic modality at work in line 1) by virtue of, and in order to protect, their card-carrying status. There is a certain facetiousness to the use of these categories, but it is interesting that the author frames her favourable opinion of the film as something like a confession. She also parenthetically reasserts her authenticity as a lesbian, which appears to be at stake in such an admission, rather than become, by implication, a member of “the bisexual crowd” - however light-heartedly these categories are invoked.

Furthermore, those negative stereotypes identified above as pertaining to the danger of bisexuels as sexual ‘amphibians’ can be found in DIVA. Table 7.1, below, shows how some of them feature:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instance</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>What does this do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indecision</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Melissa! You’re a turncoat bisexual and we’ll burn all your CDs”</td>
<td>Jocular reaction to Melissa Etheridge saying she could ‘almost turn’ for Brad Pitt (Issue 13)</td>
<td>Ridicules stereotypical reaction – though use of nominal determiner also reifies it, possibly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The pc dykes, the trendy bisexuals, the stoneground butches”</td>
<td>Author discussing trouble finding the ‘right’ label (Issue 17)</td>
<td>Activates notion of bisexuals as following a fad, and contrasts with dykes and butches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conduit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I obviously reeked of Bisexual rather than Lesbian”</td>
<td>Fiction piece about being ignored on scene, except by “the odd dominatrix” (Issue 50)</td>
<td>Activates the idea of bisexuals as tainted, and associated with fetish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promiscuity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Confessions of a monogamous bisexual”</td>
<td>Listing in contents page to personal comment piece (Issue 81)</td>
<td>Suggests that bisexual monogamy is unusual, and thus ‘confessable’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Rockin’ chicks who couldn’t get enough”</td>
<td>Sub-head to article “Top 10 bisexual women” (Issue 95)</td>
<td>Sexual insatiability as a predicate for the category ‘bisexual’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Of the bisexual, cousin-fucking, triple-nipple, transvestite, diaper-fetish variety”</td>
<td>Review of Jerry Springer stage show, discussing the freak show on offer (Issue 92)</td>
<td>Bisexuality tops a list of minority and/or fetish practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denial</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sandra Bernhard lives happily with model Patricia Velasquez, but still fights shy of L word”</td>
<td>Interview with Bernhard, who has always maintained an undefined/ bisexual identity (Issue 5)</td>
<td>Activates the notion of bisexuals as lacking the courage to adopt a fully gay identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Is not, she says, sitting on any fences or in denial”</td>
<td>Interview with Kate Copstick, a bisexual TV presenter (Issue 11)</td>
<td>Acknowledges pre-existing stereotypes. Distancing function of “She says” – ‘we’ might not say</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would be misleading to assert that the hostilities visible in some of these stereotypes feature frequently or uniformly in *DIVA*, or that they go unchallenged. In order to consider the process of erasure and stereotypical predication in more detail, the analysis below focuses on two articles, one of which represents, on the
whole, a stereotypically negative view of bisexual women, and the other an attempt at counter-discourse.

In September 2000, singer Melissa Etheridge and film director Julie Cypher announced their break-up; Cypher had left her husband 12 years earlier to begin the relationship. In October 2001, DIVA published Dianne Anderson-Minshall’s (of US magazine Curve) criticisms of the way the lesbian and gay media had behaved towards Cypher since. Anderson-Minshall is critical of Etheridge’s recent media appearances, in which she had blamed Cypher’s desire to sleep with k.d. lang before settling down - and her ‘not really being gay’ - for the split, and berates gay media for giving Etheridge the space to do so. She argues that Cypher deserves respect for her contribution over the 12 years that she and Etheridge were together. Three months later DIVA featured an interview with Etheridge (that month’s cover star), now touring with a new album and a new girlfriend.

**Extract 7.2 ‘Bye bi, Julie’**
**October 2001, p. 10**
How many lesbians, just coming out, don’t want to test the waters before they settle down with one woman? […] How many lesbians want to sleep with kd lang period? Hell, I’ve been married to the same woman – monogamously, mind you – for over a decade, and I still want to sleep with kd lang. […] Etheridge told interviewers] that Cypher complained repeatedly in therapy, “I’m just not gay”. […] We hold our bisexual women at arms’ length. […] These women identify with lesbian culture; they share values with the queer community; they live their lives like dykes. […] If a woman has loved, and fucked another woman for over a decade, if a woman has been one of the most visible supporters of queer rights, if a woman has been half of the duo that made queer families palatable to the masses, then that woman deserves to be called a lesbian. […] Rather than painting her as a faithless fence-sitter, lesbians need to hear Cypher’s voice.

**Extract 7.3 ‘Skin deep’**
**January 2002, p. 6**
Melissa talked to DIVA while on tour recently in Phoenix, Arizona, and told us the story. “A lot of my life I’d made choices to be attracted to unavailable women […] When I first met Julie, I assumed she was gay. And when she said she was married I went, Huh? I didn’t switch her, I thought she was gay and didn’t know it. But then her bisexuality started coming in. She said, ‘I need something else’. […] Nervous about starting a relationship again, Melissa was initially cautious, but now she says she feels “much more fulfilled and happy as a person”, adding, “it’s good and healthy to go out with a lesbian.” Would Melissa go out with a straight woman again? “No! I’ve learned my lesson. After Julie I dated a few straight women and though, What am I doing? They saw it as a chance to explore, but what would I get out of it?” It seems that dating a glamorous 26-year-old dyke has given Melissa a new lease of life.
The article from which Extract 7.2 is taken attempts to counter the negative attention Cypher has received, and in so doing counter negativity towards bisexual women more generally. The author stresses the sacrifices that Cypher made to embark on the relationship, noting that she “soon divorced” her husband (suggesting decisiveness) and “took up housekeeping with Etheridge” (suggesting a willingness to nest, commitment). The article is filled with in-group category labels that urge readers to note the similarities between their own experiences and Cypher’s. Further, Anderson-Minshall puts her own experience at stake in asserting the appropriateness of the comparison. In describing the treatment of bisexual women by lesbians, she claims for bisexuals some kind of community membership – “our bisexual women”. The article finishes by arguing vociferously for respect for Cypher and women who have lived lives like her, the presupposition being that one’s position in the community can rely on, or at least be bolstered by, hard work.

This counter-discourse appears, however, to be doomed to perpetual failure thanks first to the terms upon which it relies and second to the apparent resilience of the attitude it opposes. Despite contesting an anti-bisexual stance, the article seems unable to avoid shifting bisexual experiences into lesbian terms in order to defend them; it is their similarity to lesbian experience that makes Cypher’s desires and confessions acceptable. Her potential membership, too, is based upon the ratification of a lesbian identity, which Cypher has ‘earned’ after years of contributing as a lesbian (though her status here is uncertain, “they live their lives like dykes” [emphasis added] tastes rather like Lesbian Life Lite). As the contents listing of the article puts it, she has “paid her lesbian dues” and therefore, according to this author at least, should be granted the honorary title ‘lesbian’. This argument seems to leave relatively intact the category of ‘bisexual’ as outside of or peripheral to ‘us’ and “faithless fence-sitters” is still used synonymously with ‘bisexuals’.

What is more, there appears to be some resistance within DIVA to this counter-discourse: the headline given to the piece, “Bye bi, Julie” denies her continued- or re-classification as a lesbian and appears to be bidding her farewell. Etheridge’s opportunity to speak – and offer the same viewpoint so roundly criticised here – several issues later not only undermines Anderson-Minshall’s argument but gives Etheridge the chance to have ‘the last word’ on the matter. Etheridge’s explanation of the failure of the relationship hinges on two things:
first, her habit of being attracted to “unavailable women” and second, Cypher’s “bisexuality” “coming in”. In this construction, bisexuality appears to belong to a category like illness; a disease that began to encroach on their life together. Predicated on an apparent need for more (the greed stereotype), Etheridge’s notion of bisexuality is equated with (emotional) unavailability without challenge from the magazine. Stressing her new-found fulfilment and happiness, Etheridge’s claim that “it’s good and healthy to go out with a lesbian” relies upon the missing premises that she was not fulfilled and happy before, and therefore was not seeing a lesbian before. The interviewer appears to take up this redefinition of Cypher and their relationship in her subsequent question, and Etheridge rubber-stamps it with her emphatic response. Between these two speakers, Cypher is denied first her lesbian and then her bisexual identities.

7.3 Readers’ boundary negotiations in letters to DIVA

Though they have typically been considered in the context of newspapers or news magazines, previous research has repeatedly identified readers’ letters sections as sites for public opinion articulation, debate and development, and found section editors to approach their role with this democratic function in mind (Mummery & Rodan 2007; Wahl-Jorgenson 2002; Hynds 1991). In reality, the democratic capability of letters sections is limited by, amongst other factors, editorial conventions and the equal access for relevant parties, but this should not dim their discursive significance here, for several reasons.

First, at the time of the sample (i.e. pre-weblogging and social networking) the letters page was one of limited opportunities for women to talk about such issues in the public domain and before such a large (generally sympathetic and interested) audience. Second, Gillian Rodgerson, editor at the time of the discussions analysed below, believed passionately in the notion of DIVA as a place precisely for women to have those discussions, and expanded the letters section accordingly. These discussions ‘meant something’ to those contributing to and marshalling them. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the editorial intervention in these debates does not prohibit a meaningful consideration of the letters that are published in order to assess “the kinds of arguments or framings of the issue [in this case, bisexuality] that circulate and receive validation in the public sphere” (Hull 2001: 212). To Hull’s mention of validation I would add also rejection and interrogation. Arguers typically choose the premises of their
arguments on the basis of, among other things, notions they consider likely to be shared by their audience (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 1999). Therefore they, and their reception (temperature, premising, framing), offer potentially crucial insights in terms of identity and gate-keeping. In short, DIVA’s letters page is “a battlefield for ideas” (Seigel 1972: 3) and though it may be impossible to see every sword swung in vain, analysing the blows that landed is revealing of the way participants fought.

The sample includes 28 articles coded as focusing primarily on bisexuality; of those, 21 are readers’ letters. This in itself is indicative of the nature of discourse on bisexuality as one of contest and debate, and these letters make up two separate (though very similar) discussions that take place between issues 31 and 35 (1998/1999; Discussion 1) and issues 48 and 51 (2000; Discussion 2). Interestingly, Gamson (1996: 404) also notes that the two major “letters column controversies” in San Francisco’s Bay Times in the 1990s concern bisexuals (and transgendered people). Wakeford’s (1998: 187) interviewee, owner of lesbian listserve Bay Area Cyber Dykes, also highlights the prevalence of such debates. “It happens every couple of months and you can almost just count on it. It’s like, gee we haven’t had the Great Bisexual Debate in a while. It’s coming!” she jokes. Each discussion in DIVA follows a similar pattern (Figure 7.1, below), beginning with a letter from a bisexual reader that refers to upsetting or thought-provoking events or articles in the recent past. This letter prompts responses published over the course of the subsequent two or three issues:

**Figure 7.1 Discussions of bisexuality on DIVA’s letters page**

```
Phase 1  
Complaint re: negative treatment of bisexuals

Phase 2  
Rejection of complaint + derogation of bisexuals

Phase 3  
Questioning / rejection of derogation  
Support for derogation

^ Phase 3  
Further questioning / rejection

< Phase 4
```
In interview, Rodgerson spoke of her belief in the value of the “constant conversation” between readers. In the case of bisexuality, *DIVA* was forced to mediate more noticeably because of the number of letters the magazine received. Without editing and selection, “this one subject could have consumed the letters section”. The structure of these discussions, then, has at least some design, a notion supported by the fact that interlocutors on both sides are given the chance to speak (though ‘anti-bisexual’ letters do not appear without ‘warrant’ in the form of earlier letters). Letters were chosen according, predominantly, to their “wit and brevity”, though available space often played a part, as did the geographical dispersion of letters received. Most of the letters published advocate greater tolerance of bisexual women, and this, says Rodgerson, reflects the balance of opinion received by the magazine.

In each discussion, two further rounds of multiple-speaker debate are published; according to Rodgerson, “it's always best to let the readers have ‘the last word’.” The editorial management of the last phase as a closing phase is indicated in the headings: “The last word (for now) on bisexuals…” (Discussion 1) and “The bisexuality ‘debate’ continues. Here are some excerpts from this month’s replies” (Discussion 2). Both suggest that a number of further letters were received, and a feeling that the substance of the discussion would not cease to be debated, despite the ‘end’ of this particular public exchange. In both closing phases, the number of ‘pro-bisexual’ voices lends a feeling not only of closure but of ‘anti-bisexual’ voices being shouted down, overwhelmed by the volume of their opposition. Rodgerson and her team decided “enough was enough when a subject had been examined from every side and nobody was saying anything new”.

Given the constructed nature of these discussions the analysis below, which focuses on Discussion 2, does not consider ‘who wins’. Though pragma-dialectical theories of argumentation are useful in deconstructing the arguments presented in these letters, the analysis is not strictly dialectical. That is, my interest is not in the soundness of the arguments presented *per se*, but in their topical and rhetorical nature. First and foremost because this is particularly revealing of the discourses surrounding bisexuality and gate-keeping in *DIVA*. Second, a pragma-dialectical assessment relies upon critical discussions meeting a set of standards, including the requirement that the engaged parties are willing to be persuaded (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004). Where discussants are not
arguing for resolution, as appears to be the case here, the discussion takes on an eristic\(^2\) complexion and becomes a quarrel or ‘adversary argument’ (Flowers, McGuire & Birnbaum 1982). Such discussions are produced as much for the judgement of the ‘audience’ as for specific interlocutors. Therefore my interest is in the central topoi writers draw upon as being relevant to the debate and their standpoint, five of which were identified, some being used by both pro- and anti-bisexual writers:

1. Bisexuals are undecided and/or promiscuous
2. Bisexuals are tainted by men
3. ‘Real’ lesbians
4. Other ‘others’
5. Anti-bisexual feeling is bigotry (a heterosexual trait)

The strategies writers adopt in invoking these topoi and making them relevant and persuasive, and the way further writers respond to them, are considered below.

**Figure 7.2 The topical structure of Discussion 2**

**Phase 1: complaint (topoi 1, 2 and 4)**

Discussion 2 is opened by ACD\(^3\), who orients her letter to a comment piece about bisexuality recently published in *DIVA*. In setting out arguments supporting her two standpoints – ‘It is a shame that “a lot of people can’t hack bisexuals”’, and ‘Defining people’s sexual identities is complicated’ – topoi 1, 2 and 4 are invoked:
A former partner of mine was certainly a gay man – our sex life was far from complete and, let’s face it, he looked like a reject from the line-up of the Village People. Fortunately we are talking a very long time ago. I think there are a lot of people who can’t hack bisexuals. This is a shame. Although I know many people who are damn sure about their sexuality, many remain in that grey area. […]

I am currently in a relationship with a woman, and most people I know would describe me as a lesbian. However, being honest, if I was dumped tomorrow and a period of time passed without a sniff of sex, I would probably consider having a one-night stand with a man. Although I couldn’t actually envisage having another relationship with a man, does that make me bisexual? Probably, I guess.

In lines 5-7, ACD tacitly acknowledges that dislike of bisexuals may be down to their being perceived as undecided between hetero- and homosexuality (topos 1). Her letter undoubtedly belongs to the ‘pro-bisexual’ side of the argument, yet she appears, through anaphoric inference, to concur with this perception by labelling bisexuality “that grey area” – in which people who are not “damn sure” about their sexuality exist. Though she offers no overt value judgement of bisexuality as an undecided state, she does not problematise it.

The notion of tainting is missing (at least not explicit) in ACD’s account, but she acknowledges contact with men (topos 2) as something that distances lesbian from bisexual experience in reflecting on whether she better fits the ‘lesbian’ or ‘bisexual’ category. This idea of best fit is premised primarily on (desired) contact with men and the effect on one’s ability to claim a lesbian identity (which ACD may be making a tentative claim for in lines 13-14). She attempts to close the gap by differentiating between one-off sexual contact and long-term, emotional involvement (the emphasis in line 11 is hers), but appears, somewhat reluctantly, to accept that openness to any contact with men is what separates lesbian and bisexual identities.

Lines 1-4 come from ACD’s opening paragraph, and this placement appears to be significant in light of the functions the anecdote may serve; it immediately flags the writer’s sexual history and thus has implications for her category identification. This attends to her epistemic entitlement to speak on the subject, but also (potentially) threatens her affiliation with readers. “Let’s face it” (line 2) offers a remedy by positioning writer and readers together as ‘us’. Since
we define ourselves, at least in part, according to what we are not (van Dijk 1998; Oktar 2001), ACD offers a third group, gay men, as an alternative territorial marker of the ‘not us’; topos 4. The derogatory description positions gay men very far from being ‘like us’, and with inferior status. Later in Phase 3, JS argues on the ‘same side’ as ACD, though she does not refer to Letter 1. In arguing against discrimination, she also constructs a group of other Others, saying that, “As a lesbian, I can understand some feeling that transvestites and drag queens are perpetuating a silly and false stereotype of womanly behaviour”. Rhetorically, JS appears to be saying ‘Because I am a lesbian, I understand that there are some groups that ‘we’ find distasteful’. This display of understanding then makes her assertion that prejudicial behaviour is unhelpful more powerful, though she does not quite rescue transvestites and drag queens from their exile.

7.3.2 Phase 2: rejection and derogation (topoi 2 and 3)

In Phase 2, JL takes vehement exception to the idea of bisexual inclusion espoused in the first letter. She ends her letter (Extract 7.5, below) by questioning the magazine’s selection of letters from bisexuals, implicitly pointing to ACD’s letter in the previous issue. She does not take up directly any of ACD’s points, but offers an explication of topos 2 and invokes topos 3.

Extract 7.5 ‘Boys in DIVA’ (Letter 2, JL) June 2000 p. 5
1 While we’re on the subject of men – I don’t know why you
2 continue to publish letters and waste space from so-called
3 ‘bisexual’ women carping on about being bisexual. Let
4 them stew in their males’ juices and leave us real lesbians
5 to get on with it.

The first part of JL’s letter is a complaint about an article by a male writer being published by DIVA, and she moves from this complaint to the one featured above via “the subject of men”. This bridge equates bisexuals and men, rendering both ‘not us’. Robinson (2008) also notes talk about men used to differentiate and therefore exclude bisexual women. Mummery & Rodan (2007) identify this kind of move, in anti-immigration letters, as ‘protectivism’, whereby the incompatibility between what ‘we’ are and do and ‘them’ is stressed as immutable. Ault (1994) found that (her sample of) lesbians defined bisexuals in male-identified terms, and that for them, “bisexual women represent the phallus itself” (p.119). JL’s subsequent imperative in line 4 suggests something similar by
focusing on sperm (as a contaminant, topos 2). Other ‘anti-bisexual’ writers in both discussions also rely on visceral, corporeal – subservient – descriptions of bisexuality – in Discussion 1, AK asserts that she is “sick of seeing bisexual women flirt around with dykes when a few hours later she’s on her knees with some bloke” [my emphasis]. Ault (ibid.) theorises that the sexualisation of bisexuals by lesbians is a (de)legitimisation strategy that mirrors their own sexualisation (and rejection) by dominant discourses. This move also helps towards the construction of distinction (Bucholtz and Hall 2004), highlighting and making salient heterosexual sex acts as antithetical to lesbianism.

Like all other ‘anti-bisexual’ writers in these debates, JL invokes topos 3, here in line 4’s nominal determiner “real lesbians”. This is important in terms of gate-keeping, because it implies that bisexuals are ‘fake’ lesbians (also worked up in line 2) – that is, that bisexuality is not a sexual identity in itself, but a failure to be a ‘real’ lesbian. This, of course, relies on the notion that bisexuals are trying to be (accepted as) lesbians, and thus produces them as a threat to ‘our’ borders. Watson and Weinberg (1982) found that interviewees differentiated those who were gay from those who performed gay behaviour (see also Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1990 on the distinction between ‘being’ and ‘doing’ in subcultural identification). JL uses “us real lesbians” without further definitional work, which suggests that ‘our’ authenticity is predicated primarily on the absence of contact with men, and further that a recognisable, coherent (in)group is indexed. Calling on the term in this way, JL disrupts, or denaturalises (Bucholtz and Hall 2004) bisexuality, and attempts to authenticate her version of lesbian identity without having to produce numerous similarities and alignments.

7.3.3 Phase 3: questioning/rejection of derogation (topoi 3 and 4)

This appears to fail, however, since in Phase 3 of both discussions a number of readers respond negatively by interrogating and rebuffing, implicitly or explicitly, the idea of ‘real’ lesbians. Two ‘pro-bisexual’ letters printed in Issue 50 question and/or reject topos 3:

Extract 7.6 ‘Who’s a real lesbian?’ (Letter 3, JS) July 2000, p. 5
1 I am feeling outraged at the audacity of [JL] (Diva, June)
2 who believes only ‘real lesbians’ should be able to speak in
3 this magazine. I myself am a dyke; I like women. In the
4 past, however, I have slept with men – regrettable, but it
5 happened.
After reading the letter from [JL] (Diva, June) I am left wondering what she thinks a ‘real’ lesbian is. I don’t think *Diva* would last very long if it demanded 100% dyke credentials.

More than half of those expressing a broadly ‘pro-bisexual’ stance begin by referring to their strong, emotional reaction to what has been said – ranging from outrage to upset to irritation. These are not appeals to emotion in the typical, pathetic sense, but instead act first as a warrant – the letter writer was forced to respond by the strength of her feelings – and second as an argument illustrative of the negative (and therefore undesirable) effects of the previous writer’s standpoint. Walton (1992) further suggests that the demonstration of anger strengthens one’s perceived commitment to the standpoint expressed, which may have implications for the framing of the remainder of the discussion.

The majority of letters in each discussion which oppose or question the topos ‘real lesbians’ also feature some kind of statement of sexual identification, usually in the first few lines, as here. They fulfil part of what van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004: 61) call a discussion’s ‘opening stage’, whereby “interlocutors manifest themselves as parties”. JS’s self-identification (Extract 7.6, line 3) serves a further argumentative purpose: by calling herself a “dyke”, which appears to be synonymous with ‘real lesbian’ (line 2), and reiterating this in the sub-clause “I like women”, she then jeopardises the stability of JL’s ‘real lesbian’ by referring to past experience with men. Both letters attempt to deconstruct (and redefine) JL’s category. In Extract 7.7, RW undermines the idea of a (singular) ‘real’ lesbian by insinuating that the readership of *Diva* would be dramatically reduced if only those who have never had some kind of sexual contact with men were included. These arguments provide an interesting contrast to Martin’s (1996) suggestion that lesbians attempting to stabilise their present lesbian identity – that is, authenticate it – construct any past heterosexuality as somehow different to the heterosexual potential of a bisexual identity. Instead, here, women use their past heterosexual experiences precisely to undermine the notion of an authentic lesbian identity, even if this is regrettable (line 4).

The letters more directly question topos 3 by posing rhetorical questions using topos 5, the single most common (explicit) argument in ‘pro-bisexual’ letters. The rhetorical value of questions such as those posed below (Extract 7.8), which typically have limited ‘acceptable’ answers, lies in their invitation to the
reader to come to the conclusion they assert ‘by themselves’, encouraging their agreement (Bickenbach & Davies 1997).

**Extract 7.8 ‘Who’s a real lesbian?’ (Letter 3, JS) July 2000, p. 5**

1. Do we really want to turn this wonderful magazine into the
2. same silly kind of puritan exclusivity that the het world
3. practices?

Combining this device with topos 5 appears to be particularly effective in responding to the invocation of topos 3. Questions like JS’s above are incredibly difficult to answer satisfactorily; how to argue that this particular discrimination is okay? – answers will be far less defensible even than their reification of the ‘real lesbian’. In fact, in configuring discrimination as heterosexual practice – other writers suggest that JL’s letter is “eerily similar to the narrow-minded and discriminatory comments that have always been inflicted on gay people by ignorant heterosexuals” – these questions further undermine their opponents self-identification as ‘real’ lesbians by discrediting the ‘lesianness’ of their views.

### 7.3.4 Phase 3: support for derogation (topos 3)

In this phase of both discussions, another letter is published that adopts the ‘anti-bisexual’ standpoint expressed at Phase 2. This letter is, in both instances, featured last, downgrading its strength and apparent correlation with *DIVA* and its readership’s views and simultaneously inviting further comment.

**Extract 7.9 ‘I wouldn’t touch a bi woman’**

(Letter 6, JD) July 2000, p.5

1. I felt compelled to respond to [ACD] (*Diva*, May),
2. concerning her views on bisexuality. […]
3. As a gay woman, I wouldn’t touch a bisexual woman with a
4. barge pole. None of the real, woman-identified lesbians I
5. know have given up hope of finding a partner and slept
6. with the enemy.

In the same way that other letters in Issue 50 begin with *emotional* reactions, this letter is framed by its author as a *reasonable* reaction; in line 1 JD implies that the strength of her opposition to (and therefore the weakness of) ACD’s standpoint makes her letter necessary. In Discussion 1, AK, who complains that bisexuals should not be allowed to participate in Pride events, begins by saying that she is “sick and tired” of bisexuals “attaching themselves to lesbians”. This opening presupposes not only that bisexuals are very different to
lesbians and therefore *should not* “attach themselves”, but that they *have been trying* to “attach themselves” to lesbian groups, and that it is this transgression that forces AK to say the things she says. Formulating their letters in this way enables speakers to come across as defensive, rather than offensive, which may be intended to cast their standpoint as based on witnessed ‘real’ events and therefore more reasonable (Edwards 2003).

Most interesting about these letters, however, is the fact that they take up – and often elaborate – topos 3, despite its consistent (and usually sound) resistance by their opponents in both discussions. This suggests a kind of dogmatic commitment to anti-bisexual prejudice which is difficult to defend (convincingly) in an argument. Lines 4-5, above, illustrate a strategy used by some of these writers in an attempt to do so: *argumentum ad populum* (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1987). Here JD calls on the experiences of a number of ‘real’ lesbians (this is unquantified, but applies to *all* of those she knows) to demonstrate the distance between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Later, in Phase 4, FL insists: “I know many dykes share my discomfort”. This is, of course, a fallacious move, but it seems as pertinent to these writers as topos 3 itself. Perhaps their perception of the debate in metaphorically tribal terms (that is, ‘us’ and ‘them’) makes the numbers on either ‘side’ relevant. In Bucholtz and Hall’s (2004) terms, these utterances suggest discomfort as an alignment sufficient to produce a group to which bisexuals do not belong.

### 7.3.5 Phase 4: further questioning and rejection (topoi 3 and 5)

The positioning of these letters at the ‘end’ of Phase 3 also seems designed to stimulate further debate – since in both discussions we find one further phase which reacts most explicitly to the last letter. In Phase 4 of Discussion 2, five letters are published, one of which offers (mitigated) support for the ‘anti-bisexual’ stance while the remainder oppose it.

**Extract 7.10 ‘The bisexuality debate continues’**  
*(Letter 7, FL) August 2000, p. 5*

1. I admit to discomfort with the greater inclusion of bisexuals
2. in our gay media in recent years. […]
3. I know many dykes share my discomfort and we, like [JD],
4. would not consider sleeping with a bisexual. Having said
5. that, last year I met and have since developed a good
6. friendship with a bisexual woman for the first time in my
7. life. Had she told me straightaway about her sexuality, I
undoubtedly would not have allowed the friendship to grow. This has resulted in my having to confront and question my views/prejudices, which can probably only be healthy. […] My community will always be gay.

FL’s letter, above, is the only ‘anti-bisexual’ letter to feature in response to Letter 6, and its position between Letter 6 and the ‘pro-bisexual’ responses is perhaps indicative of the diplomatic work it does in adopting but de-hyperbolising JD’s standpoint. FL frames her letter as a confession, suggesting an awareness of the opposition already published in Phase 3 and perhaps in anticipation of further opposition in this or subsequent phases. This is certainly suggested by the proleptic work done in lines 4-9, where FL insists that she “would not consider” any sexual contact with a bisexual before immediately referring to her “good friendship” with a bisexual woman. This narrative works in the same way as “Some of my best friends are black” when prefacing a hearably racist remark (Jackman & Crane 1986; Bonilla-Silva 2002). FL is now someone with a ‘good friend’ amongst those she still concludes ought to be excluded, which has implications for her supposed intent (with regards to offense), and the veracity of her standpoint, which remains the same despite this friendship.

DIVA publishes four (excerpts of) ‘pro-bisexual’ letters in succession beneath this, which contain similar topoi to those in the previous phase – topos 5 figures highly, as does the continued questioning of topos 3. The way this is done in this phase is rather different however: the writers to whom DIVA gives ‘the last word’ tend to ridicule their opponents, and close their letters with requests for a change in people’s attitudes and values.

Extract 7.11 ‘The bisexuality debate continues’
Letter 8, AL) August 2000, p. 5
1 All this lesbians versus bisexuals nonsense is just ridiculous. I would like [JD] to explain what a ‘woman-
3 identified lesbian’ is. And does she possess a bargepole?
4 Very phallic.

In line 1, above, AL makes explicit her ridicule of JD’s “nonsense” arguments. The appeal to ridicule is typically considered fallacious, since it tends to lack backing and attacks the delivery, rather than the substance, of an argument. In lines 2-3, however, AL offers some syllogistic reasoning: her request for an explanation from JD implies that, even as a member of the relevant audience, AL does not recognise the category ‘woman-identified lesbian’; since it is not
recognisable, it does not constitute a reliable ‘truth’; therefore to use it as the basis for pitting lesbians against bisexuals is ridiculous. AL’s final comment picks up on JD’s assertion that she “wouldn’t touch a bisexual woman with a bargepole”, in a move that threatens JD’s ‘real lesbian’ status (as predicated upon the absence of men and men’s bodies) by highlighting its ironically phallic properties.

Extract 7.12 ‘Who’s a ‘real’ lesbian?’
(Letter 10, AC) August 2000, p. 5
1 As for ‘sleeping with the enemy’, for heaven’s sake,
2 what is the point of so many lesbians being so elitist and
3 separatist? There is too much pain in the world; love a
4 woman for who she is, not for whom she’s slept with.

In her contribution to Discussion 2’s close (above), AC makes an emotive appeal for a change in the way readers evaluate other (bisexual) women, premised upon the needless harm caused by buying into topos 1. JS makes a similar appeal earlier in the discussion, saying “Let’s leave discrimination to the bigots and get on with learning to be happy within this rainbow-coloured community”. These requests revolve around values - that is, communally shared dispositions (Jasinski 2001), and their appeals to the benefit of ‘the community’, rather than only (bisexual) individuals, carry a certain gravitas. In face-to-face interaction requests would typically be expected to illicit a response; DIVA’s selection of these kinds of letters in the discussions’ close suggests that they were intended to operate in much the same way as earlier rhetorical questions – prompting a pause for thought, and leading to finite ‘acceptable answers’.

7.4 Concluding thoughts

In this chapter, I have addressed discursive boundary management in DIVA with regard to the most prominent ‘border group’, bisexuals. The gate-keeping that separates bisexuals from ‘us’ is often subtle, a process of erasure or of (humorous) contrast. Where counter-discourse features, it represents something of a rupture in the magazine, an intervention by particular writers, and this is somewhat undermined by the ongoing positioning of lesbian identity as central and typically not inclusive of bisexuality.

This exclusion, however, is never fully achieved, remaining a topic of debate. My analysis focused on one such debate in readers’ letters, though another similar debate featured in the sample and Rodgerson revealed that DIVA received
numerous similar letters for much of the decade I analyse, at least in her seven years as editor. Five topoi appear to be central to the discussion, and some feature in letters on both sides. The recourse to essentialism is an important identity tactic (Bucholtz and Hall 2004), and writers adopting an anti-bisexual stance regularly invoke the ‘real lesbian’. This is despite its repeated rejection by fellow letter writers, who argue for inclusive notions of identity and simultaneously undermine claims to veridicality by framing the bigotry involved as heterosexual; not ‘us’. A number of these writers are, however, careful to assert the potency of their claim to ‘full’ – lesbian – group membership.

That bisexuels tend to remain ‘other’ even in texts which ostensibly argue for inclusiveness is significant. In her analysis of talk about lesbians in Cosmopolitan magazine, Rand (1994) suggests that their otherness, even where they are present as prominent topics or subjects, forces lesbians into a glass-doored closet; visible but no better able to speak or participate than if they were absent. I would argue that this is often the case for bisexual women in DIVA – and importantly, DIVA makes greater claims to include bisexuels than Cosmopolitan does to include lesbians.

According to Douglas (1966: 121), “all margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered.” Rendering the margins safe involves sacrificing the complexity and difference of ‘real life’ (Martin 1996). In DIVA’s handling of bisexuels and bisexuality there is a certain ambiguity which may reflect the ongoing struggle between acknowledging bisexual women and deciding on what terms that should be done.

Extract 7.13 ‘Both sides of the ballroom’ April 2000, p. 35

A couple of years ago I was at Pride with my girlfriend and we found ourselves next to a heavily petting man and woman. This is guaranteed to make my girlfriend see red. ‘They can do that anywhere,’ she huffs. ‘This is queer space’. […] She goes over to tell them that heterosexuals can snog anywhere […] ‘We’re bisexual,’ they say, and stick their tongues back in each other’s mouths. Tricky one.

My girlfriend retreats. I suppose that, even when you’ve got a foot in both camps, you can only really have your mouth in one camp at a time.

In Extract 7.13, which comes from the article that prompted Discussion 2, this struggle is explicitly played out; a struggle between identity and behaviour. How can ‘heterosexual behaviour’, even when practiced by those identifying as
queer, be accommodated in queer space to the satisfaction of other members? DIVA’s ambiguous handling of bisexuals and bisexuality may be a reflection of this tricky question, and there is perhaps no straightforward way in which a less ambiguous ideal can be reached. In her work on the interactions of a US lesbian community, Robinson (2008) found that texts produced by the group were written in inclusive terms, but that bisexual members were often still marginalised and their participation implicitly regulated by the reactions they received from lesbian members. Both Frances Williams and Rodgerson spoke of their hopes that bisexual women would read DIVA, but Rodgerson suggests it was designed to appeal to “the lesbian in them”.

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1 The letters in these discussions will be described as ‘pro-bisexual’ or ‘anti-bisexual’ according to their inferred central standpoint in relation to one another, ignoring internal tensions or mitigations. This is a necessary simplification given the nature of the analysis and the limited space in which it must be set out.

2 Walton (1992: 214) defines eristic discussions as purely adversarial, having no truth-seeking goal, and in which participants will resist persuasion no matter what.

3 Initials are used to protect the identities of letter writers.

4 This is replicated in Discussion 1.

5 Even in 2008, the inclusion of an article about relationships with men prompted heated debate amongst DIVA readers, despite a strong shift towards bisexual inclusion since current editor Jane Czyzselska took over in 2004.
8.1 Introduction

Chapters Six and Seven focused on what kind of in-group, or ‘us’, is created in *DIVA*, and on how the boundary around that group is imagined and enforced. Discursive constructions of in-groups also produce, more or less implicitly, an out-group, or at least the likelihood of one, even if this is not clearly defined beyond it not being ‘us’, but a group of ‘others’. Work on ‘othering’ has often considered it in precisely this way, as part of the realisation of self (Riggins 1997); one of the fundamental functions of group ideologies is to attend to the positioning of ‘us’ in relation to others (van Dijk 1998; Teo 2000). For van Dijk (1998), this typically takes the form of an “ideological square” (p. 33), in which our positive and their negative traits are emphasised, while our negative and their positive traits are mitigated, backgrounded, or deleted altogether.

In the case of *DIVA*, the discourse producers are more often used to finding themselves occupying the position of the negatively presented ‘other’, as members of a subculture subjected to – and rendered deviant by – heterosexual norms. Subcultural groups are by definition prominently aware of (and in many cases celebrate) their position as outsiders, emphasising their difference from the dominant majority in producing a subcultural self (Thornton 1997). It seems too simple, however, to stop there and leave untouched the way that a subcultural community such as *DIVA* and its readers imagines and handles its others. Though othering discourses may be more potent as a means of symbolic expulsion (Pickering 2001) when produced by and circulating among a dominant group, the way others are talked about by minorities, and to whom such talk applies and when, is no less interesting or important. For Rodgers (1972, quoted in Jacobs 1996: 62), the negativisation of the heterosexual other is particularly important in gay subcultures as a means of retaliation: “they jeer because they have been mocked”. In her work on (particularly 1980s) lesbian discourses, Koller (2008: 103) finds frequent references to the negative behaviour of ‘others’ that position the in-group as their innocent victim.

*DIVA*’s discussions of a number of issues suggests that the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is troubled; much reporting on gay politics refers to
‘wars waged’ by ‘militant’ opponents, and political activism – that is, engagement with ‘them’ and ‘others’ – is described as ‘taking to the barricades’.

Extract 8.1 ‘What a swell party this is!’ June 1995, p. 20
1 It’s Pride, and the gay monster is out on the streets with all
2 the gaudy panache of a Chinese dragon. The monster has a
3 million laughing mouths and one of them is yours, and one
4 of them is mine, and as we career past the police cordons,
5 and waltz past Westminster, fielding scandalised stares and
6 comments everywhere we go, frankly my dear, we don’t
7 give a damn.

In Extract 8.1, the description of the joy of Pride events is pregnant with a sense of temporary respite. It is only during this annual event that “the gay monster” (which seems to actively voice ‘their’ words) can revel in being big and powerful enough to face down its opponents, to career and waltz, to field stares without a care. The particular mention of Westminster and the police highlights the role of the state in the difficult relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’. With this in mind, this chapter is presented in three sections, each considering DIVA’s coverage of a topic particularly pertinent to the construction of ‘them’ from a lesbian perspective at the time of the sample.

Section 8.2 focuses on coverage of Section 28, a clause in the Local Government Act of 1988 that explicitly targeted homosexuality, preventing local authorities (and in particular, schools) from ‘promoting’ homosexuality or acknowledging gay families as such. Here, the relationship between ‘us’ (lesbians and gay men) and ‘them’ (British society and its ruling political elite) is constructed as one of oppression and conflict, in which ‘we’ are relatively powerless against their repeated attacks and attempts to write ‘us’ out of the national collective. ‘They’ are repeatedly cast as irrational, abusive and spiteful.

In Section 8.3 I consider DIVA’s discussions of mainstream media representations of lesbians both ‘real’ and ‘fictional’. The latter proliferated in the 1990s in the thrall of ‘lesbian chic’, but were typically felt to have failed to grasp and represent the realities of lesbian life (Mills 1995). DIVA’s discussions offer much the same evaluation of mainstream lesbian images, and positions both the media and the consuming British public as a homophobic, intrusive and violent ‘them’ for whom ‘we’ are little more than ratings fodder while the fascination lasts.
Finally, Section 8.4 details my analysis of *DIVA*’s talk about men, paying particular attention to the topic of parenting. The decade between 1994 and 2004 was a critical time in lesbian parenting, with a number of (publicly-fought) custody battles between lesbian mums and their former husbands, the removal of anonymity for sperm donors and a rising expectation that lesbians and single women should be granted the same access to fertility treatments as coupled heterosexual women. There are a number of indicators of misandronic feeling in the sample and this plays out in the elision of men (fathers) from discussions of conception and parenting. Fatherhood is consistently reconfigured as donation, a finite relationship between donor and mother. Often, this service is reduced further to the exchange of goods – sperm – thereby dehumanising the process of conception and reducing women’s moral, family obligations to the donor.

8.2 Section 28: once more unto the breach

As examined in Chapter Five, *DIVA*’s editorial content pays a good deal of attention to civic life and, since it tends otherwise to focus closely on specifically lesbian culture, it is in editorial on these topics that ‘they’ are most often explicitly present. Here I focus particularly on the magazine’s handling of Section 28, since it was a defining moment in contemporary lesbian and gay politics (Chapter One). Its shadow is cast across much of the sample, particularly after the election of a Labour government in 1997, which brought with it the possibility of the Section’s repeal. Between 1997 and 2004, one article every three issues (i.e. 25 in 75 issues) focuses primarily on Section 28 (in addition to a considerable number of articles that make more or less visible references to the Section)\(^1\). Of these, 19 are news articles, one is a readers’ letter, and five are editor’s letters\(^2\). The predominance of the news genre suggests a concern with keeping abreast of developments in, and demonstrations against, the Section’s status. Both editors highlight Section 28 as being central to their political motivation in the 1990s and this is reflected in Gillian Rodgerson’s repeated letters on the subject. Understood as a Westminster rubber-stamp on homophobia, the Section’s creation and elongated, abortive repeal were significant filters through which ‘our’ sense of self in relation to others was distilled at the end of the 20\(^{th}\) century. *DIVA*’s discussions of Section 28 are therefore a significant site for the construction of ‘them’.
A number of social actors appear in Figure 8.1 (below), and throughout *DIVA*’s discussion of Section 28, which can be divided into three groups. References to “society”, “government” (and its individual representatives) and the media appear to occupy the position of ‘them’, being either juxtaposed to references to lesbians and gay men\(^3\), or negatively evaluated. For example, in paragraph one, “lesbians and gay men” appear in juxtaposition to “society”. These two groups appear to exist in mutual dislike of one another (“shameful”, “disapproval”). A third, intermediary group appears to consist of local authorities, the teaching profession and campaigners. These parties are not readily interpreted as ‘us’ in the way that references to “lesbians and gay men” are, yet neither are they satisfactorily taken as ‘them’ in the way that references to “the Thatcher government” are. While ‘we’ are personally motivated against Section 28 and ‘they’ created and endorse it, this intermediary group’s relationship with the Section is mixed: its members are constructed as adhering through fear, or protest based on a broader civil liberties sensibility. In paragraph five, the Section itself, and not local authorities, “thwarts” lesbian and gay projects, which are described as “lost”, a discursive move that backgrounds the actions of teachers and local authorities and removes the notion of intentionality entirely, replacing it with fear. In paragraph 17, the content of the Section is responsible for motivating the Arts Lobby, whose reaction is joined to (and yet historically separated from) ‘ours’ by the notion of “coalition”. It is an oversimplification, then, to speak only in terms of a singular ‘us’ and a singular ‘them’, but it is possible to identify an ‘us’ (lesbians and gay men) and a ‘them’ (British society and – or exemplified by – its ruling political elite) in opposition to one another. The third group, another ‘other’, inflects ‘our’ relationship with ‘them’.

Two key topoi emerge from *DIVA*’s discussion of Section 28 that help to frame this relationship: oppression, and conflict. Understanding oppression as ongoing injustice against or control over one group by another, the notion is immediately evident in the article’s standfirst\(^4\): “under Section 28” utilises an everyday metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) to connote an oppressive regime. It suggests that the Section has a pervasive, negative influence on ‘our’ lives despite the fact, explained elsewhere in the article, that the law applies only to local authorities. The limited scope (and virtually redundant enforcement) of the law was at times cited in the repeal debate to suggest that the removal of the Section was neither necessary nor urgent given its negligible effect. This
LOOKING BACK IN ANGER: MAY 1998

By Very Powell on ten years under Section 28

On May 24th, Section 28 will exactly ten years old. Don't always think that nothing can be done about it. Year by year, more and more young people are becoming aware of the situation and are challenging it. This article is a brief overview of the concerns of lesbian and gay groups.

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 was introduced to provide a framework for local authorities to promote the practice of heterosexual marriage as the norm. It was a response to the growing concern that some forms of behaviour, such as homosexuality, were not acceptable in the public sphere.

The legislation has been controversial and has been challenged on the grounds of human rights. The government has continually defended the legislation, arguing that it is necessary to protect the traditional family unit.

In 1998, a report by the House of Commons Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport suggested that the legislation should be repealed.

In 2004, the Human Rights Review Group published a report that recommended the repeal of Section 28.

As the legislation is now 20 years old, it is time to ask whether it has fulfilled its purpose. A review of the legislation and its impact is needed to ensure that it is fitting for the 21st century.
argument is alluded to in Figure 8.1 (paragraph four) however, the construction of the Section as something constantly hanging over ‘us’ remains potent: here, it is affective, if not legally effective.

Its symbolic resonance was, for many, precisely what was offensive about Section 28: it represented the legitimacy in law of homophobia and the downgraded status of those whose lives were not to be “promoted” (Burridge 2004). It is perhaps unsurprising, then, to see its symbolic status highlighted in DIVA. Of particular interest is the selection of terms across the sample that do so by constructing the Section as some kind of physical, built symbol – terms such as “monument” and “memorial” feature on repeated occasions (see seventh paragraph, Figure 8.1). The Section “stands”, and “falls” on being repealed. Since monuments and memorials tend to celebrate and enshrine particular moments, talking about Section 28 in these terms offers ‘their’ attitude towards ‘us’ a cultural visibility and material permanence that symbols of ‘our’ point of view such as protests and Pride parades inherently lack. The Section’s lasting presence is foregrounded and provides a contrast with the finite opportunities afforded to ‘us’ to be visible. It is not only in coverage of Section 28 that DIVA constructs a social landscape designed by and to reflect ‘them’, rendering ‘us’ illegitimate or invisible:

Extract 8.2 ‘There’s no place like Dome’ Issue 47, p. 26

1 The big tent at Greenwich houses the Millennium Experience, Britain’s self-portrait for the year 2000. Kate Wildblood went looking for lesbians. Did she find any? What do you think? Supposedly, the Dome is about ‘national identity’, but we still don’t fit into their picture. Therefore, there are no official lesbian moments – but, by going to the Dome with our families and friends, just as with everything else in life, we can create our own Dyke Zone.

Here, ‘our’ absence from the national (read: ‘their’) sense of self is rhetorically constructed as inevitable (line 4) despite the inappropriateness or insufficiency of the beliefs upon which that invisibility is predicated (“supposedly”, “still”, lines 4 and 5). Though “we can create our own Dyke Zone” by being visible to one another, ‘we’ are powerless to alter ‘their’ ‘official’ picture of Britain (line 5).

The second key topos in DIVA’s Section 28 discourse is conflict: throughout the sample, talk about the Section is littered with references to
fighting, doing battle, triumphs and defeats, often highlighting the length, ferocity and bitterness of the conflict between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Where articles about Section 28 feature pictures, they tend overwhelmingly to include images of protests and demonstrations. This suggests there is something in these busy shots, filled with ‘us’ and intermediary ‘others’ out on the streets ‘fighting’, that DIVA wishes to privilege (Hall 1997). In Figure 8.1, a personal photograph of a female protestors and her children dominates. Budgetary restrictions must be taken into account when considering the selection of images (Chapter Four), but it seems reasonable to suggest that this photograph is particularly salient because readers are likely to identify with it (and thus as a member of ‘us’). ‘We’ are generally implicitly constructed in the text: this image constructs an immediately available ‘us’ which is filled out and contextualised in the additional, smaller photos.

The groups of images set the discussion of Section 28 in the context of an active, ongoing conflict in which a collective ‘us’ is embroiled. The Section is one battle among a number that characterise an always fractious relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’; we are parties at war. Paragraph 16 (Figure 8.1) suggests a socio-political landscape in which ‘we’ are ever at risk and must be prepared for hostile moves from ‘them’. Elsewhere, Rodgerson responds to a late counter-repeal move by the Conservatives with “Once more unto the breach, dear friends”, making explicit the notion of war and of repeated attempts to break down the barriers to equality.

The question of power is central to the topoi of oppression and conflict, thus DIVA’s construction of the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in coverage of Section 28 relies in part on the discursive handling of power and agency. There is a slight tension at play between oppression and conflict, since the oppressed are typically powerless yet in the latter, both sides must be able to ‘fight’. The attribution of verbs to ‘us’ and to ‘them’ seems to attend to this: as Figure 8.1 shows, ‘our’ actions are most likely to be intransitive action – looking, or mental processes – remembering, expecting – while ‘their’ actions are most likely to be transitive action processes, with ‘us’ as the patients of these actions. Though ‘we’ ‘fight’, this takes the form of demonstrations and protest, which are essentially public displays of a point of view that rely on action on the part of those protested against in order to effect change. In the articles dealing with Section 28, ‘we’ are typically protesting, or waiting and trusting in the government to change the law. This is in clear contrast to ‘them’: in Figure 8.1 ‘they’ (or the Section itself)
damage, thwart, attack, and exploit; elsewhere those in power are described as humiliating ‘us’, abusing ‘our’ trust and grossly exaggerating the risks involved in the Section’s repeal.

Parliament’s key pro-Section movers – Dame Jill Knight, Baroness Young, Baroness Blatch – are frequently given their full titles in a discursive move that emphasises their privilege and power. Their efforts against the Section’s repeal are labelled “tactics”, implying a level of strategy and planning not typically associated with “protest” – and making available some notion of underhandedness. As the repeal campaign picks up pace in 2000, articles in successive issues of DIVA construct the Section as an act of physical violence. The headlines “Getting the clause out” (January 2000) and “Sticking the clause in” (February 2000) use the alternative ‘Clause 28’ label (far less regularly used than ‘Section 28’ both in DIVA and in public discourse) to play on the homophonous relationship between clause and claws. In these phrases an absent but implied ‘them’ bears (and uses) ‘claws’, connoting not only an extremely violent, animalistic attack, but also spite – which is lexically echoed in the remainder of the later article, which describes Conservative and press actions as “downright nasty”, “agitating”, and “stirring”. The passing of, and continued support for, Section 28 is thereby produced as lacking reason, a means by which homophobic society (‘they’) lashes out at the object of its fear (‘us’).

Fear plays a significant part in DIVA’s talk about Section 28 and thus its construction of the (oppressive) relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In a number of discussions of the Section in the sample, as in Figure 8.1, fear of the consequences of breaking the law, rather than homophobia, is what effectively enforces the law. As mentioned above, it operates to nullify any potential challenge to Section 28 not only by us but by the sympathetic ‘others’. This undermines the credibility of the Section (and ‘them’, as its creators/enforcers) by inferring that some of those who are ‘not us’ are kept in line only by fear of reprisal rather than their belief in the hierarchical relationship set out and maintained by the Section. DIVA also makes a number of references to the role of religion in its creation and defence: when Scottish anti-repeal campaigner Brian Souter is labelled “millionaire Christian businessman Brian Souter”8 his religion is prominently proffered as the reason for his opposition. Since elsewhere in DIVA’s Section 28 debate religion is conflated with moral crusading based on
religious dogma, the use of this label activates an interdiscursive link which undermines the judiciousness of anti-repeal campaigns.

The rational, intellectual failure of Section 28 is further implied by the evaluative accent of the discussion – in Figure 8.1 the Section is described as “shameful”, “shabby”, “tawdry” and “abysmal”; the government as “smug” and “dark”; and the press as “wild” and “frenzied”. Similarly, words used synonymously with “repeal” include: “bin”, “lift”, “axe”, “toss out”, “bite the dust”, “scrap” and “ditch” – note that many position the Section as rubbish. This is a vocabulary that undermines the formulation of the Section and the rationale of those who created and supported it.

8.3 Mainstream media: let them eat lesbians

The 1990s was a hugely significant period for the relationship between lesbians and mainstream media, bearing witness to a dramatic increase in mainstream lesbian visibility that variously (often simultaneously) delighted and disappointed lesbian viewers, thrilled to see themselves in the spotlight yet frequently disenfranchised from the images of lesbianism on show (Chapter One). According to Kakefuda, “people believe in the media. If it says there are lesbians, they exist” (1992: 2). In fin-de-siècle Britain, the mainstream media did not just declare that lesbians existed but also set the conditions according to which they existed and their images were ‘consumed’. The surge in, and nature of, media attention was crucial in negotiating and defining the relationship between lesbians and heterosexual society.

In DIVA, women had one of very few opportunities to discuss their representation in the media, and these discussions can be broadly categorised as focusing primarily on a) the treatment of (‘real-life’) lesbians, or b) mainstream representations of (fictional) lesbians. These typically appear in the first half of the sample, at the height of ‘lesbian chic’ and when several high-profile ‘incidents’ made lesbians front-page news (Chapter One). Most articles seem to depend upon an assumption that mainstream representations are, and will continue to be, consistently a) negative, and/or b) insufficient, inaccurate and/or heterosexualised; the discussions therefore routinely produce and interrogate some notion of ‘them’. The analysis below is concerned with what kind of ‘them’ DIVA produces, and the relationship it thereby constructs between ‘them’ and ‘us’.

181
One of the most prominent discussions of the media in the sample, which appears in October 1996, provides an excellent starting point for this analysis. Headlined “Our lives on their pages”, the article is written by Gillian Rodgerson, who “examines the uneasy relationship between dykes and the tabloid press”. Here, the ‘us’ and ‘them’ subject positions are immediately activated and allocated to dykes and the tabloid press respectively. Table 8.1, below, lists the actors included in the article:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Us’</th>
<th>Intermediary</th>
<th>‘Them’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gillian Rodgerson</td>
<td>“Debbie”</td>
<td>Journalists/reporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Brown</td>
<td>GLC</td>
<td>News of the Screws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicki Thorogood</td>
<td>Channel 4</td>
<td>Evening News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Hemmings</td>
<td>Press Council</td>
<td>Daily Express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maureen Colquhoun</td>
<td>Paul Hamlyn Foundation</td>
<td>Daily Mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline Spry</td>
<td>Kingsmead School</td>
<td>Evening Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqui Lawrence</td>
<td>Gay male MPs</td>
<td>The tabloids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIVA</td>
<td>Friends and family</td>
<td>The press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lesbian press</td>
<td>Neighbours</td>
<td>Wapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gay press</td>
<td>Teachers/staff</td>
<td>The right-wing press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian organisations</td>
<td>Students/children</td>
<td>The Tory government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dykes</td>
<td>Local governors</td>
<td>Cronies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbians</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>British tabloid readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Boroughs</td>
<td>Political parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immigrants</td>
<td>Conservative supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ordinary people</td>
<td>Britain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again, a variety of referents can be organised into three groups, according to their association with others or the author’s apparent evaluation of them. When Rodgerson comments that “Once you’ve been burned, it seems you can’t trust even the lesbian press” (emphasis added), the scalar implicature differentiates between media according to its producers, which seems inherently, in this construction, to differentiate the level of trust one can generally place in such media. Here, the lesbian press is not implicated in the ‘burning’ of lesbians, but suffers the consequences just the same.

Again there is a cluster of intermediate parties that are not typically invested with the negative values associated with ‘them’, nor with full membership of ‘us’. Table 8.1 is organised according to the relative scope of the terms used, descending from most to least specific. Each group includes a range of referents, from named individuals to broader categorisations such as women and lesbians (‘us’), and tabloid readers and Britain (‘them’). In the case of the
former, DIVA readers are thereby encouraged to read as lesbians, and to interpret the account of media behaviour from this standpoint. In the case of the latter, DIVA’s evaluation of the media (described in this particular article as attacking, targeting and intruding upon lesbians) is implicitly extended to these larger categories; the media is an exemplar, a synecdochic ‘them’. Though the actions are largely ascribed to media outlets, their reception by the public seems to be implicated as a driving force. In Extracts 8.3 and 8.4, below, the gastronomic expressions (lines 5 and 18) index a public appetite for ‘our’ persecution.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, to find a consistently defensive position in DIVA across the sample and in numerous contexts, but particularly in talk about the media. After a number of newspaper reports concerning a group of lesbian prison warders found guilty of harassing and bullying male and heterosexual female colleagues, DIVA’s coverage attacks the mainstream media’s “prurient reporting”. The article closes with the suggestion that “we should be told the annual rate of suspensions for male prison officers found guilty of sexual harassment before we judge, as the papers have, the predatory nature of lesbian sexual behaviour”, in a formulation that anticipates and encourages a favourable comparison between ‘us’ (no longer indexing only the warders but all lesbians) and ‘them’ (media and men), and discourages the consideration of the warders’ behaviour on its own terms. The article appears below a mocked up, tabloid-style block headline, between a report on homophobic attacks on a lesbian couple’s home, and a recruitment advertisement placed by Essex Police that stresses the suitability of women to an enforcement role. Such framing also backgrounds the warders’ actions and foregrounds instead ‘our’ treatment by ‘them’.

In each of the articles excerpted below, as throughout the sample, the press is constructed as inherently homophobic, the only variation being in the level and intensity of that homophobia (line 19, though specific references tend to be to tabloids, line 11).

Extract 8.3 ‘Our lives on their pages’ October 1996, p. 46

1 One tabloid victim described her confrontation with 40 or 50 men, all silent, aiming their cameras at her […] Lesbian sex, in particular, seems to send most newspapers into a frenzy of fascination. The list of lesbians whose lives have been excavated for the delectation of British tabloid readers is a long one. And it is clear that the scars go deep. […] An example is the double page character assassination in the
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Daily Mail suffered by former Channel 4 programmer
Caroline Spry [...] Her successor at Channel 4, Jacquie Lawrence, has also been the victim of a sustained bout of tabloid intrusion [...] Jane Brown and her family were forced into hiding, taking only the clothes on their backs because they were afraid to return to the house. [...] The Daily Express screamed [...] will there ever come a time when the press will tire of pursuing lesbians? [...] We can be confident that our days as “loony lezzies” are far from over.  

Extract 8.4 ‘Only kidding’ December 1994, p. 10

The feeding frenzy she [Sandi Toksvig] had to endure from the more homophobic elements of the Press since coming out to _Sunday Times_ journalist Chrissy Iley [...] Some sections of the press... put an especially vicious spin on...

Extract 8.5 ‘Hard lessons’ August 1995, p. 18

It was the council that gave Jane Brown to the media, knowing enough about her private life to realise that public notoriety was the next step.

_DIVA_ offers (and simultaneously confirms) homophobia as ‘their’ (socially corrupt) motive for negative treatment ‘us’, which is frequently constructed as predictable – it is on the knowledge of such inevitability that the council in the Jane Brown case apparently acted as they did (lines 23-24).

Lines 22-23 also highlight the transitive force and direction of interactions between ‘us’ and ‘them’. ‘They’ _confront, excavate, assassinate, aim_ and _pursue_ – note the familiar battle undertones found in Section 28 discourse, above. The top picture accompanying ‘Our lives on their pages’ (the headline itself is instructive) shows two women inside their home through the viewfinder of a camera, though this is much like that of a rifle. In contrast, ‘we’ _endure, suffer, hide, are scarred_ and _are given_; passive victims once more of ‘their’ aggressive and oppressive treatment. Again the notion of fear is present, implicitly and explicitly (line 13), in characterising ‘us’-‘them’ relations. Mixing fear with the notion of ‘the family’ (line 11), _DIVA_ makes use of popular ‘think of the children’ rhetoric (Kantor 2004), undermining the reasonableness of ‘their’ actions.

‘Their’ lack of reason is further underscored by the consistent selection of particular terms: the media is _frenzied_ (lines 4 and 18) and _hysterical_ in its “unhealthy fascination” with ‘us’. Such framing activates connotations of manic, uncontrollable behaviour lacking both a sound basis and a sound mind – though the use of terms that produce a more calculating and spiteful actor (line 21, also
several instances of “nasty”) suggest only the former is intended. The verbs “scream” (line 14) and “screech”\(^\text{12}\), used in *DIVA* to refer to newspaper headlines, have previously been noted for their virtually exclusive use in relation to female subjects and interpreted as a means of disparaging women’s talk (Kaye 1989: 188). A reference to “the straight media’s thermals in a twist”\(^\text{13}\) uses a similarly misogynist phrase. Here they appropriate but reconfigure those inferences to contribute to the working up of ‘their’ attitude towards ‘us’ as ridiculous, (morally) reactive and senselessly articulated.

What is more, all of the articles analysed for their discussions of mainstream media implicitly accept, or confer, ‘their’ power to define ‘us’ (line 16). Though Frances Williams and Kim Watson both highlight the usefulness of lesbian chic in attracting support for launching *DIVA* (Chapter Four), it is typically constructed as a phrase created by and *meaningful* only to ‘them’, yet *consequential* only for ‘us’ and ‘our’ families.

In Extract 8.6, lesbian chic is contained within “the mainstream media” (line 1), and noun references position the media (which again appears to function as a synecdoche for ‘them’, by virtue of the seemingly co-referential “the media”, line 2, and “the world at large, line 5), and ‘us’ (“lesbians”, line 4) apart from one another. This sense of division is reinforced by terms like “appearance” (line 1) and “advent” (line 6), which suggest something sudden or unexpected: in these terms ‘we’ are excluded from the preparation of such images. Similarly, there is differentiation of force in response to mainstream lesbian images: whilst ‘we’ ‘notice’ (impassive reception), ‘they’ are (‘oddly’) ‘gripped’ (emotional reception), throwing ‘our’ position amongst the mainstream media’s (target) consumers into doubt.
This may be important given the parallel construction of the mainstream attention paid to lesbians as a trend or fad; this is clear from Extract 8.6’s headline and the use of “new catchphrase” (line 2), which manages to imply not only that lesbian chic lacks substance but also that it is one amongst a succession of gimmicks (see also line 8). Crucially, in DIVA’s lesbian chic discourse, it is not the notion of glamorous, feminine lesbians at stake, but the media’s claims on their invention. As one writer puts it: “Some of us have been doing it since long before fashion picked up on it”\(^\text{14}\). In discussing lesbian chic as a media concoction, lacking depth and a ‘truth’ approved by ‘us’ (as objects), DIVA produces the media and by extension a generic ‘them’ as intellectually inferior or, at least, willing consumers of ‘our’ misrepresentation. Lesbians’ initial celebration of their newfound media profile is rued by one writer with the question: “Did we really buy that?”\(^\text{15}\).

Extract 8.8 ‘I blame Beth Jordache, myself’ August 1997, p. 47

1 Imagine the sheer goddamn scandal of it all when it’s
discovered that Cwm Den… is harbouring two lesbians, or
two straight girls with a storyline crisis, depending on how
you want to see it. Cue Lisa and Fiona. In the tradition of
ridiculous soap plots there’s never been a whiff of a
suggestion that either of these two women might be
lesbians. But hey, why let that stop you when there’s
ratings to be won and lots of free publicity to be made.

The notion of commoditisation runs a fairly central course through DIVA’s talk about lesbian chic and, as Extract 8.8 demonstrates, more general discussions of mainstream depictions of lesbians. Instead of being potential consumers of these images, as above, here ‘we’ are configured as a kind of commodity; ratings fodder in a market that trades on the “scandal” of ‘our’ abnormality as (criminal? - “harbouring”) outsiders. These discussions suggest a critical understanding of the way in which ‘we’ are reduced by ‘them’ to “a spectacle, an exhibit, a source of entertainment” (Pickering 2001: 49). Once again, despite the flow of power suggested in this trade, the author supplies terms upon which readers might understand ‘them’ as inferior: line 1’s hyperbolic sarcasm mocks the idea that two lesbians should be scandalous; ‘their’ use of lesbians is constructed as a desperate move (line 3) for shallow gains (line 8) – and poorly executed at that (line 5).

The quality of mainstream lesbian portrayals is much debated in DIVA, and this debate is usually based on the presupposition that quality is low. When
one contributor asks “Have the tabloids ever made you furious with their stereotypes of lesbians?” she questions not whether lesbians are stereotyped, but readers’ reactions to this.

Extract 8.9 ‘BBC lesbian drama reviewed’ July 1998, p. 14
1 Enter woman with short bowl cut who looks like she’s
2 struggling to walk round with bigger balls than half the
3 male cast members. Could this be the lesbian? we hear you
4 cry […] One thing that must be said was that the two
5 women were not your average five-inch fingernails and
6 high-hair lesbians that programme-makers use to titillate
7 the lads and dads in viewerland; but it was still a classic
8 case of chuck-in-the-lezzy-sex-to-boost-the-ratings if ever
9 there was one.

Extract 8.10 ‘I blame Beth Jordache, myself’ August 1997, p. 47
10 Believable to the end, the dyke here is a bitter and twisted,
11 international terrorist who kidnaps male victims before
12 threatening to blow up the world, etc. etc..

Both extracts above rely upon readers’ pre-existing understanding of typical mainstream images of lesbians – the author anticipates a competent reading of the lesbian=masculine woman stereotype in line 3 – and also upon their interpretation of them as incorrect, or at least generally unrepresentative: in the sarcastic line 10, the ‘bitter and twisted’ dyke is ‘believable’ only by virtue of her repeated appearances, which number so highly that a full explication is unnecessary (line 12). In Extract 8.9 the masculine stereotype is played off against the “average” (i.e. recognisable, though also apparently ‘wrong’) media lesbian, who is once again a tool of the industry (lines 6 and 8).

Noting an apparent increase in mainstream images of lesbians several years later in 2001, editor Gillian Rodgerson comments that: “They’re not all deranged murderers and they don’t necessarily die or go off with a man in the last reel.” Formulating this statement in the negative implicates the opposite formulation (Martin and Rose 2007), in this case implying that ‘they’ usually portray ‘us’ in such ways. This kind of representation - what Cottingham (1996) calls a “cycle of enunciation and elimination” (p. 3), which “casts the lesbian … a perpetual fiction” (p. 5) - is treated as representative of the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in such a way that the treatment of a single lesbian is an act against ‘us’: “It harmed all other lesbians who were not in the direct line of fire, but knew how to read the smoke […] every time the press hounds lesbians, it
makes us all stop in our tracks,” (Hemmings 1980: 158). Hemmings was writing about 1978 – “a freak year (or year of the freaks?), in which lesbians managed, like it or not, to hog headline after headline” (p. 157) – but her reaction to media treatment is strongly echoed by DIVA.

8.4 Men, misandry and the F word (fatherhood)

The focus of this chapter has so far been heterosexual society, its ruling political elite and its mainstream media. That is, these bodies have so far largely occupied the role of ‘them’ in DIVA – though the notions of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are fluid and might represent various (groups of) people according to context, it is typically such bodies that ‘we’ measure ‘ourselves’ against. Men are often implicitly or explicitly implicated in negative assessments of ‘them’, and are consistently cast as ‘other’ in DIVA. In this section, I discuss the construction of men as a specific kind of ‘other’ and look at talk about parenting in particular, since it is here that men figure most frequently – and centrally – in DIVA discourse. What the following analysis highlights is a strong, hostile othering of men as an – the – enemy. In contrast to the construction of British society, its political class and media, however, DIVA is better able to discursively negate men’s power via the elision and/or downgrading of their role as the fathers of ‘our’ children.

For all that was ‘wrong’ with lesbian chic (Chapter One, and Section 8.3, above), it at least represented a departure from the popular portrayal of lesbians as steel-toe-capped, separatist man-haters, a stereotypical hangover from the 1970s that women were keen to erase in the post-feminist backlash of the 1990s (Wolfe & Roripaugh 2006; Ashton 1996). However, men are frequently maligned throughout the sample, referred to as “the real enemy”¹⁸, inhibitors of women, poor sexual performers that heterosexual women too find unappealing, and sex-obsessed (see also Chapter Seven). On a number of occasions, (p)reviews of theatre productions, gallery exhibitions, films and so on are prefaced with a warning that they are produced by men yet still worth seeing: “Okay, so Wain was a guy, but…”¹⁹. It seems, then, that DIVA contains traces of a misandry that assumes a consensus among readers. Below, Extract 8.11, from a feature about Diane DiMassa and her cartoon creation Hothead Paisan, offers a particularly striking example.
Extract 8.11 ‘On the rampage’ December 1995, p. 14

Hothead elicits a euphoria at seeing those who usually get away with things scot-free getting their just deserts […]

Our heroine gets to kill loadsa men: she machine-guns an OJ Simpson supporter, puts a severed dick in formaldehyde and adds it to her ever-growing collection, brains a slimy office clerk, knocks down blokes in her car and pushes others under trucks. […] “I couldn’t care less about DC and Marvel,” DiMassa says sharply, her work firmly located in the dyke universe. Hothead’s certainly carrying her own little banner for the cause.

Since we typically only speak of ‘getting away with’ normatively prohibited actions, and since the indexical in line 1 appears to be co-referential with “men” (line 3), (some, if not all) men are configured here as (serial) wrong-doers who are rarely if ever brought to task. “Gets to” (line 3) relies on the presupposition that at least some people, presumably ‘we’, would like to “kill loadsa men” (by implication, because of the state of affairs available in lines 1-2), which is also suggested in line 1 by reference to the “euphoria” (lesbian) readers experience as Hothead carries out violent acts against exclusively male victims (lines 3-6). In closing the article, the author aligns Hothead’s actions, imagined as they are, very closely with ‘us’ (lines 8-9). “The cause” reads as having a direct anaphoric relationship with “the dyke universe”, and Hothead’s violent misandronic campaign is part of both.

It is interesting to see the character, elsewhere described as a “lesbian terrorist”, labelled “our heroine” (line 3). It is not untypical (though less common today) to see central characters referred to as such, but the reference usually applies to a ‘good’ character with whom the audience is expected to sympathise or identify – beyond the arts, “heroine” is usually reserved for someone whose bravery and achievements are admired. In this context then, it seems ‘we’ admire or at least sympathise with a woman who is able relentlessly to attack men. Of course, this is by virtue of her being a cartoon creation, but the inference remains that a) readers/lesbians envy her this freedom, and b) that men deserve this kind of treatment. This is present elsewhere in the sample through references to patriarchy and ongoing male culpability. Figure 8.3, below, shows a news-in-brief item on a Dyke Action Machine (DAM) action involving spoof calling cards.
“Ah, if only!” reiterates the sense in Extract 8.11 of the desirability of action against men (in this case, humiliation), and the construction of such action as revenge. The notion of revenge is rhetorically powerful, justifying the actions of the avenger by casting them as retribution. Revenge runs through much first-wave feminist literature, which sought, amongst other things, vengeance for centuries of sexual subordination. This appears to be present in the discussion of Hothead Paisan, which mentions a “severed dick” (line 4), a “slimy” clerk (line 5), and earlier describes how Hothead “rapes a man with a telegraph pole and a sledge hammer”. Elsewhere, men are criticised for “strategically deploying” (emphasis added; note the intentionality inherent there) sex in comedy, “contaminating the environment” by reinforcing “their cult of the cock”.

Sexuality thus appears to be at the heart of the apparent problem with men.

These passages suggest that the relationship between lesbians and men is constructed in broadly problematic terms, across a range of topics and contexts in DIVA. I focus here on parenting, which appears on average every 1.1 issues. The prevalence of the topic is related to the 1990s “gay-by boom” (see Benkov 1994): Rodgeron commissioned a monthly parenting column because “parenting was something that a lot of women were embarking on during that time; there were many different ways our readers could end up being responsible for kids, so it was important to me, it had a place in the magazine.”
These articles tend to feature images of two women with a baby or child(ren); the cover of Issue 23 (Figure 8.4) shows Leonardo da Vinci’s The Virgin and Child with St Anne, which has been interpreted as symbolising two mothers. Other than an illustrated silhouette of a man’s head, only one image of a man features in this body of articles. He is described as a lesbian mother’s lodger and is therefore safely removed from the “lesbian families” upon which the article focuses. It is perhaps unsurprising to find parenting reconfigured specifically as motherhood in a lesbian magazine, but the process of deleting or backgrounding men, even from the process of conception, is rather striking.

Extract 8.11 ‘Sperm wars’ September 2002, p. 36
1 Until we live in a future where we all wear unisex silver
2 jumpsuits, travel by personal jetpack and grow babies in
3 pods, lesbians who are considering popping a sprog of their
4 own will have to contend with the sticky subject of sperm.
5 Getting hold of the stuff can be tricky enough, getting
6 pregnant with it is often trickier still, and then, when you
7 think that your turkey-basting days are long gone, the
8 source of those chromosomes can come back into your life
9 in ways that you never expected.

In many articles, the term ‘father’ is absent, with ‘donor’ or a host of cloaking euphemisms – “the source of those chromosomes” in line 6, above, as well as “the man behind the sperm”, “the person who gave [the child] half their genes”, “the man who let loose the vital sperm” and “the guy who helped you out” elsewhere – taking its place. Since all of these phrases are used to denote father yet avoid the notion of fatherhood, their use has ideological implications (van Dijk 1991). The rare use of ‘father’ is not only revealing of DIVA values regarding men but helps to set the boundaries on the kinds of roles the men referred to can take (Kay 1975). These kinds of phrases establish men as facilitators, denying their potential place in the families they are involved in creating; their relationship is limited to a temporary, business-like one with the mother-to-be. If utterances carry an ideological history (Billig 2001, or what
Bakhtin 1981 refers to as words’ ‘taste’), then ‘donor’ cannot help but speak of short-term, anonymous (until 2005) ‘medical’ aid. Furthermore, by focusing on sperm, this relationship is shed somewhat of its service qualities in a process of commoditisation whereby becoming a parent involves the procurement of goods. This exchange is consequential only for the receiving party, as lines 3 – “sprog of their own” – and 6-7 suggest. In DIVA’s commodity-parenting discourse, sperm is so central that it often comes to stand itself for male involvement, as Extract 8.11 demonstrates. This is interesting in light of Hogben and Coupland’s (2000) finding that in placing small ads for co-parents, gay men stress their desirability as fathers in terms typical of dating ads, while lesbians delineate the male’s role using the structure of recruitment ads. In dehumanising the process of conception in this way, women’s moral obligation to donors is mitigated.

The elision of men is reinforced by the attribution of agency throughout DIVA’s talk about parenting: where men are present, their agency is typically limited to the act inherent in the term ‘donor’ (unless their relationship with the mother(s) becomes problematic, see below). In contrast, lesbians are constructed as active throughout the above extracts, getting hold of sperm and getting themselves pregnant with it (lines 5-6, above, in a construction that denies the donor any agency; he is simply a “source”, line 8).

Extract 8.12 ‘D.I.Y. babies’ June 1994, p. 54
1 As part of the burgeoning “lesbian baby boom”, two new
2 books published this summer explain how to go about
3 donor insemination. Gillian Rodgerson… mother of Sam, a
4 baby boy she had using D.I., reviews the latest advice
5 manuals.

Extract 8.13 ‘Marriage - is it good for lesbian parents?’ October 2001, p. 34
6 The donor was Eric, a gay man who was willing to be
7 traced if the child wanted to meet him, but gave his word
8 not to interfere in the family I’d created.

In Extract 8.12, the role of the donor is concealed within the compound “donor insemination” (line 3), which in turn becomes a tool used by lesbians (line 4) as they ‘do it themselves’ (title). The second extract reinforces this idea, with the speaker constructing herself alone as being responsible for her family’s creation, to the extent that involvement from the donor (apparently far removed, line 7) is construed as an intrusion (line 8).
This kind of talk all manages to avoid the dangerous notion of fatherhood, which carries, of course, far greater implications regarding long-term involvement and commitment to both the child and the mother. The preferred term ‘donors’ connotes a role that might be played by anyone; donors are treated as interchangeable and dispensable, quickly becoming irrelevant.

1 The next step is getting a man. We used a white, blonde one
2 that we had prepared earlier, but you could use any type.

Extract 8.14 reads like an instruction manual, borrowing from idiomatic, Blue Peter vocabulary in a way that demonstrates explicitly the emptiness of the donor category. Instead of collected toilet rolls and sticky-back-plastic, here a man – any kind of man – may satisfactorily be put to use (line 1) by lesbians. Elsewhere an author describes “[lining] up two men – doubling the chances”25. It is interesting, then, that in the context of lesbian parenting in DIVA, fatherhood is conflated with donation such that the terms ‘donor’ and ‘father’ seem to be used interchangeably:

Extract 8.15 ‘Daddy dearest’ April 2002, p. 48
1 If you’re in thrall to the desperate desire for a child, it’s all
2 too easy to let your common sense go out the window when
3 selecting a man to donate sperm.

Here, the headline term “daddy dearest” appears to be co-referential with “a man to donate sperm”. In an editorial26 on the necessity, given the likely end of anonymity for sperm donors, of thinking “about the whole nature of fatherhood”, the term “known donor” is used where “father” might (and perhaps ought to) be, in a move that implicitly equates fatherhood with something markedly more passive, that is, being identifiable.

Where ‘father’ itself is used, which is rare, it typically appears in collocation with terms such as ‘genetic’, ‘biological’ and ‘birth’. These nominal determiners echo the commodity discourse in tying fatherhood to the notion of supply.

Extract 8.16 ‘The rights of our children’ September 2002, p. 38
1 By calling him the donor, we believe he is no longer the
2 father … Is it fair to deprive a child of knowing who they
3 have come from, biologically, genetically?
Extract 8.16 comes from an article that adopts a counter-discursive standpoint (one of only a few identified as such in the sample) in arguing against discarding donors after conception. However, this is framed (and thus limited) by the notion of genetics; the author in fact presents an argument for allowing children “to know their full genetic heritage”, and assures readers that “knowing their heritage doesn’t mean they have to live with all their family members”. The genetics argument effectively archives the meaningful relationship between father and child in the past and, in this case, retains the distance between ‘the family’ and the father, who remains, essentially, a donor.

8.5 Concluding thoughts

This chapter considered DIVA’s construction of ‘them’ – that is, the way DIVA talks about others to produce them as others, and what kind(s) of others they are in relation to ‘us’. My interest in doing so was not to define precisely who ‘they’ are. Just as no tangible singular ‘lesbian community’ exists, neither does a singular ‘them’; rather, the notion is located in discourse (Pickering 2001). My aim was to consider how ‘they’ are talked about, evaluated and represented in a magazine that circulates and relies to some extent upon notions of ‘us’.

I selected three topics to which the concept of ‘them’ was ideologically central. In Section 8.2, ‘they’, in DIVA’s coverage of Section 28, included the general British public and, more specifically, Britain’s political parties – particularly the Conservative government of the 1980s, though an increasing ire was directed at the Labour government as its first term elapsed. In these texts, ‘they’ are consistently produced as an enemy, relentlessly attacking; ‘We’ subsequently exist in perpetual struggle. In his work on parliamentary and newspaper debates about Section 28, Rahman (2004) found that pro-Section speakers frequently emphasised the threat posed by homosexuals, and we see the reverse process occurring in DIVA. My analysis also suggested that the Section was afforded a kind of material permanence by being referred to as, for example, a “monument”. Interestingly, in her work on lesbian-authored self-help literature between 1987 and 1997, Chirrey (2007) also found heterosexuality’s enshrinement in social structures emphasised, while lesbianism was treated as something hidden and transient, suggesting discursive trends that extend beyond DIVA. After the government had promised to repeal Section 28, an article on a discriminatory employment legislation was Headlined “Worse than Section 28?”27.
Even after its demise, the Section is produced as a kind of yardstick by which to measure how badly ‘they’ treat ‘us’.

Section 8.3 moved on to consider DIVA’s handling of mainstream media and their representations of lesbians, finding that these discussions again positioned the British public alongside the media as a homophobic and ignorant – but, crucially, powerful - ‘them’. ‘We’ and ‘they’ exist in a relationship of mistrust and hostility, in which (as in discussions of Section 28), ‘their’ feelings towards ‘us’ are rendered irrational. ‘They’ again have a stranglehold on producing a reality that merely entertains ‘them’ but has a profound effect on ‘us’. ‘They’ are granted free agency and influence while ‘we’ remain passive in ‘our’ wait for change.

Finally in Section 8.4, I discussed the treatment of men as a specific other in DIVA, and focused particularly on the magazine’s articles about parenting. The misandry that was readable in various texts from the sample manifested, in the context of conception and parenting, in the constant elision, backgrounding or dehumanising of men, who were often presupposed to be a negative influence in lesbian families. Speaking to lesbian parents, Donovan (2000) found that they were keen to find “men who will not want to disrupt the central basis of the family” (p. 153), so DIVA’s discussions might be understood in terms of a prevalent discourse in which men were required to prove themselves to be suitably benign. Specific aspects of the contemporary social context must also be considered, however. At the time, a number of court cases had been publicised in which lesbian mothers contested custody of their children with ex-husbands, whose cases generally relied on the mothers’ sexuality. The courts invested heavily in the notion that children need a male role model, which would, they felt, automatically be absent from a presupposedly anti-men lesbian family. Clarke & Kitzinger (2005) found that women participating in televised debates on the subject consistently shifted the focus of the role model question from fathers to a wider male social network, and this also appears to be case in DIVA.

Across these discussions and the various ‘them’s produced, several things remain relatively constant. The relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is typically constructed in oppositional terms, rather than difference or distance. These others all have some kind of influence or impact on ‘our’ lives that makes them a concern. And while the in-group, ‘us’, is made quite specific (usually lesbians, though the group includes gay men in the context of Section 28), DIVA’s
definition of ‘them’ tends to be rather expansive, encompassing at times British society, all heterosexuals, or all men. This suggests a particular consciousness of ‘our’ otherness and disenfranchisement from the public (Thornton 1997).

Taking DIVA and its readers as a subcultural group, or simply as a group self-conscious enough to have a concept of ‘us’ and ‘them’, it is understandable, perhaps even expectable, to find the notion of threat attached to ‘them’. It is perhaps problematic for a minority group, however, since the threat jeopardises ‘our’ power to overcome it (which is not entirely countered by the undermining moves that afford ‘us’ a kind of intellectual superiority). There is a tension in that ‘they’ are simultaneously responsible for ‘our’ complaint, and its resolution: DIVA must assert ‘their’ bad points, as van Dijk (1998) suggests, while acknowledging (and also problematising) ‘our’ limited ability to affect change and implicitly ask for something better, something more, from ‘them’.
In comparison, across the 95 issues, related concerns are dealt with less frequently: four articles address censorship more generally, 11 focus on hate crime, and 16 discuss sex laws.

For a list of full references, see Appendix C.

Which, even without the ‘us’/‘we’/‘our’ deixis in combination with more explicit noun references, are logically interpreted as references to ‘us’ given the context of consumption.

The standfirst is the line appearing beneath the headline, in which the article’s scope is summarised.

Lines 1-3 feature the contents page listing for the article. Lines 4-7 feature the final lines of the article itself.

In ‘Getting the clause out’ (January 2000), a set of protest images is captioned “Scenes from the battle against Section 28”.

‘From the editor’, March 2003, p. 4. The line comes from William Shakespeare’s *Henry V*.

‘Section 28 debate hots up in Scotland’ July 2000, p. 29

‘Real life bad girls investigated’ June 2002, p. 16

Spry and Lawrence both commissioned ‘Dyke TV’, a series of (late-night) programmes for a lesbian audience. Brown, a primary head, turned down free tickets for a performance of Romeo and Juliet because of its heterosexism.

‘Pinkparents UK’, October 2000, p. 29

‘From the editor’, June 1997, p. 5

‘Don’t cry for me, Soph & Rena’, February 1997, p. 8

‘Glad rags’ February 1995, p. 32

‘Lesbian chic: the latest accessory?’ April 1994, p. 10

‘Life through a lens’ May 2001, p. 38

‘No, but I play one on screen’ May 2001, p. 12

‘From the editor’ February 1998, p. 3


‘Funny peculiar, funny haha’ April 1994, p. 16

When coded as a primary topic. This is a reflection of the fact that for several years Lisa Saffron was commissioned to write a monthly parenting column. According to Rodgerson, this was important because “parenting was something that a lot of women were embarking on during that time, so it certainly had a place in the magazine”.

Freud’s (1984) interpretation of da Vinci’s work was that it represented his having been raised by two mothers, explaining the apparently indiscernible age difference between The Virgin (front) and St Anne (back, her mother).

In 2005 British law was changed to allow children to discover the identity of donor fathers.

Blue Peter is a long-running British television programme in which presenters instruct viewers in making objects using items they have been told to collect from home. It features the phrase “And here’s one I made earlier”.

‘Maybe baby… maybe not’ December 1997, p. 30

‘From the editor’ September 2002, p. 4

‘Worse than Section 28?’ July 2003, p. 20.
9.1 Considering my analysis

In the context of a dearth of research into lesbian texts, I set out, in this project, to analyse Britain’s foremost lesbian magazine, DIVA, at the level of text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. My interest, in doing so, was to be able to produce an account of a magazine and genre which have been massively under-analysed – despite the certainty with which the academy regards magazines as important cultural texts. Further, I wanted to analyse a discursive process that has been similarly prominent, the construction of ‘us’ and ‘them’, from the perspective of a minority group typically positioned as ‘them’. In drawing the project to a close, I attempt here to summarise, evaluate and contextualise my reading of the magazine.

My analysis of DIVA began, in Chapters Four and Five, by considering the circumstances of the magazine’s production, and its dominant product characteristics or ‘brand identity’. It seemed imperative that any analysis of the latter was informed by the former, and the relationship between the two is clear. At a practical level, the design limitations of DIVA can be understood in light of the limited resources described by both editors, and the difficulties both had in securing major advertising revenue. Importantly, the dialogue between interview data and textual analysis enabled me to account for the frustration founding editor Frances Williams, in particular, felt at the discrepancy between her vision of DIVA and the magazine she was actually able to put together. DIVA’s at times less than glossy appearance does not reflect the rejection of mainstream aesthetic ideals but rather the impossibility of matching them from an under-resourced corner of the gay market, and as the sole product in a lesbian market. The aesthetic urgency that competition affords publishers of more mainstream magazines is absent from DIVA’s production.

Further, the editorial philosophies described in interview are significant in interpreting and understanding the magazine’s content. Both editors describe their involvement in gay and/or feminist activism, and this is reflected in the contrasts between DIVA and the typical mainstream women’s magazine. DIVA’s covers feature models that mirror its readers as they are, diverse and realistic – not the
buy-me-and-be-like-me models that promise readers of mainstream magazines physical and lifestyle transformations and improvements (Ferguson 1980; McCracken 1993). Where postmodern femininity has become obsessed with the perfectability of the body, privileging individual satisfaction at the expense of female affinity, *DIVA* promotes a healthy sense of self and of subcultural belonging. Instead of focusing on products to improve the self and the home, *DIVA* centres on subcultural heritage and participation, and on the changing political environment of the 1990s. The spikes in political coverage that appear to co-occur with political or legal changes suggest an engagement with civic processes that scholars have typically found to be absent in women’s magazines. Machin and van Leeuwen’s (2006) description of ‘the *Cosmo* woman’ as being without political beliefs or any sense of community or solidarity seems antithetical to ‘the *DIVA* woman’. Winship’s (1987: 160) reading of women’s magazines casts them as a kind of “mental chocolate”, in which reading magazines offers women secret moments of personal pleasure. More recently, Braithwaite (2002) and Gill (2006) have again stressed the intimacy between readers and women’s magazines, whose relationship operates on a one-to-one basis and has the magazine in the role of mentor, confidant, expert. These, too, fail to sit comfortably with my reading of *DIVA*, and that offered by its makers.

Instead, we see in *DIVA* echoes of the same values that drove the highly-motivated and brave women of the 1960s and 1970s, described in Chapter One, to produce Britain’s first lesbian newsletters. Like them, its makers were tired of a lack of lesbian visibility and the negativity of those representations that were available. Like them, *DIVA*’s editors hoped to bring women together, and to offer readers images with which they could identify and engage, advertisements from companies offering goods and services targeted specifically at them, and, with increasing frequency as its first decade wore on, content that both encouraged and facilitated their participation in lesbian subculture. It is remarkable, given that both editors refused to indulge advertisers editorially or filter other advertising content according to their tastes, that *DIVA* was able to bring these qualities to market. It may be that, just as limited resources constrained the magazine, they were also, in a sense, liberating; *DIVA* was able to turn its position outside of mainstream commerciality to its advantage, maintaining the integrity of its editors’ aspirations with regard to image and content and this, in turn, fostered a loyal and growing readership. Publisher Millivres Prowler invested in *DIVA* at a
loss for around three years, a fiscal benevolence uncommon in the cut-throat magazine market, but one rewarded with ever-increasing profitability.

Chapter Six analysed the construction of an in-group, an ‘us’, by considering various means of realisation: referential and predicational strategies, conceptual metaphors, and shared narratives. *DIVA*’s preferred anthroponyms and their predicates frequently afforded the highest significance to sexuality, defining and producing an in-group and related out-groups on these terms. Interestingly, predicational work around the in-group suggested a repertoire of salient characteristics that provide, more or less implicitly, some kind of measure of members’ identification with and among the in-group. Those who are out of the closet, recognisably lesbian, and who have ‘contributed’ to the imagined community (the longer, the better) emerge, in talk about ‘us’, as central, as an apotheosis. For Rand (1994), visible lesbians are a marker of ‘our’ presence, giving detectability, and the act of spotting other lesbians, a political imperative. This, says Moorhead (1999), is why identity constructed as it is in *DIVA* has survived the deconstruction elsewhere of the categories on which it relies: as long as a group feels a need to organise politically, it will rely on the stability of clearly defined labels. “Just as blacks cannot fight the arbitrariness of racial classifications without organising *as blacks*, so gays could not advocate the overthrow of the sexual order without making their gayness the very basis of their claims” (Epstein 1987: 19). Throughout the sample analysed here, lesbians were classified as such, as a minority group, by society, which acted towards them accordingly. The commodification of gay identity did not preclude its political dimension, least of all in *DIVA*, as shown by its engagement with the political process. Though category labels may be totalising, their unambiguous reference is attractive to those whose sense of belonging is elsewhere in peril. “For so long, lesbians had been treated as outsiders,” Frances Williams told me. “The magazine was there to welcome them home to a warm, acceptable, public, visible place”.

Williams’s turn of phrase is fitting, given the conceptual metaphors used in *DIVA* to imagine ‘us lesbians’, which include FAMILY, TEAM, RELIGION and, most prevalently, PLACE. Together these emphasise shared cultural knowledge and experience, commitment and communion, and a sense of service, of functioning within a support network. I argued in Chapter Six that these metaphors, as a conceptual system, bore some of the hallmarks of nationalist identity – particularly in light of the apparent centrality of narratives describing
collective and individual pasts, with the latter functioning as versions of the former. Story-telling is the basis for communitarian discourse (Kraus 2006), and these historical narratives drop anchor, securing ‘us’ in both the present and the past. My point is not to reconfigure sexual identities as national identities, but rather to point up the prominence of community and its properties – significantly, belonging – in imagining this body of people. In the 1990s, postmodernism put the idea of ‘community’ into jeopardy, yet in DIVA we find discourse that encourages readers to feel part of a community defined by histories (journeys), practice and a sense of duty to one another. Similarly, Fraser (2008) argues that her (gay male) interviewees continue to rely on notions of community to describe their sense of sexual self, even while displaying an awareness of its foundering ontological status. Despite, or perhaps because of, postmodern interventions, belief in community remains relentless (Joseph 2002: viii; Cohen 1985). Pickering (2001) is at pains to distinguish between nationalism and other forms of identity, but his suggestion that the power of nationalism lies in its ability to salvage “the imagining of communality, or peoplehood, amidst the unhappiness of its debilitation in other forms” (p. 86) strikes a chord here, in spite of his prescriptions. Community may only survive as a symbolic collaboration (Martin 2004), but its potential for generating and structuring meaning and identity in DIVA appears to survive nonetheless.

Constructing a community necessarily, of course, involves not only granting, but withholding, membership. DIVA’s focus on a specifically lesbian community has implications for notions of communality with other gay- or queer-identified people, and in Chapter Seven I focused particularly on how the magazine handles the belonging or otherwise of bisexual women. My attention was focused in this direction because of the ongoing ‘trouble’ that bisexuality appears to cause the formulation of lesbian identity; according to scholars such as Baker (2008a) and McLean (2008), arguments dating from the 1970s continue to operate in lesbian talk. This, I argue, is tied to (western) society’s continuing investment in a homosexual/heterosexual binary that renders bisexuality non-existent; DIVA’s metaphorical imagining of ‘us’ similarly undermines the place of the bisexual, who is neither in one place nor the other, but caught amongst the traffic travelling between the two. The liminal, amphibious bisexual is thus easily cast as indecisive and promiscuous, a conduit between separate worlds, and lacking the commitment that the imagined community demands. My primary
interest was in how bisexual women’s position on and around ‘our’ boundaries was managed by the magazine and its readers, and I found some evidence of these ideas circulating in talk about bisexual women. Interestingly, those writers who sought to ‘defend’ or support bisexual women seemed to struggle without doing so by reclassifying them in lesbian terms. Dianne Anderson-Minshall set out explicitly to criticise the treatment of the bisexual former partner of Melissa Etheridge, Julie Cypher, but her argument is, ultimately, premised on the suggestion that Cypher “deserves to be called a lesbian”. Bisexuality itself is not ‘redeemed’, nor perhaps even ‘redeemable’, but individual women are, it seems, by being withdrawn from the category and admitted as ‘one of us’.

The bulk of my analysis in Chapter Seven centred on arguments between readers over the inclusion of bisexual women in DIVA’s target readership. Two relatively lengthy debates were published, the first between 1998 and 1999, and the second in 2000. DIVA’s handling of the letters is indicative of an editorial lean towards what I characterised in Chapter Seven as a ‘pro-bisexual’ stance: ‘anti-bisexual’ readers’ letters are published only in response to letters from pro-bisexual writers; pro-bisexual letters feature the more rational arguments; and anti-bisexual voices are, in the end, shouted down by their opponents, who are published in greater number.

The arguments readers present in advancing their viewpoint typically draw on a cluster of interrelated topoi. Readers on both sides of the debate activate the idea of bisexuals as undecided, though naturally, their evaluation of that indecision differs. Some anti-bisexual readers problematise bisexual women according to their contact with men, casting them as a kind of pollutant. The most extreme formulations of this were roundly rejected, but some pro-bisexual readers still sought to distance themselves from the potential for male sexual contact. All of the anti-bisexual letter-writers drew, to differing extents, on the idea of ‘real lesbians’, against which bisexuals are somehow failed or inadequate facsimiles. In countering these claims, pro-bisexual readers not only questioned and rejected the idea that there are ‘real lesbians’, but sought to endanger the authenticity of their opponents by calling them bigots. Here, bigotry is an authentically heterosexual trait. Significantly, however, a number of readers, even as they scoffed at the idea of a ‘real lesbian’, took steps to assert the validity of their own claims to a lesbian identity. Perhaps authenticity may be desirable and recognisable, but only where it is not so crudely named? Finally, several letter-writers attempted to re-focus ‘our’
border anxieties on other ‘others’, rescuing bisexuals while leaving gay men, transvestites and drag queens exiled.

Most interesting, for me, is the argumentative character of these debates, and their apparently enduring relevance. Some contributors cling dogmatically to hierarchical, essentialist concepts of authentic lesbian identity despite the rejection of their interlocutors (though, as I suggest above, these opponents at times simultaneously account for their own authenticity). The debates therefore take on an eristic hue, never making convincing moves towards resolution. Like other editors, Gillian Rodgerson suggested that these arguments were ongoing, to the extent that they could have dominated every letters page across the 10-year sample. This was a decade in which queer thinking flourished, and though some readers’ arguments rely on, to greater or lesser extents, queer logic – that differentiation and hierarchy on the basis of sexuality is flawed because no sexual categories ‘really’ exist – the debate continues. Given the emphasis on community discussed above, the tempered attractiveness of deconstructing sexual identities is understandable. As Alexander (1999: 289) says, “we long for community… our anxiety lies in our sheer diversity… because of all the many identities clustered under, within, and around the LGBT ‘community’, we have never felt more unsure about who and what we are.”

The sense of unity fostered by an imagined community has very real benefits at individual (belonging) and group (political organising) levels, but its ability to admit internal difference is compromised in the pursuit. DIVA does not obscure or deny difference, and the editorial management of these reader debates implicitly rejects an anti-bisexual stance. But in promoting a sense of ‘us’, it must rely to some extent on common denominators (Taylor 1998) that sediment around the core. For Joseph (2004), the danger of collective identity construction is precisely the capacity for that core to deny or delegitimise membership by pointing up difference. In Anderson-Minshall’s article (discussed above), difference is not accommodated but subsumed, and similarity emphasised in its stead. Speaking earlier this year¹, DIVA’s deputy editor, Louisa Carolin, rued the negative reaction the magazine received after featuring bisexual Rebecca Loos on the cover, yet her appraisal of Loos’ interview, in which she “really showed she knew lesbian culture, she knew the kind of women she was attracted to”, relies upon Loos’ informed affinity with lesbians even as Carolin “recognised her as a fellow bi”. This, it seems, is the dilemma of bisexual inclusion.
Exclusion was the more active word in Chapter Eight, which focused on DIVA’s handling of more distant ‘others’. Work on othering typically addresses dominant discourses in which minority groups, such as lesbians, are produced as ‘others’ but, though they lack the power to materially affect ‘others’ in the way that they themselves may be affected as ‘others’, subcultures are just as likely to symbolically derogate outsiders. In this chapter I divided my attention between coverage of three ideologically salient topics: Section 28, mainstream media, and men (focusing largely on the topic of parenting). As I suggested in the chapter, the salience of all three is inflected by the social context of the time, but I would add that the construction of ‘them’ in these three areas is not necessarily a product only of the era. With regards to all three, the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is imbued with a sense of constant threat, of opposition and not simply difference. The relationship is constructed according to a set of contrasts: while ‘we’ are invisible, transient, rational yet unable to act transitively, ‘they’ are everywhere visible, permanent, and irrational yet (frequently) act transitively to ‘our’ detriment. In short, ‘we’ are the powerless victims of a powerful aggressor. Koller (2008a: 103) suggests that repeated reference to unfair behaviour underlines “the impression of the in-group as the well-meaning but helpless target of aggression”. These constructions may therefore attend to internal cohesion at the same time as they illustrate external difference. Emphasising ‘their’ privileges against ‘our’ difficulties negatively characterises ‘them’, and though ‘we’ appear weak, at ‘their’ mercy, ‘we’ also adopt exactly the positive characteristics they lack – rationality, compassion, and so on. Moreover, the power differential, and the oppression it produces, adds to the communal imperative – all the while ‘we’ are treated this way, ‘we’ have reason to organise as such.

Interestingly however, men, implicitly as aggressive and inhibiting to women as Britain’s heterosexist government and media in their treatment of lesbians, find themselves subject to altered power dynamics in the parenting domain. In DIVA’s talk about parenting, one would expect to find an emphasis on motherhood and co-parenting between two women, but the extent to which men are written out of the process is worthy of note. ‘Fathers’ are largely absent, fatherhood compellingly rewritten as donation; at times, men are metonymically represented by the sperm they donate. As a donor, or indeed as sperm, a man has limited claim to parenting opportunities, to belonging to the family created. His is a finite relationship with a woman (soon to be mother), in which she procures
goods from him. This transaction is constructed as something ‘we’ control – and
there are horror stories told about those times where ‘we’ lose control – and the
conception, as well as the parenting, is thus ‘ours’. All of this is not to say that
DIVA promotes a man-hating agenda, but rather that men, as fathers, present a
certain danger to ‘us’ by virtue of their powerful position, and its backing in court
when lesbian custody is tested. Parenting talk implicitly acknowledges the
powerlessness of lesbians to wrest control of the terms from ‘them’; instead,
discursively removing the notion of parenting from conception by sperm donation
anticipates and heads off the potential for ‘our’ world and ‘theirs’ to collide.

In Chapter One I described my intention to examine DIVA magazine’s
brand identity, and its construction of community. Reflecting on my findings, I
would suggest that there is significant overlap between the two; DIVA’s was a
brand invested in the notion of community and in its role not only in imagining
that community, giving it some sort of definitional shape, but in bringing
members of that community together, providing them with information and
opportunities to participate in events and meet one another. Though readers were
at times divided over who belonged, or should belong, they were united in their
belief that there was something to belong to. In the face of a hostile, greater
‘other’, which was constructed as a constant source of threat, this belonging was
incredibly important.

9.2 Reflecting on the research: strengths, weaknesses, the future

For queer theorists such as Sedgwick (1990), work focused on gay and
lesbian subjects is ‘minoritising’; instead, research should focus on society as a
whole and the ways in which sexual hierarchies and power are constructed,
distributed and enacted (Seidman 1996). This project, then, is thoroughly and
unapologetically unequal. I hope that it has demonstrated that whether or not we,
as academics, are unhappy to define a priori a set of queers (Barrett 2002) or a
lesbian subject (Seidman 1996), members themselves continue to do such
definitional work. Speaking earlier this year², current DIVA editor Jane
Czyzszelska stated that a lesbian magazine was still needed because: “a lot of
newspapers and magazines do lesbian stories, but they write about lesbians as
‘them’. We write about them as ‘us’.” DIVA hails its readers as lesbians (see
Althusser 1971); those discourses that purport to speak to and represent lesbians
demand our attention at least as forcefully as any other.
Critical discourse analysts frequently cite the potential for resistance in discourse, but relatively few studies have considered minority groups as text producers. My analysis has shown that as well as resisting or reworking dominant discourses, in-group texts such as DIVA make similar moves to define, normalise, include and exclude, assign status and so on. The study demonstrates the interest in analysing less powerful discourses, and I hope it will contribute to CDA’s ongoing innovation. Further, it answers the call for greater attention to be paid to the role of media texts in subcultural identity. Not only do such texts provide definitions of the groups they address (and those they do not), but they are central to the circulation of subcultural meaning, both embodied and objectified. The use of a greater number of smaller adverts, targeted directly at the subculture, enables participation in particular events and promotes the consumption of particular items. The frequency with which DIVA (p)reviews gay- or lesbian-specific events and artists and their output contributes to the same process, circulating certain venues, occasions, albums and so on as especially meaningful to ‘us’.

Much scholarship on gay language has addressed interaction (Chapter Two); DIVA might be defined as an interactive space, but my intention has been to demonstrate its discursive function as a written text in which interaction is limited (and managed). In Chapter Seven, I focused specifically on reader interaction, and this adds to a number of studies of the ways in which lesbians collectively negotiate bisexual inclusion. My analysis of the magazine’s handling of these discussions, and of the way (paid) contributors write about bisexuals and bisexuality, adds a different dimension, however. DIVA is an authoritative voice, and this study contributes to expanding the field of language and sexuality research beyond conversation and into other areas of discourse that may similarly define and legitimise – and be redefined and legitimised by – gay identity.

The most significant contribution of this study, however, is what it adds to the field of magazine research: this is the first comprehensive study of a lesbian magazine outside of the US, and those conducted on US lesbian magazines have rarely, if ever, matched this project for scope. Our knowledge of gay and especially lesbian magazines constitutes a slim literature compared to that produced by research into mainstream women’s and men’s magazines. Further, much research in the field has failed to take account of production processes and conditions. This is frequently a matter of difficulty gaining access, so I am pleased to have been able to use so much interview data and financial information in
describing and understanding DIVA. The extent to which my account of the magazine’s brand (chapters Four and Five) relies on these demonstrates the important additional insights similar research might benefit from in the future.

For Fairclough (2003: 14), “there is no such thing as a complete and definitive analysis of a text”, and I recognise the limitations of my account of DIVA’s first decade – precisely because it is an account. I have chosen to focus on certain aspects of the text, to tell this or that story, and I can no more easily shed my interpretative subjectivity than other readers. Though I believe my reading of DIVA benefits from my position within the target readership, or in-group – that is, my sensitivity to particular contextual factors, or to counter-cultural meanings and uses – I am also sensitive to a potential subconscious desire not to ‘show up’ that in-group (see Krieger 1982). The dialogue between my knowledge of the editors’ goals and philosophies and my own interpretations of the text has been one of the central and most demanding parts of the hermeneutic process. For Hebdige (1979), some disagreement or indifference between researcher and subcultural member is inevitable, and indeed it would be remarkable if my analysis of the magazine produced only ideas that corresponded exactly with those of its editors. I am confident, however, in the accuracy with which I have represented the views set out by Frances Williams and Gillian Rodgerson, and the integrity with which I have brought them into play with my own interpretations. If at times our opinions differ, I hope that this provides the impetus for further discussion and research.

If I were to conduct this study afresh, the most significant alteration would be technological: instead of carrying out the content analysis manually, I would use corpus analysis software. Because of the size of my sample, and the condition of some of the older copies of DIVA, digitising it would have been a painstaking and time-consuming process, at the end of which I would still have needed to conduct a content analysis and read through the more than 10,000 articles and advertisements included in the sample. For these reasons, I opted to conduct the content analysis manually. I remain relatively happy with this choice, since it facilitated detailed note-taking on articles and advertisements that proved invaluable to my more detailed analyses. With less pressure on the timing of the project’s completion, however, I would in future opt to digitise the sample. Operating manually, I have been able to achieve what I set out to achieve in quantitative terms, but my participation in a number of discourse analytic conferences and workshops, plus the influential work of Baker (see 2008b) and
Mautner (2008), has left me better able to exploit the benefits of computerised corpus linguistics in future. A comparison between referential and predicational strategies in the magazine before and after 2004 would be extremely interesting, and I would take a corpus linguistics approach to such a project.

In fact, there are a number of future projects that present themselves from this research. The most pressing is one that addresses reception, through speaking to a variety of readers. It would be fascinating to assess the relationship between the editors’ ideas of their readers and reader accounts of their consumption, and between my readings of DIVA and theirs. Though I would have liked ideally to address this in this thesis, such scope was unrealistic – readers’ views are likely to have been given rather less attention than they deserve. A new study would also prevent the elevation of the analyst’s readings above those of readers (a move highlighted in several of the studies highlighted in Chapter Two). Were I to carry out such a study, I would be guided methodologically by Benwell (2005), whose critical ethnographic approach attempts to account for the reconstructed nature of readers’ accounts. This is particularly important here, where interviews rely not just on describing reading practices, but on remembering them. Hackney’s (2007) use of oral histories, which focuses on readers’ memories and uses magazines as material prompts, is instructive here.

There is further potential for developing the analysis of DIVA, or lesbian magazines more generally, along lines similar to the analysis of mainstream magazines. A focus on specific genres or topics would be extremely interesting: my analysis of quizzes/humour genres (Chapter Six) was necessarily brief, but suggests further investigation would be fruitful. Similarly, the insights produced by focusing on three key topics in Chapter Eight indicate that concentrating on coverage of other topics – relationships, feminism, domestic violence, perhaps – would yield some interesting insights. I also believe some kind of cross-cultural analysis would be productive; comparing DIVA with its counterparts around the globe would allow me to consider the impact of sociocultural context more fully. For instance, Nguyet Emi and Spires (2001) highlight in Taiwanese magazine G&L the discursive construction of a gay identity built less around community and more around maintaining a respectable position within the family. This is immediately recognisable as different to DIVA, and as specific to a culture in which the family is valued above individuality or surrogate families (Chapter Six).
Personally, however, my exploration of Britain’s lesbian publishing tradition has had a significant impact. Poring over these texts at the British Library and visiting archives detailing the lives of the women who helped to produce them has been an absorbing experience. Though research that lacks obvious relevance today will continue to be harder to fund, I feel myself pulled towards the past.

1 Speaking at ‘15 years of Diva’ event at the Women’s Library, London, 19th February 2009.
Appendix A: Analytic instruments

1. Codebook used in content analysis: ‘magazine as unit’
2. Codesheet used in content analysis: ‘magazines as unit’
3. Codebook used in content analysis: ‘advertisement as unit’
4. Codesheet used in content analysis: ‘advertisement as unit’
5. Codebook used in content analysis: ‘article as unit’
6. Codesheet used in content analysis: ‘article as unit’
7. Enlargement of grid ‘Referent’ on (6) codesheet used in content analysis: ‘article as unit’
8. Interview schedule (Frances Williams)
9. Interview schedule (Gillian Rodgerson)
Codebook used in content analysis: ‘magazine as unit’

Editorial
Texts authored by the magazine’s editorial team/selected contributors, i.e. front covers, contents pages, editor’s letters, interviews, competitions, fiction, reviews, horoscopes, features and news, obituaries, surveys, recipes, cartoons. Readers’ letters should also be coded as editorial.

Advertising
Pages or portions of pages designed and funded by commercial/external companies. Advertisements for Diva subscriptions should also be coded as advertising – they are not part of the fabric of the magazine, but address readers as consumers in the same way any other advertisement might. However, advertisements encouraging readers to place personal ads, which appear among personal ads on pages titled ‘personals’, should not be coded.

Advertorial
Texts written specifically to sell a product/event/service (and which are clearly not intended as simple reviews). Will routinely include the ‘book club’, since the two pages are dominated by the order form but do include copy. Another example would be the breast cancer campaign page in issue 53.

Personal ads
Refers specifically to small ads detailing personal qualities aimed at finding friends/partners, and small ads placed by the magazine encouraging readers to place personal ads.

Classified
Small ads which instead promote services, events, venues and destinations etc. where they are presented by the magazine on pages with titles such as ‘listings’, ‘noticeboard’ or ‘Diva directory’. These tend to be closer to the back of the magazine, and list adverts smaller than the minimum 1/16th size of main adverts.
Codesheet used in content analysis: ‘magazines as unit’

Completed ____ Inputted ____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue number</th>
<th>Number of pages</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Size (in pages)</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Total pages</th>
<th>Percentage of magazine total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
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<td>Advert</td>
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<td>Classified</td>
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<td>Personal ads</td>
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**Codebook used in content analysis: ‘advertisement as unit’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td><strong>Arts and culture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adverts selling books, films, music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td><strong>Days and nights out</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Events (like Pride or other major gatherings), venues (clubs etc), theatre/performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td><strong>Counselling</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Therapy/group support services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td><strong>Financial/legal services</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solicitors, law firms, fiscal advice, banks, estate agents, mortgage brokers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td><strong>Travel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Destinations, travel companies, accommodations, organised tours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td><strong>Sex accessories</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Companies selling toys, like dildos, strap-ons, whips etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td><strong>Fashion/beauty</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Clothing (including fetish wear where it is sold separately from sex toys), jewellery, shoes etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td><strong>Introductions</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dating companies, chat lines, escort services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td><strong>Wedding services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Celebrants, wedding planners, photography, bridal wear, stationery etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td><strong>Recruitment</strong></td>
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<td>Adverts for specific jobs or general recruitment drives – whether salaried or volunteering.</td>
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<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td><strong>Insemination</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Clinics/organisation advertising insemination services.</td>
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<td>112</td>
<td><strong>Adoption/fostering</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bodies offering such services.</td>
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<td>113</td>
<td><strong>Support groups/organisations</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Small or large scale bodies offering general support to the lesbian/gay community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td><strong>Merchandise</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range of products offered with gay-specific message (rainbows etc).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td><strong>Consumables</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food, drink, cigarettes, restaurants etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td><strong>Medical</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Health services/advice.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
117 **Fitness/sport**
Sports clubs, gyms, fitness centres, fitness assessments etc.

118 **Furniture/homeware**
Also removals services.

119 **Other media**
Radio, magazines, newspapers, websites.

120 **In-house**
Adverts for coming issues of *Diva*, or subscriptions.

121 **Courses**
Institutions advertising courses/modules/classes.

122 **Legal highs**
Intoxicating substances (not alcohol, see 115).

123 **Taxis/cars**
Taxi services, also car ads (e.g. Ford Fiesta).

124 **Investment**
Financial organisations offering investment opportunities (as distinct from the sort of financial *help* offered by 104).

125 **Campaigns**
Advertising for activist campaigns or fundraising.

126 **Spirituality**
Religious or spiritual groups/bodies.

127 **Technology**
Services (like photo processing) or products (like computers/mobile phones).

128 **Funeral**
Services offered.

129 **Artwork**
Companies/individuals offering art for sale or commission.

130 **TV/film**
Production companies advertising for help with/contributions to programmes.

133 **Porn**
Explicit films or books.

134 **Gambling**
Websites or establishments offering betting/Bingo etc.
Codesheet used in content analysis: ‘advertisement as unit’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue no.</th>
<th>Unit no.</th>
<th>Page no.</th>
<th>Unit size</th>
<th>Product</th>
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</table>
Codebook used in content analysis: ‘article as unit’

a. Article topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Coming out</td>
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<td>02</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<td>03</td>
<td>Parenting</td>
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<td>04</td>
<td>Fatherhood</td>
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<td>05</td>
<td>Family</td>
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<td>06</td>
<td>Commitment ceremonies</td>
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<td>07</td>
<td>Home-making</td>
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<td>08</td>
<td>Breaking-up</td>
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<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Drugs and alcohol-as-a-narcotic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
consequences of abuse, advice etc. In a news context, likely to involve crime, sentencing or legislation.

13 **Socialising/the scene**  
Texts which (p)review or report from/about specific venues, events, or town’s scenes. First-person articles on ‘going out’ etc.

14 **Encounters**  
Tales of one-night stands, sexual encounters outside of a long-term relationship, or where there is no suggestion of a meaningful relationship.

15 **Sex**  
Accounts of sexual activity (e.g. ‘how to’) where the activity rather than the relationship is the focus. Discussions of sex as an object in its own right. Not the same as 46-erotica/porn.

16 **Immigration/citizenship**  
Most common for news or interviews, concerned with legal battles for immigration rights, or where legislation changes etc.

17 **Censorship**  
Texts concerning the censorship of any media/groups, or individuals/groups left unprotected by censorship legislation/decisions.

18 **Child/parenting legislation**  
Reports involving decisions, or bills or individual disputes involving the law and childcare/conception.

19 **Legal dispute/decision**  
Usually a secondary topic, used to clarify that the primary topic refers to an individual decision.

20 **Education**  
Anything involving the education system: from point of view of teachers, children or parents. Make sure to use 87 for Section 28, however.

21 **Housing**  
Articles relating to places to live, the housing system – not like 07-home-making, which is more personal. This is predominantly a news category.

22 **Employment**  
Usually news, relating to problems/decisions/advances in the area of employment/employment law. Not to be confused with 62-careers, which should be more individualistic and profile-led.

23 **Policing**  
Largely a news topic: changes, problems, incidents, events to do with police force and its actions.

24 **Partnership legislation/rules**  
Abuse of, changes to, possibility of, retraction of rules/law which makes provision for same-sex couples, either at (inter)national level or within public body (which should be indicated by secondary topic, say 23-policing).

25 **Money**  
Articles about finances (debt, joint management), gambling, or where organisations are dealing with money issues.
Discrimination/prejudice/homophobia
May be used as a primary topic where article is, say, a comment piece on the nature/state of homophobia, or as a contextualising secondary topic. So if the primary topic is 22-employment, and the secondary topic is 26, it is clear the story is about discrimination in the area of employment.

Domestic violence
Self-explanatory. Distinct from violent/other crime to see how the figures compare – especially since domestic violence in the context of lesbian relationships has a history of silence and denial.

Violent crime
Texts dealing with violent acts, threats of violence (outside of the domestic sphere). Also terrorism and threats of terrorism.

Other crime
Crimes not covered by categories 27 and 28.

Race
Articles dealing with race in any way – as a part of identity, as a problem, as a factor in crime/legislation etc.

Religion/spirituality
Anything addressing religion, quasi-religions, matters of spirituality, religious bodies or support groups. Religion as a facet of identity, as a problem etc.

Nationality
Articles not to do with citizenship or race, but that involve discussion of one’s country or notions of nationhood to a significant degree – usually involved with identity/sexuality.

Prison
The prison system, prison life, incidents inside a prison, talk about working in a prison etc.

War
Articles that discuss major conflicts, or their effects on people/groups of people.

Sex laws
Anything relating to the age of consent, or in international news, incidents/decisions related to the illegality (or not) of gay sex or SM practices.

Political parties/figures
Stories focusing on politicians (as distinct from 48-celebrities) or political parties, as opposed to their policies, which should be dealt with by other categories, according to their focus.

Events
Festivals, conferences, Pride parades etc.

Activism
Reportage of incidents of activism, or discussions with activists about what they do, or talk about the rights and wrongs of direct action. Also features on activism of the past.
40 **Feminism/feminist groups**
Where feminism or feminist groups/individuals are the topic of discussion, as distinct from gay activism or talk about gender.

41 **Gender**
Where womanhood, gender traits or differences, or gender identity (e.g. trans issues, butch/femme) are the object of discussion.

42 **Sexuality**
Where lesbianism itself or an individual’s sexual identity/desire is explicitly the object of discussion.

43 **Polygamy**
Discussions of non-monogamy – rights and wrongs, how to make it work, effects on relationships etc.

44 **Monogamy**
Exclusive, faithful relationships discussed – might be interviews with long-term couples, or comment piece for or against. There should not be any confusion with 02-relationships: 44 should only be used where articles address monogamy explicitly, not just relationships that may or may not be so.

45 **Bisexuality**
Separate from 42-sexuality for comparison. Texts must address bisexuality itself, or the inclusion/otherwise of bisexuals in lesbian media/events, comment pieces on the nature of bisexuality etc.

46 **Erotica/porn**
Where articles deal with erotic art or literature, talk about the artists and/or their products. Not to be used for erotic fiction.

47 **History**
Articles that unpick times gone by or seek to inform readers about people/events/organisations from the past.

48 **Celebrities**
Texts about famous people (profiles, interviews, news briefs).

49 **People**
Profiles which relate to ‘real-life’ individuals, rather than 48-celebrities.

50 **Awards/memorials**
Texts focusing on award ceremonies, or individuals, organisations or films being recognised.

51 **Charity/fundraising**
Where article deals with fundraising activities or reports their results.

52 **Disability**
Articles addressing physical disability, either in itself or in relation to groups/individuals, sexuality, problems, discrimination etc.

53 **Science**
Usually news, dealing with specific scientific developments, rulings or issues like the environment.

54 **Food**
Cookery, recipes, eating out.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Texts discussing sport, specific sporting events/activities, teams, fitness etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Pets/animals</td>
<td>Comment pieces, pet features, and/or discussions of animal abuse etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Features on destinations, activity holidays, problems with travel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Places/attractions</td>
<td>Includes theme parks, exhibitions, places of interest in a domestic context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Consumerism/shopping</td>
<td>Articles about shopping, spending, gay-targeted products, or features designed to help readers choose products – e.g. gift guides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Fashion/beauty</td>
<td>Articles on make-up, clothes, looks or what is/should (not) be considered attractive, the way women look.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td>Gardening, DIY, mechanics/cars etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Careers</td>
<td>Features on certain professions, job profiles and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>Texts dealing with NHS (or international/private equivalent) provision/facilities as their focus, where the health or otherwise of the writer or subject is not necessarily relevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Where texts address generational differences, the peculiarities and problems of youth/old age etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Health (body)</td>
<td>Articles about physical illness, whether in relation to a specific individual, a disease itself, or how to maintain health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Health (mind)</td>
<td>Articles about mental illness or psychological issues; includes self-harm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Support groups/organisations</td>
<td>Where texts focus on the activities, aims, founding/collapsing or meetings of such groups. Also include articles dealing with volunteering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Usually reviews, or interviews with musicians/bands/singers. Comment pieces on popularity or otherwise of certain types of music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Theatre/performance</td>
<td>(P)reviews, interviews etc on plays, readings, comedy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Film</td>
<td>(P)reviews, interviews or comment pieces about films or the film world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Texts dealing with television programmes, appearances by favourites, issues involving television representation etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Books/literature
Discussions/reviews from world of literature, or key figures, or talk about women’s/lesbian publishing.

Radio
Anything relating to radio performance/stations.

Magazines/newspapers
Closure or start-up, involvement in controversy etc.

(All) Media
Where articles address all or a combination of the above in equal measure.

Advertising
Texts dealing with the world of adverts, or comments on particular ads/types of ads.

Technology
Texts on things like the internet, which obviously developed in the mainstream during the span of the sample, and computer games.

Art and photography
The work of particular artists, or exhibitions. News, (p)reviews, comment.

Section 28
Texts addressing, specifically, this piece of legislation and its repeal, effects, campaigns etc. Very significant across time of sample, hence distinct from 20-education.

Hate crime
As distinct from violent/other crime; reports of incidents, changes in legislation or police initiatives.

Class
Should not be down to intuition; the magazine or writer should make clear that this is an article dealing with class as the object of discussion.

Time/turn of year
To accommodate year round-ups or new year predictions or historical timelines which encompass several different topics and are difficult to categorise otherwise.

Corrections
Magazine reactions to criticism/praise or corrections to previous editions.

Research/requests for help
For letters asking for help with research or some other project. Also requests from television companies for help with documentary work.

Magazine criticism
Category for readers’ letters, those whose primary purpose is to denigrate the magazine, whether in general or over coverage of a specific issue.

Magazine praise
For readers’ letters whose primary purpose is to celebrate the magazine, whether in general or over coverage of a specific issue.

Summary of contents
To accommodate contents pages and those editor’s letters that simply guide the reader through that edition without prioritising any one topic
over others.

99 N/A
Never to be used as a primary topic. Only for those texts that deal with one topic only, to be used in the secondary topic column.

b. Article type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Genre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Front cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Editor’s letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reader’s letter*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Feature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>(P)review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>News report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Horoscope≠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Obituary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Survey/poll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>News in brief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Recipe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Magazine administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>International news report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>International news in brief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Readers’ letters should be coded individually, not grouped together
≠ In contrast, code horoscopes together as one larger article

Be guided by the signposts the magazine provides by way of page headers, but use your own judgement in order to ensure that the categories are applied consistently.
c. Anthroponyms

These words are to be counted when they are used as a (pro)noun and at no other time. Collocations should be noted in the space provided. So, for example, “gay woman” should be coded as the use of ‘woman’ as a noun, with ‘gay’ noted as the collocate.

A phrase like “women’s feelings” should be coded as an instance of the word ‘woman’. However, phrases like “women’s bar” should not, since this speaks of the bar, not the women. Something like “woman musician” should not be coded. Here ‘woman’ is doing the work of ‘female’.

Do not count words where they are used as part of a standard compound, like “cowgirl”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Pro)noun</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Woman**  | Yes: “gay woman”, “het women”, “women’s minds”  
No: “woman performer”, “women’s bar” |
| **Girl**   | Yes: “gay girl”, “sexy dancing girls”  
No: “girl bar”, “cowgirl” |
| **Lesbian**| Yes: “bunch of lesbians”, “lipstick lesbian”, “gorgeous lesbian”  
No: “lesbian superstar”, “lesbian bar” |
| **Gay**    | Yes: “screaming gay”, “I am a gay”  
No: “gay boy”, “I am gay” |
| **Queer**  | Yes: “raving queers”, “she’s a queer”  
No: “feeling queer”, “queer space” |
| **Homosexual** | Yes: “he’s a first class homosexual”  
No: “he’s homosexual” |
| **Dyke**   | Yes: “diesel dyke”, “veteran dyke”  
No: “dyke artist”, “dyke fashion” |
| **Boy**    | Yes: “gay boy”, “lesbian boi”  
No: “boy bar” |
| **Man**    | Yes: “straight man”, “old men”  
No: “man juice” |
Codesheet used in content analysis: ‘article as unit’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary topic</th>
<th>Secondary topic</th>
<th>No. of pics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Referent</th>
<th>Collocates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyke</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbians</td>
<td>Straight women</td>
<td>All women</td>
<td>Gay men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbians and gay men</td>
<td>LGB</td>
<td>Queers (LGBT)</td>
<td>Lesbians and bisexuals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enlargement of grid ‘Referent’ on (6) codesheet used in content analysis: ‘article as unit’
Interview schedule (Frances Williams)

Your relationship with the magazine
- I’ve been told Diva was your idea… can you tell me about that?
- What were you doing before that?
- What was your relationship like with the publishers? Did Millivres give you any targets, or ask you to take the magazine in a certain direction?
  - Did you have your own direction in mind?
- What did you feel was Diva’s most important role – what issues did you think it was most important to cover?
  - Section 28? Military ban etc? Scene news?
- Diva didn’t really have any competition, did that affect things?
  - How did you feel about the kinds of media representations that were around? Do you think that changed?
- You didn’t always write editor’s letters – why?
- Was there a particular issue of the magazine, or cover etc, that you were particularly proud of, or that you remember most now?

Day-to-day
- What was your staff like?
  - Did it change over time?
  - How were roles divided up?
- How much copy was the team able to generate itself, and how much came from contributors?
  - Did you have a style guide?
- Did you get involved in things like layout, page design etc?
- What about front covers? How did you choose what/who to feature? I noticed a few of them are celebrity covers - was this an economic decision? How important did you feel celebrities were in Diva?
- According to Millivres, Diva was created as a “baby sister” to the Gay Times. Was there much overlap between the two publications?
  - Did you ever feel there were shared issues?

Advertising
- Did you and your team get involved in advertising or was this a publisher concern?
- Was Diva expected to make money?
  - Did these expectations ever change?
- Were there any adverts you particularly liked or disliked?
  - Did the readers ever respond particularly well or badly to advertising campaigns?
Readers
- Did you have much of a sense of your readership demographic?
  - Do you feel the core readership changed (age, whatever) as time went on?
- Who did you see as your ideal reader; who were you writing for?
  - Did that image change at all?
  - Were there people you didn’t write for?
- And what did you imagine she wanted from Diva?
- Did you feel there was some kind of community of readers?
- ‘Lesbian chic’ etc – how did you feel about things like that? What was the interaction with readers like?
- How important were reader surveys to you?

A bit about you
- When did you come out? Was it difficult? How did/do you define yourself?
- Did you get involved with a scene or movement or anything?
- What made you decide to leave Diva?
Interview schedule (Gillian Rodgerson)

Your relationship with the magazine
- How did you come to the job?
- What were you doing before that?
- What was your relationship like with the publishers? Did Millivres give you any targets, or ask you to take the magazine in a certain direction?
  - Did you have your own direction in mind?
- What did you feel was Diva’s most important role – what issues did you think it was most important to cover?
  - Section 28? Military ban etc? Scene news?
- Diva didn’t really have any competition, did that affect things?
  - How did you feel about the kinds of media representations that were around?
  - Do you think that changed?
- Frances Williams didn’t always write editor’s letters, but you did. How did you view them?
- Was there a particular issue of the magazine, or cover etc, that you were particularly proud of, or that you remember most now?

Day-to-day
- What was your staff like?
  - Did it change over time?
  - How were roles divided up?
- How much copy was the team able to generate itself, and how much came from contributors?
  - Did you have a style guide?
- Did you get involved in things like layout, page design etc?
- What about front covers? How did you choose what/who to feature?
  - I noticed a few of them are celebrity covers - was this an economic decision? How important did you feel celebrities were in Diva?
- The look of the magazine changed over the years. What was behind the various redesigns?
- In 2002 the strapline changed from “Lesbian life and style” to “For the lesbian in you”… what prompted that?
- According to Millivres, Diva was created as a “baby sister” to the Gay Times. Was there much overlap between the two publications?
  - Did you ever feel there were shared issues?
- I looked at the types of article that appeared in the magazine in the first 10 years, and just wondered if I could get your thoughts on a couple of them.
  - First of all fiction – why publish fiction and how important did you think it was?
  - Coming out stories – there weren’t huge numbers of them, but I’d say Diva dealt with coming out perhaps every other issue or so on average. Why?
  - What about historical articles – things that introduced readers to figures like Nancy Spain, or Radclyffe Hall, things like that?
Advertising
- Did you and your team get involved in advertising or was this a publisher concern?
- Was Diva expected to make money?
  o Did these expectations ever change?
- Were there any adverts you particularly liked or disliked?
  o Did the readers ever respond particularly well or badly to advertising campaigns?
- Personal ads started to appear in 1997ish, was that something you wanted?
- I noticed that the classified section gets bigger and bigger as the magazine gets older – what do you put that down to?

Readers
- Did you have much of a sense of your readership demographic?
  o Do you feel the core readership changed (age, whatever) as time went on?
- Who did you see as your ideal reader; who were you writing for?
  o Did that image change at all?
- And what did you imagine she wanted from Diva?
- Did you feel there was some kind of community of readers?
- I found it really fascinating watching the conversation between different readers in their letters across several issues develop. There were some particularly interesting – and quite impassioned! – ones about whether or not the magazine (particularly the letters page) should be a space for bisexuals. Did you feel this was something Diva itself grappled with? Was publishing those letters a way of allowing the debate to breathe?
- ‘Lesbian chic’ etc – how did you feel about things like that?
- What was the interaction with readers like?
- How important were reader surveys to you?
- Were there people you didn’t write for?

A bit about you
- When did you come out? Was it difficult? How did/do you define yourself?
- Did you get involved with a scene or movement or anything?
- Was this in Britain or Canada?
- When did you become a mother? How difficult was that?
Appendix B: Supplementary tables and figures

1. Products advertised, ranked by frequency
2. Pie chart showing products advertised by frequency
3. Products advertised, ranked by size
4. Pie chart showing products advertised by size
5. Table showing breakdown of topics collated as ‘civic life’
6. Table showing topics associated with Gillian Rodgerson’s letters
7. Details of articles about Section 28
Products advertised, ranked by frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product/service</th>
<th>Total between 1994 and 2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Days/nights out</td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and culture</td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial/legal/residential</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex accessories</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandise</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating/chat/escort</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion/beauty</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups/organisations</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other media</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment/volunteering</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumables</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport and fitness</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porn</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadgets/phones</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption/insemination</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film/TV help</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxis/cars</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wedding services</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artwork</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pie chart showing products advertised by frequency
## Products advertised, ranked by size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product/service</th>
<th>Total space (cm²) purchased 1994-2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Days/niights out</td>
<td>281024.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books/films/music</td>
<td>185394.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial/legal/residential</td>
<td>93538.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex accessories</td>
<td>86078.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel/destinations</td>
<td>77411.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house</td>
<td>72040.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandise</td>
<td>49434.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating/chat/escort</td>
<td>40839.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other media</td>
<td>30618.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment/volunteering</td>
<td>24753.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion/beauty</td>
<td>24624.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups/organisations</td>
<td>23072.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campaigns</td>
<td>16689.38</td>
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<td>Consumables</td>
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<td>Porn</td>
<td>10522.50</td>
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<td>Medical</td>
<td>10263.76</td>
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<td>Household</td>
<td>9487.56</td>
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<td>Adoption/insemination</td>
<td>7417.51</td>
</tr>
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<td>Sport and fitness</td>
<td>6425.63</td>
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<td>Counselling</td>
<td>5865.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gadgets/phones</td>
<td>4873.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>4269.57</td>
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<td>Courses</td>
<td>4226.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxis/cars</td>
<td>3722.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wedding services</td>
<td>1406.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film/TV help</td>
<td>1307.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artwork</td>
<td>751.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Pie chart showing products advertised by size
Table showing breakdown of topics collated as ‘civic life’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic life/politics</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activism</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political parties/figures</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination/prejudice</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration/citizenship</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policing</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
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<td>Prison</td>
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<td>Censorship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation &amp; crime</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership legislation</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent crime</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal dispute</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 28</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child legislation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex laws</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other crime</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Total                                 | 627   |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary topic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of contents</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination/prejudice</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 28</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming out</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership legislation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion/beauty</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment ceremonies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (body)</td>
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<td>Books/literature</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent crime</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political parties/figures</td>
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<td>Charity/fundraising</td>
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<td>Sport</td>
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<td>Correction</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Magazine praise</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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