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Who are *we*? The use of plural personal pronouns  
in the Love section of *Cosmopolitan*

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Tko smo *mi*? Upotreba osobnih zamjenica u  
množini u ljubavnoj sekciji *Cosmopolitana*

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## Abstract and keywords

Various formal and informal, fictional and non-fictional discourses within society provide people with different representations of love and romantic relationships. This thesis investigates how the US edition of *Cosmopolitan*, as the most popular and influential women's magazine, represents love and relationships in recurring texts on this subject. More specifically, two recurring pieces, *Manthropology* and *Ask Him Anything*, appearing in all issues from January 2015 to December 2017, are analysed according to how plural personal pronouns are used in them. Through the analysis of the use of plural personal pronouns, I look into whether relationships are portrayed as interpersonal or intergroup interactions, if the focus is on community and cooperation between two individuals in a relationship or on misunderstanding between two individuals as members of different gender groups with different and potentially conflicting worldview and values. Both *Manthropology* and *Ask Him Anything* put the emphasis on the male perspective and its difference from the female perspective already in their titles, and as parts of the section on love and relationship these titles imply that the difference is relevant in romantic relationships. However, the analysis of how these two pieces use plural personal pronouns shows different, layered, and at times conflicting representations of relationships with respect to how important the community between partners in a relationship is and how important the community of each partner with the members of his or her gender is. While pronouns in the texts within *Manthropology* do indeed shape men as a uniform group with a strong sense of identity and community, a parallel notion of community is absent from the representation of women. On the other hand, although the author of the advice column *Ask Him Anything* is presented as providing the male perspective, his answers to the readers' problems rarely represent them as arising from different values between men and women, and the pronouns are not used to establish different and divided gender communities and identities. Despite that, the framing discourse, present in the titles and mostly confirmed in the texts within *Manthropology*, is the first one the reader encounters. It represents relationships as highly intergroup relationships with misunderstanding between different gender identities as its relevant aspect, and the wide reach of the magazine indicates that these kinds of representations are significant and that they either influence or reflect the opinion of millions of Americans that keep buying the magazine.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis, gender, interpersonal and intergroup communication, personal pronouns, love and relationships, women's magazines, *Cosmopolitan*

Različiti formalni, neformalni, fikcionalni ili publicistički diskursi ljudima pružaju različite reprezentacije ljubavnih odnosa i veza. U ovome radu istražiti ću kako američko izdanje *Cosmopolitana*, budući da je to najpopularniji i najutjecajniji ženski časopis na tom prostoru, prikazuje ljubav i veze u redovitim tekstovima na tu temu. Preciznije, analizirat ću kako se osobne zamjenice u množini koriste u dva teksta koja se pojavljuju u svakom broju *Cosmopolitana* od siječnja 2015. godine do prosinca 2017. godine pod nazivom *Manthropology* i *Ask Him Anything*<sup>1</sup>. Analizirajući zamjenice proučit ću jesu li ljubavni odnosi prikazani kao interpersonalni ili intergrupni odnosi, odnosno je li naglasak na zajedništvu i suradnji između dvije osobe u vezi, ili na njihovom nesporazumu koji proizlazi iz pripadnosti različitim rodnim grupama s različitim vrijednostima i pogledom na svijet. I *Manthropology* i *Ask Him Anything* u svojem naslovu već stavljaju naglasak na mušku perspektivu kao različitu od ženske, a budući da su dio rubrike vezane za ljubav i veze implicira se da je ta razlika relevantna za ljubavne odnose. Međutim, analizom upotrebe zamjenica u ova dva teksta otkriva se više različitih, slojevitih i na trenutke konfliktnih reprezentacija ljubavnih odnosa s obzirom na to koliko je važno zajedništvo između partnera u vezi naspram zajedništva svakog partnera sa svojim odgovarajućim rodnim grupama. Iako zamjenice u tekstovima unutar *Manthropologyja* prikazuju muškarce kao homogenu skupinu sa snažnim osjećajem zajedništva, odgovarajuća reprezentacija žena nije prisutna. S druge strane, autor savjetodavne rubrike *Ask Him Anything* u svojim odgovorima na probleme čitatelja rijetko te probleme predstavlja kroz prizmu razlike u pogledima na svijet između muškaraca i žena, a osobne zamjenice u njegovoj rubrici nisu u službi stvaranja različitih muških i ženskih zajednica i identiteta, iako je njegov doprinos problemu u naslovu i uvodu predstavljen kao pružanje muške perspektive. Unatoč tome, okvir u kojem se nalaze oba teksta – njihovi naslovi i uvod – i u koji se sadržaj *Manthropologyja* velikim dijelom uklapa, prvo je što čitatelj(ica) primijeti, a taj okvir ljubavne odnose ocrta velikim dijelom kao intergrupne odnose u kojima je nesporazum između dva člana različitih rodnih grupa bitan element. Broj čitateljica i čitatelja ovog časopisa pokazuje da su ovakve reprezentacije značajne i da utječu na mišljenje milijuna Amerikanaca koji taj časopis kupuju, ili barem odražavaju to mišljenje.

**Ključne riječi:** kritička analiza diskursa, rod, interpersonalna i intergrupna komunikacija, osobne zamjenice, ljubavni odnosi, ženski časopisi, *Cosmopolitan*

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<sup>1</sup> Prijevod naslova s engleskog: Mantropologija, Pitaj ga bilo što.

## 1. Introduction

In everyday life, people encounter numerous different representations of relationships and ideas about romance and love, in films and TV shows, novels and similar fictional works, in magazines and newspaper articles and through various other media. As Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet phrase it, “[e]verywhere we look, we see images of the perfect couple” (2003: 28). Those representations reflect, but also in turn shape, widespread cultural notions on how relationships and romantic encounters (should) work.

As Howard Giles and Nikolas Coupland note in the first chapter of their book on language in context, language builds upon the (cultural) context in which it appears, reflects that context, and also to an extent determines the context for the readers/listeners (1991: 1-31; see also Keating and Duranti 2011: 331-333). The aim of this thesis is to look into how a specific kind of popular discourse as language in use, namely the discourse of a women’s magazine, *Cosmopolitan* (US edition), reflects and shapes the concepts of love and relationship predominant in the American culture – which aspects are foregrounded and which are neglected, what is emphasized and what is missing in their representations.

Between different kinds of discourse, Giles and Coupland mention media as one of the “privileged and powerful” positions in society which shape “our perception of events and ‘truths’ by the language they adopt” (22-24). Norman Fairclough also claims mass media is one of the more significant resources of non-interactive discourse, in which “producers exercise power over consumers in that they have sole producing rights and can therefore determine what is included and excluded, how events are represented, and (...) even the subject positions of their audience” (2001: 41-42). Both of them focus mostly on newspaper and news reports. However, as David Machin and Joanna Thornborrow point out, popular forms, mostly considered trivial by critical discourse analysis scholars who investigate more ‘serious’ forms of communication, are one of the key sites through which (neo-capitalist) ideology is disseminated (2003: 356). Rosalind Gill also cites numerous researchers who analysed (women’s) magazines sources “of cultural ideas about women, men and gender relations” (2009: 346) and Antoinette E. Gupta et al mention a research from 1998 that shows that “magazines are delivering a larger audience to marketers than top television shows, and are doing even better with female consumers” (Frdlewicz 1998, qtd in 2008: 249)

which makes messages they deliver to their consumers about relationships far-reaching, significant and influential. *Magazine Media Factbook* for 2018/19, as a much more recent source, also reports a continued growth in magazine readership and their overall further reach than the reach of primetime TV shows (2018: 8-10, 44)<sup>2</sup>.

I decided to analyse representations of relationships in a women's magazine, since relationships (romantic or interpersonal) are usually considered women's interest: Maša Grdešić notes that even though contemporary popular culture seems to change in the direction of mixing the conventions of "men's" and "women's" genres, this division is still present and significant in the cultural industry (2013: 59-61). Popular culture, she claims, is deeply gender-coded – women are supposed to enjoy texts about the private sphere, relationships and family, while men would be more interested in politics, action and sport, and this division is portrayed as commonsensical<sup>3</sup> (56-58).

This thesis aims to analyse discourse of specific texts from the section on love and sex<sup>4</sup> in the US edition of *Cosmopolitan*, in issues from 2015 to 2017<sup>5</sup>. A self-proclaimed magazine for the "fun fearless female", *Cosmopolitan* is a lifestyle magazine aimed at young women (*Cosmopolitan Media Kit: Mission*). I chose this magazine because of the popularity: it is the top-selling women's lifestyle magazine in the USA<sup>6</sup>, which means that its

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<sup>2</sup> The data presented in the *Factbooks* is mostly second-hand, collected from various other surveys not available online. The purpose of the *Factbooks* is to convince advertisers that magazines are influential and that they should invest in advertisements in magazines, therefore there may be bias in the way research is presented. However, the data itself (the numbers of sold copies, unique visitors to websites and similar) should be correct.

<sup>3</sup> Grdešić warns that what is perceived as common sense is the work of ideology – socially constructed ideas of femininity/masculinity are portrayed as integral/essential parts of women and men as biological sexes (58; see also Fairclough 2001, Chapter 4). Later in this thesis I will analyse how this is achieved in texts about relationships in the US edition of *Cosmopolitan*.

<sup>4</sup> The section had different names in these three years. From January to April 2015 it was named „Love, Lust and Other Stuff“, from May 2015 to December 2016 „Love Lust“. In 2017, it was divided into two different sections, „Love“ and „Sex“, but in November 2017 the sections are connected again under the title „Love&Sex“.

<sup>5</sup> *Cosmopolitan* is a monthly magazine – 36 issues were published in three years. Of those, 32 issues were analysed in this thesis; issues from June and October of 2015 and May and August of 2017 were unavailable to me, so they are excluded from this analysis. When I cite from a certain issue, I will abbreviate it to month/year (for example – 12/2016 for the issue for December of 2016).

<sup>6</sup> *Cosmopolitan* is tenth on the *Magazine Media Factbook* list of top 10 magazine brands by the size of their print and digital audience, and, apart from *Good Housekeeping* and *Better Homes and Gardens*, aimed at a different audience, it is the top-selling women's lifestyle magazine (2018: 11; see also *Cosmopolitan Media Kit: Reach*). The latest *Magazine Media 360° Brand Audience Report* (May 2018) shows a slight decline in the sales of print and digital editions, but mobile web audience increased more than tenfold from May 2017. On *Cosmopolitan Media Kit* it is claimed that „*Cosmo* is the world's largest young woman's media brand, with more than 130 million brand touchpoints across print, digital, and social platforms“.

representations of relationships reach, reflect and influence the views of a great number of people there, especially young women. The focus of the analysis will be on recurring pieces in the magazine's sections about love and relationships, because they can be approached as a single discourse continuing from one issue to another. More precisely, I will analyse the use of personal pronouns in these texts – in which contexts they appear, who their referents are, what denotational meaning and what connotations they carry – to see what ideas and values about intimate couple relationships arise from their use.

There are three recurring pieces appearing in all 32 of the analysed issues in the sections on love and sex: *Sex Q&A* (various authors), *Ask Him Anything* (Logan Hill) and *Manthropology* (multiple authors), renamed in January 2017 to *All About Men*. The first two of those are problem pages/advice columns (readers send letters with questions and problems about sex and love (respectively) and get an answer or advice), the third is a subsection within the section on love/sex usually composed of several short texts arranged on two pages which should function as “your guide to the male brain” (*Cosmopolitan*, any issue 2015-2017)<sup>7</sup>. In July 2016 a new column with love advice appears, *Close Encounters* written by Esther Perel (renamed in February 2017 to *Dating and Mating*) – it presents a certain common problem in dating and/or long-term relationships, explains how and why it arises and what the best ways to solve it are. Since *Sex Q&A* primarily deals with sex, and not relationships, and *Close Encounters/Dating and Mating* appears only in the second half of the analysed period, my analysis will be focused on the two items present in all issues and dealing with relationships – *Manthropology/All About Men* and *Ask Him Anything*.

Rosalind Gill cites some of the more common criticisms aimed at women's magazines in general in the beginning of her article, among which are the claims that the

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<sup>7</sup> There is no clear-cut typology of magazine articles. As Scott Francis notes, there are dozens of different types of articles (2009). Typologies are usually not exhaustive and most of the listed types presuppose one writer; *Manthropology* on the other hand has four or five distinct parts, either unsigned or signed by different authors, and the person composing those parts is named the editor rather than the author of the piece, which contributes to the notion of *Manthropology* as a sub-section rather than an article. For this reason, although with its two pages it is shorter than many articles, I will refer to it as a sub-section in the rest of the thesis. For articles such as *Ask Him Anything* and *Sex Q&A*, Macmillan English Dictionary's thesaurus page about parts of newspapers and magazines provides two different terms with corresponding definitions: “advice column” and “problem page”. Both terms are used for pieces in which someone gives advice by answering questions by the reader, but I will mostly use the term “advice column”. When referring to both *Manthropology* and *Ask Him Anything* in this analysis, or to any other item in *Cosmopolitan*, I will use the terms “item” and/or “piece”, both terms being quite vague and covering a wide scope of different types of magazine texts, or simply the term “text”.



magazines are heteronormative and that they “serve to legitimize and naturalize unequal [gender] relations” (2009: 346-7). Partly along those lines, my research of the use of pronouns in *Cosmopolitan’s Manthpology* and *Ask Him Anything* will focus on how much relationships are portrayed as a *cooperative* process in which two sides work towards common goals and wishes, mutual success and happiness, and how much they are portrayed with an implication of enduring *conflict* – or, to use a more neutral term, *misunderstanding* – between a man and a woman (which would then also imply heteronormativity in their representations).

To investigate that, I will primarily explore how plural personal pronouns are used: how often and in what contexts do they stand for the whole gender (*we/you/they* as men in general or women in general) and how often/in what contexts do they signify a couple. Regarding plural personal pronouns, the ambiguity of number in the pronoun *you* will also be discussed – and the difficulty it poses for defining whether it is used to address the individual reader (by implication a woman), the reader and her partner, a group of (women) readers or women as a group in general. These issues will be analysed first in the subsection titled *Manthpology/All About Men*, and then in the advice column *Ask Him Anything*. I will also look into how third person singular pronouns (mostly the masculine one, *he*) are used: to refer to an individual or as a reference to any member of the sex.

## **2. Definitions and explanations of key terms**

Before the start of the analysis, I will shortly explain the key concepts on which this thesis is based and present some relevant or problematic points related to them. Firstly, I will provide several definitions of the term ‘discourse’, as well as short explanations of the concepts ‘discourse analysis’ and ‘critical discourse analysis’, which are relevant for the interpretative stance in this thesis. Secondly, I will explain the difference between interpersonal and intergroup interactions, terms originating from social psychology, but relevant to the primary question of this thesis – whether relationships are represented as cooperative or conflictive endeavours. There will also be a short overview of the notion of gender, its relation to biological sex and how society constructs and perpetuates ideas related to gender, especially in relation to love and romance. And finally, I will provide a

definition of personal pronouns, which are the basis of this research, as well as present relevant points related to their use.

## 2.1. Discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis

Many scholars agree that it is difficult to define the term ‘discourse’ as well as its scope, since it is used differently in different disciplines and different analytical approaches (Brown and Yule 1983: viii; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 75; Keating and Duranti 2011: 331; Fairclough 2003: 2-4). Machin and Thornborrow cite Kress’ and Van Leeuwen’s definition of “a discourse as a particular, contextually specific knowledge about a social practice, or set of social practices, together with a set of associated legitimations, values and purposes” (2001; qtd in 2003: 454). For Brown and Yule, a linguistic approach to discourse examines “how humans use language to communicate and, in particular, how addressers construct linguistic messages for addressees and how addressees work on linguistic messages in order to interpret them” (1983: xi). Fairclough develops a combination of these definitions, explaining the term ‘discourse’ as “the particular view of language in use (...) – as an element of social life which is closely interconnected with other elements” (2003: 3). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet claim that discourse often marks the “structure and meaning beyond the level of the sentence,” and it can be analysed with or without consideration of the social context of a certain utterance or text (2003: 75-77). The study of discourse can by these standards focus on anything from particular bounded texts or conversations to the use of language in a relationship over a lifetime or in sequenced and connected utterances approached as one continually emerging text (75). These definitions of discourse explain how the term is used in this thesis. Two recurring items in *Cosmopolitan*, *Manthropology* and *Ask Him Anything*, are approached as sequenced utterances which form two continually emerging texts<sup>8</sup>, as language in use, addressed to readers, and as a significant part of the social life in which they appear.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet distinguish discourse analysis in the more restricted sense, which focuses “on patterns of syntactic combination” outside of context, from socially engaged discourse analysis, also called critical discourse analysis (2003: 75-77). Fairclough is one of the more prominent researchers in critical discourse analysis, and his analysis of

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<sup>8</sup> In this analysis it is delimited by the first and last issue analysed, January 2015 and December 2017, but the pieces appear in earlier and later issues as well.

discourse, as the definition he provides shows, takes into consideration the social context in which it arises. He claims, in his manifesto for critical discourse analysis, that “social relations, social identities, cultural values and consciousness are in part discursive” and “CDA is analysis of the dialectical relationship between discourse (...) and other elements of social practice” (2003: 205). The role of discourse in social practices varies, he adds, it “may be more or less important and salient in one practice or set of practices than in another, and may change in importance over time” (205-206). Of the three ways he lists in which discourse participates in social practices, this thesis will analyse how discourse figures in representations (namely, the representations of love and relationships) which “enter and shape social processes and practices”, and which are produced by social actors (206), in this case a women’s magazine.

## **2.2. Interpersonal and intergroup interaction**

One of the main questions throughout the analysis will be whether relationships and romantic encounters are viewed primarily as interpersonal or as intergroup interactions, interpersonal if they are represented as cooperative endeavours between two individuals, intergroup if they are represented as overcoming conflict/misunderstanding between two members of a different gender. Henri Tajfel presents these two as

two hypothetical extremes of a continuum of social interaction: the “interpersonal extreme” defined as “interaction between two or more individuals which is very largely determined by their individual characteristics and the nature of the personal relations between them”; and the “intergroup extreme” defined as “interactions which are largely determined by group memberships of the participants and very little – if at all – by their personal relations or individual characteristics (1979, qtd in Tajfel 1982: 13).

Giles and Hewstone see these two “extremes” rather as two separate scales – the same situation can be viewed as low (or high) on both the interpersonal and intergroup scale (qtd in Giles and Coupland 1991: 17). The approach I will be using in this thesis will be situated somewhere between these two interpretations: I will analyse which of these two poles of social interaction is more prominent in *Cosmopolitan’s* representations of love and relationships, arguing that foregrounding one pole necessarily at least partially backgrounds

the other, but both can be present in varying degrees. As Giles and Coupland note, “romantic encounter” is an “archetypally interpersonal” situation (1991: 190, emphasis in the original), so the interpersonal pole can hardly be completely backgrounded. Despite that, they continue, this situation can very often “shift into, or simultaneously be an intergroup (between-gender) situation”, since gender relations are “a set of macro-societal forces impinging on the way conversations are negotiated by particular interactants” (190).

I will analyse how much personal pronouns in *Cosmopolitan’s* analysed pieces express cooperation between partners in a relationship, and how much they express opposition between them as members of different genders. As Tajfel and Turner noted, the more people approach a certain situation (or in this case a relationship) as an intergroup encounter, “the more uniformity will they show in their behaviour towards members of the relevant outgroup [...] [and] the more they tend to treat members of the outgroup as undifferentiated items in a unified social category rather than in terms of their individual characteristics” (1979: 36; qtd in Giles and Coupland 1991: 16). According to that, if types of social interaction such as relationships and romantic encounters are represented in a way that personal pronouns are used to refer to a couple (plural) or its individual members (singular), then their interaction can be interpreted as interpersonal (or intra-group). If, on the other hand, plural personal pronouns appear as references to all members of a certain gender (*we* as all men, for example), or singular pronouns *he* and *she* as shorthand expressions for a man/woman in general, then the representation can be interpreted as showing (heterosexual) relationships as intergroup interactions, since people are then portrayed as “undifferentiated items in a unified social category,” gender, or rather as uniform in their stance and behaviour.

### 2.3. Sex and gender

Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet provide the following definition of the difference between sex and gender: “Sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex.” (2003: 10) “Gender builds on biological sex,” they continue, and it is viewed as “the result of nurture,” of being socialized into certain commonplace ideas and cultural beliefs about what it means to be male or female (9-10). Robin Tolmach Lakoff adds that “this differentiation [between

sex and gender] is by no means universal or automatic” (2010: 152) – it is not easy to determine where biological distinctions end and gendered behaviour learned through socialization begins. The chapter “Constructing gender” in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet’s book is devoted to an overview of various studies that try to illuminate how gendered behaviour is learned and that show how very little apart from reproductive potential can unproblematically be ascribed to biological differences between sexes (9-51).

In the introduction to this thesis, I already mentioned women’s lifestyle magazines are part of a developed system of “women’s genres” and that the divide between “men’s” and “women’s” genres in popular culture is perceived as commonsensical (Grdešić 2013: 56-61). This divide is also an example of cultural ideas about maleness and femaleness so widespread that gender differences they arise from are ascribed to “an unchanging essential quality of males and females” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2010: 35). Those ideas are “embedded so thoroughly in our institutions, our actions, our beliefs, and our desires” that they seem to be “completely natural” (9).

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet argue that gender is “ever-present in conversations” and “central to our understanding of the world” (2003: 9), and that it gains an even more central role with the emergence of the heterosexual market and desire in adolescence (25-32). According to them, heterosexual market is “the means by which the social order comes to *presume* heterosexuality, marginalizing and rendering deviant any who do not eventually participate” (27, emphasis in the original). The omnipresent images of the perfect couple come to influence self-images and self-presentations, as well as teach girls and boys to “to desire that perfectly matched partner of the other sex” – a small, delicate girl, or a tall, strong boy (28). If this interpretation of the dominant way society constructs relationships is examined through the concepts of intergroup and interpersonal relations introduced earlier, representations of heterosexual relationships seem to provide an interesting intersection of interpersonal and intergroup interaction. On the one hand, the partners in a heterosexual couple are represented as collaborators, complementing each other and working together in an interpersonal relationship. On the other hand, this collaboration and complementarity is represented as arising from their opposition, from the fact that they are members of different gender groups, different social categories – foregrounding the intergroup aspect of the relationship. This thesis will, among other aspects, investigate how much *Cosmopolitan’s*

representations, through their use of personal pronouns, contribute to what Eckert and McConnell-Ginet presented as the dominant discourse shaping relationships and between-gender relations (25-32), as well as how much they foreground the differences/opposition between genders and present them as natural and commonsensical.

## 2.4. Personal pronouns

Quirk et al begin the chapter on pronouns in *A Comprehensive Grammar of English Language* with a remark that although “[t]heir name implies that they ‘replace’ nouns,” this interpretation is misleading (2000: 6.1 (335)). They go on to provide a tentative definition, explaining that “[i]t is best to see pronouns as comprising a varied class of closed-class words with nominal function (...), ‘like a noun phrase’”, which share a common property: “their meaning in itself is general and undetermined; their interpretation therefore depends to an unusual extent on what information is supplied by context” (6.1 (335)). Personal pronouns are further pointed out as the most important class of pronouns, one of the central pronouns, because of their frequency and grammatical characteristics - they display all the morphological characteristics specific to pronouns: case (subjective/objective), person (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>), gender (personal (masculine and feminine) and nonpersonal) and number (singular and plural) (6.1, 6.13 (335, 345-6)). Below is a table listing all personal pronouns in English, divided by the number, case and gender wherever possible:

<b>Number:</b>	<b>singular</b>			<b>plural</b>		
<b>Case:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> person	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	1 <sup>st</sup> person	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person
<i>subjective</i>	I	you	he/she/it	we	you	they
<i>objective</i>	me		him/her/it	us		them

Katie Wales, in line with Quirk et al, notes that ‘substitution’ traditionally played an important part in defining pronouns, especially third person pronouns, but that the notion is problematic in several ways (1997: 1-2). A pronoun (third person pronoun) can indeed replace an ‘already mentioned’ noun phrase, having anaphoric<sup>9</sup> reference, but it can also

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<sup>9</sup> Brown and Yule provide a following definition for anaphora: „an anaphoric element such as a pronoun is treated as a word which substitutes for, or refers back to, another word or words“, therefore, its meaning is uncovered by looking for its referent in the co-text (1983: 24, 49; see also Halliday and Hasan 1976: 14)

serve as a deictic expression, to refer to an entity not recognized from the co-text and obvious only from the situational context<sup>10</sup> (2-3).

Another problem, she says, arises with the first and second person singular pronouns – they are used to mark the speaker and the hearer, and do not substitute any person consistently (3). *I* and *you* (singular) are used in a communicative situation to establish what Don H. Zimmerman calls discourse identities, which are “integral to the moment-by-moment organization of the interaction” – these include “current speaker, listener, story teller (...) and so on” and they are assumed and negotiated by participants throughout the interaction (1998: 90). Discourse identities are relevant only in a given interaction, and are not related to the participant’s identity or position outside of the conversational context. Showalter uses the term ‘interlocutory’ for pronouns that participate in conversational exchange (1986, qtd in Bhat 2004: 5), and D. N. S. Bhat also distinguishes personal pronouns from other proforms on the basis of speech role indication (third person pronoun is ambiguously set between personal pronouns and proforms) (2004: 4-5) – both of these distinctions separate pronouns that constitute discourse identities from those that do not.

Wales claims that another problematic feature of traditional grammar definitions is that the use of pronouns for rhetorical effects is mostly ignored and the definitions focus on their denotative and anaphoric capacities (1997: 8). Mühlhäusler and Harré argue that this should change, since in discourses, pronouns are more often used for their connotations and rhetorical effects than for their denotation (1990: 15, qtd in Wales 1997: 8). As an example of pronouns with connotations and rhetorical effects Wales uses the pronouns *he* and *she* and their capacity to refer to the whole gender<sup>11</sup> (8) – my analysis will focus on this capacity, although mostly in plural pronouns, and similar connotations that pronouns may hold which are relevant in *Cosmopolitan*’s representations of love and relationships.

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<sup>10</sup> This is what M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaya Hasan call an exophoric reference, which „takes us outside the text altogether,“ referring to extratextual environment of the dialogue (1976: 18). Unlike for example nouns that refer to a certain item, person or element regardless of the context, exophoric expressions do not hold meaning themselves, and they must be interpreted from the extratextual context (33).

<sup>11</sup> In this case, unlike with *I* and *you*, pronouns evoke what Zimmerman terms „transportable identities“. Transportable identities “travel with individuals across situations and are potentially relevant in and for any situation and in and for any spate of interaction” (1998: 90). They are usually observable through physical or cultural indicators and participants can decide on their relevance in any given interaction (91). This thesis aims to investigate whether relationships are represented in *Cosmopolitan* as interactions in which gender is a relevant or an irrelevant transportable identity.

### 3. Analysis of recurring relationship advice pieces in *Cosmopolitan* US edition

This study focuses on two recurring pieces in the US edition of *Cosmopolitan* in the period from January 2015 to December 2017 – *Manthropology/All About Men* and *Ask Him Anything*. *Manthropology* and *Ask Him Anything* are parts of the section(s) in *Cosmopolitan* focused on love, relationships and sex. There are 36 issues of *Cosmopolitan* in the analysed period (one per month). Of those, I read 32 issues for this study – I could not obtain the issues from June and October of 2015 and May and August of 2017. Since *Manthropology* and *Ask Him Anything* appear in all the issues of *Cosmopolitan* in the span of these three years, 32 instances of *Manthropology* and 32 instances of *Ask Him Anything* were analysed for their use of pronouns, 64 pieces altogether. There is only one more recurring piece which is part of the sections on love, relationships and sex in all approached issues – *Sex Q&A* – which is excluded from this research because it deals with sex advice rather than relationship advice. Both *Manthropology* and *Ask Him Anything* put the emphasis on the male perspective: the first one, subtitled “Your guide to the male brain”, is presented as a course helping readers understand men, while the second one, subtitled “Love advice from our guy guru, Logan Hill”, functions as a problem page in which Hill, whose credentials mostly consist of the fact that he is a man, helps readers with their love problems by providing the male perspective<sup>12</sup>.

In her article about sex and relationship advice in the UK edition of *Glamour*, Rosalind Gill notices the advice mostly falls into three types of discourse: the ‘intimate entrepreneurship’ repertoire (which uses language of goals and strategies in intimate relationships), ‘men-ology’ (studying men) and ‘transforming the self’ (‘makeover’ of bodies, sexual practices and psychic life) (2009: 346). Both of *Cosmopolitan*’s recurring pieces on love advice, by this categorization, fit in the ‘men-ology’ type of discourse (*Manthropology* is even clearly named in that direction). The focus in this type of texts, claims Gill, is on

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<sup>12</sup> In the issues where the Contents page includes short introductions to texts, *Manthropology* and *Ask Him Anything* are most often announced together, with phrases such as “master the male brain” (7/2015), “get inside the male mind” (11/2015), “brush up on guy psychology” (12/2015) or “get his take” (1/2016) and “read his mind” (2/2016). One *Ask Him Anything* column is announced with “Wondering WTF your dude is thinking?” (6/2016) and one announcement for *Manthropology* focuses on a specific text: “decode his dating slang” (7/2016).



“educating women to understand men, to learn to please them” and (women) readers are depicted as “somewhat uncertain and unworldly about sex and intimate relationships” (354-6). In this study I will argue that the readers are depicted as uncertain about a man’s perspective rather than relationships themselves, the presumption being that a man’s mind is different from a woman’s and foreign to readers, who then need help with understanding men.

The main question of this thesis is whether romantic relationships are represented more as an interpersonal and cooperative endeavour between partners or an intergroup interaction, in which the focus is on difference (or opposition) between a man and a woman. The analysed texts already in their titles and the phrases announcing them put the emphasis on men and women as different groups. By being part of the section on love and sex, they emphasize intergroup aspects of romantic relationships, which implies that translations of men’s perspective are necessary. In the following sections I will investigate whether the use of pronouns in these pieces reflects this impression or portrays a different view, and how this can be recognized.

### **3.1. *Manthropology/All About Men***

*Manthropology*, named *All About Men* from January 2017 onwards, is a recurring sub-section in the US edition of *Cosmopolitan*. Like many texts in *Cosmopolitan*, according to Machin and Thornborrow, it integrates “several different discourse genres within one text,” displaying “generic heterogeneity” (2003: 463). Each *Manthropology* consists of four to five smaller texts spread on two pages. I divided the texts in several types according to their subjects: statistical data<sup>13</sup>, texts explaining men (including a distinct type of short texts titled “Why do men/guys...[stereotypical male trait]”<sup>14</sup>), texts that help ‘decode’ the type of man the reader is dating, compilations of personal stories by men, and one relationship advice column, named “The Hus(s)tle” and written by Matthew Hussey, the only author and text

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<sup>13</sup> ‘Dude Data’ is present in every instance of *Manthropology* and provides readers with random results from surveys with male participants, and there is other sporadic information on which places are mostly frequented by eligible bachelors ages 20 to 34, or data from random surveys in which participants are divided by their gender.

<sup>14</sup> Examples of titles: “Why don’t guys... decorate their place?” (4/2015), “Why do guys... hate brunch?” (1/2016), “Why don’t men... acknowledge calendars?” (3/2015).

appearing consistently in every issue from August 2015 to December 2017<sup>15</sup>. Most of the texts can be sorted in these categories, and there is a total of 162 different texts<sup>16</sup> in the analysed issues.

Already in the titles of the texts in *Manthropology* a pattern arises regarding the use of pronouns – *he* is “used generically and symbolically, to refer to men,” like in Wales’ example mentioned in the previous section (1997: 8). In about a third of the titles of texts within *Manthropology*, a masculine third person singular pronoun is used without a referent<sup>17</sup>, which encourages the symbolical interpretation. As an expression referring to a man in general, *he* has the same connotations that the nouns ‘man’, ‘guy’, ‘bro’ or ‘dude’ (used both in singular and in plural) have in other titles.

In the texts that help readers interpret the behaviour or type of a man they are dating, this use of the possessive pronoun often appears alongside the word ‘decode’<sup>18</sup>. This phrase implies that *he*, as a man in general, speaks and behaves in a code different from *hers* (or rather *yours*), and that the signs *he* uses (linguistic or otherwise) need to be translated to help the (woman) reader understand her (male) romantic interest. This in turn portrays men as a group with their separate ‘language’, which is emphasized by Giles and Coupland as one of the most important features of group identification (1991: 96-100).

The texts themselves, beyond the title, often include the pronoun *he* as a reference to the reader’s hypothetical romantic interest, date or partner. It carries the implication of heterosexuality, including the emphasis on relationships as intergroup encounters, and certainly also provides the connotations present in the titles, because constituting the hypothetical date as a man allows the authors to presuppose his traits or explain his behaviour. However, since *he* is a singular pronoun, and in most cases paired with *you* as the woman reader, it can no longer be interpreted as “a man in general”. The fact that this pair of pronouns is used in singular, rather than plural, partially foregrounds, or at least de-backgrounds, the interpersonal aspect of relationships.

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<sup>15</sup> This column is even shortly published as an independent article, from August 2016 to January 2017. In February 2017 it becomes a part of the *All About Men* subsection again, and in November 2017 it changes the name from “The Hus(s)tle” to “The Love Coach”.

<sup>16</sup> Including “The Hus(s)tle” while it was an independent article.

<sup>17</sup> This includes third person singular personal pronoun *he/him*, as well as the possessive pronoun *his*.

<sup>18</sup> “Decode his texts” (2/2016), “Decode his dude squad” (9/2016) or “Decode his Instagram likes” (12/2017) are a few examples.

More interesting in the texts is the use of plural personal pronouns – *we/us* and *they/them*, as well as *you*. *You*, a second person pronoun that has the same form in singular and in plural, is problematic already in its ambiguity of number, which allows it to be interpreted in several different ways in many cases. For this reason, I will discuss *we* and *they* first and then turn to the problems surrounding *you* and its referents.

Overall, in *Manthropology*, *we* and *they* both most often signify men (or, to use a term much more prominent in *Cosmopolitan*, *guys*) as a group, with different prominence in different types of texts. *We* sometimes also appears in what Quirk et al term its “generic use” – “with reference to ‘people in general’” (2000: 6.21 (353-4)), a few times it is used for authors/editors of the text or magazine (in two instances *we* covers both the authors and the readers signifying women in general), and several times as reference to different groups or a couple. All other referents combined appear less often than the referent ‘men’. *They* is used for men in general slightly more often than it is used for a specific group of people. This group of people, however, is mostly same-sex, referring to a group of men, often surveyed men in a personal experience compilation or a statistical data piece – in these cases the men are presented as prototypical members of the gender. A couple of times it is used to refer to a certain type of men (“players” (1/2016)) or a type of women (“badass babes” (3/2017)) or for people in general, but the overwhelming majority of referents are, like with *we*, men as a single group. In the following sections the uses of *we*, *they* and *you* will be discussed, respectively.

### 3.1.1. First person plural – *we*

The pronoun *we* (or its objective form *us*) as a reference to men as a single group appears most often in “Why do men/guys...” type of texts. These texts are always written by a male author, who explains why a certain stereotype about men is true. Jason Jones and Jean Stilwell Peccei note that questions used instead of statements, especially the “how” questions (in this case “why” questions), are one of the prominent ways to ‘slip’ presuppositions or implications into a sentence (2004: 42-43). The titles of these texts serve this purpose: by asking why men sleep late, give bad gifts or never notice your hair (7, 12/2015, 4/2017), the titles include the presupposition that men do indeed behave this way, and this in turn “can persuade people to take something for granted which is actually open

to debate” (Jones and Stilwell Peccei 2004: 42). The use of the pronoun *we* in these texts further establishes these presumptions.

In nineteen out of twenty texts of this type, the authors use this pronoun at least once throughout the text to establish men as a unified group. Cliff Goddard warns that while *you* can easily be interpreted as the plurality of addressees, *we* is not a plurality of *Is*, of speakers, and its use invites the addressees to infer who else is being talked about, who else is included in this act of ‘same-saying’, speaking for the group (1995: 99, 107). *We* in these texts is often paired with *you* and the readers are not included in the pronoun – Quirk et al call this the exclusive *we* (as opposed to the inclusive one, which includes reference to the addressee) (2000: 6.7 (341)). The presumption is that readers are women, so these texts discursively construct them as an outgroup in relation to the men, an ingroup. Lotte Dam cites an example from a Danish women’s magazine in which women are constructed as an ingroup through the pronoun *we* and opposed to men as an outgroup, and she claims that through this pronoun the identity of the writer, reader and other people is constructed through differences in gender (2015: 35-6). Although in “Why do men/guys...” texts the relationship between groups is somewhat reversed (however, only indirectly, as I will argue later), this use of pronouns does emphasize the gender aspect of the writer’s and the readers’ identity. This process is made easier by the fact that gendered identities are already constructed through various discourses in history (Dam 2015: 33) and the constructs are readily available for reproduction in representations of this type.

Teun A. Van Dijk claims gender or ethnicity are social *categories* which do not hold ideologies, rather than *social groups*, which have ideologies related to their interests in relation to other groups, or *cultural communities*, which hold certain common knowledge or values (2006: 119-120, emphasis in the original). However, later in the article he argues that the use of the pronoun *we* is one of the discursive strategies through which “ideologies are acquired, expressed, enacted and reproduced” because the author then speaks “as a member of a social group” (124-5). Using the pronoun *we*, the authors of “Why do men/guys...” texts presuppose that values, beliefs and ideas they express are valid for the entire group. Since the texts are aimed at women readers and *Manthropology* is positioned in the section on love and relationships to provide information relevant for intimate

relationships, these beliefs and ideas are presented in relation to women as the other group and the *we* constituted in these texts can be interpreted as what Van Dijk calls a social group.

Since the texts are written from a first person perspective, this type of attribution of common beliefs and ideas to the whole group can be explained in terms of J. C. Turner's self-stereotyping theory (1987; qtd in Giles and Coupland 1991: 168-9). Giles and Coupland explain the phenomenon of self-stereotyping in this way: "When group identity (...) becomes salient for whatever contextual reason, people not only depersonalize and stereotype a relevant outgroup, they also stereotype themselves," or rather, "take on characteristics they believe (rightly or wrongly) to be prototypical of the social group to which they themselves belong" (168-9). According to the use of the pronoun *we*, in this type of texts, gender is represented as salient in intimate relationships, and male authors of texts take on this identity and emphasize its stereotypes.

One final point to make on the use of *we* in *Manthropology* is that although the pronoun in these texts invites the readers to construct men, the authors, as an ingroup and themselves, the addressees, as an outgroup, when the wider context is taken into consideration a reversed relationship emerges. The titles of those texts, as well as others, refer to men in third person, using either nouns or the pronoun *he*, and the same is done in the whole *Manthropology* subsection, as well as in the wider context of the magazine. It is the women readers, occasionally joined by women writers and editors of the magazine, that form an ingroup, and men are represented as an outgroup. *We* can be read as an embedded version of *they*, in the similar way in which *I* would be an embedded version of *he* in a statement like "He said: 'I am tall.'"

### 3.1.2. Third person plural – *they*

*We* mostly appears only in "Why do men/guys..." texts, except for a few occurrences in Matthew Hussey's dating advice, and it appears only sporadically in other types of texts for various uses – mostly to refer to "people in general". *They*, on the other hand, is distributed more evenly among different types of *Manthropology* texts and with different referents. Two kinds of uses, however, are most prominent. As it was already mentioned, the first of these is observable in texts relaying statistical data or in personal experience compilations, where *they* refers to a specific same-sex group – surveyed men. In

the other prominent kind of use, the pronoun refers again to men as a unified group; this kind appears in various types of texts, but most often in “The Hus(s)tle”, Matthew Hussey’s dating advice.

In texts on statistical data and personal experience compilations *they* does refer to a group of men, whose only common trait is that they were surveyed on a certain issue, but the pronoun carries generalizing connotations. The results and stories are related to specific men; however, the reason they are relevant for the readers as students of Manthropology is because from this information they can form conclusions about the whole gender. For this reason, although it refers to a group of men, a different interpretation is open (even suggested) to the readers –*they* can also refer to men in general.

“The Hus(s)tle”, functioning as a dating and relationship advice column, is another significant source of the pronoun *they* used as a reference to men, this time fully referring to men in general (only occasionally to a specific type of men or after a slightly more reserved statement “most men”). Gill argues that “[e]xpert’ discourse plays a key role” in men-ology (2009: 354), and the author, Matthew Hussey, is introduced as “the dating expert,” whose monthly advice on various issues is presented in three to five points or steps. The implication is that success in dating men is just several steps away, if the rules are followed properly – according to Grdešić such step-by-step advices are one of the core features of *Cosmopolitan’s* discourse in general (2013: 122). The content of his advice is often very general, with phrases such as “attract the kind of *people* you want” (9/2016, emphasis mine), but more than half of his titles include either the noun “guy” or some form of masculine third person singular pronoun. The column is also a part of *Manthropology* in almost all issues, which hinders interpretation outside of the heterosexual and intergroup framework. This point is further emphasized by the use of the pronoun *they* (and an occasional *we*) to refer to men in general, as well as the pronoun *he*, which almost exclusively refers to the reader’s hypothetical love interest, but frequently includes assumptions made on the basis of his gender. Such a use of pronouns, paired with statements like “men respond to praise” (9/2017) or “competition goes a long way with guys” (8/2015), emphasises the gender aspect of identity.

Through the pronouns *we* and *they* with men as their referent, an “imagined community” is discursively constructed. Anderson originally coined the term to refer to national communities, arguing that the image of the communion between the members of a nation exists only in the minds of the members, since they never meet most of their fellow-members (1991, qtd in Dam 2015: 32). Today, Dam claims, it is used “to refer to the idea of having a common identity” with other people based on various distinctions – people identify themselves and other individuals as members of communities which exist only in the minds of members (2015: 32). As I have argued at the end of the previous section, the pronoun *we* used for men in general can be interpreted in the same way as the pronoun *they*: although *we* appears to construct an ingroup, both pronouns construct an outgroup. The prominence of these two pronouns with reference to men, especially when combined, generates a strong notion of community and identity between the members of this ‘imagined community’, the ‘outgroup’ gender. The following section turns to the pronoun *you* and the construction of ingroup identity of women readers.

### 3.1.3. Second person plural or singular? – the ambiguous *you*

The oppositional pair *you* and *we/they* constructs the women readers as an ingroup differentiated from the male outgroup. However, because of the ambiguity of number in the pronoun *you*, a sense of community that usually accompanies plural pronouns is not as present in the use of this one. Arguably, when *you* appears paired with *we* (or *they*), the pronoun can be interpreted as plural, referring to ‘you women’ in general (and often as hypothetical romantic interests or partners of ‘us/them men’ – because this romantic interest is a woman, and the reader is implicitly a woman, there is a sense of identity and community on the basis of gender between these two persons).

There is an important reason, however, that discourages a plural interpretation in other uses of this pronoun in *Manthropology*, and even in some cases in the occurrences where *you* is paired with another plural pronoun – the ideology of individualism and aspirational feminism, pointed at by various scholars as the prevalent ideology of women’s magazines, especially *Cosmopolitan* (Winship 1987: 106, 120; Grdešić 2013: 63-4, 144-6, 151; Gill 2007: 199-200). According to Machin and Thornborrow, independence is one of the core values on which the *Cosmopolitan* brand is founded, and there is “little sense of mutual sharing (...) [or] of any real relationship with others” – “[t]he fun, fearless female acts alone

at all times” (2003: 454, 464, 467). As Winship points out, “*Cosmo* manifestly subscribes to an ideology of competitiveness and individual success (...), aspirational feminism” (1987: 106). Competitive individualism of this type of feminism focuses on ‘I’ rather than ‘we’, continues Winship, and there is no room for the community of women (119-120).

Svennevig et al point to the potential of the singular second person pronoun to construct a community – they are adopted from personal face-to-face communication and indicate closeness (1995: 182; qtd in Dam 2015: 36). Winship argues that this potential in women’s magazines at the same time constitutes the reader as a ‘lonely woman’ and emphasizes “the support the magazine provides for its readers” (1987: 12). The magazine functions as the reader’s friend in a woman’s world (66), but a sense of community is nevertheless very weak in that world – it is obscured by the notions of competitiveness and individual success which are incompatible with it (120). This interpretation functions within *Manthropology’s* uses of the pronoun *you* as well – although there are numerous presumptions made on the basis of the reader’s gender identity, the notion of community, emphasized by the plural pronouns *we* and *they* for men, is absent from the woman reader’s gender identity.

#### 3.1.4. Plural pronouns for couples – *you* and *we*

There are only two types of texts in *Manthropology* in which a plural pronoun is used to refer to couples: the first are “The Hus(s)tle” columns and the second personal experience compilations, and each type uses a different pronoun – *you* and *we*, respectively. First person plural in this sense appears only a handful of times, since personal experience compilations are not as frequent as “The Hus(s)tle” column or texts explaining men, and *we* is used only in those which are about dating and relationships in particular.

Second person plural, on the other hand, is more frequent, and this use of *you* is the only in which plurality is unambiguously determined, in the context and by phrases such as “you two” or “you both”. Their occurrence almost exclusively in “The Hus(s)tle” is logical, seeing as this is the only type of text in *Manthropology* that explicitly discusses interactions such as dating and relationships as its primary subject. However, since their use appears in the column alongside gendered uses of the pronouns *they* and *we*, as well as surrounded by statements positioning certain behaviour as “a powerful draw for guys” (9/2016), these



occurrences of the pronoun *you* can foreground the interpersonal and cooperative aspect of relationships only tentatively and to a limited degree.

In the next section, I discuss the other recurring piece in *Cosmopolitan's* love and relationship section, *Ask Him Anything*, and whether the representations of gendered identities, couples and relationships found there follow the pattern of *Manthropology* or create a different one.

### 3.2. *Ask Him Anything*

Already in the title *Ask Him Anything* there is a pronoun that refers always to a particular man that answers the questions – Logan Hill. However, his credentials are expressed in a phrase “guy guru” – suggesting that what makes him qualified to solve your love problems (implicitly heterosexual) is the fact that he is a man, capable of providing the male perspective. In the title (and subtitle), therefore, it seems to be irrelevant who “he” is – what is important is that he is indeed a *he*. This is further emphasized by announcements of the column with phrases such as “get his take” or “read his mind”. Announcements and the title are the first thing readers notice, and these shape their expectations in similar directions as *Manthropology* does.

*Ask Him Anything*, like any problem page in any magazine, differs from other items, including *Manthropology*, because it has elements of conversation and turn-taking. The second person pronoun in Hill’s answers to the readers no longer refers to a hypothetical woman reader, who could then be ascribed certain traits and values on the basis of her gender, so *you* loses most of the capacity it has in *Manthropology* to evoke the transportable identity of gender. Instead, it evokes the asker’s and answerer’s discourse identity. When *you*, as unambiguously singular, is used by Hill to refer to a reader, it refers to the specific reader that asked a question, and it cannot be interpreted as a plural pronoun referring to women as a community or to their common female identity. When *you* is used by the reader, it refers to Logan Hill, the *he* from the title, who is the established writer of this column (much more consistently than the writers of the *Sex Q&A* problem page, for example, which is sometimes even left unsigned).

Contrary to the announcements and the title, a closer reading of the content and the analysis of the use of pronouns reveals a more complex and quite different image. As

mentioned, most first and second person singular pronouns are used with reference to speech roles (or discourse identities, as a term that does not imply spoken interaction), which Bhatt views as the distinctive feature of personal pronouns (2004: 4-5). Apart from that, both singular and plural third person pronouns are used almost exclusively as anaphoric references, to refer to already mentioned partners, crushes, friends or groups of friends, families and so on. When plural *we* or *you* appears, an overwhelming majority of the references are again anaphoric and refer to a couple. *We* is used by the asker to refer mostly to her and her partner/romantic interest, *you* (often paired with “two” or “both” to avoid ambiguity) is used by Hill in the same way, with the difference in pronouns arising from different discourse identities. Generalizing uses of the pronouns *we* and *you* in *Ask Him Anything* are mostly what Quirk termed their “generic uses” (2000: 6.21 (353-4)) – for statements referring to people in general, regardless of their gender. Occasional references in the pronouns *we* or *they* to aspects of gender identity as self-evident (such statements never include the reader and feminine gender identity) are overshadowed by frequent hedges and restraints related to generalizations made on the basis of gender – either generalizations reproduced by the asker of the question or stereotypes arising as relevant in a certain issue<sup>19</sup>. Hedges such as “every dude is different” (1/2015) are in accordance with the way the askers and Hill use pronouns and both de-emphasize the intergroup aspect of relationships and emphasize the interpersonal one, pointing to relationships as generally cooperative endeavours in which problems are not caused (or at least not most of the time) by different values or interests which would stem from different gender identities.

### 3.3. Summary of the results

The analysis of the use of pronouns reveals that in *Manthropology*, male identity and community between members of the gender as a social group is represented as an integral part of and an important issue in romantic encounters and intimate relationships. However, the same cannot be argued for the opposite sex – the relevance of group community and gender identity among readers as women is much less clearly established through the use of plural personal pronouns. The sense of community between them is at

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<sup>19</sup> To a question „Do a lot of guys fall for women who are like their moms?“ Hill answers by removing the gender aspect of the assumption: „[w]e are often attracted to people with familiar faces (...) [and] often connect to people who express love the way our parents did“ (3/2016). There is still a generalizing effect – however, it is no longer based on gender identities, but on the 'human nature'.

best ambiguously contained in the potential for a plural interpretation of *you* – potential arising from the plural pronoun used to establish the male community.

There could be several different factors for uneven representations of gender community. The already mentioned ideology of aspirational feminism guiding the magazine in general can be interpreted as one of the factors. “The fun fearless female” is independent and acts alone, values individual success in the workplace as much as in intimate relationships (Machin and Thornborrow 2003: 464, 467; Winship 1987: 120). A contributing reason can also be uncovered in the unequal enforcement of gender on the sexes. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet note that “[gender] enforcement is more intensely aimed at boys than at girls” (2003: 21). Boys appropriating gender choices reserved for women, in areas from fashion to the choice of a vocation, are judged much harsher than girls appropriating male gender choices from the earliest age (20-22). There are several reasons for that, but Eckert and McConnell-Ginet emphasize that it is easier to overcome the imposed gender limitations if a disadvantaged social position is perceived to arise from them – gender choices for men are culturally valued above those reserved for women (9, 21-22). Tajfel’s theory contributes to the relevance of this factor – he claims that one important reason for a social group to shift towards uniformity in their representations of themselves is a perceived loss of stability and legitimation by the social organization that determined their higher status (1982: 13-14), which can be interpreted as feminist ideas entering the mainstream culture and jeopardizing the privileged position of men. Tajfel also provides a claim that could explain the uneven representations less in terms of dominance and power and more in terms of difference: the accentuation of similarities within a certain category or group is not symmetrically distributed to ingroups and outgroups, and the outgroup is perceived as more similar and uniform than the ingroup by participants in an interaction (1982: 21-22). While his first theory helps explain the self-stereotyping of male authors in *Manthropology* through the pronoun *we*, the second one explains it in the wider context of the magazine which constitutes men as an outgroup.

Regardless of the factors for the uneven representations of gender community, this unevenness can be interpreted as representing heterosexual intimate relationships both as intergroup and interpersonal relations. Intergroup relations emerge as primary in the perception of the male partner in a relationship as firmly and primarily a member of the

outgroup. The use of the pronoun *you*, on the other hand, in the context of competitive individualism invites the reader to perceive herself more in interpersonal terms as an individual rather than as a member of a collective. However, competitive individualism urges the reader not only to isolate herself from other members of her sex, but also hinders the cooperative aspect of relationships as interpersonal interactions, emphasized in the introduction as the aspect the prominence of which this thesis investigates.

Besides *Manthropology*, Logan Hill's column *Ask Him Anything* was analysed. The title, subtitle and introductions, as mentioned in the previous section, position the column as similar to *Manthropology*. This creates expectations that in the content of the column the pronouns would follow a similar pattern, less prominently due to the fact that *Ask Him Anything* is an advice column with its already mentioned specific discourse requirements arising from its resemblance of conversation. However, even when the higher frequency of personal pronouns being used to establish discourse identities is accounted for, Hill's column uses personal pronouns mostly solely for their anaphoric reference, rarely using them to make assumptions about the asker or her romantic interest based on their gender identity. On the contrary, generalizing uses of *we* and *you* are limited almost exclusively to the meaning 'people in general', and their use to make generalizations on the basis of gender is present, but much less frequent than the phrases defying generalizations.

*Ask Him Anything*, therefore, contributes to a fairly different representation of intimate relationships than *Manthropology* does. Askers, possibly influenced by the representations of relationships as intergroup endeavours that frame *Ask Him Anything*, occasionally do approach Hill for his portrayed ability to provide the male perspective. Most questions, however, do not overtly present their relationship problems as problems in communication between genders, at least not by the way that they use pronouns. By more or less consistently avoiding generalizations about gender in his column, both in the use of pronouns and in the general content, Logan Hill shaped a sequenced and ongoing discourse within *Cosmopolitan* that is gradually recognized by the readers as transgressing the emphasis on heterosexual and intergroup aspects of relationships, emphasis made both in the ongoing discourse of *Manthropology* and in the way Hill's column itself is represented in the wider context of the magazine. For these reasons, despite how it is framed, *Ask Him Anything* manages to foreground the interpersonal aspect of relationships, founded in

cooperation between individual partners in a relationship, and background the intergroup aspect, based on partners and romantic interests being defined by their gender identity. The column achieves this much more consistently than the pronoun *you* used for couples in “The Hus(s)tle” or *you* addressing the individual hypothetical reader can.

#### **4. Influence of *Cosmopolitan*’s discourse on the readers**

Both in *they – you* and *we – you* pairs of pronouns in *Manthropology*, in most cases, the editorial team of the magazine, mostly women, seems to be excluded. This position can be explained through Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of “cultural intermediaries” – they offer symbolic goods and services, by advising people on lifestyle and consumer choices in a world increasingly filled with numerous possibilities in those areas (1997, qtd in Grdešić 2013: 214). Editors of *Cosmopolitan*, notes Grdešić, perfectly fit into this new role (214), and by constructing themselves as an outside authority, presenting various aspects of relationships between *you* and *them*, their representations gain credibility and significance in the readers’ perception.

The researchers I cited in the introduction and throughout the thesis all point out the potential of language and discourse to indeed influence the prevailing ideas and values in a certain society (Giles and Coupland 1991: 1-31; Fairclough 2001; Keating and Duranti 2011: 331-33; Gill 2009: 346). However, as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet point out, every discourse depends on the audience response – “failure to reach any appropriate audience robs the uttered words of force, renders them effectively meaningless” (2003: 77). Joke Hermes argues, in her research on reading habits among women’s magazine readers, that this is valid (although maybe not so drastically) for discourse of women’s magazines – she finds women’s magazines are read distractedly, without much attention being paid to the content of the texts (1993).

The specific conversational qualities of Hill’s column, primarily the fact that it includes the readers’ questions, makes this one of the rare places within the magazine in which the readers’ feedback and reaction to a certain type of representations of relationships can be recognized. The askers of Hill’s column are also its readers, and presumably also readers of the magazine, so the way they shape their questions can provide

clues regarding how they interpret the provided representations of relationships. As it was mentioned, there are occasionally readers who formulate their problems as problems in between-gender communication, asking “are guys OK with” something (3/2015), and even those that ask questions beyond the individual, such as “Do all guys really fit into butt-men vs. boob-men camp?” (8/2015). The fact that they ask such questions suggests that their ideas about relationships are either influenced by or merely reflected in the representations of relationships which focus on the intergroup aspect – prevalent in *Manthropology* and suggested in the way *Ask Him Anything* is framed.

On the other hand, the majority of readers do not formulate their problems as between-genders problems, recognizing that the column places an emphasis on the interpersonal rather than intergroup aspect of relationships – they also partially participate in shaping the discourse this way. There are also askers who transgress the heteronormative frame of the column by asking questions regarding alternative sexual identities – from November 2015 onwards, almost every column includes at least one question of this kind. This also indicates that (most) readers do indeed approach the column beyond its surface and make the conclusion that relationships are not portrayed in intergroup terms. In *Ask Him Anything*, therefore, there are accounts both of the readers who approach the column through the frame, superficially, as similar to the *Manthropology* discourse, and of the readers who pay closer attention to how relationships are constructed in the particular text; there are accounts of the readers that accept the dominant heterosexual discourse, as well as of those who challenge it. According to that, it is difficult to determine whether the representations indeed influence the readers, who could otherwise be persuaded to accept an alternative representation as the ‘natural’ one, or they simply reproduce the ideas dominant in a given society, in this case the American one.

## 5. Conclusion

The focus on heterosexual relationships can be explained by the fact that *Cosmopolitan* is a commercial magazine highly depending on its reach for its success and continued existence – the majority of people do identify as heterosexual. However, two out of three recurring pieces about relationships and sex in the magazine are represented, at

least on the surface, primarily as ‘translating’ devices for the male perspective. This suggests not only heteronormativity, but also that heterosexual relationships are perceived as based on the difference in behaviour, goals and values between genders – implying that a conflict of interests, or at least a misunderstanding, is one of the key features, if not the key feature of intimate relationships. A closer analysis of how these texts use pronouns, though, suggests a more complex and even conflicting representation of relationships. Pronouns in *Manthropology* subsections, especially plural pronouns, do confirm the focus on the intergroup aspects of relationships and on romantic encounters as interactions which include conflict or misunderstanding between two members of different groups, with different goals and values. Pronouns in *Ask Him Anything*, on the other hand, provide a very different representation of relationships and, as the questions addressed to him suggest, this difference is noted by the readers, who more often than not base their questions on the interpersonal aspect of relationships and background their different gender identity, or occasionally even ask advice on relationships that do not include partners of different sexes.

There are also various other outside accounts of readers who express their disagreement with the representations of relationships as intergroup and conflictive interactions, on various social media or elsewhere (see also Grdešić 2013: 225-230). One dissatisfied reader expresses her dissatisfaction in an article in *NYU Local*, titled “Is the *Cosmo* girl a feminist?”, directing her complaints specifically at how *Manthropology* represents men, and asking *Cosmo* to “please, show women that a ‘perfect’ man is much more than someone who remembers our birthdays and keeps his fantasy football talk to a minimum” (Garcia Lowrel 2015).

There are, of course, readers who adhere to the more prominent representation of relationships in *Cosmopolitan*, as an intergroup and potentially conflictive relation, and these sometimes provide their feedback through the questions they ask in Hill’s column. However, the majority of readers of this wide-reaching magazine never voice their opinions publicly in any way. The only indication of their compliance to or disagreement with the representations provided is their act of choosing or refusing to buy the magazine – the only significant act a reader can make in contemporary society (Grdešić 2013: 263). The reach of the magazine suggests that there are millions of women in the American society who implicitly agree with how *Cosmopolitan* represents love and relationship, or at least whose

disagreement is not significant enough to make them act against it or to ask for alternative representations. As long as the majority of readers appear to accept and agree with existing representations, the discourse of *Cosmopolitan's* relationship advice will most likely, with certain exceptions like those present in Hill's column (though only beyond the title and introduction), continue to represent relationships as primarily heterosexual and intergroup interactions, with potential misunderstanding and conflict between genders as their most prominent feature.



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