

Launches in the UK magazine industry:  
interrogating Archer's morphogenetic  
approach.

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## Preface

### **Introduction**

The 2007 Work Foundation report *Staying Ahead: the economic performance of the UK's creative industries* estimated that the UK had the largest creative sector in the European Union and that the UK's creative sector as a proportion of GDP is the largest in the world. Magazines form a (small) part of what is termed the creative sector in the UK.

The actual size of the magazine industry alone is hard to identify as it depends on how a magazine is classified and, for example, whether business to business, and contract titles are included. However, unofficial figures would put the turnover of consumer magazines in the conservative region of £7.2bn (PPA 2007a), which is about the same size as the UK pharmaceutical industry.

Like many creative industries, the magazine industry is intensely competitive and constantly evolves in order to survive. It is different to other forms of mass media, as it does not aim at large general markets, its markets are segmented, and divided into niches to maximise audience appeal and target audiences for advertisers. Although over the period of time that this thesis has been produced there have been many comments on the death of magazines. (See Who says Print is dead? [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk) June 3 2012), they still survive and in many case thrive.

### **Industry overview**

According to the DTI, the current appeal of magazines to the consumer is due to the abundance of new launch titles (DTI, 2002). The DTI consider that the fickle nature of consumers today contributes and helps to drive the constant supply of new launches and market expansion. Therefore, launches are an important part of the magazine industry. Yet, both editorial staff and industry folklore would have one believe that magazine launches are

all about lunches and hunches. The individual ‘star editor’ is perceived to make the success of a magazine, through tacit knowledge and social networks, ultimately chasing or making the cultural zeitgeist, which is deemed to be a magical and mystical process. However, working in the industry it struck me that there are many contributing factors to a successful launch, both internal and external to the company. Within magazine publishing, launches and re-launches are the most obvious point of change or interaction between the environment and the agents of the magazine, which is why this particular aspect was identified for study. This thesis sets out to explore magazine launches and uncover some of the mystique behind the successful magazine launch.

### **Thesis rationale**

The original intention of this thesis was to pose the empirical question ‘What are the mechanisms behind a UK magazine launch?’ and view the question through a suitable theory that would highlight the mechanisms. McRobbie (1999) pointed out that magazines had occupied a ‘less central and prestigious space in media and cultural studies’ (1999: 47) than other forms of media, and with the exception of Crewe (2003) magazine launches were rarely discussed. In order to really understand magazine launches, which are a vital part of the magazine cycle, the mechanisms that produce a launch have to be recognized. A magazine launch represents a potential change in the production cycle, from inception to print and in the wider magazine industry. A site of change or an altered state is often the site of interaction. Investigating magazines at a point of change would increase our knowledge about this media form.

To investigate magazine launches required a theory that would be able to successfully view interaction and change. An obvious choice was the sociological meta-theory of structure and agency, because this would allow both the structural proprieties of the industry and the agential influence of the production workers to be encompassed. The perspective of critical realism, which privileges neither structure nor agency, was identified as a suitable theory within which the variant of Archers morphogenesis was selected. Archer’s morphogenesis

was particularly suitable as a theory of change. “The ‘morpho’ element is an acknowledgement that society has no pre-set form or preferred state: the ‘genetic’ part is a recognition that it takes its shape from, and is formed by, agents, originating from the intended and unintended consequences of their activities.” (Archer, 1995: 5). This theory would enable interaction between the structural and the agential strata to be viewed which is unique to Archer. Archer is also recognized as one of the foremost British social theorists in this field (King, 2010).

Much of the work surrounding magazines, with a few exceptions, have viewed magazine production within debates surrounding the cultural industries. Those contributing to this field could be placed within the terms of structure and agency. Some situated their concerns within a structurally determined context, like Adorno and Horkheimer (1979), and authors like McRobbie (1977) and Tuchman (1978) who were interested in gender studies and the structural/oppressive influences of cultural production. Alternatively, others like Hall (1980) and Hermes (1995) situated their concerns around how the actors or audience, and later the active audience, received the messages produced. This thesis sets out to follow neither of these options instead of emphasizing structure over agency like Adorno and Horkheimer (1979) or agency over structure like Hermes (1995). This thesis set out to look at the interaction between the two strata giving both structure and agency an equal influence in order to view interaction.

Morphogenesis is described as a practical social theory by Archer (1995); however, there is little empirical work using the morphogenetic cycle; therefore, almost by default, this thesis would interrogate Archer’s theory of morphogenesis. As the thesis progressed, it became more important to assess whether the theory was able to achieve what was required of it. It had to be applied faithfully without cherry picking the best bits. Therefore this thesis interrogates Archer’s theory of morphogenesis on a practical level, using the empirical example of magazine launches.

However, it is also necessary to make clear what this thesis does not achieve. Firstly, the empirical approach to the subject matter does not align with traditional cultural studies, which



is concerned with media and ideologies as defined by Hall (1980 see p117). Neither is it interested in the message produced by the media or the linguistic structures within which these messages are viewed. In addition there is no audience element to this study, it is not concerned with the effect and reception of the media produced as it circulates ideological views. The empirical emphasis of the thesis is concerned with the relative autonomy of the media workers and how the media workers' autonomy is viewed. It intersects with work on media workers produced by Hesmondhalgh (2002) and Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), and McRobbie's (1998,1999) work on creative workers. Nevertheless, to reiterate, more central than these issues that situates the empirical problem, was the interrogation of Archer's self-declared, practical social theory, which has been under used as an empirical framework of study. Finally, looking at magazines through this perspective highlights aspects that have previously been overlooked.

### **Situating the empirical data**

The period of interest for this thesis is situated from the mid 1980s until 2004. The 1980s heralded a rise in the number of magazines being produced (see page 135), which peaked in 2004. My interviews focused on launches during this period. My starting point for the literature review is the years between the two world wars, as according to White (1977) although circulation was restricted, there was a change from 1946 onwards where women's magazines that had originally been sold purely on their value to the reader, changed to large circulation concerns attracting a dual income from both advertisers and sales. This period saw magazines change into the form on our newsstand today, making it a suitable place to begin the research.

### **Discipline boundaries**

The disciplinary boundaries of this thesis are broad. I have used four main types of literature on magazines to contribute to this thesis. Firstly, there is the sociological literature, which has influenced my choice of theory. This takes the form of general commentaries surrounding

critical realism, including Archer's work on the morphogenetic cycle, both structure and agency (1995) and culture (1996). Secondly, there is a broad body of feminist work that can be categorised within either sociology or cultural studies, that historically grounds the subject matter although does not contribute to the final arguments and discussions (eg Tuchman 1978). Thirdly, another body of work concerns cultural producers - again this straddles the boundaries between cultural studies and sociology, and relates to the way social actors interact within institutional frameworks, producing ideological or aesthetic products. This literature covers a wide selection of cultural producers working in creative industries like film, music, TV and visual arts, not specifically magazine or editorial staff. (Eg Hesmondhalgh 2002, Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010) Finally, the sociology of organisations and business also provided background material (eg Haveman, and Khaire (2004)). This relatively eclectic literature makes it important to re-specify further where the thesis is located. It is not a work situated within cultural studies where there is a greater focus upon the message or the medium and how it relates to for example, ethnicity, gender, or social class. Nor is it a work situated in media studies, which is more concerned with the effects of the mass media or its content, and history. It could perhaps be placed in cultural sociology but cultural sociologists are more interested in the way a social role is acted using practices, artefacts and symbols. The thesis is more accurately situated within sociology. At a general level this is because of sociology's inclusive approach to all areas of human activity, including cultural production. More specifically, sociology is animated by debates over structure and agency, which have proved central concepts in researching this thesis.

## **Literature**

In this section an overview of the approaches used to understand culture and media studies is provided. Keith Negus (2006) in an overview of cultural production suggested that although there was a move away from the cultural industry approach to a creative industries perspective, neither approach paid enough attention to the wider external influence. He used Becker and Bourdieu to illustrate this point demonstrating how Becker highlighted the

importance of networks and individuals, while Bourdieu argued that culture was another site where social inequality was reproduced and contested. Both of these authors provided evidence that culture needs to be studied within a wider sociological context, rather than the industry centred perspectives.

Accordingly, this thesis proposes morphogenesis, the sociological theory through which this problem was examined, as a suitable solution. It links human agency with social structure, and tries to avoid determinism by using analytical dualism. Essentially, Archer was concerned with the interaction at different analytical levels; which may uncover the generative mechanisms behind an event. This interaction of different analytical levels has not been studied in connection with magazines. Archer's view of analytical dualism is central to this thesis, and is discussed in more depth in later chapters. The main literature review analyses and categorizes magazine literature explicitly through Archer's theory. As previously stated this work is multidisciplinary in its framing, therefore the next section is brief and not exhaustive in its framing of the thesis.

Archer (1995) argues that without the analytical ability to view emergent properties from the independent strata of structure and agency, other social theories are likely to be culpable of three types of conflation. This may be either upward where causal efficacy is granted to agents. Central conflation where structure and agency are simultaneously fused making the relative influence of each difficult to disentangle. Thirdly, downward conflation where causal relations are only granted to structure, and agency is denied causal influence. For example previous literature written on the cultural industry that perceives that cultural goods are standardised in order to manipulate the masses, encouraging consumption to gain pleasure and meet the needs of capitalism, may be culpable of downward conflation.

Newbold et al., (2002) identified circles and spirals in a review of media theory and its development. The first main strand they proposed was mass media. Newbold et al (2002) suggests there were three main themes of intellectual thought surrounding theories of mass media. All versions attributed considerable power to the media. Right wing scholars like Leavis (1952) considered the media undermined the civilizing influence of high culture.

Another view concerned moral or religious anxiety where the media was seen to encourage immoral behaviour (Cohen 1972). Left wing scholars like Adorno and Horkheimer (1979) reflected that the media repressed the consumers. The most relevant for this thesis is Adorno and Horkheimer. These are theories of mass media and the focus of enquiry is concentrated on the structural aspects.

Similarly the cultural industry as a specific term is used in cultural studies to refer to Adorno and Horkheimer's notion of mass-produced culture, which cultivated false needs in order to pacify the masses. Adorno and Horkheimer suggested that culture far from being a separate element outside of economic affairs became commodified and therefore culture and industry become fused. This theory is most often associated with structural constraints, with its philosophical roots in Marxism, it was perceived that mass culture was creating a false consciousness in the proletariat, and impeding the class struggle. However within this approach there is less emphasis placed on the economy than in traditional Marxism. This approach is concerned with macro issues focusing on society, and the commodification of culture. It is often criticised for taking a hypodermic needle model and a lack of acknowledgement of interaction between the media and consumers. Viewed through this approach, magazine launches would not be an iterative process, where the consumers and producers both influence the success of the magazine.

The second strand of media theory is situated within cultural studies, this alternative approach is taken by the political economists who are concerned with institutional analysis they preference an interest in the "broader macro issues of economic ownership and the overriding socio political environment" (Curran et al., 1984:83) This view inevitably centres around power and according to Golding and Murdock (1991), the connection between the economic organizations and the symbolic aspects of politics, society and cultural life. Scholars such as Hoggart (1957) and Williams (1958) showed how 'counter-culture' and sometimes popular culture could subvert and oppose the ideas and values of the ruling classes. Hall (1980) produced the most recognisable model within cultural studies for examining the media, which is useful to situate my work against. Although this model is thirty years old, and magazines

were not a particular focus of his study, it does provide a point of loose comparison as it has been used for other creative industries, most notably for studies of journalistic practice within television (Morley and Brunsdon 1999). Hall (1980) moved away from the Frankfurt School, criticised for its linear conception of the audience, to a more encompassing view which, similar to structure and agency, analytically separated two different societal aspects of 'encoding' and 'decoding' in order to understand the social relations between the two. Hall (1980) was of a theoretical purpose and suggested a model, where the concepts of 'encoding' and 'decoding' were examined and related to one another. The author's intention was to understand the ideologies and hegemonic influences on knowledge production and formation. The 'encoding' and 'decoding' model set out to generate knowledge for evaluation and most concerned what was wrong with the contemporaneous knowledge about journalistic practices and the production of ideology in the 1980s. Moreover, through his proposal, Hall (1980) indicated that this theory broke with the mass communication research most notable in America.

Hall (1980) conceptualized his model of communication, 'encoding' and decoding', as a form of semiotic analysis within a 'linguistic structuration', which he separated into two distinct aspects; encoding is the aspect where organisations yield a message, this aspect encompasses practices. This seems to imply Hall conceives that the message is yielded from a single dominant unified ideology, rather than from contested practices. The second aspect is where the message is 'decoded'. Hall allows the audience to be active through three repertoires. He described the theory as "a structure produced and sustained through the articulation of linked but distinctive moments- production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction" (Hall, 1980: 128). Although this presupposes a very structured 'dominant hegemonic' view of the encoding process, he also emphasises that "we must recognize that the discursive form of the message has a privileged position in the communication exchange (from the viewpoint of circulation), and that the moments of 'encoding' and 'decoding' though only 'relatively autonomous' in relation to the communicative process as a whole, are *determinate* moments" (p129). Thereby he stressed the importance of the active audience decoding the message.

Hall (1980) acknowledged that any discursive interchange of encode/decode has a context but suggested that ‘institutional and societal relations must pass under the discursive rules of language’ (p130). This explanation assumed a form of coding which was structurally embedded as meaning was interpreted and then re-evaluated. The codes were all understood, fixed and shared within the dominant ideology without allowing for contested cultural influences before being interpreted within one of the three frameworks. Hall’s model viewed everything within an ideological framework primarily because codes and encodes are ideologically embedded. In addition, because Hall is most concerned with meaning making, nothing is unmediated through the institutions that perform encoding. This reifies the institutions as they code in a unified context and it underplays the part of the agent. Hall (1980) was most concerned with the realization of the product and although he touched on the labour process it was epiphenomenal to the ideational emphasis that was centrally concerned with the message. Hall’s (1980) explanation of ‘encoding’ and ‘decoding’ put a lot of emphasis on unpacking the ‘moments’, which were the point of decoding the message, which was central to his interest. However, I would argue that the moment of encoding encompassed a far wider scope including structural, institutional practises and networks, which he suggested was framed through meanings and ideas.

In comparison, the advantages of Archer’s morphogenetic model, which is the model for this thesis, is that it allows the heavily compacted context more weight, than Hall provided in his conceptualisation of encoding, and by separating the structural and agential aspects it allows the interaction between the aspects to be viewed. In addition, morphogenesis attempts a more equally balanced view of structure and agency. Whilst Hall may agree that there is a dialectical relationship between structural aspects and agents, his theory was weighted towards analysing a restrained agents’ view, who have limited ability for insubordination within the ‘complex structure of dominance’ (p128), and his lens of enquiry is focused purely on the aspects of the message. Archer’s metaphor allows for a more complex analysis. Political economists vary their emphasis on the public sphere and technological influence, as the recent media content explosion questions the older notions of access to media production.

(Newbold et al 2002). Consequently, Curran and Gurevitch (2000) view the media as one that is constrained by structure and the unequal distribution of material and symbolic goods. They recognise media institutions as being concentrated in ownership by the few, due to the pressures from organisations including advertisers. This concentration of ownership reflects a concentration of power, which, they argue, produces a lack of diversity. The issue then becomes one of unequal access to the media. However cultural studies is interdisciplinary and eclectic, and draws on a wide variety of perspectives. “Cultural studies is a process, a kind of alchemy for producing useful knowledge” Johnson R ([1983] 2007:75). As a discipline it is more interested in the microanalysis than political economists. Dahlgren (1997) suggests that cultural studies reflect an everyday lived experience interested in people and social institutions in specific circumstances that produce culture. Hesmondhalgh (2002) suggests that it questions the hierarchical ways of understanding culture but aims to have a broad conception of culture.

Other authors like Strinati (1995) see it as the study of popular culture with a variety of perspectives suggesting its routes are in the humanities and its primary concern is with linguistics, semiotics and how meaning is created through social practices. For example, studies on consumption centre on negotiated meanings as well as exploitation. Hall (1982) was more, interested in cultural hegemony. He perceived that Gramsci’s notion of hegemony had demonstrated that the media is used to serve the notions of the ruling class, even though Hall (1980) highlighted that, through encoding and decoding, audiences have the potential to reinterpret texts and imbibe them with their own meaning. More recently cultural studies has been used to explore gender, emphasising the socially and culturally constructed character of gender, and the power of producers rather than consumers in compiling popular culture (Van Zoonen, 1991). However these approaches all emphasise the power of structure to condition agents, while the agents are perceived to resist conditioning. The emphasis is on the resistance to downward conflation and the message contained in magazines rather than an interest in launches and re-launches.

Work on magazines using the gender perspective, aims to look at magazine while examining

the gender identity, social roles and the lived experience of different groups of people. Like cultural studies this is a broad and interdisciplinary field, and therefore difficult to generalise. Within the bounds of this thesis the area of interest within gender studies that is relevant is quite small and most concerned with how the media represents different sections of society. Although gender studies covers a wide area from politics to literary studies, sociology, and history, the feminists are concerned with a general framework of inequality and how women's roles are socially and culturally constructed while men's studies are concerned with the construction and representation of masculinity.

As a discipline the area of gender studies has contributed the most in terms of quantity to studies on magazine publishing. However as is further explained in the literature review the writers using a gender framework have emphasised structure while downplaying the role of agents to interact in an iterative manner.

Another approach uses the circuits of culture (Du Gay et al 1997) where the metaphor (Fine 2002) is applied to study cultural artefacts. Based on Johnson's (1987:2007 p664) circuit in which he emphasised the cultural conditions of production. The diagrammatic scheme moved from cultural production to the creation of cultural texts, then how the cultural texts are read and socially produced as part of the lived culture. The process is recursive. The best known framework from Du Gay et al (1997) suggested viewing cultural texts or artefacts as they pass through five nodes: representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation in order to study them adequately. "Our 'circuits of culture' suggests that, in fact, meanings are produced at several different sites and circulated through several different processes and practices (the cultural circuit)" Du Gay et al., (1997: 10) emphasise. Thus, Du Gays' framework, like Halls' (1980) 'encoding and decoding' is concerned with meanings. Benwell (2005) takes this approach in a textual analysis of magazines. In addition the circuits of culture framework uses the metaphor of a circuit; however, there is no requirements to view one aspect before another in a cyclical manner. This leads to a problem when viewing the interaction and change, as it becomes difficult to establish which aspect influences which other parts of the framework the five nodes all interact with each other simultaneously:



essentially, the process is additive. This body of work on magazines therefore has shown downward conflation, where the emphasis is on the importance of meaning.

Similarly, two types of organizational sociologists who have examined publishing also execute downward conflation: organizational ecology (Haveman, 2004; Hannan and Freeman, 1977; Hannan, Polos and Carroll, 2004) and neo-institutionalists (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Haveman (2004) examined the institutionalization of the structural elements that surround the antebellum US magazine industry from 1741 to 1861 and was interested in how organisations emerge, grow and die over time. Those within the organizational ecology tradition use theories developed in the natural sciences, and statistical methods, to understand how natural selection theories in biology might apply to an organisational life cycle.

Organizational ecology uses a macro unit of analysis to analyze large populations and the change in industries over time. The emphasis on time is welcome and the results from this work show how the different type of firms enter industries at different times in the industry life-cycle; yet in addition to the criticisms from Negus concerning industry levels, organizational ecologists deny any room for agency within these studies where patterns are the key to explanation. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) are also interested in macro patterns of behaviour over time, and centre on isomorphism where structurally similar organisations conform to industry norms. This has revealed the structural and environmental pressures on organizations and, by extension, magazines to conform. However these approaches deny the agents efficacy and causal mechanisms are only produced through structure.

Recent work concerns the creative industries Hesmondhalgh (2002) moves away from the emphasis on audiences and interpretation of texts to a wider concern, which views the symbol creators and discusses their autonomy within the wider creative industry environment. As Negus and Pickering (2004) points out there is a move away from “creative artist to creative industries”. (2004: 51) This thesis aligns itself to this view and seeks to take a wider sociological approach through the application of the social theory of Archer’s (1995) morphogenetic cycle to view the interaction between the creative editorial employees and the ‘creative industry’ of magazine publishing.

To sum up broadly speaking cultural studies is concerned with the micro issues of audience reception and signification in cultural texts. The political economy is, in contrast, focussed on the broader macro issues of ownership and the socio-political environment (Curran et al, 1987). Similarly organisational ecology is interested in the macro issues surround the life cycles of industries.

Archer's morphogenesis (1995) conceptualises an explanatory methodology which counters conflation between structure and agency. By adopting the wide-ranging, meta-theory of structure and agency, Archer's theory potentially can analyse the micro-issues of audience reception or *what gets said*; the broader issues of producers, *who says it*; and the socio-political and economic environment, *the context within which it is said*; however, it is the interaction between these aspects, rather than the specific focus on one aspect, that becomes important. Critical realists like Archer (1995,1998) use analytical dualism to view the concepts of structure, culture and agency. This holds the concepts of 'structure' 'agency' and 'culture' as analytically separate, functioning in separate stages over different periods of time. Archer (1995) produces an emphasis on emergent properties and generative mechanisms avoiding reification and requiring the use of depth ontology. Therefore, to reiterate, this thesis interrogates Archer's theory of morphogenesis on a practical level, using the empirical example of magazine launches.

### **Approach**

Most PhDs present the literature review first in order to identify the gaps in the literature before embarking on finding a suitable theory for their research question. In this case however, the initial literature review was written and the research question was developed with the knowledge that structure and agency was of primary importance to the research area I wished to investigate. For this reason the theory chapter is situated before the literature chapter, as the literature was ultimately viewed through the lens of the theory.

In my literature review, I discovered certain genres of magazines are reasonably well studied from particular perspectives. The research questions previous studies concentrated on were in

accordance with different types of ontology, more commonly using single units of analysis focused on either the individual or the structures. Overwhelmingly, the previous literature has tended to concentrate on the issues from a gender perspective (Crewe, 2003; Nixon and Du Gay, 2002; Jackson and Brookes 1999; Jackson et al. 2001; Hermes, 1995; McRobbie, 1991, 1999, 1998, 2002; McCracken, 1982, 1993; Freidan 1963; Ferguson, 1983; Winship, 1987). This thesis uses critical realism, an approach that utilises more than one unit of analysis. The methods used within this study were congruent with the methods used by critical realists. Structural elements were viewed first, as critical realism proposes that events happen in a pre-existing structural context. The secondary data collected from the PPA, AA DTI and Nielsen data, was used to understand the demi-regularities that influence the structural emergent properties of magazine launches. Interviews were carried out in order to better understand the events and mechanisms at work. The interviews also highlighted the constraints and enablements of agents and the way that the structural context is reproduced by human activity.

However it became clear as the thesis progressed that the use of structure and agency was not sufficient given the cultural nature of the subject matter. Archer (1996) explicitly covers the morphogenetic cycle of culture and agency. This was included more latterly.

## **THE FORMAT OF THE THESIS**

### **Chapter one: Theory**

This chapter sets the framework for the thesis, and in particular the literature review for this reason this chapter needs to be read first. My interest concerns the interaction between the employees the companies and the market, leading to an interest in structure and agency debates. It concludes in a theory chapter comparing two theoretical perspectives; the theories of Giddens (1979,1984), and Archer (1995). The theory chapter finally identifies a theoretical framework of Archer (1995), which is used throughout the thesis.

### **Chapter two: Literature review**

This chapter is viewed through the lens of the theory. It was re-written three times: firstly, to give an over view of the subject; secondly, through the lens of critical realism and eventually

after another two years a third time which cemented my understanding more firmly. This process enabled a more sharply defined focus in order to categorise the studies that favour one or other aspect of social reality - structure and agency. There is little that is not concept laden, an issue that is discussed further (Sayer 1992). Therefore starting a thesis from a particular perspective was an advantage, and enabled me to focus more quickly.

### Chapter three: Methodology

This chapter sets out to establish how the methods used in this thesis are congruent with my reading of critical realism. It sets out how they tie in with links to established knowledge, as there is no landmark study or well quoted cohesive body of empirical work that utilises critical realist methods (Hedstrom and Ylikoski 2010). For this reason this chapter restates the theoretical implications of using critical realism, and the methodological requirements are reiterated followed by the rationale for my particular case. The chapter then goes on to discuss, in particular, the limitations encountered while using the methods relevant to this particular theoretical framework.

### Chapter four: The importance of Structure

Archer suggests that material structures have to exist before agents can interact and practise within them (1995). This chapter sets the scene and context from which launches are produced. Structure is the context that constrains or enables all magazine launches. Hence publishing companies are not just influenced by other companies but also by their economic position in relation to the market norm required for launches at that current moment in time. Magazines appear to have a natural lifecycle, suggesting that launches are needed to rejuvenate the magazine market. In addition, this chapter presents the results from a survival analysis of magazines from 1974-2008.

### Chapter five: Empirical findings

In this chapter the data has been transcribed within the categories or constructs that informed the questionnaire design of critical realism or Archer's morphogenetic cycle. It leaves all aspects of the interviews intact but categorizes them into themes from the interviewees'

responses. This was in order to try to provide a corrective to counter the possible charge that the theory is being fitted to the data.

#### Chapter six: Findings through the theory

The purpose of this chapter is to re-introduce and examine examples of the interviews and the theory using structure, agency and culture to view the interaction between the strata, and consider the causal mechanism influencing the events, from the perspective of Archer's morphogenetic cycle. It emphasises the importance of culture within an explanation of magazine launches.

#### Chapter seven: Conclusion

This chapter applies Archer's (1995) the model in the domain specific environment of magazines; it argues that in order to better explain the magazine launch process, further theorisation is necessary, offering a modification to Archer's morphogenetic cycle as a solution. This chapter also discusses the importance of the interaction between structure, agency, and culture and demonstrates that the launch of a magazine is more than the sum of one person. It highlights that explanations, which focus on only one of the aspects of structure, culture or agency, only offer a partial view. However, these aspects are theoretically difficult to separate.

This chapter also rounds up the findings from the empirical work and interviews, and establishes that there is a drive to create and sustain the myth of star producers, and explains some of the reasons behind this.

#### Summary

The purpose of this thesis is to gain a greater understanding of the mechanisms behind magazine launches, while interrogating Archer's theory of morphogenesis on a practical level. The magazine industry in the UK is a large industry and magazine launches are an important process within the industry. The power and relative autonomy of media workers is woven into the fabric of a magazine's launch.

The thesis draws on an eclectic literature covering four main disciplines. Most previous research concentrates on two genres of magazines – either women's or more latterly men's

(McRobbie 1999). There has been a preoccupation with the influence of magazines on their readers, and there is little understanding of the practices of magazines and the people who work within them. This thesis takes a sociological approach since Archer, who provides the theoretical basis, is one of Britain's foremost social theorists (King 2010) As my theoretical interrogation forms the base on which the research will be built, the next chapter sets out the theory that will be used throughout the thesis.

# Chapter One

## **Theoretical discussion**

This chapter establishes the theoretical thread that runs throughout the thesis.

My research posed the question, ‘what makes a difference to magazine launches - the environment or the individuals that work on the launches? This made choosing a theoretical model that centred on structure and agency a logical choice. Therefore the framework for the thesis is structure and agency.

In this chapter, the two principal sociological approaches discussed are structuration and critical realism. The chapter is divided into four sections: firstly, Giddens’s<sup>1</sup> structuration theory is set out, followed by Archer’s morphogenesis which is applied in both structure and agency and also culture and agency. This section is followed by a discussion surrounding the two theorists. Having established that Archer is the preferred theorist, an example of how Archer might be applied in practice follows.

Not surprisingly, a meta-theory like structure and agency has many variations, and a definition would preference a particular theorist. Although there were a number of theorists that would have been suitable for this particular project, Giddens was identified as being perhaps the most well known theorist on the subject while Archer, a critic of Giddens, was the most well known critical realist theorising structure and agency. Therefore in this section, the meta theory is made explicit, with reference to the definitions made by Archer and Giddens within a discussion that compares Archer’s (1982,1995) morphogenesis to Giddens’s (1979,1984) structuration theory in order to make explicit the rationale for choosing Archer rather than other theorists. Although Giddens and Archer view structure and agency as two separate stratum they both view social strata as having influential properties, represented in the form of agents who have intentionality and the capacity for choice. In addition, agents

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<sup>1</sup> I have used the possessive form of the apostrophe Giddens’s’ as in Keats’s poems as discussed by Truss (2009)

have the capacity to effect change and/or evolution and the ability to reflect. However these theorists have marked ontological differences, which I propose to make clear in order to support the rationale for choosing one theoretical perspective over another. Central to this theoretical dispute are the definitions of structure and agency and the concepts of dualism and duality; which are elaborated upon further in this chapter. These issues are important to this study in terms of methodology. I start with Giddens's solution to the problem of structure and agency. Giddens (1979) predates Archer (1982), who disputed his structuration theory (See Archer 1982).

### **GIDDENS THEORY OF STRUCTURATION**

Giddens (1976,1979,1984) developed possibly the most well known variant of structure and agency theory. Through social practice he treats both structure and agency equally, although action and meaning are preferred. Structure, defined as rules and resources, intrinsically contains culture and is both the medium and the outcome of social interaction. Structural properties are defined as both rules and resources and are made active by the repetitive action of agents, according to their understanding of a given situation. Structuration, which is comprised of the mutual interdependence of both structure and agency, is a condition that allows for the continuous transformation or reproduction of structure. In other words all human action is predetermined by the context and knowledge of the actor.

*To study the structuration of a social system is to study the ways in which that system, via the application of generative rules and resources, and in the context of unintended outcomes, is produced and reproduced in interaction (Giddens, 1979:66)*

According to Hay (1995) Giddens's theory was motivated by his frustration with the split between structuralist (and functionalist) and intentionalist (individualist) accounts of social theories. He tried to overcome this dualism through his duality of structure.

Giddens perceives structure as a virtual property, as it can only be made real through the action of agents; this determines that the interaction between structure and agency takes place over the same period of time. Giddens views Structure as influential as it enables and



constrains the actions of agents. “‘Social structure’ thus tends to include two elements, not clearly distinguished from one another; *the patterning of interaction*, as implying relations between actors or groups; and the *continuity of interaction* in time.” (1979:62)

Giddens defined the single aspect of structure as a duality (Outhwaite, 1990 sees this as a narrow definition). He subdivides these again as he defines rules as norms and social conventions, whereas resources are subdivided into two sections - allocated resources and non-material resources. However, Giddens (1979) points out that these are interconnected and neither of these can be studied in isolation. Many criticisms of Giddens centre on his definition of duality. Giddens uses the metaphor of duality as being two sides of the same coin; this precludes the ability to analyse both sides of the coin at the same time. One facet of the coin is held constant while viewing the other. Giddens is attributed with dividing structure and agency as a duality in a unique way; he has been scrutinized for making structure a duality as opposed to working with a dualism of structure and agency, (Hay 1995; Outhwaite 1990).

Giddens’s actors are entirely conscious of their intentions; they ‘perform a reflexive monitoring’ using ‘mutual knowledge’ in social encounters. In essence, society is produced through the praxis of agents. Giddens assigns hierarchical roles to agents as they produce and reproduce society. The entities of knowledge, which make one agent more knowledgeable than another are social rules, which are relative to their structural surroundings, however this is only active when the agents instantiate the structure. He consigns this role to a few, perceiving that not all actors are the same; their knowledge-ability influences their function within the social process.

In summary, Giddens posits that the action of agents creates and reproduces society; social structure is constituted by both rules and resources and is the medium and the actual outcome of social interaction.

### **ARCHER’S THEORY OF MORPHOGENESIS**

Archer’s (1995,1996, 2003) critical realist perspective is the preferred theoretical framework.

Structure and agency for Archer refers to the emergent properties of these strata, although she defines these categories as relative and not fixed while Sibeon points out this is problematic, it is more flexible than a fixed categorisation or the addition of an extra layer – meso. (Sibeon, 2004). To understand the choice of this perspective it is necessary to consider some of the primary characteristics of critical realism.

Firstly, critical realism uses a depth ontology, which assumes that layers of social structure exist and effect interaction, although agents are not always aware of the causal affects taking place. Working within the social structure are agents who make choices, these choices are then enabled or constrained by the social structures. This produces the need to be able to investigate incidences, events and generative mechanisms that happen beyond the ability to observe them. For example an accident may be caused by a combination of circumstances not one single explanation but an agent may attribute a ‘common attribution element’ to someone else’s behaviour assuming it was premeditated or planned. Critical realists term the combination of elements that an agents may or may not be aware of as deep structures or generative mechanisms, (a stratified ontology,) Archer terms them as structural emergent properties (SEP).

Secondly, following Bhaskar (1975) the depth ontology reflects three levels for a critical realist framework:

*the real*, which constitutes several ‘ingredients’ that may be available and can be mixed together,

*the event*, when certain ‘ingredients’ cause an event,

*empirical*, when events are viewed.

Thirdly, it tackles issues of conflation where one aspect of the social strata is conflated with another, the rules and resources, which constitute elements of structure, are only seen through the action of agents, therefore structure and agency cannot be viewed separately, this produces an inability to decipher the action that takes place. Archer (1995) is critical of other perspectives suggesting that they conflate the different elements of society into one another. She identifies three types of conflation. Downward conflation is when agency is regarded as

epiphenomena to structure. This is quintessentially a reductionist point of view, where agents have little ability to act beyond the structure. Essentially, they are structurally constrained. For example in the classical Marxist view agents are perceived to act on mass, producing economic reductionism. Upward conflation is when structure is rendered impotent, viewed as a combination of an individual's activity it does not allow structure the influence to enable or constrain. In this scenario agents have total free will to act without external influence or restriction. Finally she constructs central conflation as the merging of structure and agents together, as in Giddens (1979). This may be represented in a study that just looked at cultural practices or institutional behaviour, as it would be difficult to identify what was the action of the agent and what was the structural influence. Essentially, critical realism enables the interplay between structure and agency to be examined, without bracketing off one social stratum.

Finally, Archer's (1986) particular approach foregrounds culture, that became important in this study of magazine.

Archer (1995) assumes a reality independent of our knowledge of it. Influenced by Bhaskar (1979) and the natural sciences, she aims to produce a framework that in practice has the ability to acquire, as close as possible, a scientific knowledge of reality. Bhaskar pointed out that experiments and explanations within science are carried out within a controlled environment where influences can be identified and isolated. Both Bhaskar and Archer contend that social reality cannot be studied exclusively by objective study, as social life is not a closed system, it cannot be closed off or aspects isolated for the purpose of study. For Archer, neither a collective nor an individual can change society to his or her own requirements. Society changes constantly over time, with the competing demands of many, coupled with agent's fallibility and unintended consequences, it results in change that conforms to no single person or group's ideal.

Archer (1982) and Outhwaite (1990) categorize Giddens as an elisionist or central conflationist. She views the ability to use a form of non-conflationary theorising as crucial in order to understand the interaction and relationship between different elements of society. For

Archer, analytical dualism is non-conflationary, as each facet is separate for analysis it enables the impacts of each facet to be viewed which as seen separately emphasizes the linkages that joins the two strata. In addition, this allows for elaboration of structure and agency over different periods of time. Since Archer separates structure and agency her meta-theory allows for interaction between the two strata to be studied, neither of which becomes subdivided, a process she considers vital for practical analysis.

Archer (1995), like Bhaskar (1979) believes structures can be theoretically described prior to an action or analysis.

#### Archer's model

Archer produced a model based on Bhaskar's conceptualization of critical realism; it is Archer (1995) morphogenetic model that will be used throughout the thesis. The morphogenetic cycle is based on two assumed factors.

*(T1) a social structure that lays out the conditions of enablement or constraint, this influences the action of agents.*

*(T2 –T3) The action of agents takes place within these conditions.*

*(T4) the interaction causes some form of reproduction or transformation of the structure-structural elaboration.*

1. The 'morpho' element is an acknowledgement that society has no pre-set form or general preferred state: the 'genetic' part is recognition that society is created and formed by agents, which originates from the intended and unintended consequences of their activities.
2. The morphogenetic cycle functions over time, the cycle is based on two proposals-
  - A structure always pre-dates an action (Whether that is language, rules, whatever is pre-given).
  - The action (which is carried out by agents) results in a structural elaboration that post dates those actions (Archer, 1995).

## Structural conditioning

T1

## Social Interaction

T2

T3

## Structural elaboration

T4

Figure 1. The morphogenetic sequence Archer 1995:76

Archer (1995) views structure as a social reality, a single entity that has structural emergent properties. A structure only has the ability to condition (rather than determine) the action of agents. Archer views a structural explanation as a way in which previous influential populations have defined a structure. Structures are totally dependent and created through the activity of agents; they only exist as emergent properties created by past agents. *'Social structure is the resultant that nobody ever wants in exactly its current form, which is precisely what fosters continuing morphogenesis'* (Archer, 2000:469). In essence, all agents' start from within a pre-existing structure, this position then enables or constrains any possible action. A structures previous state never satisfies the current agents who take action in order to change it. Archer pointed out to Bhaskar that one of the main differences between Giddens's structuration theory and Bhaskar's critical realism was the different way the theories treated time. Like Bhaskar, temporality is an important aspect of Archer's theory as the creation and reproduction of structure may happen in a different time frame instigated by different agents. Archer views time as a variable (Archer, 1996) and this explains the tension between being conditioned to do things in one way but being able to visualize doing them another way. Critical realism argues that change or even stasis is due to emergence, when two or more aspects combine to produce a new property that is irreducible to the original parts. Archer perceives that structures have emergent properties (SEPs), which have a dependence on material resources. These emergent properties of structure produce causal powers, which characterize the structure, regardless of whether these powers are activated or exercised. That is to say causal powers are not necessarily a linear succession of connections between observable events, rather a combination of a certain context or action may trigger causal powers. Causal powers are present and fixed they are not changeable, however if the intrinsic

properties of the object may alter, therefore changing the causal powers.

However, unlike positivists, Archer emphasizes that causal laws are tendencies not regularities. Whilst structural emergent properties are always present, they only operate when triggered; and the manner in which they are triggered depends on the context within which they are operating. Different structural emergent properties will operate at different times and in different contexts, some countering the activity of others, while certain structural emergent properties may reinforce or magnify the action of other structural emergent properties.

An explanation can be produced by identifying the causal mechanisms, analyzing how they work, under what conditions and where they can be activated. The results are studied and retrodution is applied in order to advance the understanding that is gained from empirical data or the observation of events. The aim of retrodution is to conceptualise from the information collected, and elaborate on the empirical or observational findings, finally adding the causal mechanisms or the properties that must exist in order to make an event happen. Nevertheless, that is not to predict an event, as casual mechanisms may not always be trigged within an open system.

An analogy for critical realism using Bhaskar (1978:56) domains of reality the *real*, the *actual*, and the *empirical* might be a recipe, where the cook throws together a dish of ingredients to their own design; there are numerous ingredients that could possibly be added, the ingredients are ‘*real*’ possibilities and represent the structural emergent properties.

However when the cook adds certain ingredients the dish becomes ‘*actual*’ as a particular taste is triggered. The context, which is the amount of heat applied and time of cooking will vary the outcome, as the taste of some ingredients are enhanced or destroyed. Only if it is measured can it become ‘*empirical*’. In order to recreate that exact dish again a closed system would have to be induced with the exact ingredients measured and the cooking time and temperature regulated and controlled. The natural reproduction of a closed system is not usually possible in social life. However, critical realism aims to recreate the situation as faithfully as possible by using a depth ontology.

### **Archer's later work, The internal conversations**

Archer's (2003) later work takes aspects of structure and agency and studies particular aspects of these strata, enlarging and categorising them further. The following section gives a brief overview of this work in order to acknowledge some more nuanced aspects of her theory, although these areas were not particularly influential in this study.

Archer has been laterally concerned with how structures influence the behaviour of agents, she emphasizes that although structures and culture condition the way in which agents behave, it is the 'ultimate concerns' of agents that has most effect on the way agents behave. She suggests this is a missing link between structure and agency. For example certain individuals from particular categories within society would be conditioned to adjust their concerns to be less ambitious.

Archer (2003) views this as so important that she differentiates agency, analytically categorizing agents into groups with different ultimate concerns. Agents may be part of more than one group. She categorizes agents into groups: primary agents, social agents, actors, and corporate agents.

Primary agents relate to the world in one way or another through their family background and material classification system. Social agents are a person's sense of self, an emergent personality, and the social expectations imposed on that person. Social actors choose to some degree the roles they play; the chosen role offers possibilities, an opportunity to calculate the risks or costs, unlike positions, which are enforced. Archer elaborates on this point showing that roles may be at odds with a person's identity. Archer (2003) defines corporate agents as having two properties: articulation and organization. Corporate agents can be collectives of primary agents that group together to form a lobby. Corporate agents have more influence on structure.

Archer believes there is a separation of the personal and social identity, that is to say that an agent has personality, which is more than socialised behaviour, the private consciousness or inner voice is not the same as the public self, this allows for reflexivity (See Archer 2003). She suggests that reflexivity inevitably stops the private from collapsing or conflating into the

self, and reflexivity enables a social conscience that does not threaten personal integrity. She states that the bridge between the personal and the social identity is agents. The later work of Archer is much more concerned to re-centre agents perhaps as a reaction to her critics like Zeuner (1999) who consider she is purely a structuralist.

### **Cultural conditioning, Socio-Cultural interaction and Cultural Elaboration**

One useful point about Archer (1996) is that she explicitly produced an analytical framework using morphogenesis that she applied to culture and agency. She perceived that culture had been previously theorized as the poor relation to structure, although it is perhaps more about extremes as she comments that it is either viewed as an 'epiphenomenon...providing an ideational representation of structure' or a 'prime mover...capable of orchestrating an entire social structure' (1996:1). Archer represented this framework as a cyclical process where cultural conditioning → Cultural interaction → Cultural elaboration. Each new cycle constituted another cycle of cultural change. She considered culture significant as it constrains and enables agent's thoughts and beliefs and although culture has the potential to be remade and changed by people over time, agents cannot escape the culture that shapes them.

Archer's (1996) model can handle both the ideational and material aspects of culture. Archer defines culture in two parts: first, the cultural system, which consists of the components of culture and defined below; and second, socio-cultural integration, which is the relationship between cultural agents. This allows for cultural change to be activated from within a system rather than purely imposed from the top down (as viewed from a structuralist perspective). Archer proposes a two-way interaction where a cultural system is changed by the action of cultural agents. She notes that socio-cultural integration requires some shared common aspect, although this can exist alongside other dissimilar systems.

Archer's (1996) cultural systems comprise of a number of components, situated within a body of 'existing intelligibilia'; a system, like for example language, consists of 'all things capable of being grasped, deciphered, understood or known to someone'. This system produces properties that cannot be attributed to the judgment of actors. Cultural systems can be defined



as doctrines, theories and beliefs, which is essentially an ideational environment, but this environment can only be found within a material environment that is suited to a particular ideation. So the Church of England has doctrines and beliefs which are carried out within the bounds and doctrines of that religion, it is not transferable to a mosque or synagogue which are also similar material environments, but with different beliefs and doctrines.

For Archer (1996) cultural conditioning is systematic as opposed to sporadic, A socio-cultural level (cultural structural situation) is either conditioned or not, it cannot happen in part, although it may occur over a different timeframe, than structural elaboration, it cannot be unconditioned, unlike material conditioning which Archer views as being able to change. For example the existence of the term 'nouveau riche' illustrates that although the material environment has changed for one agent the cultural conditioning may happen for future generations of that agent, but not necessarily for the original agent.

Structural conditioning always works through agents, the conditioning influence of the structures (SEPS) and (CEPS) effects the conception of agents' projects. On the socio-cultural level, Archer's agents are surrounded by a cultural structural situation, which is reconstituted for different generations of agents, the interaction that makes this happen could be both intended and unintended. Archer perceives that agents are born into a culture, which is mainly inherited and predetermined. Agents have social cultural powers, which are mediated by other people who may choose to ignore, or even evade cultural tendencies. Archer (1996) perceives socio-cultural emergent properties as something fluid that can be changed over time, with ideational shifts.

An agent's reflexivity maps onto culture in different ways, as an unknowing subject is more susceptible to cultural conditioning than a knowing subject who understands the culture.

Archer views the constraints and enablement's of any given situation are not the same as an ability to conceptualize and envision. It is possible that an agent's projects could outstrip the social possibilities of their time. She uses the example that most of us share basic life projects, although an individual's concerns may vary considerably. For example a woman with no children would be likely to be concerned with the pay and conditions of employment whereas

a woman with children may be most concerned about the hours and childcare and attach a lower priority to the pay.

The above discussion has given an overview of Archer's model, which in summary categorizes three types of emergent properties:

SEP - structural emergent properties, these are material structures.

CEP - cultural emergent properties, these are belief systems that are not reducible to individual beliefs - CEPs as emergent properties are comprised of; cultural systems (CS), the beliefs within these are socio-cultural interaction (SC) and finally;

PEP - people's emergent properties, which is agency.<sup>2</sup>

### **Discussion of Archer's and Giddens's theories**

In summary both Giddens's structuration and Archer's morphogenetic approach suggest that structure pre-exists, either for Giddens in the minds of agents or for Archer as a material structure, and that action by agents which is intended or unintended has causal influences upon structures or social systems.

However, Giddens perceives structure as non-material, as structural properties only become operable when they are instantiated by an agent. Giddens redefined structure as rules and resources, which by implication makes structure a duality. Rules are defined as norms and social conventions, but resources are also subdivided into resources that are allocated and non-material resources.

Giddens is criticised for making structure something that social scientists would not conventionally recognize (Layder, 1994; Hay, 1995). In fact (Hay, 1995) goes on to claim that dualism, in fact, never existed between the concepts that Giddens deploys. In order to incorporate social groups like families, action groups, and organizations Giddens introduces systems (Sibeon, 2004). Systems are reproduced relations between actors or collectives, organised as regular social practices (Giddens, 1979).

Giddens is criticised for only being able to examine social practices as the result of structure

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<sup>2</sup> For fuller discussion on PEPs, CEPs and SEPs see Cruickshank (2003; p111).

and agency. Social practice may be studied, or one aspect of social reality may be bracketed off in order to view the other. Each of these methods are carried out within discrete segments of time. This, coupled with Giddens method of subdividing structure, makes it difficult to distinguish between the two elements of social structure, and makes interaction and interplay impossible to disentangle and analyse.

Furthermore, Giddens views structure and agency as fixed terms of reference, whether micro or macro elements make up the strata, they are predetermined and do not change according to environmental or temporal changes. Thus a structure is always a structure. A magazine, for example *Cosmopolitan*, is a structure to its employees, however it remains a structure even within a group of other magazines, or magazine companies. If the people in these magazines form an interest group and lobby government, for changes in the organization of VAT, the magazines still remain a set of rules and resources or a structure.

A difficulty with using Giddens empirically is that the duality becomes a confining lens through which to take a view, particularly, where Giddens conception of the structural attributes are found in both the subject (actor) and the object. The strata are entwined, as they interact but have to be disentangled and separated in order to study them. By implication this means that when Giddens examines the social system, he has to bracket off the dimension of agency, and when social interactions are viewed then the institutions are bracketed off. Thrift (1985) defines structuration as all micro-situations and world-empires with nothing in between. The use of duality hinders the ability to understand the interaction between structure and agency. Layder (1997) argues: *'Thus instead of both incorporating both agency and structure, Giddens's conception of the duality of structure dissolves them into each other while the analytic focus is trained on social practices. This is the worst of both worlds since the independent properties of both action and structure are lost to analysis and as a result, the exact linkages between the two cannot be traced over time'* (Layder, 1997: 247).

On the one hand, the rules and resources are transformative (see Bhaskar, 1978) the actors have considerable autonomy and enjoy a high degree of freedom, without being heavily constrained; on the other a picture of social life where actors unconsciously reproduce the

rules and resources, which results in the very steady reproduction of social systems. Thus, for Giddens there is no ability for emergence in a social context, social structures that have emerged as a consequence of human agency for example an editorial team who produces their own cult language, or mode of behaviour (or ideology), do not have properties of their own. Besides for Giddens temporal analysis is a series of comparative snapshots, as each moment in time is instantiated by agents, and as this is only done through the agent: it gives a view of practices at the time, therefore structure only exists in the present not the past, which would have implications for large-scale longitudinal studies. Agents cannot be analyzed as a phenomenon capable of possessing power or generative mechanisms, as Giddens conflated this aspect within the agent.

Giddens assigns a knowledge-ability to agents, which is relative to their structural surroundings. Knowledge only becomes active when the agents instantiate the structure but it becomes hard to scrutinize the activity as the two are intertwined making it difficult to view which part is the structure and which part is the agent. This is easier to view within a dualism rather than a duality as agents are all structurally interrelated, and difficult to separate from structure.

For example, the role of an editor on a woman's magazine compared with the same role of the editor in another company on a similar woman's magazine may be entirely different, depending on the rules and given resources asserted by the company and surrounding editorial team over time, even though the surrounding overall structure of the magazines market and social environment are comparable.

Structuration by positing a duality between structure and agency fails to deal with the issue of when circumstances favour determinism and when circumstances favour voluntarism (Archer, 1990). Archer argues that the problem of not being able to disentangle voluntarism and determinism is the result of the duality of structure and agency because the two sides of the duality of structure embody them respectively. They are simply clamped together in a conceptual vice (Archer, 1990: 78).

For this thesis, duality becomes a less attractive proposition. Structuration theory without the

ability to view the interaction between structure and agency is not the most useful theory with which to view the interplay between magazines and the cultural producers. Clearly separating structure and agency enables interaction to be viewed. Cultural producers have to have knowledge of their structures, or the myth of that knowledge, in order to justify their position; thereby culture becomes an emergent property of a structure, which indicates that an inclusion of cultural morphogenesis is necessary even though Archer's models are not best suited to be used in conjunction with one another due to the dual use of agency within culture and again within structure (see the conclusion chapter). Within Giddens's framework it is not possible to view culture as separate as it is intertwined with the knowledgeable agent, which is intertwined with structure as previously discussed. Moreover, as Archer, (1990) pointed out the implications of the duality are that it is impossible to think of some structural properties as more resilient or resistant to change than others which has the same implication for culture. So for example it may be relatively easy to change the tax system but the relational change in patterns of behaviour relating to this would take longer and would not necessarily happen at once.

However, Archer's theory does present an empirical problem as using structure and agency alone will not provide a useful explanation for the cultural aspects of magazines, but if all three divisions are used together then there are issues over the dual use of agency interaction. The CEP has been constructed with central conflation as the cultural interaction (SC) or the agential aspect of culture merges into the cultural system (CS), the structural aspect of culture. However, if culture was subdivided for ease of analysis, using the same metaphor for the emergent properties as structure and agency (SEPs and PEPs), then there would be two elements of agential interaction. This would be people's emergent properties (PEP's) and socio-cultural interaction (SC), which is the relationship between cultural agents. With this method, using all the aspects of social life, the theoretical construction of the two elements of agency PEP's and SC would make it impossible to untangle exactly what interaction or influence was due to what type of agency.

## **IN SUMMARY**

To sum up in this study critical realism provides a better framework because Archer (1995) produces an explanatory methodology to counter any form of conflation between structure and agency. Critical realists like Archer (1995,1998) view the concepts of structure, culture and agency as an analytical dualism. This is possible because ‘structure’ and ‘agency’ function in separate stages over different periods of time, which makes it less problematic to view interaction. Archer (1995) produces an emphasis on emergent properties and generative mechanisms avoiding reification and requiring the use of depth ontology.

Archer is interested in how structure interacts with agency, which in turn then reshapes structure in a cyclical fashion. Archer highlights agents and promotes structure so that neither one has a precedence. Morphogenesis is about changing form, a cause and effect, which is never static. Unlike other theorists, Archer views structure and agency as relative and not fixed, she views macro and micro as unnecessary and as different versions of the same debate - thereby she removes the need for meso (Sibeon, 2004). Archer highlights the importance of culture equating its significance to structure.

The ability to view the interaction is key to this thesis and the two relative forms of social interaction between the cultural producers and the magazine is vital to this thesis.

To this point, the main comparison has been between structure and agency in order to be able to compare Giddens and Archer on similar grounds. However Archer departs from Giddens in her treatment of culture. This makes a difference because Archer perceives that material structural situations and ideation work by shaping the environment of people. These situations Archer perceives are indicative of the generative powers (SEPS and CEPS), as SEPS condition the ideational response (CEPS) of a person; people have different responses and different reason for acting in a particular way, which is attributed by Archer to be ‘ultimate concerns’. In essence the ideational element or (CEPS) guide agents when they act and react to structure. Archer claims that culture and structure should be viewed as different entities for two reasons, firstly that they are substantively different, (material and the ideational) and secondly although they are iterative, as independent entities they may not be in

synchronization and therefore have to be analyzed separately. However an awareness of the possibility of central conflation when using structure, agency and culture together in a morphogenetic cycle needs to be instigated.

#### Applying Archer's theory in practice

The following section takes an empirical example and uses it to demonstrate how Archer's morphogenesis will be used on this thesis. Using Archer's morphogenetic framework, the study will look at a particular group of social structures, which are most influential to the magazine environment and evaluate their ability to enable and constrain. Starting with the structural strata, which may consist of for example; other business organizations, which create a surrounding market; the cultural environment that the particular magazines are situated within; and very broadly the economic climate that the magazines are working with in. It is through these structures that agents or cultural producers, by their actions, intended or otherwise transform and reproduce the structures over time. These social and cultural structures enable and constrain the agents in particular ways to fulfil their interests, however as agents are all acting at the same time and their causal powers may not cohere, their ultimate concerns will differ, this activity will cause unpredictable results which would be expected within an open system.

The best way to explain this is through an empirical example taken from Crewe (2003). Crewe has written authoritatively on magazines using Wittgenstein as a theoretical framework, this example uses his data not his framework. The next example is intersected with the time frame that Archer uses to demonstrate how the morphogenetic cycle works. In order to situate the example an understanding of the sector is important (T1 the structural condition that pre-exists). Woman's magazines dominated the magazine market, with the best selling magazine *Cosmopolitan* selling around 500,000 copies per issue. The industry was always looking for new sectors and had been investigating way to capture the men's market. The men's markets had traditionally consisted of special interest titles relating to hobbies, or business satire and politics. This was challenged in the 1980s by the introduction of style

magazines, though these were loosely based around music, which is essentially a specialist interest. The publishers departed from the established format developing a new or perhaps revived sector perceived as a desirable market by publishers. Although it was well known that men would read women's magazines, for example *Nova* was purported to have a monthly male readership of over 40% (not purchasers), no publisher had successfully been able to identify and launch into this sector. Crewe (2003) succinctly points out that there was a lot of longitudinal research on attitudes and lifestyles available previous to the launch of *Loaded*, as this was the preferred method of the time for establishing new launches. However, publishers did not use it as the basis or format for the *Loaded* launch (T2 –T3 the action taken by agents). There were established marketing and advertising categories such as the 'new lad' or 'millennium man' but these were not overtly made as the basis on which to develop a new men's magazine sector (T4 a new sector is created). Within the industry, James Brown and Tim Southwell are mythically attributed with the creation of *Loaded*, it is a tale supported by Tim Southwell's book (1998). However, consider the structural and cultural implications surrounding the launch of *Loaded*, all the big publishing houses were carrying out or had carried out in-house research, viability studies for market development within the men's sector, and the potential of the sector was widely acknowledged, just not the commercially viable format. The desirability was acknowledged, and although *GQ* had made openings in the market, it was not the big market leader that was hoped for by the industry pundits, the rationale for this was given as being due to the upmarket target audience. The economic downturn of 1990-2 had ended by 1994 and there was a slight up turn in consumer spending, when *Loaded* was launched.

By 1994, there was a specific set of structural economic circumstances, which supported a stream of advertising revenue (T1). Similarly the agents want to change the status quo. Advertisers were keen to find a niche market with which to approach young men. Clearly there was a market for advertising. Indeed, publishers were keen to develop the market but



had reservations about whether the socio-economic target group of C/D's<sup>3</sup> could support a title because culturally this target group had not purchased magazines. Titles existing in the market for men were aimed at a more up market readership of A/B1s but they were struggling to make an impact and gain sufficient readers<sup>4</sup>.

IPC publishers watched the mistakes that others had made and wanted to find a strong editorial voice before launching: not as cliquey as the style press, with its London centric bias and yet not as up market as *Esquire* and *GQ*, however but with a broad enough appeal to gain big sales. The magazine industry culturally reliant on myths and rumours was keen to pickup on the rhetoric of a recovery for the economy, and ultimately their profits. Luckily for Brown and Southwell the time was considered right and the project was launched, and not kept on ice. These structural events would have played a part in the launch of *Loaded*. Publishers were actively looking for a way to 'unlock' the potential of what would become the men's magazine market. In other words there was considerable 'enablement' for this launch.

Therefore, it would be simplistic to attribute all of *Loaded*'s phenomenal success to the ideas of two of its editors and ancillary cultural producers.

This scenario is interpreted: as the structural constraints and enablement's (T2-T3) of *Loaded* magazine were very specific in order that James Brown and Tim Southwell could produce a magazine '...all about the best moments you ever had' (Southwell, 1998:2) enabling a lifestyle and cultural prestige not afforded to them in previous jobs. Without the generative mechanisms of gender, class, and arguably education<sup>5</sup> Brown and Southwell would not have been employed in this editorial role. In turn the structural and cultural emergent processes enabled rather than hindered their ultimate concern of having 'the best fucking time of your life' (Southwell, 1998: 2). The actions (emergent properties) of those who produced *Loaded* then influenced the structure making it possible to change the magazine publishing environment and produce a new sector (T4). The causal effect within this scenario is the

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<sup>3</sup> In the jargon of the well-known socio-economic category C/D's are skilled to semi-skilled workers

<sup>4</sup> However this was not the readership that *Loaded* ended up recruiting, it had ABC1s putting it more on a par with Yachting world.

<sup>5</sup> Brown did not go onto university, but was reputed to be intelligent and well read

cultural emergent properties of agents, an understanding of the structures and ideologies that made these particular agents more knowledgeable of their surrounding structures than others. Creative projects are not conceived of as independent of their cultural context, which has relevance for a study on magazines.

That is not to underplay the role these individual agents played in the publications launch. However, it would be an empirical fallacy to suggest that all agents could have achieved the same effect; yet, within similar conditions other similar agents may have achieved comparable results. The advertising industry and publishers had been trying to breaking into the new market for almost two decades (SEP). The timing of a launch was hugely influential, as to its success as this represents the existing structure but ultimately it is the interaction between particular agents (PEP), their cultural knowledge (CEP) and their structural surroundings that make a launch possible.

### **Conclusion**

Both Archer and Giddens provide a framework through which it is possible to view the launches and life chances of magazines. Magazines exist in order to inform, entertain and provide their readership with information that is culturally significant, not just reinforcing pre-established views but producing a 'zeitgeist' - the next big thing, this lure of infotainment is so tantalizing and compelling, it convinces readers to come back for more each issue. However there are three reasons why Giddens's theory of structuration is not the most appropriate theory. Firstly, Giddens's theory precluded the ability to view interaction between structure and agency thus the mutual dependence between the strata is difficult to unravel; secondly, the theory is restrictive when viewing culture, as culture is inherently part of structure. The knowledgeability and cultural influences of actors is represented as social practices and inherent within the structure, although one is bracketed off, it is hard to decipher where one starts and another ends. Finally the temporal aspect of Giddens's theory is also problematic, as it views time in discrete chunks, thereby change is instantaneous, as nothing pre-exists, external to an agent.

By contrast, the main reasons for using Archer are: the straightforward categorization of agency and structure, the depth ontology, the incorporation of time and the inclusion of culture in her morphogenetic cycle.

The straightforward categorisation of agency and structure is helpful when viewing interaction, as there are clear distinctions between the two categories.

Using Archer's depth ontology may add a more complete picture. The generative mechanisms and emergent properties would have to be theoretically identified and separated aiding a more rounded understanding of what makes magazine launches happen.

Archer views change as happening over a period of time; with the temporal aspect of structural emergent properties happening over a longer period of time than personal emergent properties or structural emergent properties.

Finally, Archer (1996) incorporates culture in her morphogenetic cycle. Culture plays an important role in magazines as they are cultural products and the cultural environment plays an important part in the launches of magazines. Archer views culture as comparable to structure, producing emergent properties within the strata that make up social reality.

Knowledge becomes an emergent property that may be transferred through culture. Archer does not resolve the hierarchical issue between structure and culture (which comes first) stating that this would need further work however, deduction of this issue would be most likely when there are discontinuities in the cycle between morphogenesis and morphostasis and where there is a parallel conjunction between structure and culture with reciprocal influences.

Considering the advantages and the disadvantages, Archer's (1996) theory of morphogenesis is the most appropriate theory for this study of magazines and is the theoretical framework for this thesis. There are several advantages to using Archer. First, by analytically separating structure and agency over time, interaction can be viewed. Second, the depth ontology allows generative mechanisms to be identified. Third, because of the temporal dimension to the morphogenetic cycle, the depth ontology and the fact that that causal efficacy can be both structural and agential, Archer's work is highly suitable for examining the process of change.

A more nuanced view of the particular issues relating to alternative author's approaches can be found later in the literature review.

As seen in the introduction, Archer (1996) argued that previous authors have conflated the irreducible properties of structure and agency. Conflation denies autonomy to agency and causal efficacy to structure. By contrast, analytically separating the different strata, and viewing them over different time periods, can allow their interaction to be explored. In addition, by identifying the emergent properties the generative mechanisms can be uncovered. This perspective allows a wider sociological view than an industry-based approach, without denying agency.

The next chapter uses the theoretical framework set out in this chapter in order to view the concentration of the previous literature, which favours one aspect of social reality over another.

## Chapter Two

### **Literature review**

This chapter sets out to give a critical review of the literature that relates to magazine launches in the UK. The starting point for this literature review is work that discusses magazines from the years between the two world wars onwards. World War II sparked many changes in society, which also marked a change in magazines. Gradually as the paper restrictions were lifted Women's magazines became commercial relying on both advertising and cover sales for profit (White 1977). Magazines also began to be coerced by government, to support a particular ideology about the role of women; initially magazines promoted the value of taking men's roles in the work place and once the war was over magazines promoted the value of being back in the home (White 1970). This huge period of change in publishing magazines seemed the rational place to start from. This review is concerned with the launch of print magazines in their traditional form, therefore it does not investigate Zines, e-zines and Internet based titles.

There is very little literature specifically on magazine launches, therefore the work discussed is a representative collection of the papers and books written about magazines as a media form, these have been written from a number of different perspectives and also cover different disciplines, including sociology, geography, cultural studies, media studies and business studies.

The early body of work written about magazines as a media form is written by authors who are interested in the messages that magazines produce, which is a narrower field of focus than my interests. These authors conceive that readers do not interact with the message but accept and absorb the information and entertainment at face value. This leads to magazines being seen as representing a mode of social or cultural conditioning. This chapter uses a theoretical

perspective with a wider field of focus where the centre of attention is spread between structure and agency.

The original purpose of this literature review was to look at magazines through structure and agency using Archer's morphogenetic model. The rationale for this was that, in order to discover and explain the interaction between structure and agency that takes place when a magazine is launched, both theoretical aspects of social reality would have to be considered. Initially, I believed that earlier previous work on magazines tended to privilege either structure, or agency without looking at the interaction between the two. I spent the first part of my PhD trying to organise the literature into authors that had written from a structured perspective and those who had written from an agential perspective. However as the thesis extended it became clear that this was too simplistic. To take the example of just one author McRobbie's (1977) early work has been much criticised for not viewing the agents as having free will. McRobbie highlighted that the young girls she interviewed were seeking a boyfriend with husband material in order to fulfil the societal expectation of the time, by settling down and having children. The problem with McRobbie's view was that young, working class girls were determined by their environment. However, McRobbie's (1999) later work was much more nuanced, it extends further looking at agency as well as hegemonic structural influences. She interviewed many of her ex-students and their friends and concluded that the readers were constructed like an extended group of the editor's friends and acquaintances demonstrating the closeness of the readers and the magazine, and although still noting a variant of hegemonic structures, she was highlighting their interaction and choices that the individual actors made. This later work of McRobbie's (1999) although still heavily influenced by a structured perspective, incorporated an agential aspect. Although rooted in a feminist perspective, it was very different to her earlier work. To view her writing as an entirely structured view and lump it in the same category as her earlier work was akin to attributing a straw man argument to her work and felt uncomfortable.

After two iterations of the literature review, and while analysing the empirical work it became clear, it would not be possible to produce a rounded view using structure and agency as a

dualism in this specific subject domain. Eventually it became evident that the literature review would be better organised to view authors specifically within Archer's (1995) morphogenetic cycle. Although this was mixing the time frames, by using a cycle rather than a dualism, it meant that authors were assessed acknowledging their use of both structure and agency and the interaction rather than trying to preference one part of the dualism over the other; in addition the concerns of my thesis were around interaction, and both my reading of the literature and my empirical work need to be able to allow for this interaction to be analysed and viewed.

It also became clear that all of Archer's (1995) emergent properties would have to be investigated covered and considered in order to achieve a rounded view. That is to say that not only structural emergent properties (SEPs) and personal emergent properties (PEPs) but, given the environment and physical qualities of the magazine itself, the work also had to include cultural emergent properties (CEPs). This meant that the body of literature that could be reviewed was vast and beyond the scope of one thesis, therefore, following Archer (1996), the work on culture was narrowed down to be very specific.

The main body of literature takes a structural view and covers structural conditioning, and social interaction. It has a tendency to be situated within gender studies and takes the stance that magazines are hegemonic or socially constraining. McRobbie (1977) concluded that *Jackie* provided the social norm for white working class girls and Tuchman (1978) suggested that women's expectations were limited to 'hearth and home'. This has remained the most dominant discourse in the sociological literature, although more recently the debate has widened from feminist to gender studies to include men's magazines.

An alternative view is given by authors particularly interested in the group of agents or cultural producers who work on magazines. This view has tended towards perceiving the cultural producer to have special qualities, which enable them to produce cultural goods.

### **The framework of the chapter**

The literature review is informed by the use of Archer's (1995: 193) morphogenetic cycle.

Archer argued that social reality is made up of both agency and structure, two different levels which are irreducible into each other and in order to study any aspect of social reality both aspects must be studied. Archer's analytical dualism has three stages: structural conditioning, social interaction and structural elaboration, which have been referred to in the theory section, and therefore suffice to say that this review is divided into three main areas, each area concentrates on one aspect of social reality. However, the use of the model enables the authors who have covered one or more section of Archer's cycle to be viewed, e.g. from structural conditioning to social interaction and in some case possibly all three like for example Crewe (2003).

The literature review is not equally divided into sections of equivalent length. This is because there is more literature written in some areas than others, and it would give a false impression to add literature that was more concerned with other media or subject areas in order to achieve balance. The way the categories have been used highlights what has been researched in the past; however, any form of classification system will also highlight gaps. This research has indicated for example that there is a lot of work concerned with the message from different viewpoints but work concerned with the producers tends to be restricted to structural influences on the producer.

The first section concentrates on the literature that puts emphasis on structural influences (conditioning). In this section the literature articulates an in depth analysis, where the emphasis surrounding the work on magazines tends to be loosely based on gender studies; the concerns articulated are the conditioning effects of structure, both on the message produced by the magazine and also the producers who work in them. These scholars view the parameters as fixed and magazines function within the environment. Individual agents do not interact or change the environment and to a greater or lesser degree the structure is reified.

The second section is more concerned with those authors who recognize the interaction that takes place, between the magazine, its message and its readers, or producers. The literature in



this section views the agents dealing with the structural condition they are presented with, and adapting their behaviour. Although the interaction takes place between the agents and their structural environment there appears to be little effect on the structure, by the action that the agents take.

The final section is where authors have demonstrated or been interested in the interaction that takes place between those individuals that read, or produce a magazine and the structural or cultural conditions within which they find themselves. Most importantly, this section covers how the individuals interact and try to change their structured or cultural environment.

### **STRUCTURAL CONDITIONING**

The majority of authors covered in this section are interested in the message and the structural conditioning that is imbibed in the message. This view is broadly speaking associated with the feminist critique beginning in the 1960s. Initially it starts with the ideological oppression of woman. By the mid 80s, this is replaced by a slightly more nuanced view, which looks at the pleasure gained from the magazine, and how this is intertwined with the repeated promises of transformations noted by Winship (1987). This shift also acknowledges the move towards recognizing magazines as a specific feminine form of mass culture.

Within some of the literature there is a view that participants who work in the production of the media are ensuring the continuation of the patriarchy and promoting capitalism, whether consciously or unconsciously (see for example McCracken, 1993).

### **Authors most concerned with the message produced by magazines**

Friedan's (1963) *The Feminine Mystic* ascribes mystical powers to women's magazines to keep women within their homes. Friedan (1974) is particularly interested in the structural conditioning that she perceives the media reinforce, and the way the media is complicit in this role. Friedan suggests that the only really fulfilling role for women according to their magazines would be perceived to be within their home raising children. Later, White (1970) built on this idea to suggest that men returning from the war and reclaiming their previous jobs drove the motivation behind this ideological manipulation. During the war magazines

wrote about stretching rations and dealing with wartime emergencies and encouraged women into men's roles. This was reversed when the war ended and woman's roles were marked out in the home. Government rationing until 1946 restricted paper, and therefore it restricted the circulation of magazines; although there appears to have been more leniency on those magazines that were promoting the government's message. The 1950's boom in the economy followed this, and the circulation of magazines rose quickly. Advertisers saw this as a fantastic opportunity and reinforced the ideology of domestic bliss with advertising aimed at women who would be purchasing domestic white goods for the household. White (1970) suggests this reinforced domestic values and perpetuated the belief that success as a woman and wife could be found at home and '...purchased for the price of a jar of cold cream...' (1970: 158)

Tuchman (1978) brings up similar concerns about the cultural conditioning of Woman magazine fifteen years later. Tuchman's (1978) *Hearth and Homes* opined: '*How can we free women from the tyranny of media messages limiting their lives to hearth and home?*' (1978: 38).

She viewed magazines as oppressive "*The ideal woman, according to (women's) magazines, is passive and dependant. Her fate and happiness rest with a man, not with participation in the labour force.*" (1978; 18)

She suggested that the media were to all intents and purposes teaching young people how to behave. In effect, women adopted the model presented to them in the media reflecting that role model which was most commonly presented.

In a similar tradition, Beetham (1996) charted the history of femininity. She analysed woman's magazines from the 1800s to more detailed discussions on magazines in the early 20th century. She viewed women's social progress and contributed to the feminist discourse, looking at how women have been defined in the magazines but also by them. However, in conclusion, Beetham viewed magazines as structurally and culturally confining without any real interaction as readers are given a narrow range of views from which to construct their own femininity.

McRobbie's ([1977] 2000) study was a landmark study. It was adapted from her MA thesis on working class girls and the culture of femininity. If magazines were oppressive, McRobbie showed how early this occurred in adolescence. She noted that most of the content of *Jackie* magazine was around narrow issues personal to the individual, like romance, fashion, beauty and music. The magazine strongly represented romantic individualism where girls competed in order to obtain a boyfriend. These ideas she suggested were accepted wholesale without deconstructing the ideological model portrayed.

McRobbie's studies of *Jackie* magazine concluded that the readers were passively manipulated in a signifying system that portrayed a certain ideology in the formation of teenage femininity. The original paper was highly criticised for assuming that the reader absorbed information and ideas from the magazine without question, similar to the effect from a hypodermic needle. However this study contributed to the debate surrounding culture as being subsuming rather than an aspect that can be taken off or put on like an item of clothing. Instead of assuming that readers were following their 'natural' female inclination, McRobbie pointed out how in her terms indoctrination started very young and the reader was presented with a highly idealized version of 'romantic individualism'. *Jackie* in McRobbie's eyes was tantamount to pushing a form of female oppression.

This analysis could be viewed as a form of cultural conditioning without emphasis on the social interaction that takes place between the reader, her friends and the magazine. Later, McRobbie acknowledged this deficiency in her early work, but strongly attributed with the potential power to socially condition its readers. However her sample was class constrained, since she was only talking about the working class girls, their passivity may have had other generative mechanisms. Other research at this time showed quite clear class-based behaviours (Willis, 1977).

In effect much of this early work on magazines was concerned with how ideological messages reinforced woman's oppression in a false consciousness approach. At around the same time during the 70s there were 'consciousness raising' movements working at very local levels.

Ferguson (1983) moved the field of magazine literature forward slightly. She wrote about her own life experiences, which included 10 years in women's magazine journalism, where amongst other titles she edited and launched a racy magazine called *Intro*. The editorial direction was somewhat confused by management intervention and the title was short lived and folded. It was perhaps this experience that made her view the wider context surrounding magazines. She was interested in the audience, the message and role of magazines in society but she saw femininity as a constraint, and magazines as a method of creating a symbolic social order.

Mixing quantitative and qualitative methods, she set out with the premise to view the cultural significance of women's magazines. Her research question concerned the role of woman's magazines in society, within the context that fewer women were buying magazines than formerly. Ferguson was particularly interested in the messages that magazines were conveying in the post war period. Like the early work of Friedan and McRobbie, Ferguson (1983) viewed magazines as telling women what to think, by their instructional and directional tone. This tone, coupled with what she viewed as large quantities of advertising became, she thought, an effective formula for influencing women's behaviour. Ferguson (1983) drew an analogy between magazines and Durkheim's (1976) work on cults. She concluded that magazines may have become 'a way of reaffirming the badge of femininity rather than arbiters of femininity as a state' (1983: 231). The notion of cult puts the editor as cult leader.

Ferguson has a view that woman's magazines educated women and heavily influenced the reader's view of the world. This indicated that her focus was in structural conditioning without viewing the interaction that might be necessary to understand the readers views and acknowledge their ability to recognise bias and make informed judgments.

Ballester et al (1991) take a similar view to previous feminists; being mainly concerned with the destructive quality of women's magazines and how they constructed views of femininity. They used the research to challenge gender differences; in essence, magazines are viewed as harmful, although there is more postmodern thought in the acknowledgement of the

individual's view of pleasure, creativity and criticisms that their readers find in magazines. However, as Hermes (1995) states "Do harmless and innocuous constructions of femininity exist at all?" (1995: 3). Winship (1980,1981) like McRobbie was a student at CCCS at Birmingham although at a later period. She stencilled a paper entitled 'Woman becomes an individual – femininity and consumption in Woman's magazines 1954-69'. She viewed the contradiction between the consumerism represented in the pages of Honey magazine alongside the editorial supporting sexual emancipation and women as individuals with choices. She viewed the structured environment as constraining women into certain roles despite the contradiction of the power accorded to them through their (agential) consumer buying power. Winship highlighted this inherent contradiction.

#### **A wider view of structural conditioning**

The view of structural conditioning is not confined to feminism.

Gauntlett (2002) was also interested in these conflicting ideologies in the messages that magazines produce. He viewed magazines as structurally conditioning although the readers interact with the messages within the magazine, in order to engage with an identity that suits the current condition. He provided a good overview of the literature to date within the feminist field and further debates around masculinity. Gauntlett discussed the reassertion of masculine values but says that it is more about 'Am I doing ok'. He disputes the notion that magazines produce a ready to wear identity; you can 'pick and mix' as a reader choosing the identity you feel most comfortable with. In effect he offers a role (agency) for readers in terms of choice.

Gauntlett (2002) noted that there was much discussion about the tone of magazines. However this may be attributed to the way that communication has changed over generations. In the 50s, we were happy to be told information by men in white coats, now we feel it is patronizing. Magazines have to reflect this, by changing their style of communication. This is particularly noticeable in men's magazines with information wrapped in jokey irony (see Jackson, Stevenson and Brookes 2001).

The problem with this so called ironic view is that it is the editorial producer (the agent) giving account, justifying that readers understand the ‘true’ situation. Irony – the expression of one’s meaning by language of opposite or different tendency especially mock adoption of another’s views. In fact *Loaded’s* so called irony produces disinformation. It could be considered that if you read enough of the irony without engaging with it as irony, it can become a form of indoctrination that enables social conditioning.

Still working within the message, David Machin and Theo van Leeuwen (2003) studied the discourse of magazines. They took eight franchise copies of *Cosmopolitan* and analysed these titles over a two-month period. They identified and described specific discourse schemas especially the ‘problem-solution’ schema, which they perceive is used as a lens to interpret social practices, personal relationships, anger management, discourses of work etc. They argue such discourse schemas serve the interests of certain social institutions. The schema is particularly individualist. They view this as an exchange between women and the neo-capitalist order each gained from the allegiance. They proposed that there is a global community of *Cosmopolitan* readers with reference to the particular concept of ‘speech community’, as defined by Hymes (1972), but unlike Hymes they do not see the ‘speech community’ as equal. They see it as institutionally controlled by the franchiser. Machin and van Leeuwen (2003) assume that the Hearst Corporation control all the international versions of the magazine, but in fact, these magazines are produced under licence or as part of joint ventures. Only in the case of the UK is the National Magazine Company a wholly owned subsidiary. The nature of the relationship between the franchiser and franchisees goes a long way to explain the findings of Machin and van Leeuwen (2003).

Ellen McCracken (1982) uses a neo-Gramscian model, influenced by Hall and Jameson (1990). McCracken looked at the role advertising played within women’s magazines.

Although looking specifically at the American market, the observations would generalize to the British environment. She noted the fiscal relationship between advertising and magazines, and how it reflects the ‘health’ of the title. Greater advertising improved the chances of a title surviving in a competitive environment. In addition, McCracken suggested that the

advertisers shape the cultural content of magazines. Her example was an editorial on improving facial wrinkles, which would create a desire to buy face creams, she argued, and face creams may be advertised in the magazine. McCracken interviewed editorial staff but found that they did not consciously consider that they constructed a particular 'master narrative'. She considered that ultimately it was the woman's spending power and buying patterns that ensured magazines targeted the reader. McCracken concluded that magazines put into effect a form of cultural leadership. Within a magazine's influence women can experience a real or utopian sense of community and participate in feminine culture, learning consumerist competitiveness and individualism. She viewed magazines as an articulation of consumerism and desire.

However, McCracken (1982) conflates editorials and advertorials, which in the UK are usually carefully controlled and balanced. Readers are not dupes as the 1990s phase of customer service magazines showed as evidence. These magazines had to run a fine balance between advertising their own products and a balanced and interesting editorial. If the magazine was too heavily biased towards advertising then potential readers would view this expensive promotional product as junk marketing, which devalued the product, making it no longer viable. Consumer magazines were in a comparable position. If they sell advertising against editorial features, advertisers will not advertise if the content of the magazine is not related to their product. This would become cyclical meaning that the advertisers controlled the editorial - readers would soon notice – and this would be another way for the magazine to fold.

McCracken's (1982) view of the direct relationship between advertising and editorial does not work.

In effect, McCracken (1982) takes a very structured position identifying the relationship between the advertising industry and magazine, leading to cultural conditioning through the messages produced by magazines. The interaction between the advertising industry and the cultural message creates in her opinion the demand for consumers to consume magazines. By taking a 'neo-Gramscian' position McCracken splits structure and culture, but on an empirical level McCracken (1982) suggests that neither the readers or the editors are conscious of this

process, thereby they are not aware of the generative mechanisms that create the situation.

The success or failure of a title is directly related to consumer demand.

Lury (1996) writing about consumer culture explores the way that tribes and social groups have replaced social classes. She views modern society as a structured arena where

individuals create social and political identities through the consumption of cultural goods.

Lury has a very structured view of the way consumers create their identity which is ascribed

within structured conditions. Individuals interact through consumerism in order to create

identity. Lury (1996) looks at how the audience acts, but not at how the audience interacts to

change the structure. Gauntlett (2002) follows the same lines.

To summarize, the early body of work written about magazines from this period is written by

authors who are interested in the message that magazines produce. Like, for example, how

magazines constructed views of femininity. These authors viewed magazines as a form of

social or cultural conditioning where consciously or unconsciously the agents do not interact

with the message but accept and absorb information and entertainment at face value. These

authors viewed the way individuals, both male and female, constructed their identity in the

way that is prescribed in magazines.

### **PRODUCERS**

The following set of authors are interested in the editorial staff that work on the magazines,

and how they shape or interact with the magazines structure.

Early sociological texts written about magazine producers like White (1970), set out to supply

a historical perspective on women's magazines, and to analyse the women's magazines

industry against the background of social, economic and technological change. In a sense,

they looked at the mechanisms of historical changes via the editors and structural changes,

which shows some affinity with critical realism. White (1970) provides a useful insight into

the inter-war years, the influence of women's magazines on society as perceived by the

government, and the role this took up until the 1950s.

During World War II, White related that the government began to realise the importance of

women's magazines as a channel of communication specifically aimed at women. Various



departments such as The Ministry of Food and the Ministry of Fuel and Power used magazines to relay their message of economising, suggesting ways in which to stretch rations and save fuel. Generally, manufacturers were not advertising in any quantity, which left the Ministry of Information as one of the biggest advertisers of the time.

After the war, there was an increased demand for publications but the quota restriction of paper was allocated to magazines based on their circulation figures at a pre-war level. This meant that an increase in demand for a particular magazine could not result in its increased circulation. The shortage of paper continued into the 1950s.

Magazines certainly played their part in redefining the role of women during and after the war. White (1970) concurs with the view that magazines encouraged hearth and home roles for woman, as was relayed by Freidan (1963) and Tuchman (1978). However, magazines were not actively instigating this change argued White (1970). Anecdotal evidence suggested that magazines were encouraged to find complex, time-consuming recipes to keep women busy in the home.

*“...in 1951, social changes in favour of women’s advancement had not begun to be felt. Society was still in the grip of retrogressive trends associated with the psychological aftermath of the war. The concept of the social role proper to women had narrowed considerably compared with 1946, and the weeklies were merely acquiescing in the trend, though their support no doubt helped to strengthen it.”* (White, 1970: 144)

By 1953, rationing had ended; women’s magazines were beginning to change. By 1956, consumer goods were abundant. Housewives needed advice on what to buy, and magazines began to advise on consumer choice. These factors helped lead to a considerable increase in circulation and, perhaps more importantly, advertising revenue. This buoyancy led to many new magazine launches, and sowed the seeds for economic gain that led to the mergers and conglomerates that followed this period.

McRobbie (1999) tied her work in with the work of authors more interested in production and consumption like Nixon (1997), Negus (1997) and Du Gay (1997). Although McRobbie concentrates extensively on the role magazines play in producing a normative femininity in which sexuality is perceived as the main structured meaning, her work extends further than

earlier work looking at agency as well as hegemonic structural influences. The magazines that she uses as examples are teenage titles like *More!* and *Just seventeen* and also magazines aimed at a slightly older readership like *Marie Claire*, *Elle*, *19*, and *Cosmopolitan*, and she acknowledged that these magazines, inform and entertain.

She interviewed journalists, who all stated that they were avid fans of magazines, and readers of magazines from a young age being interested in the fashion pop and style aspects of the titles. Akin to Ferguson (1983), McRobbie perceives the editors hold considerable power in the formation of the ideas represented in the magazines. She stated:

*“ Drawing on this strong success of personal taste and style, the editors attribute the success of their magazine to the instinct that what they and their friends want to read or look at, proves to be equally appealing to readers,”* (1999:179)

McRobbie interviewed Sally Brampton in September 1994 who summarized how she got the job as first editor on British *Elle*

*“ Editors and writers would continually say ‘Would you read this/do that/go there?’ or ‘Is this the kind of fashion me and my friends would have wanted to look at and buy when we were at college? Before I put the dummy issue together I did my own market research by testing out my ideas with approximately thirty friends, all woman of more or less the same age and outlook as myself. I then presented my findings and got the job.”* (1999: 180)

For McRobbie, this illustrated the way in which readers were constructed like an extended group of the editor’s friends and acquaintances demonstrating the closeness of the readers and the magazine, which is again akin to Ferguson’s cult leader.

Equally, it could be possible that the quote demonstrates how highly the publishers rated the ability of this particular editor, who was perceived to have a ‘special’ understanding of their readers. Sally Brampton began her career on *Vogue* before moving to *The Observer* as fashion editor. The fact that she had asked 30 friends was no more likely to make her understand her readers, than her previous experience on *Vogue* and *The Observer*; which is presumably the type of reader being targeted for the new launch of *Elle*. Hachette were hiring the person they would like to be their ideal reader, whom they considered would gain a lucrative advertising market. In effect they bought into the myth that the editor was selling. The myth of the ‘Svengali-like cult leader’ is one way to view how magazines retain and gain readership.

However the 1960s<sup>6</sup> brought a new type of management ‘technology’ - market research, which afforded magazine publishers a new tool to counter the power of the editor. The magazine market changed considerably from the 50s and market research had become the tangible method to target readers.

Anna Gough-Yates (2003) set out to study magazine production. She was quick to acknowledge that her methodological analysis had problems. Initially, she set out to use interviews and ethnography but predictably found access a problem. Magazines are incredibly fast paced production lines, speed is always an essence, and there is often an endemic long hour culture. Therefore, colleagues and the management hierarchy would frown upon spending valuable time talking to outsiders with no obvious gain for the magazine. That is without consideration of commercial sensitivity and loyalties, which would not allow an interviewee to talk openly about company policies, working practices and operations. Instead, she chose to understand the women’s press through the versions produced in the media trade press. Anna Gough-Yates (2003) points out “these cannot be viewed therefore, as transparent description of ‘what went on’ (2003: 24). The trade press consists, in effect, of ‘business-to-business’ titles. This means that we need to be aware of the commercially driven publications that are concerned with promoting their activities to those in their own related industries. She was interested in the way that magazines changed the way they carried out their market research, which helped to identify and create new markets. Her aim was to understand the relationship of femininity to the cultural industries, with the inclusion of production, which she considered had been slightly ignored. Although this is ironic given that most literature surrounding magazines is written from a gender perspective. She situated her work within circuits of culture<sup>7</sup> and the cultural economy<sup>8</sup> debates using a post-fordist perspective. Post-

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<sup>6</sup> White documents how Psychologist Dr Ernest Dichter came over from America to produce a study for Oldham’s, which produced a new measurement study for Woman’s magazines. Other British publishers soon followed this example. P219

<sup>7</sup> The circuits of production is a term developed by Du Gay et al (1997) and suggest that in order to study a cultural text it must be analysed through the following five stages representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation.

<sup>8</sup> Cultural economy is a term from a book by Du gay and Prike (2002), where they recite Lash and Urrys work where three development are viewed as important, 1 There are more cultural industries; 2 more goods and services

fordism is a description of a method of production that is characterised by flexibility, specialisation, and small batch production in contrast to Fordism, which is characterised by large-scale production, and economies of scale.

The example she uses is the personification of the 'new woman'. This was created as a discourse by the media industry when their research methods extended to include qualitative life style research. Editors were chosen to represent the 'new woman' and thereby legitimate the term, which would be sold to advertisers through their own life style choices and activities.

*'Magazine editors, in particular, had the job of promoting to advertisers their potential as 'cultural intermediaries', who were 'in touch' with the lifestyles of their target market groups because they were- quite literally part of them.'* (2003:152)

Gough-Yates attributed this to the magazines trying to ascertain a feminine 'new middle-class' fraction, separate and distinct from the traditional mass-market magazine. The success of this is due to the ability of the practitioner- especially the editors in their role as cultural intermediary. She suggested that the cultural intermediary's ultimate aim is to make profitable advertising deals. Gough-Yates's discussion of the role of the cultural intermediary implies a wider role for the editor similar to that of a broker, rather than the cult leader discussed in Ferguson.

*'The editors of women's magazines had a need to demonstrate to the potential advertisers their ability effectively to target and 'deliver' target markets, of young, middle-class women consumers. They strove not merely to prove that they had identified the lifestyles and aspirations of these target markets, but also to confirm their own incorporation of the lifestyle practices and ideals imagined.'* (2003:131)

An alternative view, which she overlooked, would assert that the promotion of the editors as being part of a target market is simply a way of recreating the myth of the star producer. This was not essentially a new idea. White (1977) talked about editors who presented their magazine as an extension of themselves. Indeed the idea may be linked to Bourdieu (1984:310), who noted the production of a new middle class where people have self created

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can be thought of as cultural goods and more items have a cultural significance; 3 growing importance within business of the cultural ways of managing employees

an image, and were judged by the capacity for consumption of lifestyle goods, as much as their capacity for production. Indeed, Gough-Yates noted that demographic marketing was used until the 50s onwards, when attitude marketing was employed, centred on the psychology of the consumer. This motivational research spawned magazines like *Cosmo*, but also less successful examples like *Nova* and *Candida*.

This possibly charts a change in the power of the editor. By producing a matrix about the reader's attitudes the marketers had, in effect stolen some of the editors power making them intermediaries not leaders and reflecting the marketing profile of the magazines, rather than treating the magazine as an extension of themselves (see White, 1970).

All of the attention of the writers has so far has centred on the role of the editor. However, Carol Ekinsmyth (1999) wrote about magazine freelancers in a risk society. She linked the proliferation of titles in the 1990s with, the London centric nature of the business and the networks used by freelancers. She differentiated between on the one hand, writers and on the other designers and subs as the latter have to work in the office, while the writers can work from home and therefore enjoy more flexible benefits.

Her result could be explained as a morphogenetic process. As more titles were launched into the market. There was a boom and bust shake out as many of the magazines went bust. This situation could then be viewed as a structural elaboration as editorial staff became freelance, giving employers a skilled and more diverse range of employees than they could normally employ. There is then an over supply of talent in the market place all vying for the same jobs, this led to freelances being hired cheaply, if one person will not take reduced wages there are always others who will, which is the structural condition that begins a new cycle. Again, this enabled more launches and so on. Ekinsmyth's view of freelancing worker also highlighted the structural elements, for example in the different power of the freelance writers versus freelance sub-editors.

Continuing the structural theme, White's (1977) work is seminal to the body of literature surrounding magazines, and many academic and policy makers viewed her work as pivotal. She was commissioned to write a working paper for the Royal Commission on the Press

about women's magazines. This extended and updated the work that she had done previously in 1971. She investigated the structural conditions including concentration of ownership and economic conditions including the production and employment conditions of workers on women's magazines, describing the events that created the mechanisms of change. White strongly supports the role of the editor, as the following quote demonstrates, where she is setting the scene of women's magazines between 1946-1960. The three magazines that she used to illustrate her point were: firstly, *Mirabelle*, which missed its target age group of 18+ but was popular with 13-16 year olds. This is now a well-known phenomenon in youth and younger woman's titles, where the published target reader is nearly always older than its actual readers. Secondly, *She* magazine where the editorial team identified a market gap of women like themselves, meaning that *She* was alleged to be the first title aimed at an attitude group, rather than a socio-economic and age related matrix. The final example was *Woman's Realm* published to use up a spare print capacity at Oldham's, the magazine was formulaic and consistent with previously existing titles but extensively used colour printing, a difference that gave the magazine a circulation of one and a half million in four years. White (1977) stated:

*“ These three examples highlight the extraordinarily delicate balance between success and failure in women's publishing, and the key role played by the editor. The ability to achieve reader-identification was crucial in creating the mass publications of the 'fifties just as it has been in creating successful magazine of all types throughout publishing history. It is significant that successful periods within the histories of individual magazines can be correlated with the tenure of exceptional editors. Such editorial skills were no less important when the mass market later began to break up and reform on different lines, as happened in the mid-sixties. It will be a prime contention of this paper that editorial insights prevail where market research fails, and the ability of editors to 'know' their readers and how best to cater for them. **Whether or not** these perceptions are grounded in, or reinforced by, objective analysis, is a cardinal element in the success of publishing ventures for women.” (1977:13)*

White's examples demonstrate the principle “don't give the readers what they say they want, but what you find they enjoy” (1977:12) this essentially highlights a problem with market research, as focus groups and readers tell you what they think you want to hear. Or if readers

are asked what they would like, they can only envisage what already exists. This is still very much true today.

Magazine management and publishers drive the history of market research rather than the editorial teams. Market research in magazines started, after 1914, with the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), which audited magazines. The information produced by the ABC proved to be invaluable to the sales and marketing departments, indicating that a certain number of readers lived in Surrey and were within a certain income bracket, for example. However this was not particularly useful to the magazine editor. White made the point that research that was carried out during this period was often not relevant to the editors as the next quote illustrated.

*“This principle has tended to be undermined by the spread of empirical research into publishing from the social science. Non-scientific editorial judgments tend to be denigrated by managements when compared with the slick statistical profiles produced by costly – and therefore highly credible – market research departments, disregarding the fact that the important reader characteristics, editorially speaking are probably non quantifiable, while the kinds of research which might have editorial relevance are seldom carried out to function effectively, even the best editors require managerial support, perhaps in the form of funding appropriate research (although this is questionable) but most certainly by giving them the necessary editorial freedom to do their job in the manner they deem appropriate. It is equally significant that the success stories in women’s publishing, are also those in which managements have minimally interfered” (1977:13).*

In a similar tradition to White (1971, 1977), Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) charted the births and deaths of mainly women’s magazines in the sixties seventies and eighties. Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) presented an industry view for the reasons behind the successes and failure of some of the launches. They attempt to predict the likely successes from the 80s and 90s out of a handful of new launches. This is given from an insider’s perspective as Braithwaite was the founder publisher of *Harpers and Queen*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Company* and *Country Living*, finally working on *Good Housekeeping* for numerous years

Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) outlined three sets of heuristics for launching a magazine.

Firstly, there must be a need for a magazine as opposed to simply supplying a publication to

satisfy a demographic condition. The example they give is of a condition is that of one-legged lady hockey players, or cross-eyed plumbers who do not need a magazine. To launch a magazine for them is just simply providing for their condition. (1988:95). Secondly, the perceived market needs to be a niche market that provides better value or is novel in some way, not already provided by an existing magazine. Thirdly, the final possibility is to introduce an already successful title overseas.

Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) were concerned with the institutional logic of management and the culture of the industry that surrounds magazines, but they attributed little to outside structural conditions or individual agents, success was viewed as a management process.

Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) describe the industry wisdom surrounding launches, which can be understood in three separate areas.

Firstly, incumbent magazine companies are in a strong position because the structural constraints for a new launch are mainly viewed as the cost, it is pointed out that for an established publisher, the cost of a new launch is mainly contained within the launch cost, as the building and central office services are already in existence. The only other costs apart from these are a small number of editorial and advertising staff to work on the project. The main constraint for an existing publisher is that they have to be careful not to oppose or threaten any existing circulation or advertising revenue.

An independent outsider to the publishing industry would have to accept large initial costs with the set up of premises, office machinery, production, and paper buying departments plus the editorial, advertising and launch costs that an existing publisher would endure. Thus the incumbents in the magazine industry have an advantage.

Secondly, there is a tendency for magazines to become more alike over time. When employing new editors to re-launch a magazine there needs to be an awareness that new editors often make changes, which upset the old readership but don't attract enough new readers to compensate, which can cause long-term problems. Although they suggest that the key to keeping the circulation of a new launch is to concentrate on only half the readers; as with any magazine half of the readers of a magazine are loyal but the other half are impulse



purchasers and it is these that have to be courted. Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) also suggested that loyal magazine readers get older each year, and although loyalty is good for circulation it is not for advertising, therefore it is important to keep younger readers buying the title.

Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) claim that most editors mix with other editors and change jobs within a very limited group of titles is a problem. Often when changing jobs editors take their tried and trusted contacts with them, which means that magazines begin to gain an overall uniformity as the same staff are used across various magazines (see also Ekinsmyth, 1999). Indeed, Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) suggest using well-established staff, although for legitimating purposes rather than uniformity. Art editors create a magazine's identity, but are often encouraged to follow the fashion identity of another market leading title, (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) which again can result in reader boredom at best or even brand confusion at worst, where the reader cannot differentiate between individual titles.

Braithwaite and Barrell's (1988) perceptions about the individuals working on magazines were largely regarding the editors. Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) suggested that editors used to write for themselves but since the extensive use of reader surveys has resulted in better reader profiling this is no longer the case. Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) suggest that editors are having their role undermined by marketing, although they produce no evidence to back this up.

### **In summary**

The majority of academic literature is concentrated on women's magazines written from a feminists' perspective. The earlier feminist magazine criticism takes the standpoint that the medium of magazine publishing is a means of oppressing women, and legitimising gender differences. Therefore, magazines that enforced the gender differences were ideologically manipulative.

However there seems to be little acknowledgement of the "freedom" of the 60s. The 60s brought about sexual emancipation, and the pill gave women a means of control over their own fertility. There was also growth in new codes and values, new moralities. Although not

all magazines would aspire to the new values, magazines like *She* (launched 1955) and *Nova* (1964) would.

This quote from the editor of *Nova* at its launch reflects the change in attitude of the magazine publishers to women, but this does not seem to be reflected in academic criticism.

*“ What is there for women like this to read? No end of housekeeping and fashion items, escapism unlimited, and reliably happy endings. The standard explanation is that an intelligent women can always read whatever an intelligent man reads-but does she really have to digest New Statesman, Skim through the British Medical Journal, fillet New Society and wade through The Times Just because her horizons don't stop at furnishing hints or Royal gossip? ...At Newness we believe she is hungry for a magazine of her own, one that looks at life from her own attitude, and ranges over her many interests...[NOVA] is not an implied criticism of existing women's magazines, but an assertion of the emergence of readers with new requirements. ”*

World press news, March 12 1965:44

An omission of the early feminist standpoint was that they did not acknowledge the pleasure and entertainment gained in reading a magazine from the reader's point of view. Both Friedan (1963) and Tuchman (1978) presented the medium of magazines as alienating; and patriarchal.

Five years later Ferguson (1983) has a slightly different standpoint; she sets out with the premise- to view the cultural significance of women's magazines. Drawing a similarity between magazines and Durkheim's (1976) work on cults, she concluded that magazines may have become a way of reaffirming the badge of femininity.

Magazines provide a service for the majority; unlike television, there are no subsidised or public service magazines. Mainstream magazines are commercial products and companies will not run them without a profit. Thereby to talk about the minority interests which are not represented in articles about sex in women's magazines ([Jackson, 1996] McRobbie, 1999) seems to be a matter of economic viability, rather than an ideological decision on the part of the editors or publishers.

The next section on the structural aspects surrounding magazines considered the industry.

White (1970, 1977) and Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) set out to supply an industry analysis

perspective in the field of publishing for women. They analyse the women's magazines industry against the background of social, economic and technological change. White (1970), and Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) engage with the editors' view but not with other editorial staff. The magazine as a team is ignored (Becker, 1984) .

White's (1970,1977) literature articulates an extensive in depth analysis of the industry until 1968 and 1976 respectively. Further research of this breadth and depth would supply a greater understanding of the magazine industry.

We have turned from the view of magazines as structural conditioning to one where the producers react to their own structured position and try to improve it (McRobbie, 1998) and to the idea that the message has not only changed over the last few decades (Winship, 1987) to the notion that there is a knowing audience who take the message with 'a pinch of salt' (Hermes, 1995; Radway, 1984) This takes us back to the irony idea where anything goes because (producers argue) it has no effect. However, those writers who emphasised structure downplayed the role of agents. This is viewed without enabling agents to interact.

### **CONDITIONING- SOCIAL INTERACTION (STRUCTURE TO AGENCY)**

The next set of studies concern the parts of the cycle where agents impact (fallibly) on the social or cultural structure. From agency to social elaboration the majority of these studies are agency based, they make light of the social structures and conditioning.

#### **The Message**

Although McRobbie (1998) was not writing specifically about magazines, she commented on the fashion press. McRobbie (1998) presented a view of fashion magazines as forming the way in which agents within the fashion industry constructed 'the fashionable', to improve their relative status. She saw the magazine as a structured environment constructing its own rules. *"...the fashion media 'represents' fashion but adds its own gloss, its own frame of meaning to the fashion items which serve as its raw material"* (1998:151). The magazine constructed fashion as being about 'insider knowledge', which is, manipulated by the editors and designers. She charted how the editorial staff created their reputation, with a very high

degree of job mobility. Taking the examples of fashion stylists, she charted how the individuals work on many jobs at the same time, some of which may be carried out for no charge in order to enhance their creative reputation (see also Mort 1996). Particular magazine like *ID*, *The Face*, *Dazed and Confused* and *Don't tell It* existed as a creative display case for editorial people wanting to be picked up by the more lucrative paying jobs with newspapers:

*"The art work is the means by which the style press advertises its own creative talent, offering valuable exposure for photographers, stylists and also models."* (1988:16)

McRobbie goes on to argue that it is an aesthetic image because there is no text, which precludes any measure for judgment. She notes that reputations are made by these means.

*"Cultural outsiders are excluded from understanding how such decisions are arrived at precisely as a strategy of power and as a means of protecting already existing cultural hierarchies"* (1998:165)

McRobbie goes further, illuminating how important it is for the editor to be in touch with their audience.

*"Everything within these magazines has to be translated into a kind of secret, insider knowledge about what is 'cool' and 'hip' to which only they, as editors and journalists, have access to and which they can then sell to the big companies in exchange for valuable advertising revenue by providing them with knowledge of 'the street' and of black youth culture and urban life"* (1998:173)

McRobbie shows how the agents interact, which sees magazines as part of cultural conditioning, although she noted that there is some social interaction as magazines, "[They also] produce distinct cultural values which feed directly into the formation of taste groups for the broader consumer culture." (McRobbie 1998:173) the study placed the context in the background and focussed on how the agents constructed the message.

More concerned with how changes in the readers of magazines affected the message was Winship (1987). Winship (1987) charted the changing profile of the magazine market in Britain, she built on White (1977) but noted how the changing social position of women and the changing economic environment influenced the content of women's magazines. Although she implied that magazines were still concerned with giving advice and viewed this as their role, rather than the magazine being a vehicle of entertainment. She wrote from a feminist

perspective and alluded to closing gaps between feminist magazines and commercial glossies, and noted the newly emerging men's market for magazines. *The Face* changed publishing as it revealed the ossification and complacencies of large publishing houses like IPC who had relied for many years on its women's weeklies to make a profit that was large enough to support other parts of its publishing ventures. *The Face* was radical as the editorial "*spoke to, whilst also partly creating the changing consciousness of young people in the 1980s.*"

(Winship, 1987: 152) This interaction she noted between the editorial staff and the audience is paramount in a small title where market research would not be available. However, Winship also drew attention to the way readers compared the content represented in the magazine with their actual experience of the social life. Critical of the way magazines '*define the parameters of our personal life*' (1987: 162), she pointed out that magazines might be representative of desire. The 'woman reader' may not necessarily be able to buy the commodities represented in the spreads and advertisement in publications; however they do still desire the commodities and enjoy looking at them. Her view of future magazines, hoping that the commercial realities of advertising can be separated, edited and re-presented in an acceptable post feminist form is somewhat idealistic. Unfortunately, this view is let down by a lack of consideration for the more structural constraints and enablements that face magazines in a highly competitive and overcrowded market.

From the mid 1980s, audience studies began to influence the academic literature on magazines. This is an important departure as although these studies were not specifically about magazines, the connection with popular fiction and television soap operas was reasonably obvious. These media entertained as opposed to informed. There is an acknowledgement that the audience is an active participant. There are large amounts of escapism represented within all three genres. For example, the way that women are represented could not be construed as the normal experience of the receiver/reader. Moreover, all three genres relied heavily on personal and family issues as being of central importance.

### **Multiple messages**

Jackson, Stevenson and Brookes (2001) were interested in the how the audience interacted with the multiple messages published in the magazines and used the information in order to choose their preferred type of social conformity. As geographers they situated their work within a different literature; and were more concerned with the ideological power that the media wield. Stevenson et al., (1999) were particularly interested in how the material and ideational aspects of society are interconnected. They suppose that any group that can dominate the system of symbolic and linguistic signs would be able to gain a dominant relationship in the material field, which would remain unquestioned. Jackson, Stevenson and Brookes (2001) use the term 'circuits of culture' (see Johnson, 1986) and are keen to move away from notions of economic determinism, suggesting that culture can no longer be an add on to an economic or political explanation. They viewed men's magazines through the framework of Beck's (1992) information society, where aware individuals used their knowledge to take precautions against risk.

In a similar vein, although concentrating on the masculinity issues, Jackson et al (2001) suggested that '*Loaded* embraced an idealistic nostalgic notion of the good old days of white working class (male) Britishness' (2001: 37) encouraging and emphasizing the laddishness and the relationship between masculinity and the cultural context, as masculinity is discussed and constructed. In their view men's magazines or more specifically 'ladmags' provided a 'constructed' certainty about what it is to be male, in response to the uncertainty in the labour market. Helping modern men to navigate through their present-day anxieties about masculinity and its interrelationship with consumer culture. This is elaborated within the magazines format as it airs issues surrounding health, grooming, careers and sexual relationships. Jackson et al (2001) put forward the idea that the magazines allow space for new forms of masculinity to emerge; however there seems to be some inconsistency between the 'new forms of masculinity' and an idealistic nostalgic notion of the good old days of white, working class (male) Britishness. The latter requires a backward looking view of masculinity, which appears prevalent within *Loaded* and many other of the magazines format.

Jackson et al (2001) suggest that the articles and issues that support the old notion of masculinity are merely fantasies around traditional masculinity which can be enjoyed in these magazines with a sense of irony which is ‘understood’ by the audience, whilst providing a safe laddish environment to sell grooming products.

To their credit, Jackson et al (2001) viewed an interaction between the magazines and their audience. They considered that magazines created different positions of identification where the audience construct their maleness according to the different options presented; however, cynically, this may be more about covering the marketing profile of a specific social group provided in the magazines. Jackson et al (2001) did not set out to find structural elaboration on the part of the magazines, as their specific interest was about the discourse surrounding masculinity and how modern men construct their gender. Their finding that the voice of the magazine was ironic, where readers distanced themselves from the magazine, only reading it ‘as a laugh’, although odd, may have reflected their focus groups that by self declaration were not regular readers of men’s magazines. The project was about the commodification of gender, where men are anxious about their masculine role within the bounds and contradictions of popular culture, which is viewed through the magazine market.

However in Archer’s (1995) terms they did note the structural emergent properties as they described how the magazine market was changed by *Loaded*. Moreover, they noted constraints from the advertising industry regarding images that were considered pornography, as well as the enablement’s provided by the numerous willing advertisers wanting to reach the new male market.

Jackson, Lowe, Millar and Mort (2000) looked at the production, content and readership of Men’s lifestyle magazines, their particular dialectical interests were “*concerned to map personally-held dispositions onto more public categories in a way that represents both micro and macro levels of analysis*” (2000: 195) The methodology used was focus groups, (similar to Hermes (1995) on which they state the project is based) which were then referred back to ideas of masculinity. However, their focus group approach cannot show interaction with the producers of magazines. Instead the authors had to interpret the agent’s view of the world.

Their defence of irony is questionable. Irony in the men's magazines can be presented as a method of justifying sexism; it is a 'heads, I win; tails, you lose' form of defence. To comment on the sexism means you did not understand the ironic nature of the editorial, which in turn assumes that you are not part of the 'target' or 'in' group. The researchers' attribute some structural emergent properties although they are concerned with the contribution of discourses, in this case surrounding masculinity, although the audience might be less willing to accept what is on offer.

### **The message blunted and audience**

This section acknowledges that the messages received by the audience from magazines is mediated by other factors, it is more sophisticated than the hypodermic needle model, which portrays the media as so powerful as to inject their message into the audience without the interference of other external influences. Katz (1980) suggests the extent of media influence swings between strong and weak, relating to social stability. Morley (1992) argued that the media is just part of the way that power and influence is socially negotiated. This section reflects that these types of debates influenced the work written about magazines.

Hermes (1995) changed the direction of the debate in feminist studies by acknowledging the audience. From the mid 1980s, audience studies by Ang (1986), and Radway (1984) had begun to influence the academic literature of magazines. This is an important departure as although these studies were not specifically about magazines their connection was with popular fiction and television soap operas. Nonetheless, rather than looking at how magazines culturally constrain, Hermes studied the way that women's magazines are consumed.

*"I have tried to reconstruct the diffuse genre or set of genres that is called women's magazines and how they become meaningful exclusively through the perception of their readers. Text analysis would not suit such an approach, for it would always imply that readers 'miss' things in the text, such as their deeper meanings" (1995:6)*

Hermes acknowledged the attraction of the genre of woman's magazines assessing it as addressing the many parts of a women's personality; for example 'practical self,' or 'worried partner or parent self' or 'cultured person self' which are given form through the different repertoires used by a reader. She highlighted that many women described the pleasure gained



from reading magazines, enjoying them as a source of distraction and entertainment even though they felt guilty about almost colluding with magazines that portray and perpetuate a very patriarchal view of life where an ultimate concern for women is romantic love. She set out to do an ethnographic study, but ended up doing a genre study, using “*readers shared references to structures of meaning in relation to different kinds of women’s magazines.*”

(1995: 208) In fact, when Hermes interviewed readers they found magazines much less meaningful than popular culture research had suggested. She believed that this was because magazines slot into daily life. Although Hermes’s methodology was flawed, as by her own admission her sample was biased (one of her two case studies consisted of her mother).

Nonetheless, like Radway (1984), Hermes noted the escapism involved. Unlike early McRobbie, Hermes comments on the readers more complex relationship with magazines that went beyond the idea that they are purely the seller of oppressive ideology containing the morphostasis of cultural conditioning.

Radway (1984) was interested to find out how readers interacted with romantic novels. In her study of American women in Smithton, she found that readers best expressed their view of reading as a chance to ‘escape’. Radway interviewed the readers in depth where they expressed the function of ‘relaxation’ and ‘self indulgence,’ a chance to use reading as a ‘restorative agent’

“...however romances are not picked up idly as an old magazine might merely to fill otherwise unoccupied time. Rather romance reading is considered so enjoyable and beneficial by the women that they deliberately work it in to busy schedules as often and as consistently as they can.” (Radway; 1996:457).

Radway’s readers were often socially constrained within their home life but were given credence about their understanding that the romantic books did not represent life but they could be used as a means of escapism. So, the audience studies blunted the force of the message since readers were more active and critical in their acceptance or rejection of the messages; however, audience studies have much to say about agents but relatively little to say about the producers (of course they were reacting to producer dominated work) to which the chapter now turns.

## **Producers**

Hesmondhalgh (2002) set out to evaluate and explain the changes in the cultural industry in the UK considering three main aspects.

Firstly, within the overview he assessed the cultural industries by definition. Situating this within previous academic literature on culture, he touched on what the media produce, ownership and control.

Secondly, he noted huge changes in terms of policy over the 80s-90s with what he regarded as a shift towards global associations between different types of media companies, although he also suggests that there are a greater number of smaller creative enterprises. He notes that there has been considerable convergence of cultural industries but as yet no evidence of a tangible knowledge economy.

Thirdly, he noted the set of environmental conditions within creative personnel work. He stated that creative personnel or to use his term 'symbols creators' were granted more autonomy than other workers, and because good symbolic creators are at a premium, the cultural industries could not control the market. Hesmondhalgh highlighted a particular autonomy afforded to creative workers in the 90s

However as White (1970,1977), Braithwaite and Barrell (1988), and Gough-Yates (2003) had noted the increased use of market research in magazines changed the role of the editors, making them less powerful. The autonomy of the editors as a representative or intermediary, for the required target audience, has decreased as attitude surveys have become more sophisticated. Managers and publishers who perceive they can gain an element of control positively welcome this change. Hesmondhalgh (2002) is more concerned with the structural influences within the media industries, however he attributes much of the success of creative products to individuals or star producers rather than attributing the creative or editorial team with influence. The designers on magazines are reduced to the roll of paste-up artists with no input in the design, content or success of the magazine product.

Crewe (2003) argued that informal knowledge held by individual practitioners is decisive in forming a magazine. He looked at the lifestyles, identities and motivations of producers.

Crewe interviewed many of the leading editorial staff on men's magazines. This was carried out at a particular and very important moment in time. He charted the men's sector from its start through to its eventual shake up. His book viewed the structural and some cultural conditions that produced the rise of 'Men and Lads' magazines. In addition, Crewe considered how the editorial team reached their audience through their journalistic identity. His research was established through understanding the cultural conditions surrounding the publications and their launch processes and also through understanding how the producers perceived the process. He was keen to understand how the magazines adapted and shifted with the cultural changes as well as the confines of their economic constraints. He established *Loaded* as a 'lads mag' pivotal to the development of the men's market, when he assessed the different developmental stages of magazines launches, within the competing titles in the men's magazines market. Crewe (2003) related how masculinity, particularly working class masculinity was used to develop the new magazine sector. Crewe stressed that through his series of case studies he was able to show how magazine are more than just the product of group practices and organizational needs. He asserts strongly that magazines are influenced by the knowledge, motivations and intentions of the people who work on them (Crewe, 2003). These intentions are constrained and enabled by the determinants that influence the sector as a whole.

However the editorial staff consciously constructed their own persona, *Loaded* was originally aimed to launch into a market for readers in social classes of C2 and D. The trade magazine *Campaign* (15.10.99) supports this "...a magazine that spoke to them and not at them, a magazine which unashamedly celebrated working-class Britain: football, drinking sex and getting into 'interesting situations'." However within a year of being launched it was revealed that 73% of *Loaded's* readers had a social class profile of ABC1 (National Readership Survey, 1995). This was not the publisher's original aim but a surprise that they were delighted with, as this profile could be guaranteed to bring in profitable advertising revenue. From *Loaded's* conception to its launch the editorship hadn't changed. James Brown the editor and Tim Southwell his deputy had chameleon like qualities which enabled them to

adapt their persona in order to fit with the required reader profile. Aiming for the lower readership profile had undoubtedly helped legitimate the masculinity of the title. It was not the reincarnating of a woman's magazine, but a legitimate product aimed specifically at men. Crewe's work was extensive and well developed although he does not self-identify as a critical realist, his treatment of cultural and structural influences make us able to read this work in a critical realist manner.

Crewe (2003) shows how the intent of the magazine editorial staff was critical to the success of *Loaded*. Like Hesmondhalgh (2002) he shows how it is not just the editor involved. These staff were cultural producers; however the cultural producers can get it wrong- they aimed at the wrong market - sometimes they get an even better one (Like *Loaded*). Then we see how the editor personified his readership like in the earlier work on woman's magazines (White 1970). In the case of *Loaded*, the chameleon-like re-adjustment tends to undermine the image of the powerful cultural producer in favour of an image of cultural producers as surfers trying to catch a cultural wave.

## **CULTURE**

Culture is a very broad area and one of the major issues in social theory (see Williams 1958). The initial premise of this thesis was to look at magazine launches through Archer's morphogenesis using structure and agency. However as my thesis progressed it became clear that, in addition to structure and agency, culture was essential to explain magazine launches. Including culture could quite feasibly extend this thesis into several volumes, as the central premise is to uncover the mechanisms behind magazine launches therefore I intend to follow Archer's example. When she was constructing theory, she argued that she sought to "...travel light...most readers will probably be surprised by the lack of any reference to large chunks of the literature on culture" (Archer 1996: xiii). Archer (1996) derived her concept of culture from Popper (1978). Popper's notion of reality, split the world into three separate categories; world one has physical entities like objects; world two has mental events and world three has knowledge, which may be objective. It is world three that Archer used to ground her notion of

culture, where knowledge exists outside an actual, physical entity. Nevertheless this information is subjectively framed. Popper (1978) viewed knowledge as objective, but it was entwined with a subjective ontological status. This influenced Archer's definition of culture. Especially her concept of a cultural system where there is an objective element to culture, which does not depend on the judgment of social actors (Archer 1996). Archer's cultural system is the product of thought systems, and the "prepositional register of society" (1996: 105)

Archer's (1996) culture comprises two elements: cultural systems, that is in effect the components of cultural conditioning; and socio-cultural interaction, which is the actual relationship between cultural agents

She uses the morphogenetic cycle to explain culture and agency in a similar fashion to structure and agency. Using the morphogenetic approach (1996), she subdivided culture into socio-cultural interaction (S-C), which is akin to agency, and cultural systems (CS), which is akin to structure. She reasons that this model allows for the interaction between socio-cultural interaction and the cultural system. Culture (the combination of CS and S-C) can exist with both a knowing subject, and an unknowing subject, allowing for a depth ontology. Archer is interested in Culture as a meta-theoretical device whereas much of the literature that my work is situated in has its roots in a slightly different definition of culture as a theoretical field.

In this section the intention is not to comment on the enormity and variety of work produced surrounding culture, but in basic terms it is necessary to mention some of the major works that have influenced the literature review in order to acknowledge the different emphasis that has surrounded the problems associated with culture within sociology, cultural studies, and media studies in order to situate my thesis.

Culture within sociology is not merely a part of society but an influential form. The significance and interaction of culture to social life as a whole, has been the subject of a wide body of research during the twentieth century ranging from; Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, to Raymond Williams, and Pierre Bourdieu. These authors have influenced the

researchers that write around the subject of magazines. The literature that has influenced this work ranges in subject area from business and cultural studies and sociology where authors are interested in different aspects of the cultural realm. Peterson (1979), Peterson and Anand (2004), Du Gay and Prike (2002) for example, are interested in the cultural system. Nixon (2003), Mort (1996) and Di Maggio and Powell (1983) all write about cultural practices within the cultural system. Jackson, Lowe, Millar and Mort (2000) and Du Gay and Prike (2002), are interested in social practices.

It is almost impossible to look at the launch of magazines without touching on the cultural domain. Those authors writing about the cultural economy, touch on issues that are relevant to magazines. Cultural economy theorists are interested in the interaction between the cultural and the economic realms. This definition of culture falls within a very specific confine, narrower than Archer's definition, but which covers work on the creative and cultural industries, mainly concentrated on the area of cultural production. There are a number of edited books like, for example, Du Gay and Prike (2002) or Jackson, Lowe, Millar and Mort (2000) where the latter are interested in commercial cultures setting out in a series of chapters, studies surrounding the context of commercial culture. However these edited books cover topics of commercial cultures and therefore do not have a central argument with a particular thesis on culture. Instead individual chapters examine very specific phenomena whilst drawing on a wide variety of disciplines from sociology, business studies, geography and economics, each building on their own discipline, with little attempt to reach across to other disciplines. Their areas of interest are wide being concerned with gender, cultural production or the organisation of the firm; this literature therefore produces a plethora of unconnected arguments.

### **Culture as a concept in the magazine literature**

There are two fairly traditional ways of looking at culture (Jack, 2002). The first associated with the cultural economists, views culture as an epiphenomena; where markets and structural environments are economic entities based on certain conditions that are separate from the ideological aspects of society, hence the ideological aspect of society is attributed to being an

outcome of economic relations. For example Peterson (1979, 2004) was concerned with organisations that produce and handle culture. Looking at six facets of production (which are technology, law, regulation, industry structure, organisation structure, occupational careers, and markets) he was interested in the interaction that produces culture at the institutional level, not at the level of the individual. In the same way Di Maggio and Powell (1983) built on Weber's 'iron cage' to show how organisations become similar to each other over time, which they called isomorphism. They named four isomorphic mechanisms that enable this to happen which are competitive, coercive, mimetic, and normative. Competition comes from Weber but the other three reflect social conformity. These authors are looking at mechanisms, but not at agents, and are trying to explain why all firms look alike. They conclude this is the result of imitation as a way of building legitimacy. This view reifies the organisations.

Alternatively the other view, which is more common in cultural studies, regards culture as social where cultural relations influence economic activities. In this view the economy only exists through the discursive practices of groups of agents within structural constraints. The agents act together and pursue their individual or group objectives. For example, Du Gay and Prike's (2002) edited chapters focus on the cultural sector of the economy. They attempt to bring together two elements; the work on organisations; and markets, which can be viewed as the relationship between the structural and material realms. The authors are also concerned with the production of goods and the subjective value laden significance of them, which is construed via practices and processes, carried out by agents. This process they view as cultural. Nixon (2003) also writes about the creative environment. *Advertising Cultures* was an ethnographic study of the work place culture in an advertising agency, looking at the unique relationship between copywriter and creative (art director), who are hired and fired as a unit (Nixon 2003). Their success is intertwined. So Nixon viewed the identity, competitiveness and collaboration in the work place between this team. Similarly using Foucault's theory of power, Mort (1996) looked at the interaction between different social groups and how in his view, power is inherent within consumption. He viewed culture as social where cultural relations influence economic activities. Mort (1996) concentrated on a

commodity specific cycle, and the creation of masculine identity. He explored a very specific market aimed explicitly at young men or “the new man”, which he views through the photography and the representation found in style magazines particularly, *The Face* magazine. Viewing the spectacle and representation of the ‘new men’ as the new market developed and noting the influences of the individuals working on the magazines like the stylist Ray Petri, and his influence on male dress; he uncovers a strong influence that single individuals have in new market areas. Mort points quite clearly to the very London specific influence of style.

However this work doesn’t investigate the notion of who gave the particular individuals a creative platform and why those individuals were chosen rather than others. This work views the individuals as being creative rather than perceiving creativity as a group effort like for example Becker (1982)

Research on culture that has influenced my work on the magazine industry tends to incorporate the magazine industry within a broader sector than the specific field of magazines. The research falls into five main areas; work which has organised the cultural industries as a theme; work which focuses on the cultural economy as economic networks (Du Gay and Prike, 2002): the production of cultural artefacts or expressive symbols (Peterson, 1979, 2004): culture in production (Nixon, 2003): and the nature of creative labour (Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010).

Culture has been defined by these groups in various ways for example it was defined neatly for social science by Peterson (1979, 2004) as consisting of four kinds of elements: values, norms, beliefs, and expressive symbols. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) use a different conceptual model provided by Miège (1989) who subdivides the cultural and media field by their type of cultural end products. Miège is particularly concerned with the conditions of workers within the cultural industries. Hesmondhalgh uses Miège (2010) in order to view the way that power and autonomy is negotiated, and also the different logics within the cultural and creative industries. Therefore, a number of authors view culture as the key to understanding magazines as cultural production.



However, in this thesis, culture has been subdivided into its constituent parts.

My work is concerned to view how magazine launches can be viewed through morphogenesis. Archer contends that there is a cultural system, which is the product of thought processes and the theories, beliefs, values and arguments. In addition there is socio cultural interaction a process, which can be independent of the cultural system, working over a different temporality. Culture and magazines are a product of both (see Archer, 1996).

### **Conclusion**

In summary this chapter has critically discussed the body of academic literature, and highlighted the main areas of limitations found in it. Firstly, there is a limited lens of analysis with which magazines have been viewed. The early work and essentially the major contributors to the area have utilised a feminist/gender theory or cultural production, and these works have influenced the thesis. However the main concerns of their work has been concerned with the messages that magazines produce, which is not an area that this thesis will extend to. Secondly the later work takes into account a situation where agents are able to react to their determinants but are not acting dynamically . This broadly builds on the previous feminist literature but extends to discuss the additive nature of agents reacting to their environment. There is a scarcity of literature that views the agents as dynamically interacting with their environment and changing the environment that surrounds them. A few scholars have recently begun extending this discussion within the debate to consider a broader dimension noting an interaction either from a mainly macro perspective (Hesmondhalgh, 2002) or micro perspective (Crewe, 2003) but none have looked at the interaction between the two. There is also a lack of work that extends beyond the editor of a magazine, there is an assumption in the literature that the editor is the face of the magazine, and everything within its covers is solely attributable to that individual. It latterly became clear that this thesis was covering the production of a cultural product, which by its nature was neither structural nor a haphazardly produced property by agents. It was an ideological form, with constraints and enablements, produced within a structurally constrained environment by groups of agents,

which needed to be viewed through a cultural lens. In consequence this study critically examines conceptually and empirically the interaction between magazines and their environment. As such the exclusion of the interaction between culture, structure, and agents represents a gap in the literature.

This chapter has built upon literature spanning a fifty-year period but it is worth reiterating a point made by Gauntlett (2002) that media contexts change all the time, he noted that other constraints like identity change more slowly. Therefore as Gauntlett suggests it would be a mistake not to acknowledge this “*change and mix together studies from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s as if they were providing accounts of fixed phenomena*” (2002:256). In essence, I am aware that with in the context of the media, the message and the environment has changed considerably over this period, which in turn influenced the producers who work on the magazines. Although critical of previous work on magazines, I acknowledge it was written with different constraints. This literature review is produced with the current constraints, it identifies a lack of studies concerned with the interaction between the agents and their environment, which in turn effects the environment.

Publishers are constantly looking for new markets, or manipulating an overall market share, which may constitute redefining existing ones, in order to outmanoeuvre their competitors. When I started this thesis the current trend was celebrity publishing. When the market is at saturation point, publishers will have to come up with another concept, and technology has increased the speed of change. Nevertheless, most importantly I need to be aware of these changes in my final analysis as my study was conducted over eight years and almost a decade is a long time in publishing.

Whilst, this chapter has looked at the previous literature on magazines through the lens of critical realism, the next chapter establishes how the methods used throughout this thesis are congruent with my reading of critical realism.

## Chapter three

### **Methodology**

There is not a well established and accepted method for ‘doing’ critical realism. Most of the work surrounding critical realism concerns theoretical issues, although methods are mentioned by authors such as Sayer (2000) who favours case studies, while there is much debate there is no landmark study or well quoted cohesive body of empirical work that utilises critical realist methods. For this reason this chapter will initially reiterate the theoretical implication of using critical realism, looking at why it was considered suitable as a perspective, and how the methods congruent with my reading of critical realism tie in with the links to established knowledge. The methodological requirements of critical realism are reiterated followed by the rationale for my particular case. The chapter then goes on to discuss the particular methods used and the limitations that were encountered while using the methods relevant to this particular theoretical framework. Finally I discuss mixed methods as a suitable method. Firstly, I cover the existing literature in order to set the context.

#### **Existing Literature**

As I discovered in my literature review certain genres of magazines are reasonably well studied from particular perspectives. The research questions that previous studies asked are in accordance with different types of ontology, more commonly using single units of analysis focused on either the individual or the structures. Early macro analysis emphasized structure, see for example feminists like Friedan (1963) Tuchman (1978) or early McRobbie (1977) who asked how woman’s magazines influence women as a group. More latterly researchers have been interested in the micro-level of analysis, for instance audience studies like Hermes (1995), who interviewed individuals about how they interacted with magazines.

Overwhelmingly, the previous literature has tended to concentrate on the issues from a gender

perspective (Crewe, 2003; Nixon and Du Gay, 2002; Jackson and Brookes 1999; Jackson et al. 2001; Hermes, 1995; Mc Robbie, 1991, 1999, 1998, 2002; McCracken, 1982, 1993; Freidan 1963; Ferguson, 1983; Winship, 1987). The particular feminist literature surrounding magazines could be broadly identified as an emancipatory theory with earlier work like McRobbie (1977) and Winship (1987) taking a socialist/ feminist stance and later work like Hermes (1995) talking a poststructuralist view. The methods used in the previous literature reflect this interest in the ideological argument, exposing the discourse of woman's suppression and examining the influence of magazines on their audience. A much smaller literature has examined theoretical aspects of the cycle of production (Du Gay, 1993, 1997). Remarkably few studies have discussed how those within magazines work, with the exception of Gough-Yates (2003) and Mort (1988). However, White (1970, 1977) from an industry perspective produced a substantive overview of the area. White's work although written some time ago, is probably the closest in methodology to this thesis, although her project was much more comprehensive, ostensibly due to the time and government sponsors that she was writing for. Her project is not explicitly critical realist but the approach is broadly consistent with this view of a realist ontology. White (1970, 1977) used mixed methods and carried out numerous interviews with the editors and other notable dignitaries connected to publishing using a qualitative approach. She employed quantitative methods to analyze the industry performance. Her motive for doing this was to obtain the editors worldview in order to support the empirical findings. However, she did not try to explain the mechanisms behind the tendencies that she discovered but preferred to use numerical information as evidence, and the interviews to support how an event happened in order to further endorse her empirical findings. Whilst this may reflect a triangulation strategy, my research differs to White (1970) in that it is more focused on the interaction between the structure, agency and culture; with the aim of explaining the causal conditions that create generative mechanisms to operate. I consider the use of a depth ontology important as it implies there are some unobservable elements to an event.

White (1970) focused on the magazine publishing industry, utilizing the views of what might be claimed to be a representative sample of significant actors within the magazine industry, through elite interviewing (Grant 2000). In contrast, this study focused on launches of new magazines, and re-launches, within the industry. Launches and re-launches are the most obvious point of change or interaction between the environment and the agents on the magazine within magazine publishing, which is why this particular aspect was identified for study. This study investigated the understanding and meaning that magazine personnel placed on launches; the individuals that work on launches; and the interaction of launches within the business structure of the magazine industry and the wider context. To reiterate, there is little that has been written that views the interaction between the employees and their structured environment.

There is no existing work on magazines that takes a critical realist perspective. Critical realism is an appropriate methodological perspective; a focus of this thesis is to view the different types of interaction between magazines and their environment, and the agents. I endorse the realist position with both transitive and intransitive elements therefore a Critical realist approach is appropriate for this purpose.

### **Critical Realism**

Bhaskar developed the philosophy of critical realism on which Archer (1995) based her morphogenetic model of structure and agency. It is appropriate to cross reference both in order to devise a robust methodology. The current interest in critical realism can be attributed to the philosophy of Roy Bhaskar (1975) and the writings of Archer et al., (1998), Sayer (2000), Layder (1997) and Pawson and Tilley (1997). The methods used in this chapter and those that informed the research design are rooted in critical realism. Bhaskar (1998) developed a particular philosophy of a new realist ontology, which he would claim is intransitive, essentially this stipulates that the natural world exists regardless of human activity. Where positivists would produce a hypothesis and test the theory deducing their conclusion in order to predict an event; and interpretists may undertake to build theory from

data using induction in order to explain their findings; Bhaskar would suggest that both these examples may describe a phenomena but not the causal laws that make it happen and that an approach based on retrodution would provide a more complete explanation (Danermark et al 2002)<sup>9</sup>.

There is much debate surrounding the use of methods most appropriate for critical realism as neither Bhaskar nor Archer elaborate on small scale research projects, Bhaskar suggests multidisciplinary research teams which is neither practical nor applicable for this thesis.

While Archer uses one off interviews with individuals for demonstration purposes in order to add examples to her theoretical claims. The aim of this study was to follow a critical realist methodology as defined broadly by Bhaskar and Archer as they were originator and early adopted of the philosophy. However other authors have influenced the debate. In a treatise with realist methods, Sayer (2000) distinguished between intensive and extensive methods, he implicitly associates extensive methods with positivism. Intensive methods, he asserts, start with the individual, which he perceives is largely ignored within extensive research methods. He justified case studies (intensive research) as the preferred method for critical realism, as “intensive research is strong on causal explanations” (2000:21). However this does not address the structural context within which the case studies take place. I argue it is the use of mixed methods that help to counterbalance any weakness in any single method. In addition rather than arguing for any one methodological process over another my aim was to be consistent with Bhaskar’s philosophy as the founder of critical realism. Broadly this describes the structural context, then moving to a more concentrated method for the agential activity. Bhaskar has two particular processes that he suggests should be followed according to the situation. The ‘DREIC’ process should be followed within a closed system, which is more consistent with science.

**Description of a non-random pattern**

**Retrodution to a structure**

**Eliminate fake explanations**

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<sup>9</sup> Retrodution asks what has to happen for ‘x’ to be possible.

Identify what produces results

Correct previous knowledge

‘REIC’ could be used in an open system and is therefore more appropriate for social science (

See Hartwig 2007 for a fuller explanation. p195)

**Resolution-** analyse multiple causes and resolve them into components

**Redescription-** describing components in a scientific way

**Retroduction-** (the cause), with reference back to generative mechanism that happened before the described outcome.

**Eliminate-** those possible mechanisms that do not apply

Identify the causes and verify the mechanisms

Correct and augment knowledge in an iterative style.

Archer is not as lucid as Bhaskar in terms of methodology. Archer would suggest that methodologically structures are viewed first as “ realism itself is committed to an explanatory frame work which acknowledges and incorporates (a) pre-existent structures as generative mechanisms (b) their interplay with there objects possessing causal powers and liabilities proper to them in what is a stratified social world, and (c) non predictable but none the less explicable outcomes arising from interaction between the above” (Archer et al 1998:337) However, both Bhaskar and Archer emphasize: firstly, breaking the initial problems down into its component parts, and then Bhaskar suggests re-describing the problem in order to clear away unnecessary baggage or preconceived ideas. The second stage that Bhaskar describes is the process of retroduction where the re-described phenomena is broken down into the parts that have to exist in order for the phenomena to happen. These are the unacknowledged conditions as well as the obvious ones. Thirdly, False explanations then need to be eliminated. The final process is to identify what produced the results, which meant the emergent properties of structure, culture and agency, would be identified and the situation re-described according to the findings.

### **The Rationale**

The aim of the study is to try to unpack the process of the interaction between the three strata of culture, structure and the individual. Archer’s framework analytically separates structure

and agency and then the relationship between culture and agency, the relationship between the two pairs is an aspect of morphogenesis that Archer (1986) did not fully dissect. Using Archer's framework commits the research to be informed by critical realism. This means that the methods need to be geared towards identifying the causal generative mechanisms that, within a certain context, would bring about the outcome of a magazine launch.

This is a small scale study and was limited both in its ability to be able to gain access to the creative individuals involved and also by financial constraints, which hampered the purchase of the only available complete data set itemizing the launches of magazines. Information and research on launches is commercially sensitive and available data is expensive due to the ability of research companies to sell it at a market value to other industry players.

#### Methods specific to Archer's theory of structure

Given that this thesis is an interrogation of Archer's theory the next section lays out the specific implications for methods from Archer's theory. For Archer (1995), unlike other theorists, the theoretical concepts of structure and agency are relative and not fixed since the terms are relative; it removes any need for meso. In methodological terms structure happens at different levels and is not a predefined level for example there is not a specific level of 'the nation', or a level of 'the publishing firm' terms are fluid depending on the situation within which the description is taking place. Archer uses a morphogenetic cycle for all levels of explanation in social reality.

#### Methods for Archer's theory of agency

Methodologically the implication is that the interaction between structure and agency is a key to explanation. Archer is concerned with both the subjects (agents) and the objects (structure). As previously iterated in the theoretical chapter, critical realists perceive that structures are reproduced by human activity and the individuals are as a consequence, facilitated or inhibited in the actions they take. In other words individuals are fallible therefore interviewing alone would not be sufficient There are influences that agents are aware of, and can vocalize, these may be termed the empirical, but also influences that are unseen by the agent. The actions that agents take are influenced by the knowledge that individuals have of



their cultural and structural environment. It is inevitably partial, producing tendencies, which influence the way agents behave. The emergent properties of agents influence and affect the social and cultural realm.

#### The importance of time.

Archer (1995) views the concepts of structure and agency as an analytical dualism. This is possible because 'structure' and 'agency' function in stages over different periods of time. Structures and culture endure over a long time, this coupled with a depth ontology suggests again that interviews alone would only produce a partial explanation. Archer (1995) refers to culture and structure as taking place over the 'long duree', while the action of agents may be viewed over a much shorter time frame. Therefore in this thesis structure and agency will be considered separately allowing for the different time aspects.

This meant a number of magazines should be studied, so that the structural environment would vary as far as possible using the same period of time, similarly with genre namely consumer magazines, although the genus within consumer magazines varies. When interviewing individuals they had all worked for a number of titles and different varieties of magazines, which meant their examples were often drawn from a range of examples.

#### Why these particular methods

Given that Critical Realists are concerned with a depth ontology, it was important to use more than one method to research the data; the research aims to uncover the unobservable generative mechanisms that affect the outcomes. This has clear implications for the methodology. In the first place, secondary data is at the level of events. It can show us that there are patterns that require explanation (Lawson 1997) but it cannot provide the explanation itself, although it may be able to re-describe the data showing important elements. This is because the social world and magazine launches take place within an open system where there may be several or many generative mechanisms and contextual effects that are simultaneously affecting the events concerned, in addition it is almost impossible in social science to conduct closed experiments.

It was evident that it would be useful to use a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to eliminate causes and re describe the issues. Mixed methods enabled the views of the agents to be collected providing an understanding of their environment within which they function and allowed me to compare this understanding to the structural context within which they operate. This activity is inevitably situated within a cultural context, as is the individuals identity and social experience which is also used as a factor. For example, it is necessary to obtain both an understanding of a process from the individual's perspective as well as identifying the common patterns and regularities found within a particular group of people that are found within a specific environment. To study both these points of reference would enable me to assess the likely generative mechanisms that would be active in enabling and constraining particular agents and their environment. Obviously the interaction between agents and structure takes place within the environment of an open system, where the isolation of generative mechanisms is not possible or practical. The interaction of social events are the product of a variety of interacting mechanisms which are not isolated, thereby complex interaction is constant and the ability of these mechanism to obstruct or collaborate with each other is always a likelihood. The chance of certain interactions being influenced by other dormant or active generative mechanism makes it impossible to claim any kind of probability factor or total empirical accuracy, which is not my aim. However my aim and the methods chosen enable the explanation of the factors surrounding the question of which aspect can be preferenced structure or agency (See Archer 1990) or indeed a mixture of the two, and if it is a combination of the two it would be useful to discover if the combination is additive or interacting.

My initial research question was 'Is it the structure or the agents that affect the life chances of new launches in the magazine industry?' To answer this I might have made empirical observations about the magazines from secondary data from industry; on companies that produced launches and the articles from the named spokesperson from the staff that started the launches with additional information about the external business environment. However, this secondary data collection would be unlikely to provide me with a very complete answer,

because this is at the level of events within an open system and because there are likely to be other factors effecting the launch of magazines, for example budgets, marketing, how well the team work together, the external political, economic, social and technological environment, even how well the idea of the launch itself fitted the target audience. Although difficult, it might be possible to obtain some of these factors by collecting them from secondary data sources. However, primary data could be collected from the individuals concerned would start to build a more complete picture. Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest that the first step in a realist analysis of an intervention was to interview those who are 'closest to the action' to gain their views about what they believe they are doing. Although an individual's view is not a complete picture as previously noted they would have inside information that would be unavailable though other sources both political and economic, particularly if a right time, right place scenario, which is more to do with the current fashionable culture was considered a key factor. This is an important source of information about phenomena that is not available from secondary sources. Interviews however are not perfect when trying to build a complete picture, although they are extensively used by some critical realists (see Archer, 2003). All of this discussion supports the use of mixed methods.

### **MIXED METHODS.**

Researchers who combine different methods to yield data on a single topic describe their approach as mixed methods (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009). As Brewer and Hunter (1989) point out, many of the best sociological studies of the twentieth century have been based on multiple sources of data; therefore they call for a mixed methods research strategy. Mixed methods research is common in many fields of sociology, although this form of research is often described by different names: mixed methods, multi-methods, combined methods (Ragin, Nagel and White 2004), or integrating quantitative and qualitative methods (Fielding & Fielding 1986). Characterizing mixed methods is not straightforward; what is quantitative and what is qualitative is a point of substantial debate. Small (2011) distinguishes three separate foci: the types of data, the types of analysis and the data collection. Moreover, some

researchers understand the problem as variable analysis versus case studies (e.g. Ragin, 1987), then the core analytical issue concerns combining the data. Creswell and Plano Clark (2008) say mixed methods research still struggles to be seen as legitimate. Both quantitative and qualitative elements of the study have their own issues of legitimation which are often compounded when the two components are placed together, causing a threat of yielding to additive or multiplicative integration; where mixed methods researchers must satisfy the standards for both qualitative and quantitative research giving no allowance for the additional validity given by the triangulation of findings. Furthermore, this is compounded by debates within mixed methods and a need for agreed techniques.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2008, 2011) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003, 2009, 2010), leading exponents in the mixed methods field, categorised the debate surrounding mixed methods into five overlapping eras. Firstly, the formative period ran from the 1950s - 1980, this period marked the initial interest in combining methods. Secondly, in the 1970-1980 period a paradigm debate ensued because researchers considered the philosophical and epistemological assumptions associated with different methods of data collection to be incommensurable. The later 1980s debated the purpose of mixed methods - a 'procedural development period'. Fourthly, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) perceived a period of advocacy and expansion, spawning many books and even journals focussed on mixed methods. Finally, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) characterised the current period from 2005 as a reflexive period. Today, mixed method research is recognised as increasingly important right across the social sciences.

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) suggest three main reasons to employ mixed method research. Firstly, mixed method research can simultaneously address a range of confirmatory, exploratory or quantitative and qualitative approaches. So, it can realise more complete accounts of a phenomenon. Secondly, mixed methods provide stronger inferences because influences in one strand of a study can be detected in another strand; thus, giving greater confidence in the findings. Thirdly, mixed method research provides the opportunity for a greater assortment of divergent views, which can be compared and contrasted. The

complexity of many research questions lends weight to the call for mixed methods research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2009). In this case, the complex nature and different aspects of magazine publishing led to a mixed methods approach but there are a number of mixed methods designs to choose from.

### **Which mixed methods**

For this thesis, the choice of which mixed methods research design adopted, was based on the research question and the purpose of the research. As Creswell et al (2011) point out the design and conduct of any two mixed method studies will never be exactly alike, although they share some common principles. The key issues Creswell suggests, are matching the design to the problem and being explicit about the reasons for choosing mixed methods. The first issue is in matching the design to the problem. The theoretical stance chosen for the thesis called for a mixture of methods that was able to address different types of problems broadly known as dynamic approaches. The two methods chosen were a specific variant of the dynamic approach known as a 'synergic approach' (Hall and Howard, 2008; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Within a synergistic approach two, or more, aspects interact, combining these aspects produces a sum greater than the parts. This is because synergistic research focuses on the contextual factors that effect outcomes, which were produced by interpreting historical time series data, combined with qualitative data which drew out participant's interpretations and patterns. This was carried out with a clear objective to interrogate Archer's (1995) morphogenesis using the example of magazine launches; therefore, the data and findings were communicated within an established framework of mixed method research. Consequently, the methods were conducive to the critical realist framework as explained in this chapter.

A second characteristic of mixed methods is the degree to which the data is nested. When multiple data is collected from the same individual, organisation or entity, this complementary, nested data can provide depth. However, I used a non-nested approach as recommended by Small (2011) because it works well with cultural perceptual factors or when

looking at a “*community, network or market where diverse sources are more important than multiple data points*” (Small, 2011: 69). In studying magazines through morphogenesis the structural environment should be studied first, the non-nested approach stressed diversity rather than obtaining multiple data from the same individual units because structure is a multifaceted strata. The causal effect of one structural influence is insufficient for a critical realist explanation as the material cause of structure results from multiple causes; in addition critical realism recognises that not all potential causes are activated.

#### Defining the pre-existing structures

The initial task was to describe the problem, Magazine launches are in essence the holy grail of the magazine industry, and they can reap massive rewards and benefits for the individual company. In addition the prestige that may then be attributed to individual staff after a phenomenally successful launch can ensure a career for life. Launches are important for individual companies profits but they are also important for the industry as a whole giving new life and raising the profile of the industry, and ensuring a continuing readership for the future. It is not unheard of for the sales of a whole niche sector to increase when a new high profile launch enters the market.

In my case these structures may be identified as for example pressure from advertisers and an available market. Having identified the possible structural causes, it is usual to eliminate extraneous causes in order to identify the generative mechanisms. With the generative mechanisms identified it would be helpful to discover which were real mechanisms and which were the actual events\*<sup>10</sup>. Having established this it would then be possible to view the structural relationship and establish in my case at what point the higher order of dependence from the companies was reliant on the lower orders of individual agents, allowing me to reflect on the interaction between the editorial staff and the companies who employed them. Specifically, chapter 4 discusses the structural context surrounding magazine launches. The structural component of the thesis was approached within that chapter using multiple data

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<sup>10</sup> Danermark(2002) would suggest that there are three levels these are: - *The real* (the depth analysis) the causes that make things happen. *The actual* (the event,) an event even if there is no experience of it. and *the empirical* an event which is recorded.

points to illustrate different levels of analysis, from the perspective of the whole economy to the magazine industry level.

The first data source was at the economic level, secondary time-series data was collected from Office of National Statistics (ONS) and the Print and Publishing Association (PPA). This data showed the relationships between the number of launches of magazines, the advertising spend and the health of the general economy over three decades.

The second data source was at the industry level. Again, secondary data was collected. obtained from British Rates and Data (BRAD) and Nielsen. BRAD provides information on the launch of magazines and the price of advertising within the magazine but it is expensive to purchase. Nielsen provide information on advertising spending on everything from mobile phone providers to cars and breakfast cereals for marketing managers. In collecting robust data, they analyse every magazine that carries a significant advertising spend on consumer goods, which provided a list of individual magazines within defined categories. Their list of magazines is categorised into general interest, women's magazines, and even specialist interest titles. These defined categories changed over time to allow for changes in consumer fashions. Again, this data covered over thirty years and therefore shows changes over time. The importance of taking data over time is consistent with the morphogenetic approach to structural change, as discussed in chapter 4. This type of data helped to answer questions about the change to the magazine categories, and the longevity of each magazine.

This time-series data helped to answer questions concerning the timing of launches over the economic cycle, to assess the generally held belief that magazine launches follow periods of economic boom, when advertising spend is likely to be higher.

Multiple sources of data provided answers to different aspects of the structured context (Small, 2011). Where both sets of contextual data show the structural forces that act upon, but do not determine, the actions of agents.

#### Viewing agency

Conversely, agency is viewed as a separate analytical stratum. Viewing agency highlighted the meanings, reasons, behaviours and experience of respondents who worked on the

launches. Within this aspect of the social strata the important element is the agents understanding of their environment, which would include their motivations as well as their non-motivations and therefore agency was investigated through research interviews. Research interviews enabled the interpretations of the participants to be heard in discussing questions surrounding their aims, and to reflect on their work on magazine launches. This did not always match the information found from the secondary, published data, supporting the mixed methods research design. All these launches would have appeared in some of the aggregate data above. These individuals would have acted within the structured context referred to earlier.

In addition, the usual interviews with editors or spokespeople for magazines were broadened to gain the understanding of the actual magazine producers, and writers.

Some interviewees had worked on more than one launch and flipped between talking about different launches in the interview.

The information required was sensitive and complicated as many participants had signed ‘gagging’ documents to forbid them speaking about their projects, which they considered may pertain to past projects as well. It was also considered useful to be able to elicit responses should interviewees talk about sensitive information. As Fielding and Thomas (2001) suggest “*One study showed that variation in respondents ‘verbosity’ resulted from the willingness of interviewees to probe*” (2001: 134).

#### Interviewing the experts

Scheurich (1995) suggests interviewing may be particularly demanding when interviewing powerful people as they may rephrase or not answer the question asked. My main choice for research methods was semi-structured interviews. Most of the meetings were carried out as face-to-face interviews. The majority of those were carried out in places external to the office environment, like in a café or stations. Two were telephone interviews. Having worked in the industry for over fifteen years, I obviously had a fairly well defined view of the world of magazine publishing. It was difficult not to just test my knowledge of it, since I have been



involved in launches myself. However, the process of discussing and re-describing (where causal mechanisms become more evident) has helped.

In order to control for any bias and my prior knowledge, I could have used a very structured interview (Silverman 1993), however I considered this would probably have just tested my own view of the launch process, and since the purpose of the interview was to gain an understanding of what the respondent believed that they were doing, a more semi-structured interview style was used. Scheunrich (1995) suggests the structured interview is no guarantee of controlling the interview as I found out with my own interviews, not everyone understood the questions I was asking in exactly the same way. I tried writing open-ended questions but I was acutely aware of the importance of myth creation to individuals and how that affects their position in the industry (see Scott and Lyman 1968). I was very concerned not to just give people the chance to spin something that they wanted me to believe. In addition it was in effect a role reversal; where normally the editorial staff have the power in the interview situation this was reversed. Being acutely aware of what I didn't want, influenced me into trying to counter that perceived problem, the result of this was a list of questions for my semi-structured interviews that were quite complex. Initially when I approached some people they would agree to be interviewed, on the condition that they could see the questions in advance, unfortunately having then viewed the questions they would often refuse. The potential interviewees felt the survey required too much thought, it was more in-depth than they expected and couldn't just rely on surface knowledge. Many editorial staff said that they had signed a 'gagging' document on new launches which they didn't want to break, another person said after viewing the questions that 'the questions require me to think it would just take up too much time' obviously this was probably due to looming deadlines on the part of the journalist, although the interviews were timed to take 30 minutes this was perceived as 'too long'. One editorial director, from John Brown, commented that remembering launches that didn't work meant remembering the emotional investment that was produced by staff and then remembering having to sack those people when the project didn't work. On the other hand, she didn't want to talk about successful launches for reason of commercial sensitivity!

Media personnel are a relatively difficult group to study. Studying the underdog or people at risk has different implications of access and vulnerability. However the powerful are hard to access, and having been granted access, gaining enough trust in a short space of time in order to give their real views rather than the publicly acceptable line was difficult. These people have *savoir-faire*, and most perceive academia as irrelevant. I was intensely aware that if not perceived to be on their side I would be given the party line as such.

One wondered whether this was a reflection of the media. It was almost as if reflexivity was dangerous, the quest was to constantly keep moving forward. No doubt these people were probably over worked, and over stimulated, but to suggest that the reason for the lack of reflexivity is a product of un-reflexive capitalism, or Post-Fordism in publishing or the outcome of the 'Just Do It' generation seems too simplistic. It may be that the process of a magazine launch is a well-accepted one with tightly defined routines. As such there is no great benefit from being reflexive about a routinised process. Secondly, which is my preferred view is that the nature of the open system is reflected in the high levels of uncertainty within launches, which leads to a perceived randomness surrounding the success of the new magazine and therefore little benefit to be gained from reflection.

My previous experiences of working in design departments, had certain advantages but also restraints. It provided me with magazine experience and eased my access to interviewees, since finding people who have worked on launches is very difficult, although it had little effect when then persuading them to be interviewed. Many interviewees who I had worked with for a number of years became shy and declined to be interviewed. However, I used these contacts in order to gain access to other interviewees through a snowball procedure, which is a useful approach for sampling a group that is difficult to access (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). However although I always asked interviewees if they knew of anyone else I could talk to very few supplied any contacts. This was useful as the suggestions were often in companies that I hadn't worked for and therefore the interviewee's were completely unknown to me.

Many thousands of media students ring up magazines a year asking for information. National Magazine even had a link on their website specifically for media students, in order to protect their employees from the constant barrage of requests.

Most of the interviewees did not know of my previous experience in the industry, a few I had worked with in the past, so they knew me in my previous role. I didn't go out of my way to explain that I had worked in the business previously. However it became patently obvious by my use of language and questions asked that I had knowledge of the industry and many interviewees were curious and asked my connection. Interviewees unknown to me were thrown by my degree of insight and greater understanding than was expected, which caused them to sometimes ask if I was working in the industry. In one sense this was positive, because it enabled me to have an interview that was more candid, based on some shared understanding of the industry. Thus those who are more familiar with the magazine industry can have a more in-depth discussion (Bruyn, 1966).

Some interviewees got cold feet and changed their mind once I had arrived; however, in one instance I waited in reception for three hours before being given a final excuse. I had to apply some self-examination regarding to potential value bias. My thinking was perhaps influenced by Bourdieu's (1984) suggestion that cultural intermediaries may have a somewhat dismissive attitude towards intellectuals given a lack of requirement for formal educational qualifications within the magazine industries. However, in reality it is probably more to do with straightforward time pressures. Sheurich (1995:246) would argue that the reticence to be interviewed concerns power in the interview situation and typically more power resided with the interviewer than the interviewee, which may be a position that some editorial staff do not want to be in. Cassells (in Lee 1993) suggests that elites are more sensitive to the change in power sharing, as they are keen to maintain their reputation. The problem of the role relationship within the interviews is subject to definition. Essentially, I had no idea what value the interviewees would attach to my current role as researcher as opposed to previous role as an art editor. At the end of my interviews I concluded that my previous experience

legitimated the latter role for some individuals, but as it was over five years previously it was considered irrelevant by others.

During the interviews, I used prompts when gaps in the conversation occurred although if an interviewee did not interpret the question in the way I had intended but answered a different aspect, the question was not always re-phrased or re-asked. This was the case in the first section of the interview, where the first questions were designed to put the interviewees at ease. My aim was to use a generic question to put people at their ease. However it was so broad as to be value laden which threw some people completely. As I become more experienced at interviewing I learned to use body language and my voice to try and convey there was no judgment involved. As I became more experienced and confident the interviews became more conversational.

Patton (1980) described this interview technique as the 'interview guide approach'. Topics and issues were outlined in advance but the interviewee can answer questions in different order depending upon what had previously been discussed. The advantage of this method is that it increases the comprehensiveness of the data although the interview itself remains fairly conversational (Patton, 1980). It was the conversational interviews that were most interesting, again re-iterating that it was the interviewees understanding of the situation, structure and culture and their agency that was important.

My interviewees were highly skilled in interviewing since interviews are a key part of the skill set within the industry. Therefore it was in part a conscious decision on my part to try and eliminate too much opportunity for 'spin', or the freedom for turning answers into an opportunity that perpetuated their own cultural myth. Denzin (1981) warns against 'self-presentation' within interviews. At this point my industry knowledge was useful. Having worked in the industry myself I am aware of the power and importance of the cultural myth. I was aware the people that I have chosen to interview are more akin to the elite interview (Gillham 2005:54 Hertz and Imber, 1995). Some of my chosen groups were experts in the interview situation, all candidates without a doubt were intensely aware of the power of the interview although most showed some reticence or reflexivity in the interview itself.

Comments like “that is probably libellous please delete it” were heard. In some respects this showed the differences in conceptions of the interview between a media interview and a research interview. Within the magazine industry, the purpose of the interview is to get a story. It was not my intention to try to trick anyone into giving me a salacious story or commercially sensitive information. However, I had stressed that the interview would not be available in the public domain or that individuals would not be named if quoted.

After an initial trial with the questionnaire it became clear that the questionnaire was taking too long. I had aimed to keep the interviews to around forty minutes. The rational was that when trying to recruit volunteers, I could explain that the interview may take about half an hour, but may be a bit longer depending on how fast one spoke or the length of their responses. I knew that time would be the biggest barrier and as the initial interview pilot took over an hour it had to be cut, the questions were too broad and spreading too thinly across a number of areas. I then decided to concentrate on trying to sort out the influences of structure and the influences of agency.

### **Methods analysis**

The interviews were taped, transcribed and then open coded into three initial categories (Gilbert, 2001). The questions on my questionnaire were categorised into areas, which were mainly devised from the theoretical perspective of morphogenesis, and also Archer’s later work *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation* (2003). The aim was to take the higher level categories of structure and agency and divide them into themes at a lower level, as individuals might described them, for example: social life, technology, autonomy. The first sets of categories were related to structure and agency, where interviewees referred to structural constraints or enablements or actions, such as ‘the publisher wanted this’. These were the themes that were open coded. Instances of structural conditioning, agential action and then structural elaboration were identified within the interview transcripts. So, for example, the enhanced role of advertising in one interview indicated that there was a

structural emergent property. The theoretically relevant distinctions were then categorized from the responses and used as a coding frame for the rest of the questionnaire.

The second set of categories were developed from commonalities between interviews; for example most interviewees mentioned technology in response to the first question which was ‘Has the industry changed much since you have been working in it?’

The coded individual’s interviews were compared in order to establish how similar or different the experiences of individuals were. There was some overlap as utilised data could also provide further description of other categories. Commonalities were colour coded. The interview script is in the appendix.

The final set of categories picked up on responses and opinions that highlighted new areas of insight, which had been overlooked or not emphasised in the literature, for example the change in power in the following quote.

*... the biggest change we are finding is the power that the celebrities have, which they didn’t necessarily, have before. It is very difficult. They demand copy approval and covers and all kind of things that ten years ago, they wouldn’t have bothered about... B.*

It feels more like you are playing their game than they are playing yours.

After the initial categorisation, it became evident that from within these categories themes were emerging, these were noted and further developed.

#### Industry data and demi-regularities

In an ideal world the industry data from British Rates and Data would have been used, although not without fault it is the most extensive data on magazines available, but as a yearly electronic subscription was over £2000 this was prohibitively expensive as it is priced for commercial buyers. Although in theory the annual is available in the British library equally spread between Ireland Scotland, England, and Wales. So for example the British library in London might hold March, July, and November issues, however in practice many editions were missing. Therefore data was gained from Nielsen on the births and survival of magazines as top selling brands, which is available in some university libraries. Although the use of quantitative methods within critical realism is considered controversial by authors such

as Sayer (2000), it was considered necessary. Quantitative data and analysis can provide demi-regularities to be explained; on the other much of the critical realist argument suggests a rather more limited role for quantitative analysis as a causal explanation within an open system. At the least the quantitative data can show the extent of a phenomena Danermark et al (2002) say ‘while seeking and analyzing these mechanism it may be of interest to discover how common a phenomenon is’ (p166). This suggests a very limited role for quantitative data, to show how prevalent magazine launches are. Moreover, within critical realism Lawson (1997) sees a larger role for quantitative data. He argues that over a limited time and place some aspects of a phenomenon will ‘shine through’: demi-regularities are the result. These demi-regularities will be sustained to the extent that an explanation will be needed. This suggests a quantitative role within critical realism that is based on demi-regularities and retrodution. Again Danermark et al suggest ‘Together with Lawson, we claim that social science research is about identifying demi-regularities and from them trying to find explanations’ (Danermark et al., 2002:166). To develop these explanations Danermark et al. (2002) suggest that the more intensive methods like research interviews are important. Hence here is a clear rationale for a mix of intensive and extensive methods within critical realism. In order to assess the demi-regularities and the churn present in the various markets for magazines, which essentially creates a gap for new launches, I collected Nielsen data that identified the top selling magazines brands. Nielsen collect data on advertising spend by the top selling brands, by monitoring a number of different media including TV newspapers and magazines. They report each magazine they have monitored in order to collect their data. The research used this data to analyse the industry. All the magazines are not listed in the Nielsen data which makes it less robust than commercial data such as BRAD. Nonetheless many reputable data sources only define membership of an industry after a certain threshold, like VAT statistics or ABC figures (circulation data) on the number of firms in various industries. The magazines that Nielsen list are not all magazines in existence at a given time but the ones that Nielsen consider the most pertinent for the top selling brands to advertise in. Nielsen data was collected between 1974 - 2008 and the data shows 1319 magazines were listed at any

point in that period, of the 548 that remained in 2008, 53 of those magazine had remained constant throughout the entire twenty four year period. The preliminary analysis of the data was carried out through Excel, indentifying the simple trends then a survival analysis was conducted using STATA. Other data has been collected from the Periodical Publishers Association, DTI, Data monitor and the Advertising Association. PPA data was adjusted in Excel to assess the trends over a longer period of time.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that methods consistent with critical realism are appropriate for the investigation of this project. Broadly speaking, this is because it is a suitable theory to view interaction, I take a realist position where explanations may change and are transitive; yet the social world has intransitive elements, in other words there is an assumption that there is a difference between what appears to be an event, and what actually happened (Marsh and Furlong, 2002).

The chapter presented evidence that the methods used in this study were congruent with the methods used by critical realists. Structural elements were viewed first, as events happen in a pre-existing structural context. The collection of the data used a variety of methods. Firstly, interviews were carried out in order to better understand the events and mechanisms at work as structures are reproduced by human activity; the interviews also highlighted the constraints and enablements placed upon the agents by their structural context.

Secondary, data was equally challenging to acquire, market research companies charge hundreds of thousands of pounds to assess markets, for launch proposals. Ultimately this means that information can only be bought at commercial costs. Nevertheless, data derived from Nielsen was used to approximate the commercial data. The Nielsen data and the secondary data collected from the PPA, AA DTI and Datamonitor helped to understand the demi-regularities that influence the structural emergent properties of magazine launches. These include cultural trends found in the Nielsen data, and a survival analysis of the life chances of magazines.



Methodological literature was used as a guide and to understand the issues surrounding the collection of data and the process of interviewing. As with any study there were numerous shortcoming and constraints. Access was the biggest constraint on the research, this was something I knew would be difficult but even having worked in the industry, I was unaware quite how difficult an issue it would become.

The area that I wished to investigate is by its nature an area that is commercially sensitive; often surrounded in secrecy. A few people that I approached declined to talk to me as they had signed a 'gagging clause' before working on the launch of a publication, which they felt could still be enforced. Gossip is rife when you are working on the inside of the industry.

There is a constant supply of snippets overheard in a lift, or over coffee, or from people who have friends in different places; however, I was no longer part of that environment. I was an unknown, or in the case of people I did know, I was asking for a conscious declaration of information, a relinquishing of control. The conversation I was asking for was confined to a script rather than a chat where leaked bits of information are exchanged which is led and controlled by the giver of information.

In terms of the interviews my experience in magazines was both a hindrance and help. My ability to obtain industry data was also constrained; however overall this study has used both quantitative and qualitative data congruent with critical realist methodology in order to explain the mechanisms and outcomes surrounding magazine launches.

The next chapter sets the scene within which magazine launches are produced, this is the structural environment that constrains or enables a magazine launches success or possible failure.

## Chapter Four

### **The Structural Context of Magazine Launches**

In previous chapters the theoretical implications of critical realism have been discussed. This highlighted of the methodological importance of viewing structure first when trying to explain the mechanisms that cause an event. It has been established that structure and agency occur at different levels of analysis. To reiterate, in Archer's terms structure cannot be reduced to people, nor can it act, but it can influence. Archer (1995) is resolute that material and ideational phenomena have causal powers. These two causal powers work in tandem, with agents acting independently and mediating the action that takes place. This chapter is mainly concerned with the structural elements of the industry but there are cultural influences, which are intertwined.

The chapter sets the structural scene and looks at the empirical examples of structural influences that affect magazines. It relates the structural conditions (T1) within which magazines are launched; at the same time the chapter conveys how structural emergent properties produce a launch imperative.

Material structures have to exist before the agents can interact and practice within them (Archer, 1995). Therefore, companies are not just influenced by other companies or regulation but also by their economic position in relation to the market norm required for launches, and the cultural norms of the companies themselves.

The structural environment of magazines is entwined with other industries. At this point, it may be useful to define the terms used. In industry terms magazines are part of the media. In academic terms magazines are viewed as part of the cultural industries, however in policy terms they are part of creative industries (DTI 2002). Hesmondhalgh (2002) discusses the definition of the cultural industries and succinctly defines them as 'industries that directly involve the production of social meaning' (2002:11). Creative industries, he suggests, tends to

be the term used by government in a policy environment; but the definition is slightly broader including craft based industries. In this chapter the two terms are used to set the scene for the magazine publishing environment, as magazines are relevant in both categories. This means understanding the magazine industry as being involved in both the production of goods as well as the production of social meaning.

The chapter will touch on the influences of entities with contingent relationships, for example government, advertisers and retailers. The next section starts by locating the research in its geographical and technological context. Then the chapter sketches out the way that structural conditioning influences new launches, arguing that the structural conditioning within the magazine industry enables new magazine launches because of the demands for growth from stakeholders coupled with the limited lifecycle of magazines.

### Geographical and Technical Context

Geographical locality appears to be an important structural influence from my interviews and other secondary sources. It is clear that the geographical locality, of being in London and having access to the variety of cultural forms and networks, was an important influence on the editorial personnel.

According to Richard Sharpe (2008) visiting fellow at the University of East London:  
*“Magazine publishing is focused on London. Not only is the vast majority of the UK’s magazine publishers headquartered in London, they also operate out of London. Magazines are created in London and the vast majority of employment in the sector is in London. Eighteen of the top 23 publishers either solely operate out of London or have the bulk of their employment in London. Only two are based out of London: DC Thompson in Dundee and Future Publishing in Bath. Even these two have operations in London”* (Sharpe, 2008: <http://www.uel.ac.uk/risingeast/archive08/essays/sharpe.htm>)

London in the 1980s became a creative hub, which empowered magazine editorial staff in an unprecedented way. Mort (1996) notes the rise in popularity of style magazines during the 1980’s period and related it to the creation of a new expression of masculinity. The creative industry became high profile, the industry became exciting, jobs were competitively fought over and esteem could be gained from being around this creative hubbub. London was

heralded as a creative capital. The advertising industry was also going through periods of creative boom, the British advertising ‘creatives’, rather than the American ‘creatives’ were heralded as the best in the world (York, 2008). British fashion design was in vogue, and international companies poached British-trained product designers. This feeling or view of the creative British hub was encouraged and perpetuated by the London advertising agencies, which were clustered around Soho. The pubs, clubs, fashion and effects of wealth were all situated together, making it easier for social interaction and networks to function. Raymond (2010) expresses the importance of being surrounded by different types of inspiration, in order to pick up a rising trend or zeitgeist.

Access to different cultural forms and cultural networks helps create individuals who are cultural polymaths, constantly picking up changes shifting and editing their knowledge, which enables them to tune into the zeitgeist of the time. The reputation for expertise in creativity affected not only the magazine publishing houses, but also the relationship with advertising agencies. The symbiotic relationship between magazines and advertising can most obviously be viewed from the launch of the *Sunday Times* colour supplement on Feb 4, 1962. After the launch of the *Sunday Times* colour supplement the other major newspapers soon followed with similar titles of their own. Over time the colour supplements became a showcase for the advertising agencies to display their creative talent. By the 1980s their adverts were seen and talked about, which supported the reputation of individual art directors and copy writers, assuring future business for the agency, in addition to providing revenue, readers, and publicity for the magazines themselves.

Like the advertising agencies, newspapers and magazines also tend to have an iterative relationship. Elements of magazines like *Nova* in the seventies were copied in order to provide an individual identity for the colour supplement, and separate their identity from their newspaper. The colour supplements continue to copy some of the editorial formula used in the glossy women’s and men’s magazines today, encouraging movement of employees and informal networks between the staff of newspapers and magazines.

One of my interviewees remembers working for a magazine outside London in the 80s commented:

*“..we weren’t in London, there wasn’t a lot of launches going on, we weren’t quite part of the women’s, ... because we’d go to press trips and you realize it was that whole clique meeting up all the time sort of thing, so that was going on, so you felt like a real minnow. It was all Good Housekeeping and the like, at the time. ...So I think our location out of London, sort of didn’t make us quite a major player and there was no other synergy in the company, because that’s who we were, there was three magazine and a business newspaper and career path wise there was nowhere to go, also in terms of sharing resources and things like that.” SW*

National Magazine, and EMAP were positioned in central London and IPC had moved most of its personnel from various offices like New Oxford Street into a central office on the Southbank. In order to appease the staff that felt they were moving away from the creative hub a lunchtime bus service was run between Kings Reach Tower, on the Southbank and Covent Garden. The creative hub of the time gave the editorial team access to the cultural zeitgeist and with that came a particular power, which in turn influenced the type of launches and the launch process.

My interviewees were asked, ‘Are your social networks important to your job?’

This quote sums up the general tone of the replies:

*‘They are but that is not the reason that I have them, But it does happen that having worked in the industry for twenty years that a lot of my friends are in the industry and its good to know what other people are doing, and what other people are up to, and so people don’t forget you’ MD*

Although this may loosely be giving ‘account’ (Scott and Lyman, 1968), it demonstrates the insecurity of people within the profession, who even after twenty years, and a highly regarded position feel the need to keep tight networks. It is a profession where jobs are easily lost, and there is a lot of personnel movement. This flux encourages strong network ties for support.

In summary, the social context influences publishers’ behaviour and responses. Geography and networks are important. Most publishers have tended to centre themselves around London eventually. An example of this was EMAP whose main offices were originally in Peterborough. They gradually moved more and more of their magazine interests to London

offices. Future publishing, although the majority of the editorial staff are still based in Bath, have a London office for, in particular fashion and music related staff. Even with all the technological advances it appears to be harder to keep in touch with key people and be part of the established networks while operating from a geographical distance.

### Technological

The biggest changes in the magazine environment in the last thirty years were the changes in the print and production process. Technology brought new ways of working, and changes in the surrounding media like the increased popularity of the Internet and mobile phone.

Contrary to the hype, which suggested magazines would be killed off by the Internet, magazines have flourished over the last decade, There are 12m more copies of consumer magazines sold in the UK in 2006 than in 1995 which was the start of the wide scale adoption of the commercial Internet (PPA, 2007). So although the surrounding technology has brought massive change to the way a magazine is produced, it has not affected the content of the items as much as was originally predicted (Sparks, 2000; PPA, 2007).

All the interviewees commented on the change in the technological process surrounding magazines, regardless of the time they had spent working in magazine launches. This is two fold both in terms of the actual production process and also the surrounding structures, including the Internet.

The production processes changed radically. Before the 1980s magazines were unionized in a similar way to newspapers, it was *de rigueur* to belong to a union before being allowed to work for the big publishing houses, even freelancers had to hold union cards. New technology made print production more automated and arguably less skilled; this also affected the editorial teams and their terms and conditions. Although the editorial staff that had been members of the NUJ and NGA gradually adapted as new technology was introduced, new contracts were signed, and the companies that had been closed shops no longer recognized union membership. Besides, the whole editorial process has been turned on its head by PCs. Much of the production process once carried out by skilled printers was now part of the

routine office work of the editorial personnel. The technology in printing presses had also changed, predominantly the more widespread use of colour printing. The big circulation weeklies used colour printing since the 1950s, but black and white printing was still the norm for most magazines right up until the 1980s. ISDN and broadband meant that files could be electronically transferred, speeding up the processes, and removing the need for couriers and bike messengers. These changes have produced a very different job as my interviewees noted, routine tasks have to be added to their workload, although it has also given these individuals more control over the process as much of it is solely in their hands. In essence the production process, which is technologically driven, has changed more in the last twenty-five years than in the previous fifty years. However that is not to say that new technology has killed magazines off, the number of magazine produced appears to be increasing. The business model has changed.

The Internet, which has been heralded as the media most likely to kill off magazines, is at present a support system to magazines as opposed to a threat. Strictly speaking, the effect of the Internet could be classed as more social with regards to networks or an cultural influence, than in the means of delivery of information.

One of my interviewees summed this up:

*We are now in the second period where people are confidently predicting the death of magazines.*

Oh yea

*The first period was in the first burst of the Internet. People said, "Oh there won't be any magazines, people who are in magazines should clear out and get into the Internet". I have never quite understood why people feel that way, because history is full of very robust examples of where old media has adapted very, very well to the introduction of new media. In theory books, newspapers, radio, cinema, and probably TV now should all be dead or dying, and yet they all seem to be remarkable adept at reorganizing themselves, and reinvigorating themselves to take on the new challenges that come with new media and new opportunities. I think that there is a quite clear difference between the type of things that magazines do and the type of thing that the Internet does. Actually I think that there are some quite interesting ways in which the two dovetail very successfully together. You know magazines, like newspapers, are all about editing a selection. What they forget is that 90%*

*of what you end up reading in a newspaper or magazines is not something that you would have set out to read in the first place necessarily.*

Right, Yes

*You know you discover it – it is an article that you look at and then you go oh, blimey that's interesting because of this... they go, Ooooh, blimey that **is** interesting. So that is the quite distinctive and interesting thing about magazines and newspapers. People have made decisions on your behalf, about what they think you want to read.*

Yes

*Whereas the experience of going on line is unusually quite a different one, you usually go on line having some knowledge of what you want and seeking it in some way, it might be that when you get there, they have twisted slightly it in some way or they have given you the opportunity to find other things but fundamentally you start off on a passage of saying I need to know about the train timetables between Warwick and London and I am going to go on line and find those and book myself a ticket and if while you are there they might tell you about some special fare deal that they are doing somewhere else that may encourage you to explore that further. SK 2008.*

The Internet is certainly perceived, by media pundits and certain people working within the industry as a structural constraint, while at other times an opportunity but it is how the agents interact and react to the changing media that makes a difference causing the structure to change or remain in statis.

This research is set within the geographical context of 1980's and 1990's London and in the context of the changes brought by technical change. Nonetheless, within this context, change depends on the influence of corporate agents.

### Magazine Launches and Stakeholders

Stakeholder theory<sup>11</sup> argues that, via their vested interests, other parties are interested in businesses apart from shareholders. Magazines are situated within a group of stakeholders, who embeds the firm in a network of structured relationships. Stakeholders might include political groups, trade associations or unions, associated companies, employees and customers. Most of the stakeholders, with the exception of readers who influence magazines

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<sup>11</sup> Attributed to R.E Freeman 1984, Strategic management : A stake holder approach. Boston Pitman.



are made up of actors<sup>12</sup> who play a role and produce ‘structural emergent properties’, which may or may not be activated. Individuals can be part of a number of groups at the same time so actors may, for example, also be ‘corporate agents’ as they also influence the environment creating ‘structural interaction’. The same individuals may also be employees, and readers who make up a market readership.

The term stakeholders is not meant to replace Archer’s terminology but merely be an efficient way of grouping interested parties together.

There is a strong dialectic between magazine launches and the stakeholders involved in the industry. Launches are important to the magazine market and their stakeholders because they regenerate the market sometimes creating new sectors or niches.

Previous work that examined newspapers in the US, Ireland and Argentina found that newspapers have a limited lifecycle (Carroll, 1984; Carroll and Delacroix, 1982; Carroll and Hannon, 2000). It is reasonable to suppose that what applies to newspapers may, in certain conditions, be true for magazines; suggesting magazines may similarly have a limited life cycle. In order to evaluate Carroll’s view, Nielsen data<sup>13</sup> was collected between 1974 – 2008. As described in the methods chapter, this data shows that 1319 magazines were listed at any point in that period. Of those 548 remaining in 2008, only 53 of those magazines had remained constant through the entire twenty-four year period. Although this data did not include all magazines, it does indicate the sort of “churn rate” within magazines.

If 74% of magazines that had a healthy circulation and advertising in 1974 did not survive until 2008, then this data suggests that most magazines have a limited life cycle that ends in

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<sup>12</sup> Archer (1995) elaborated on different kinds of agents which included corporate agents these are agents that affect the world though their social interests, or ultimate concerns, primary agents who are not coordinated as a group and although they have an effect it may be unintended or uncoordinated, and Agents (Archer 1995) individuals who share the same life chances in her theory of morphogenesis. All these agents through their social interaction effect structure. However it is actors that are generally of interest in this chapter as they are individuals playing a role particularly through their employment.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Neilson collect data on advertising spend by on top selling brands, in order to collect the data they monitor a number of different media including TV newspapers and magazines. They report which magazines they have monitored, the data is collated from the magazines that Neilson monitor. The magazines listed are not all magazines in existence but the ones they consider most pertinent for the top selling brands. As Social science citation index only list a selected number of journals similarly Neilson select the most influential.

failure, suggesting a cycle of births and deaths is present. Therefore, data indicates that launches are necessary for the magazine sector to stay buoyant.

Number of magazines in 1974	197
Number of original magazines surviving in 2008	53
Percentage of surviving magazines	26.90%
Number of magazines that did not survive.	74.15%

Source: Nielsen (1974-2008) author's calculations

Obviously there are a number of stakeholders who are interested in growth for economic reasons. Shareholders want to see growth in order to increase their profits, government want growth in order to increase economic prosperity, and financiers and investors want growth in order to maximize their return. But these economic pressures are not the sole drivers for magazine launches. There are also other influences or associated companies pressurizing for more growth, for example the industry norm suggests strong pressure to be first or second in a market.

The importance of market position is illustrated by the following example. A successful launch is often followed by other magazines imitating or competing known as a '*me too*' in the industry. For example *Hello!* Magazine was the English version of *Hola* published by Spanish publishers Eduardo Sánchez Junco in 1988. *Hola* was full of royalty and celebrity stories. At first, the UK *Hello!* was not seen as a threatening format, as it was very different from the current traditional British weekly titles that stuck to real life stories, or bimonthlies that were for sale at supermarket checkouts. It was considered a 'lightweight' title of marginal interest that probably would not survive but the precisely targeted title built a 2 million readership quickly, which surprised the industry. Richard Desmond at Northern and Shell, now owner of the Express Newspaper group, was quick to respond and saw an opportunity for a 'me too'. He launched a similar title called *OK!* In 1993 *OK!* Magazine was very closely aligned in editorial format and look to *Hello* magazine; the rivalry was clear as they tried to 'out scoop' each other with exclusive stories and photos of celebrities. *Hola* understandably

saw *OK!* as a threat to their market share in the UK and tried to take *OK!* to court for ‘over passing off’ as they believed *OK!* was infringing copyright law. ‘Passing off’ is a term to describe a product or company, which is piggybacking on another’s success by stealing their visual identity. The rest of the magazine industry watched the saga with interest, as it is not unknown for a fast mover to be able to knock a bestseller off their prime position<sup>14</sup>. The obvious success of these titles brought out many ‘me too’ copycat versions hoping for a slice of what was seen as a new market. This included *Now* in 1997, *Heat* in 1999 and *Closer* in 2002. *OK!* now outsells *Hello!* by around three to one copies. So although *Hello!* was the first mover, it is no longer the best seller.

So, launches are an integral part of the publishing process. There are many pressures on publishing houses to develop launches, this is especially prevalent for magazine companies that are answerable to shareholders and are listed on the London stockmarket. Launches are the fastest strategy for growth and if successful bring the greatest reward. However they require the most financial outlay and carry the greatest risk.

### **EXAMPLES OF STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN PUBLISHING**

The following section explores stakeholders within magazine publishing starting with an example of a large institution: government.

There are many interested groups who have structural emergent properties that are dormant until activated and would not necessarily have to be activated on all occasions. Government and its emergent property regulation is one case in point.

Government is a stakeholder that is interested in the magazine publishing industry for three reasons: its potential for contributing to the UK’s economic growth, the size of the industry, and its influence in the social realm. These points are clarified in turn.

Firstly, magazine publishing is one of the industries that make up the creative industries.

Historically, Britain has excelled in creative activities and innovation often using it as a

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<sup>14</sup> This was also seen in the men’s market between *Loaded* (1994), *FHM* (1994) and *Maxim* (1995).

springboard for development and growth. The 1851 exhibition in Crystal Palace acted as a showcase for engineering and design innovation making enough profit to set up the V&A and the science museum. This exercise was repeated, first in ‘The Empire’ exhibition at Wembley in 1923/4, then again in 1946 the London exhibition entitled ‘Britain can make it’ aimed at convincing manufacturers, retailers and foreign buyers that design was critical to Britain in the post-war period (see Woodham, 1997). Another exhibition followed on the Southbank, in 1951 although without the phenomenal success of the 1851 exhibition. These exhibitions demonstrate how important government perceived design to be in returning Britain back to a healthy economy, after the Second World War.

Repeating the cycle in Britain shortly after coming to power in 1997, the New Labour government established the Department of Media and Sport with an interdepartmental task force supporting the creative industries. This taskforce was charged with the task of developing creative activity and cultural innovation. Publishing makes up a reasonable part of this plethora of creative industries.

Government is interested in this set of industries, as they perceive the creative industries to be capable of contributing to the UK’s economic growth, where UK economic growth is an ultimate concern for the government.

Secondly, publishing is an industry large enough in terms of turnover and employment to matter for the economic health of the nation. Gathering data on publishing is, even by the government’s own admission, difficult and for magazines it is even more so. The magazine industry does not have its own SIC code (Standard industrial classification<sup>15</sup>). In a recent DTI (2002) report the authors, by their own admission note that both unofficial and official statistics vary, making it hard to categorize the size of the industry because the industry has shifting boundaries and contested definitions. Official data combines journals and periodicals, and does not distinguish between consumers and business to business titles who have vastly different business models. However, the best estimates suggest publishing

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<sup>15</sup> The classification is used by industry analysts like economists or the monopolies and mergers commission, which suggests that magazines are not viewed as a major industry despite their size.

employs more people than pharmaceuticals and has a larger turnover. This is not common knowledge as the next quote suggests.

*” Startling because although the products of publishing are all around us everyday, as an industry it does not have the profile its size would justify” (DTI, 2002:4)*

Finally, publishing is perceived as politically important not simply in economic terms but also influential in social, cultural, educational and political areas of British life. Consequently the government regulates the publishing business; as an economic entity in relation to the concentration of ownership and taxation; and as a social, cultural, and political entity in relation to the actual nature of the published content, for example obscenity, privacy and libel.

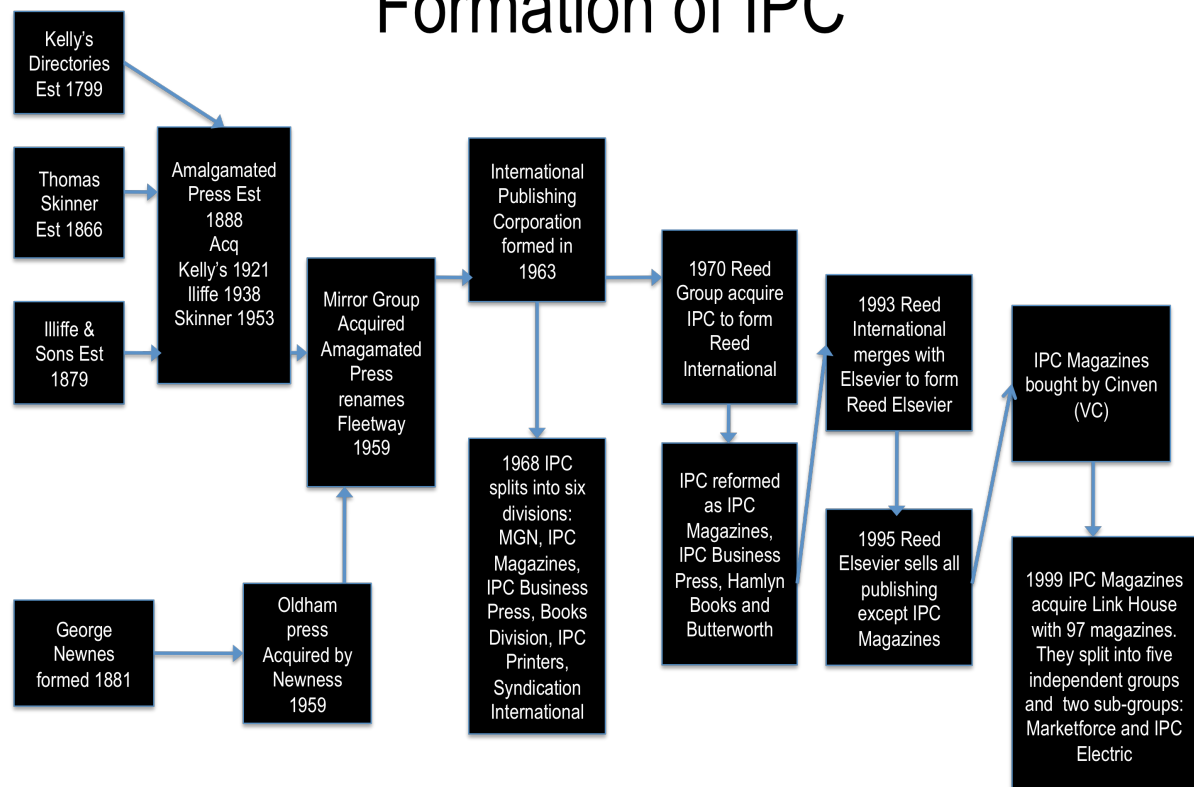
The government periodically intervenes with further forms of regulation sometimes creating structural changes this was most notably during the war period (White, 1970;1977). A more recent example was the deregulation of broadcast media listings. In the 1980s, UK government produced plans to deregulate TV and Radio listing. Originally Listings were viewed as intellectual property and copyrighted, thereby no other magazine or newspaper could carry more than two days listing at a time. This duopoly between ITV and BBC was deregulated in February 1991, meaning that other publishers could launch TV listings magazines which had been a lucrative duopoly at the time for IPC who held the copyright for ITV and C4 and the BBC for BBC programmes. This deregulation created a large budget shortfall for the BBC, and a loss of revenue for the owners of *TV Times* magazine.

In summary, regulation and legislation can create openings for some companies and curtail the activity of others. The BBC had their business interests curtailed by listings deregulation, but for other companies like Bauer and IPC this regulatory change created new openings. In 1987 the *Radio Times* was selling an average of 3,044,679 copies a week with 11 million for the Christmas Issue. In a bid to enter this lucrative market IPC bought *TV Times*, (average circulation of 3,000,492 in 1987) and launched *What's on TV* as a spoiler for Bauer's TV title, *TV Quick*, only to find *What's on TV* became the largest selling TV title, leaving *TV Times* lagging behind the front-runners, after significant investment. Regulation constrains but also enables certain companies.

In terms of the regulation as an economic activity, the way government operationalised economic models of growth have ramifications for regulation. As economic models go in and out of favour, the emergent properties that interact with companies change. In addition the regulation imposed on industry and media structure also changes (Leyshon and French, 2004). The fashionable economic model during the 60s was towards the creation of large firms or 'national champions'. Mergers were supported and encouraged by the government with the idea of improving Britain's economic growth through economies of scale, which were by definition generated by large companies. The thinking was that the larger the company the more competitive they would be. The 1960s saw companies become large conglomerates, and magazine companies were no exception. For example IPC (International publishing company originally created by Mirror group) was created out of a number of companies and has consistently been one of the big players in the magazine industry. Even though, since the 60s, it has been bought and sold a number of times. By the early 70s, economic thinking had changed to a model that encouraged the 'freedom to choose' (Friedman and Friedman, 1980). It was felt that an increase in smaller companies would provide more jobs for Britain overall, in a climate of rising unemployment and inflation, suggesting that Britain's economic problem was concerned with too few producers (Bacon and Eltis, 1976). By the mid 70s, national champions were unpopular, the IMF had bailed Britain out of its economic crises and the government was concerned to stop monopolies and practices that it termed anti competitive. Many of the magazine companies like EMAP (East Midlands Allied Press, a printer and owner of many local papers in the East Midlands and surrounding regions) and IPC had links with the newspaper industry and had access to their own presses. This vertical integration of press and magazine would aid launches as it is more cost effective to continuously run printing presses, rather than allowing them to stop and stand, which necessitates cleaning and dismantling. Therefore, it would be more cost effective to launch, and if the title survived, you might buy in services. Later the fashion in industry was to 'stick to your knitting' (Peters and Waterman, 1982). Again publishing companies were no exception and divested their shareholding in print companies, moving the focus to

other areas of publishing like distribution companies, for example Comag (formed by Condé Nast and National magazines) in 1977, and Marketforce 1999 (owned by IPC media). This indicated a changing emphasis as distribution became the critical part of the supply chain: owning the companies provided preferential treatment in the distribution process, which could make or break a launch. In essence, magazine companies have altered their organisations over time in response to the fashions in financial and industrial circles.

## Formation of IPC



A glance at a magazine company's history will often show changes that affect mergers and acquisitions according to these fashions, which are the result of structural emergent properties of government, the economic environment and industry. An example of this is IPC, which reflected the fashionable economic models of the time, see figure above.

IPC was created in a merger friendly period in 1963 and was a merger, between the Mirror Group, Fleetway Publications and Oldhams Press. By 1968, the economies of scale were still fashionable but the expected corporate norm was divisionalisation, so companies had difficulty in raising money if they did not have the specific multidivisional form (Fligstein, 1990). IPC was split into six divisions, selling off the printing section and MGN. In 1970, it

was bought by Reed and reformed into four distinct companies. When Reed and Elsevier merged in 1995, Reed Elsevier sold all the consumer publishing groups except IPC magazines. In 1998, when management buyouts were fashionable a management buyout leveraged through Cinven venture capital took over IPC.

In 2000, IPC Magazines was renamed IPC Media, and a year later sold to Time Inc. who acquired IPC Media for £1.15bn in 2001. In some ways, the current climate of large firms expanding their stable of magazine titles through the acquisition of more magazines or magazine companies is similar to the early press barons. However the enablement and constraints on companies are now different. The key difference today is that the magazines companies are heavily regulated, although some have other business interests, which are often closely aligned to magazines making them slightly less dependent on the single form of print media, but nonetheless powerful.

In summary, the government is one stakeholder who is interested in publishing due to its size and influence on economic growth. Publishing is also perceived to be powerful, due to its capacity for social and political influence. The terms by which the media is regulated reflect the fashion of previous structural conditions. Government also impose regulation concerning issues such as data protection, freedom of information, intellectual property, copyright, contract and licensing, libel, obscenity, defamation, privacy, discrimination, employment, equal opportunities, and even health & safety.

#### Advertisers as stakeholders

In terms of stakeholders at the industry level, advertisers can be powerful. Advertising has a large stakeholding in the profitability of a magazine. Many suggest that the purpose of print media is to round up appropriate readers to deliver to the advertisers (See Curran, 1980; Schudson, 2000).



Magazines can be categorised as belonging to one of four main industry sectors, consumer titles, business titles, customer titles and newspaper supplements<sup>16</sup>. Many magazine sectors function in a dual product market. Consumer and business titles, for example, rely on revenue from more than one source; they have a cover price or subscription charge and in addition they take revenue from selling advertising. Whereas the two other categories, the customer magazine and newspaper supplement, do not share the same business models with advertising. Each are taken in turn.

Customer magazines are produced with the sole purpose of promoting a single product, for example Sainsbury's magazine promotes Sainsbury's, in addition it has a cover price of £1, which is a nominal cover price in comparison to other consumer titles that sell for £3.50. In order to encourage consumers to buy their products they cover general interest topics within the magazine.

Newspaper supplements rely solely on advertising revenue; however their existence supports the main paper. In addition, there are other exceptions like part-works, who sell a fixed number of issues that are produced to be collected as a set; and academic journals whose sales are subscription only. However for most magazines, and all consumer magazines, advertisers are a major stakeholder.

Advertising expenditure has significantly increased in real terms since 1952. British Rates and Data (BRAD) divided this period into three distinct phases. The first was 1952 – 1965 a period that saw a year on year increase of 8%, which may be partly attributed to TV being introduced as an advertising medium.

The second period 1965- 1982 was perhaps less easily explained, this BRAD identified as a period of relative decline with advertising growth falling to 1.9% which they attributed to global recession and the occurrence of the Middle East Oil Crisis. The recession and Middle East Oil Crisis may be causal mechanisms but perhaps not the only influencing factor. The Middle East Oil Crisis happened in 1973 and the recession was at its height in 1981, which

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<sup>16</sup> There are one or two magazines that fall between the categories like for example Nature, which is an academic journal that is sufficiently mainstream to be bought in shops, but this is uncommon.

was eight years after 1973 (Aaronovitch et al., 1981), indicating that the Oil Crisis was not the only influence in this period and that this does not clearly account for the period between 1965 -1973. Nonetheless it is quite a distinct period, even if the causal mechanisms are more complex than BRAD suggest. A broader explanation including other factors in addition to the economic factors, as given later in the chapter may go further to explain the full range of influences that would have affected magazines at this time. However, the third period is the most interesting in terms of my study, which BRAD identified as 1982 – 1989. This period had a year on year increase of 8.6%.

An institution that supported advertisers and perhaps one of the most influential bodies in magazine publishing is the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), which was created in 1931 as an independent body that accredited circulation figures for newspapers and magazines. This institution was important for advertisers, as the premise for advertising of the time was that the larger the circulation, the more people viewed the advertising and the more people were likely to buy your product (outdated industry folklore). Magazines with the largest circulation could charge the most for their advertising. The 1970s saw advertising favouring the big selling weeklies, as the big rise in the circulation of popular magazines was most evident in these titles, driving the need to print more colour pages to support the colour advertising. But without a regulatory body, claims concerning the circulation, which was of paramount importance to the advertisers, might be inaccurate and unsubstantiated, and circulation can make or break a launch.

For example, it was rumoured that in the 1980s when Chris Anderson started Future Publishing in Bath by launching *PC Plus*, he was given a £15,000 bank loan, to be rolled over into the second month of production if the circulation figures were healthy; however, there was a ‘glitch’ and the circulation figures never became available. The loan was confirmed for a second month. Both the first and second month figures were revealed at the same time: the first month had been a disaster, but the second month figures showed a phenomenal success. Chris Anderson went on to create a successful company. Nonetheless, the story underlines the importance of circulation figures for new launches.

Advertisers continually demanded more accurate figures. By the mid 1980s, bar codes had become standard, which enable a more accurate tracking of sales and distribution, giving more transparency to the ABCs. Although the quantity of the readers remained important, advertisers were keen to tap into the niche markets and the exact demographic profile of their desired customers, meaning launches were more common in certain areas. Transparency of ABC figures is still a hotly debated point. There is currently pressure from advertisers to declare the actual rate paid for each copy of a magazine, in order to stop subscriptions being sold at less than cover price, although this is more prevalent in the USA where subscriptions make up a far greater part of the market share.

### Readers

Whilst this chapter has discussed a variety of magazines to provide a context; the thesis concentrates on consumer magazines<sup>17</sup> a small section of the industry, where readers are a major stakeholder. This particular sector has arguably the potential for more editorial integrity as the potential pool of advertisers is balanced with a high proportion of its income, derived from the cover price. Readers buy a magazine often aspiring to be part of the “target tribe” that the magazines is marketed at, but the readers will expect to be entertained and informed with integrity (Ferguson, 1993). For example *Top Gear* magazine (in conjunction with the television programme) is structured around editorial integrity, this is particularly important when reviewing products, like cars. There is a clear demarcation between advertising and editorial which is understood to be separated from the advertising sales aspect of the magazine. This is obviously much easier in a large high profile magazine than in a small, specialist title. For this reason, there is a wider set of structural influences on consumer titles than those titles in a business-to-business environment where the influences may be narrower. The reader can choose between two methods of purchase: 1) A subscription magazine, which is a commitment for a year. This decision is more to do with buying a brand rather than an

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<sup>17</sup> However some companies engage in both businesses—to business and consumer magazines, which means that although I am only interested in looking at consumer magazines some of the companies also have business-to-business titles, which may affect their structural influences.

impulse purchase from the newsstand on the strength of a cover line or cover mount. 2) A consumer magazine bought from the newsstand. This is reliant on its appeal competing with many other similar titles where the cover becomes paramount as the first point of contact with the reader. A well-designed cover will attract attention leading to the chance of a magazine being picked up, eventually leading to increased sales; similarly, a badly designed one will drop sales.

World magazine trends suggest there are more magazines in the UK in comparison to other European countries and the US, which is surprising considering the population in the UK, verses the US. The sales in UK are dominated by retail, rather than subscription. This suggests that design plays a big part in the sales process in the UK, as other countries are more reliant on the sales from subscription.

Publishers in the UK often use cover-mount items in order to boost the sales of a magazine. This is a tried and tested method, however the acid test with cover mounts is not the instant increase in sales of the issue, but 'keeping' the reader. An example of this was present in the mid 1990s when a photographic magazine cover mounts included a film. The cost of the film would be in excess of the cost of the magazine, meaning readers keen to have a free film may purchase the magazine just to get the film, but the test is how many of these new readers would buy the magazine the week after obtaining the film.

### Retailers

Retailers are another stakeholder element in UK magazines. Closest to the customer in the supply chain are the retailers with the majority of the market share, supermarkets, who hold the biggest market, and W.H.Smiths. Retailers play a significant part in the sales process of magazines and their business strategy can play an important part in the economic growth of individual companies (Porter 1985), An example of newsagents changing their strategy can be found in the large retail outlet, W.H.Smiths who sell magazines. Thirty years ago they wanted diversity and proudly identified themselves as selling the largest range of magazines in the UK. This business strategy from Smiths protected small specialist titles. Therefore, diverse

launches regardless of the size of their circulation were encouraged and promoted. Now, W.H.Smiths strategy has changed. The current trend of their business is to reduce the variety of magazines they hold and sell only the top selling titles, which will preference only the bigger launches, not magazines from small publishers that cater for minority interests. It is worth stressing that the role of distribution is significant in magazine publishing. At the present time, if Smiths for example decide to accept a new publication for display in their shops they charge magazine companies for displaying and promoting their new magazines, and the most prominent shelf space has a premium charge. This relatively new move has affected the cost of promoting and launching titles, and discourages smaller specialist titles. This is an example of how the changing strategies of other companies affect magazine companies and their launches.

### Distributors

Another stakeholder in the industry are the distributors. There are twelve distribution companies, which is a relatively small amount given that there are about 3,200 consumer magazines published in the UK in 2009 according to Wessenden Marketing (2009). These magazines are then divided up and distributed to the wholesalers via the twelve distribution companies. The share of the market is Frontline (30%), Marketforce (26%), COMAG + CSD (19%), Seymour (12%), Northern & Shell (6%), DC Thomson (2%), Advantage (1%), MMC, Odyssey (1%), News International (1%), Others (1%).

Magazine publishers, either singly or jointly own most of these distribution companies.

Distribution is considered of such importance for publishing companies that this is reflected in the need for an element of control being retained by being a shareholder in distribution companies. The following list indicates the interconnection of companies.

**Frontline** is owned by four companies, originally set up by EMAP in 1986, it is now owned by the Bauer consumer magazines and H Bauer publishing, both part of a German media group; BBC Worldwide, the third biggest UK publishing consumer magazine publisher; and Haymarket Media, the UK's largest private magazine publisher.

**Marketforce** is owned by the IPC media group, with the ultimate holding company being

TimeWarner.

**Comag +CSD** is a joint venture between The National Magazine Company, and Condé Nast publications.

**Seymour** is 50% owned by the Frontline Group (BBC Magazines, Haymarket Publications, Bauer) and 50% by Dennis Publishing Limited.

**Northern and Shell** handle its distribution in house, it also owns the Daily Express and Star group of newspapers

Looking at these figures it is clear how potentially powerful the small number of owners are in this specific sector. Owner publishers hold the majority of holdings within the distribution companies, but the figure above show how intertwined publishers are with each other, making it hard to keep new launches quiet. Distribution is a major part of new launches, dispatching the products but in addition negotiating which retailers display it and the magazines position on the retailer's stands.

More recently in May 2005 the Office of Fair Trading investigated the way magazines were distributed. Previous arrangements were that magazines relied on territorial or regional distribution deals, where wholesalers agreed exclusive tie-ups with distributors. The Office of Fair Trading felt this was anti-competitive.

In a recent furore, Asda wanted 'contra-deals' ('contrasting deal' - industry slang indicating a barter of goods or services in order to complete a sale) with a big publishing house in exchange for displaying their magazines in store (Guardian, 2008). It would be very difficult to display and launch in a supermarket unless you could provide the supermarket with reciprocal deals, which would favour the bigger magazine companies that had many titles.

The story was leaked to *The Guardian* and the PPA joined in the argument suggesting the deal was inappropriate. This nevertheless highlights the vulnerability of publishers in a very narrow retailing market place. OFT is including this move in their current review into the magazine industry.

Summarizing this section, a number of stakeholders are influential in the magazine industry ranging from distributors to advertisers and from other companies to government. As previously discussed, magazines have a dual income stream; striking a balance between

satisfying the readers and the advertisers at the same time. The advertisers subsidize the cost of production although the percentage of revenue from advertising versus cover price changes over different periods of time depending on the price of paper, print, postage, etc.

#### Morphogenesis: The case of the Single European Market

Morphogenesis appears at different structural levels; the following example indicates the emergent properties that produced a morphogenetic change at the level of government and regulation.

The predominance of business ownership in the area of consumer magazines had always traditionally been British, before the 1980s. Language and cultural barriers and the problem of distribution, in addition to an element of time sensitive material (material that loses its value after a certain date) protected the British market from much international company competition. However, the 1980s brought change in anticipation of the single European market. A number of European owned companies entered the British market. In 1986, the German company Gruner and Jahr entered the UK market with *Prima* magazine, followed by a second launch *Best* in 1987. Bauer also from Germany entered the market during 1987 launching *Bella*, followed by the Spanish owned company *Hola!* launching *Hello!* Magazine in 1988. The European owned entrants to the British market have influenced a change. The German magazine model of governance is radically different to the British one, allowing German companies a much longer period before a return on the investment is required, (see Hall and Soskice, 2001) which has changed the dynamic in the woman's magazine market. According to Wessenden Marketing (2009) the story of British business ownership is now somewhat different. There are 15 main companies that make up about three quarters of the consumer market; the top two companies are no longer British owned with the largest share of the retail value being IPC 18% (owned by Time Warner, US) and Bauer (German owned) with a 12% share. In addition, these two companies also own the largest share of British magazines in total including all sectors of consumer, business and B2B. The change in the regulation enabled the material, and structural conditions for the entry of other European

magazine producers into the British market (T1). Entry was delayed until the decisions made by the managers of the German and Spanish companies (T2-T3). The outcome was a change in the ownership and competitive make-up of the British magazine industry that has also encouraged entry from US companies (T4).

#### In summary

This chapter has shown that there are a number of stakeholders, all of whom have structural emergent properties which in the main enable magazine launches and who have interests in the growth of the magazine publishing industry, these include government, financiers, shareholders, retailers, distribution companies, suppliers and printers. Most of the large magazine publishing companies who are either shareholder driven or influenced by managerial economics, expect growth. Companies are more highly rated by the stock market if they show continued and sustained growth. Managers would rather work in larger companies, as there is a far greater likelihood of receiving a higher salary in a large company. Managing a growing enterprise is more rewarding than managing one that is cutting back (Devine et al., 1985).

There is a dominant business model regarding the way the publishing industry operates.

Broadly speaking magazines divide into four distinct types, with differing business models, and distribution routes. They are quite distinct products with different end user groups.

Although the business model of foreign companies varies there is a core similarity between those found in the UK. As previously stated the focal area of the consumer magazine business is centred around products that are situated in dual products markets, the product is sold to the end user, but in addition the attention of the end user is sold to advertisers.

During the period that I am interested in there is evidence of significant growth, overall in terms of spending on magazines. For example, overall sales grew substantially until 1996, although subsequently sales have declined (PPA, 2009).

In the next section the connection between advertising, magazines and launches is discussed.

There are huge structural and economic pressures on magazines. However agents are the



mediators within the structural condition, altering and acting in the current environment.

Demographic information is not enough to ensure a successful launch.

The main pressure on the publishing industry is growth; in order to grow a magazine publishing company it would have to produce more magazines, or purchase other already existing magazines. They could increase the number of copies they publish, or increase the issue sizes of their magazines to increase the number of advertisements sold, however, there are obvious production and distribution costs, and the profits would not be as much. So put simply the most profitable of these options is to launch more successful magazines as it has the potential for the greatest return.

There are fairly well defined sectors within magazine publishing like for example woman's magazines. Within the sectors one could assume there is a finite number of readers buying a core number of magazines, when the market is saturated there would be little room for a new launch unless one of the existing titles folded. From this information a fairly simple logic would suggest that more magazines would be launched in periods of the greatest economic growth, as advertising would be more prevalent and consumers would have more available cash to spend on non essential consumables and other leisure products like magazines. It would also follow that to chart and launch according to demographic information would strongly increase the chances of success of a launch. However the causal link is more complex. The *Radio Times* and *TV Times* scenario suggests that looking at one aspect of magazine launches like successful sales figures for example will only provide a partial view. The whole picture can be explained by looking at the generative mechanisms, in the *Radio Times* and *TV Times* example, it was government legislation which was important, in addition to the structural influences, of other magazines and publishing houses wanting to acquire dominance in the area of broadcast media listings magazines. Of course the structural emergent property of regulatory activity could not have an effect unless the efficient cause of agents exercised the structural influences of other magazines. The regulatory changes could not have had an effect without the action of individuals.

## **LAUNCHES**

This section considers that although the stakeholders make decisions in relation to their ultimate concern within a structured environment there are other structural influences that affect the outcome of a launch. Using Archer's morphogenesis the next section looks at structural environmental conditioning that surround magazines. But first the importance of launches for the industry is outlined.

Launches are considered to be the major driver in the expansion of the consumer magazine market. There are 3,243 consumer titles published in the UK (PPA, 2009). As can be seen from the PPA 2009 chart below. The number of magazines available is steadily increasing.

### **Consumer business titles 1993-2009**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Consumer</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1993</b>	2,085	4,553	6,618
<b>1994</b>	2,112	4,586	6,698
<b>1995</b>	2,220	4,607	6,827
<b>1996</b>	2,329	4,628	6,957
<b>1997</b>	2,438	4,650	7,088
<b>1998</b>	2,794	5,151	7,945
<b>1999</b>	3,174	5,713	8,887
<b>2000</b>	3,275	5,545	8,820
<b>2001</b>	3,120	5,342	8,462
<b>2002</b>	3,130	5,208	8,338
<b>2003</b>	3,229	5,108	8,337
<b>2004</b>	3,324	5,142	8,466
<b>2005</b>	3,366	5,108	8,474
<b>2006</b>	3,445	5,113	8,558
<b>2007</b>	3,409	4,917	8,326
<b>2008</b>	3,391	4,894	8,285
<b>2009</b>	3,243	4,811	8,054

Source: PPA, 2009

Launches are important; they form a part of the complex mix of cycles, booms and trends that effect magazine publishing. The number of consumer launches was 296 in 2007 and 239 in 2008. Compared with the period between 1961 and 1976 where 48 new woman's consumer

titles launched, 34 ceased publication, and eighteen titles were launched and died within the same period (White, 1977). The number of launches has increased dramatically.

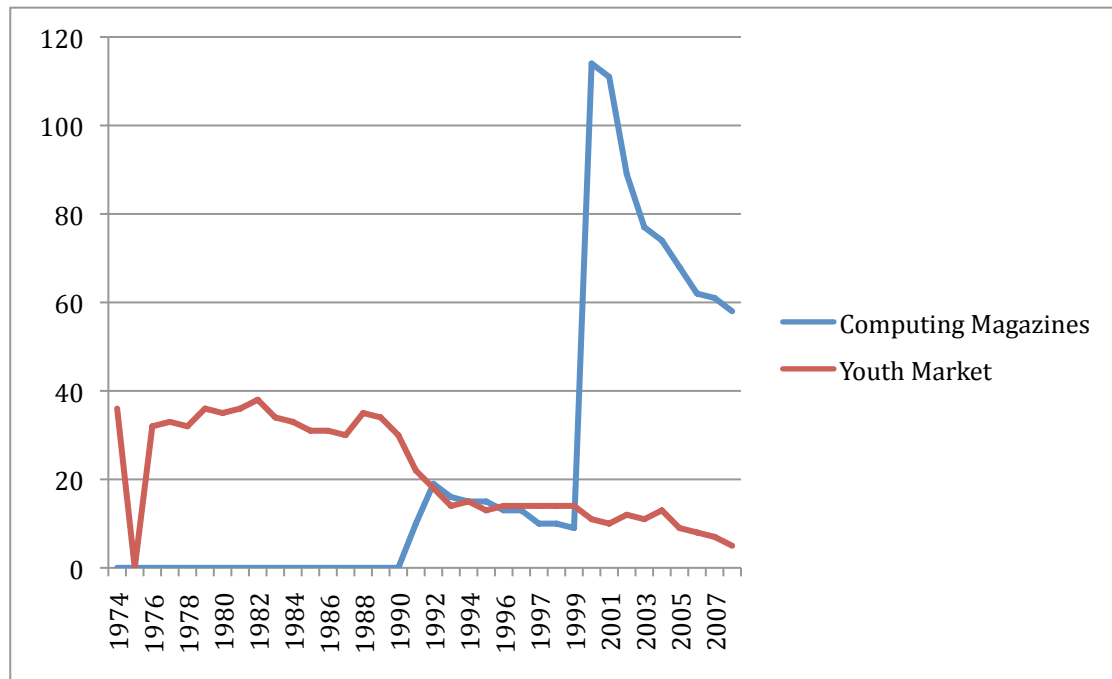
However launches have two functions in current conditions. The real boom activity that enlivens the magazine industry is cyclical according to Bilton (Guardian 13/4/2009). He noted there have been two major launch booms since the 1980s the last one in 2003 -2005. Bilton also notes that although there is often launch activity, it cannot be assumed that periods of recession are without casualty, he states that cover prices have risen considerably from an average 72.3 pence in 1991 to 133.4 pence in 2000, (Guardian 13/4/2009), which presumably means that a slump in sales and advertising revenue combined would create a tough environment. The change in business model from advertising revenue to advertising and cover price has made this more pertinent.

The increase in desire to use cover price to generate profit rather than the previous model, which was income solely from advertising rates, has added more reliance on the cost of paper and printing prices. The quantities of magazine copies sold has increased in importance as the cover price barely covers the cost of production. This change has made it harder for new entrants to enter the market, as the capital outlay would have to be substantial, coupled with the fairly recent requirement to pay for newsstands space and displays in the bigger newsagents. These factors were not so much of an issue twenty years ago. This has led to a fairly stagnant growth for entirely new entrants, that is to say the current leading players or foreign companies continue to dominate the market of new launches (see Sutton 1991 for further discussion of this topic in economics).

The Nielsen data indicates that there are categories that experience a boom and bust.

Typically, a new category is established in tune with a particular zeitgeist and as the fashion or trend passes and ceases to be popular the category declines.

An example of this is shown below with the sales of computing magazines, which although computing was a technology was also a fashion in consumerism; as computers became more common in the home, there was a huge rise in 1999. This can be compared to the very gradual decline in sales of the youth market indicated over the same period.



Another example is the changing fashion and fads in woman's titles. A few years ago there was a shift away from big circulation mass-market weeklies to niche monthly titles. Bilton (2009) suggests that the move away from weeklies has now changed. He suggests that weekly titles are popular again. Driven by the celebrity market that generates time sensitive stories, he suggests weeklies reflect the faster pace of life. Again this is in tune with the zeitgeist, as the weeklies balance the necessity to have the latest information with the short bite size pieces of information found on the Internet. Obviously, this comparison is between different weekly magazines.

The magazines popular in the 60s or 80s are different to the celebrity driven titles that are popular today. If magazines have a natural life cycle, then a supply of new launches is needed on constant basis to revitalise the market.

The DTI report (2002) also suggests that niche marketing is more in tune with the zeitgeist, Carroll (1985)<sup>18</sup> would claim that this is the normal evolution of industry using a resource-partitioning model. However this does not mean the niche is necessarily small, or special interest. *Saga* magazine sold 639,316 copies in 2007. It has previously been established that the number of magazines is increasing steadily, however the quantity and sales expectation in

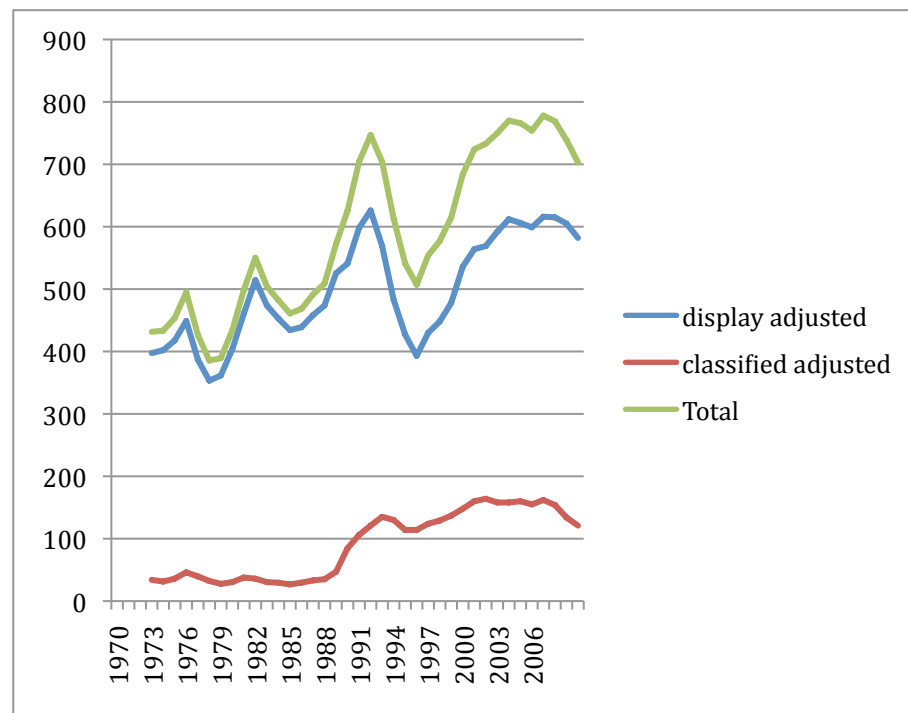
<sup>18</sup> Carroll(1985) developed a model that showed that markets eventually over time undergo market partitioning into a generalist centre consisting of a few large markets surrounded by a thriving niche market on the periphery.

magazine sales has also increased. In 1946 *Good Housekeeping* magazine had sales of 120 thousand, rising to 207 thousand in 1957, falling again to 188 thousand in 1968. By 2004, it had a circulation of 400,000 and was the number three bestseller in the monthly woman's magazine sector, which is a large increase in forty years.

#### Does more advertising mean more launches?

Having established that magazine launches are required to revitalise the industry, it would be logical to assume that the amount of magazine launches is related to the economy, because there would be more consumer spending power and bigger advertising budgets available. Two aspects of economic growth are important for publishing in the consumer magazine market. The growth and distribution of advertising expenditure is significant; however, more influential is the distribution and growth of consumer spending.

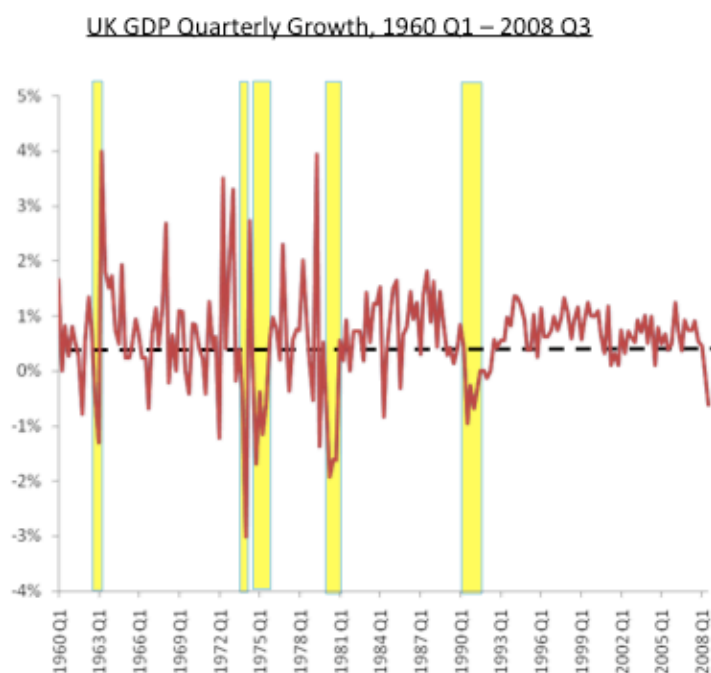
#### Consumer advertising expenditure at constant prices (Adjusted)



The greater the economic health of the country the more advertising spend there is available. In turn this might enable an increasing number of successful magazine launches. This deduction could be supported by the relationship between the print industry and the economy (see discussion in chapter 5) as the health of the print industry is regarded as being very

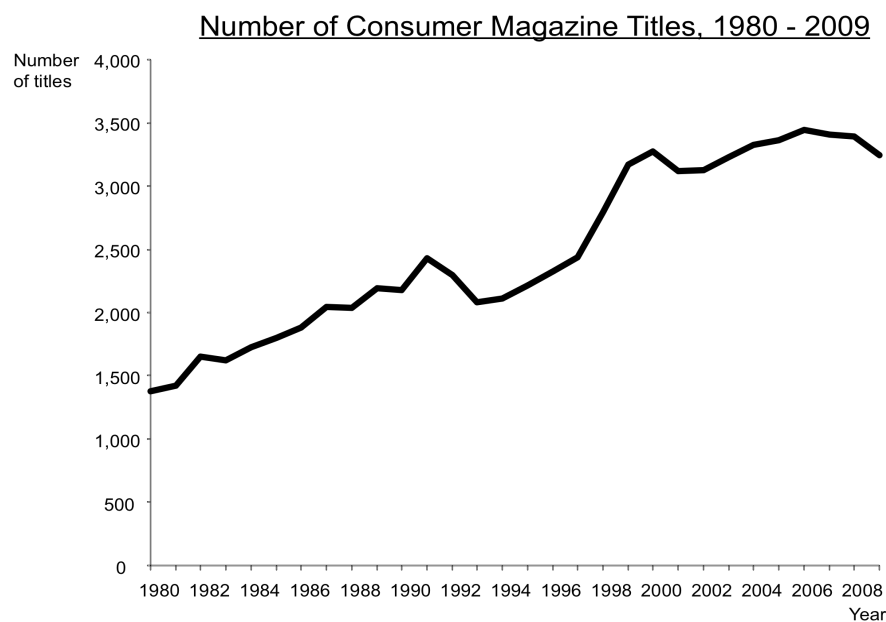
closely related to the buoyancy of the advertising industry. However, the general economic health of the UK does not appear to be related in the same linear way to magazine launches. The chart demonstrates the conventional consumer advertising expenditure at constant prices (adjusted for inflation). It shows that spending on the advertising industry exhibits large fluctuations year on year. In addition display advertising is shown to represent a larger proportion of a magazines income, and on average display ads show greater fluctuations than the variations in classified advertising. However the peaks and troughs of display advertising do not appear to follow the periods of recession in GDP as described in the chart that follows. Having established that display advertising is important to magazines, an assumption might be if the mechanism that enables a new launch is an increase in advertising spending, then we might expect more magazines launches in periods when advertising increased, irrespective of the health of the general economy.

The following two diagrams demonstrate periods of recession and the number of magazine launches. When they are compared, there appears to be little consistent correlation. The first graph shows the growth in GDP as a line and its relationship with recessions represented as blocks (PPA define a recession in terms of two quarters of negative growth)



Source: ONS, 2009

The PPA chart indicates there have been five recessions in the last 45 years, prior to that of the late 2000s (most recessions, last less than two years). The last recession occurred between October 1990 and June 1990. This can be compared with the second chart below. The periods between 1980 and 1982 show a peak in the number of magazines. The steady rise continues with more peaks at 1987, 1989, and a larger one between 1990 and 1991, there is a drop in the number of titles around 1994 and the market does not really recover the volume until 1999-2000. Overall, the number of magazines has increased during this period, however this does not necessarily mean that there are more launches in this period as it could just indicate that the market is supporting more magazines per se and there are in fact the same number of launches. However it appears that the recession between late 1979 until 1981 coincides with a peak in the number of titles, this is repeated between 1990-92.



Source: BRAD (Feb 2009)

There are two incidents in the data where recession is associated with a peak in magazine numbers, so although a recession may coincide with an increase in the number of titles this does not mean that an increase in titles is a result of a recession. This is indicated during the 1999/2000 period, where there was an increase in titles but no recession.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that recessions do not necessarily reduce the number of magazines on the shelf, in fact a counter trend may be indicated but more data would be

necessary to really conclude this. The following chart helps to support the idea and shows the number of magazines sold over the period indicating a peak over the periods of recession.

One reason could be that magazines are ‘recession-proof’. The following table shows that a similar situation exists in the United States, where magazines have increased in popularity over periods of recession.

These charts have indicated that advertising revenue fluctuates, and that magazines tend to increase in numbers during periods of recession. The charts so far have indicated that this is interrelated with advertising. Initially one might assume that advertising revenue would be cut during a recession, which would become a constraint on magazine launches. However the indication is that that agents act in their employment roles to increase the advertising in recessions in order to boost and increase their market share. Barwise (2009) substantiates this suggesting that larger companies maintain their advertising over periods of recession, as weaker competitors have to cut back which enables them to grow a market share when the costs are lower, rather than when a total market is growing.

**Average growth in US consumer expenditures for the recession (1990-91 and 2001-02) compared with average growth for entire period (1984-2006)**

Index average growth for entire period = 0

Category	Change in % spending over recession compared with average for period
Education (eg, tuition, textbooks)	+90
Reading (eg, newspapers, magazines)	+53
Personal insurance, pensions	+43
Health care (eg, health insurance, services)	+29
Food at home	+28
Entertainment (eg, tickets for events, trips)	-6
Housing	-10
Tobacco products	-13
Cash contributions	-28
Apparel and services	-45
Transportation	-70
Personal-care products and services	-78
Food away from home	-110
<b>Total</b>	<b>-10</b>

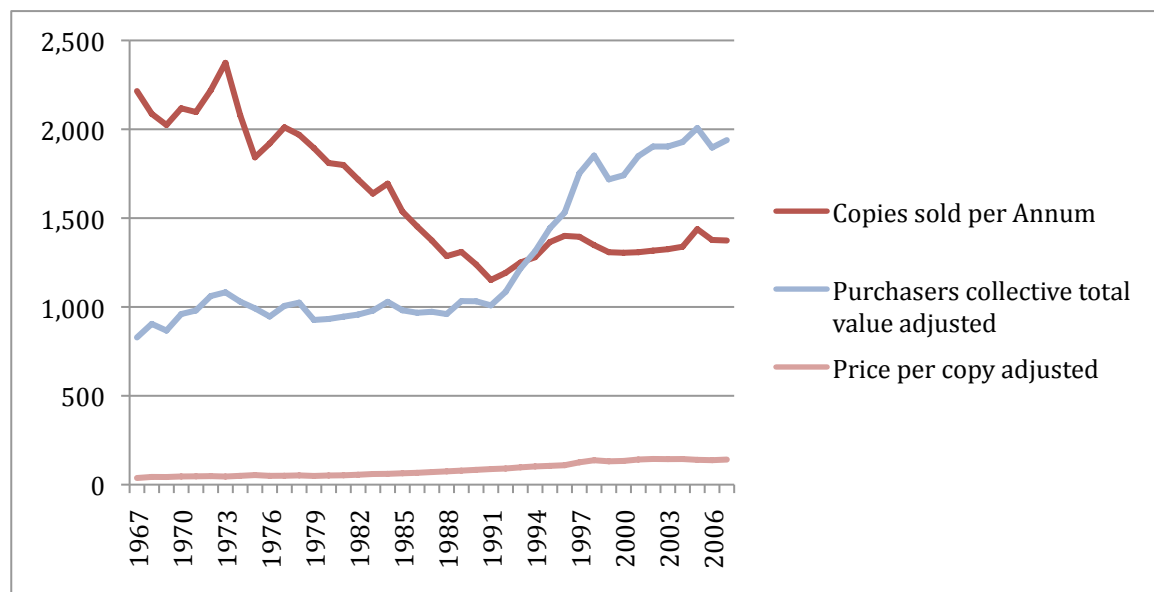
Source: McKinsey & Company (2009).

If the advertising is one enablement of the number of magazines launches, another is consumer revenue. If the consumer considers the magazines to be of good value then they



will continue to pay for the product despite a cover price rise. Often in a recession companies increase the costs to the consumer in order to balance the higher payments charged by suppliers.

The next chart shows the actual cost to the consumer in real terms that a magazine costs. The graph shows the amount of magazine copies sold per annum, the price that the consumer pays per copy (adjusted) on average, and the total amount of money spent on magazines, which is represented on the chart as the purchasers collective total value.



The indication is that customers are willing to spend more on magazines since the 1980s, however the overall number of magazines sold has declined, although the chart does seem to show a break around 1991-1992 which in effect means that the actual value of a single magazine is perceived as higher.

Cover prices have altered, increasing year on year on average as the business models of magazines changed (PPA, 2007). Consumers are buying more magazines since the 1980s and paying more for each individual copy, meaning that for publishers the emphasis on profit has shifted from advertising revenue to cover price revenue. This obviously increases the emphasis on the actual amount of copies sold. A top selling large circulation woman's weekly magazine (White, 1970) like, for example, *Woman* magazine sold 3,219,400 in 1967, the same magazine sold 358,957 in 2007 and was the 19th bestselling title in 2007.

A comparative magazine of a similar genre and similar popularity to *Woman* magazine in the 60s today would be *Take a Break* magazine, which sold 1,009,795 in 2007. There is still the expectation of a similar number of copies sold, in comparison to 1967; however, the market is more complex than it was in 1967 with a far greater choice of titles available, making competition for circulation more intense.

#### Morphogenesis: The case of recessions, advertising and firms

From the (advertisers) firm level, a tendency to advertise one's way out of recession appears to have happened on two occasions. This is not an iron law but faced with the loss of earnings from low demand for their products generally (T1). A boost may be found in the buoyancy of magazine sales in recessions (Jiang Koller and Williams, 2009). It would appear that some firm managers have decided to increase advertising spending to boost their declining revenue (T2-T3). In turn, this provided the opportunity for new launches, which may make the industry more buoyant (T4). From the magazine companies point of view this impact of advertising spending is structural conditioning; yet it is the result of agents past actions.

In summary, markets are complex. Advertising has an effect on launches but not in a straightforward economically deterministic way. Many other structural influences from the changed perceived value of an individual magazine, to technology, and regulation all condition the market. We have viewed the enablements produced by stakeholders, and the action of actors playing a role as they make choice for their company. But there is another influence that is not viewed in the action of agents or the structural conditioning that surrounds them. This is the action of cultural conditioning on magazine launches. To analyse the structural influences further a survival analysis was undertaken.

#### SURVIVOR ANALYSIS

Nielsen had collected data on the advertising spending of brands within Britain. Every magazine that carried significant amounts of advertising was therefore listed in the data.

When the magazine no longer existed or had lost the majority of its advertising revenue it was

dropped from the data. Some magazines lasted throughout the whole 1974 to 2008 period, such as *The Radio Times*, *Cosmopolitan* or the *New Scientist*. Other magazines ended, like *The Face*, which dropped out in 2005 due to its closure in 2004. It also categorized the magazines into sectors: like women's magazines, or even new sectors such as the computing and the men's market, indicating shifting cultural tastes. As well as magazines that exited others entered: *Which Computer* entered in 1991, *Arena* entered in 1988, *GQ* in 1990 and *Loaded* in 1994. *On Your Bike* entered in 2000 and exited again in 2002, providing a source of duration data. The data collected for this thesis was listed from 1974 to 2008, which covered the period that the interviewees were likely to mention.

To look at the life chances of magazines required a suitable method of analysis. Survival analysis (or duration modelling) is a type of statistical analysis that deals with death in biological organisms. This method was applied to the births and deaths of magazines using STATA® as a way to analyze how likely a magazine was to survive. This type of regression analysis enables the understanding of how the value of the dependent variable, in this case the life span of each title, changes when any one of the independent variables is altered, while the other independent variables are held fixed. The model tries to estimate the impact of variables on a hazard rate or risk of not surviving. The model most widely used for survival analysis is the Cox Proportional Hazards model (Beck 1998) which worked well with the binary time series data derived from Nielsen. Cleves et al., (2010) point out that the advantage of the Cox model is that it makes no assumption about the hazards over time, for example the hazard rate could be constantly increasing, or decreasing or increasing then decreasing or a combination. However, it is assumed that the shape of the hazard is the same for everyone or in this case every magazine.

The next table shows an estimation sample of the statistics used the Cox proportional hazards model. This is followed by a matrix of the correlation between variables. The description of each of these variables is given below.

**Descriptive statistics for use in cox model**

Number of obs = 1294

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
_t	12.3864	20.95483	1	180
niche	30.55796	30.17427	1	114
niche2	1843.572	3514.309	1	12996
recession_~y	.2140649	.4103307	0	1
postrec	.0857805	.280148	0	1
leftrunc	1506955	.3578902	0	1

**Correlation matrix**

Independent variables	niche	niche2	recess~y	postrec	leftrunc
niche	1.0000				
niche2	0.9592	1.0000			
recession_~y	-0.2806	-0.2307	1.0000		
postrec	-0.1309	-0.1231	-0.1576	1.0000	
leftrunc	-0.1775	-0.1695	0.1038	0.0345	1.0000

In order to understand the data set containing the 1294 magazines that entered, survived, and died over the period between 1974 -2008. Six variables were used to analyze some of the events that occurred within the Cox regression. The first variable was  $t$ , which was the dependant variable from which the model generates an explanation. It measures the life span of each title to provide the number of years that the magazines survived within the Nielsen data. This variable produced 12 as the mean number of years for the average life span of popularity for a magazine. Then more independent variables that might have influence the lifespan of the magazine were introduced. The second variable was *niche*, which contained the categories identified by Nielsen for the different sectors of magazines. *Niche* counted the number of magazines that already inhabited the category when the magazine was launched. Another variable from *niche* was also created, which was  $niche^2$ . By squaring *niche* the pattern was magnified to test if the relationship between *niche* and a title's survival was linear or curved, the relationship was found to be curved.

The fourth variable *recession y*, which contained the years when the UK was identified as being in recession: 1975-1976, 1980-1981, and 1990-1992, when 21% of the magazines in the sample were launched. The final variable *postrec* contained the first two years post recession when 8.57% magazines were launched to account for any delayed effects of the recession. Anecdotal evidence suggests that magazine companies try to launch at the end of the recession to take advantage of the consumers demand and the increased advertising spend in the recovery period.

<b>Cox regression</b>		<b>Breslow method for ties</b>		
<b>_t  </b>	<b>Haz. Ratio</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>z</b>	<b>P&gt; z </b>
niche	1.017643	.0046978	3.79	0.000
niche2	.9999177	.0000378	-2.18	0.029
recession_~y	1.579121	.1475771	4.89	0.000
postrec	1.336023	.1645996	2.35	0.019
lefrunc	.292812	.0379055	-9.49	0.000
No. of subjects	1294			
No. of failures	761			
Time at risk	16028			
LR chi2(5)	179.97			
Log likelihood	-4764.8259			
Prob > chi2	0.0000			

Harrell's C = (E + T/2) / P =	.6227
Number of comparison pairs (P)	531682
Number of orderings as expected (E)	326074
Somers' D	.2454

The Cox duration analysis was performed using STATA® In order to test the robustness of the model Somers' D, and Harrell's C test were performed The overall model was significant as the LR test was very significant at a level of under 1% with 1294 observations. Harrell's C showed that the model correctly identified life span failures 62% of the time, indicating that the model is reliable, and Somers' D confirmed the predictive accuracy of this model.

### The individual variables and their impact on hazard

The control variable *lefrunc* was used in this model to account for the left truncation of the data where some magazines would have had an early entry and may have died before our model sample was taken. In other words *lefrunc* was used as the sample taken would only include those that had survived up to 1974, creating a potentially uneven bias as compared with the base line. Those magazine sampled before 1974 were 70% less likely to die. The four variables used in the Cox regression above were found to be significant.

The variable *niche* was used in this model to estimate the number of magazines present in the category that a magazine entered when the magazine first came to prominence. This was found to be significant ( $z=3.79$  and  $P>|z| 0.000$ ) the hazard ratio was 1.017643. This means that increasing the niche by 1 more magazine increases the likelihood of failure for that magazine by 1.7643%. This variable produced information on the amount of magazines in each category at launch, providing the mean number of magazines found in any category as 30. The average impact of *niche* is to increase the likelihood of failure of a magazine by 52.8% ( $1.7*30$ ). Then the variable *niche*<sup>2</sup> was used in the model to estimate the number of magazines present in the *niche* category when squared, this was found to be significant ( $z 2.18$   $P>|z| 0.029$ ) the hazard ratio was 0.9999177. Squaring *niche* highlights the patterns present in the *niche* variable, which may appear as scattered or regular. It was found that by increasing the *niche*<sup>2</sup> by 1 decreases the likelihood of failure for that magazine by 1 - .9999177%, which is 0.0083%. The mean average of *niche*<sup>2</sup> was 1843.572. This indicated that the average impact of *niche*<sup>2</sup> is to decrease the likelihood of failure of a magazine by 15.3%. Therefore as *niche*<sup>2</sup> got bigger the harder it was for the magazine to survive until the number of magazines in the sector reached an optimum level. If the number of magazines in the category increased until there was 225 magazines in the category then the effect was 0. The curve became diminishing at 113, however the effect was negligible after 100. The net effect of these two variables *niche* and *niche*<sup>2</sup> together is 52.8% - 15.3%. This equates to a percentage for the hazard ratio in a region of 36% although this varies over the distribution of the curve.

The variable *recession y* was used in this model to estimate the number of magazines that

entered the sample during the years when the economy was in recession, which was significant ( $z = 4.89$   $P < 0.000$ ) and the hazard ratio was 1.579121. This means that being in recession increases your chance of failure by 57.91%. The variable *postrec* was used in this model to estimate the number of magazines that entered the sample two years after the economy was in recession, which was significant ( $z = 2.35$   $P < 0.019$ ) and the hazard ratio was 1.336023. This means that entering the market in the two years post recession increases your chance of failure by 33.6%. What this shows is that launching in a recession or even post recession decrease your chances of survival.

#### Did More Existing Magazines Fail During the Recessions?

To examine this the Nielsen data was used again. The dates when magazines dropped out of the data were taken as failures. In all 761 magazines dropped out of the data. These were compared with the years when the UK was in recession: 1975-1976, 1980-1981, 1990-1992. These seven years of recession accounted for 20.6% of the 34 years covered by the data. In those seven years 72 magazines failed, which was just 9.5% of the failures, which seems to be fewer than expected. A chi-squared test can test for the frequency of variables within categories. In addition, a chi-squared test can show whether the magazine failures were randomly distributed. For example, 20% of the years examined were in a recession period; therefore, there would be an expectation that 20% of the failures would be present in those years. The chi-squared test was used to evaluate this. The value for a chi-squared test was 4.502, the critical value for the 5% level of significance with one degree of freedom is 3.84. The Nielsen data shows magazines are less likely to fail in recessions.

	Years (%)	Failures (%)	Total
Not recessions	27 (79.4)	689 (90.5)	716
Recessions	7 (20.6)	72 (9.5)	79
Total	34	761	795

Another variable used which was then removed was *posttec* which identified the likelihood of a magazine's death after the introduction of new technology which was signified by the gradual adoption of desktop publishing firstly *PageMaker*, *Quarkexpress*, and finally *In*

*design. Quarkexpress* was the most widely used standard industry software for the production of magazines over the period between its introduction in 1987 and 2008 the end of the period reviewed. This variable made little difference to the survival analysis and was removed.

When new technology was installed there was considerable talk about how this would increase the ability of magazines to multiply in niche markets, as the new technology was perceived to be able to drive down the cost of production in magazines making niche markets cost effective. Marketing (13 August 1992) indicated that the 73% increase in consumer magazines during the 1980s was the result of new technologies, tighter marketing and better market research. However, the increase in niche publishing is not to be found across all categories and the area where it would be expected to make an impact, which is the specialist interest titles, do not show the consistent expected rise. Haveman, Habinek and Goodman (2010) suggest that as the magazine industry expands and develops over time, larger older firms tend to compete by raising the barriers to entry for smaller firms. For example big companies spend more and more on promoting and researching launches, which makes it difficult for smaller companies to compete at the same level as they do not have access to the finance. Smaller newer companies are more likely to use an industry specific resource like technology to enable them to compete. Thornton (1995) points to the big increase in the music and style magazine niche by the end of the 1980s, however other categories would be decreasing. In fact the table below indicates that there appears to be a mean number of magazines, and there is no significant difference between the numbers that entered post quark as pre quark.

	Years (%)	Entrants (%)	Total
Pre quark	11 (32.4%)	321 (24.8%)	332
Post quark	23 (67.6%)	973 (75.2%)	996
Total	34	1294	1328

The economic climate of recession and post recession that were in play over the period from 1974 to 2008 do not appear to have had a significant impact on the amount of magazine launches during the whole period. There is a likelihood that the amount of advertising would be less in times of recession and post recession, however the PPA (2008) suggest that this

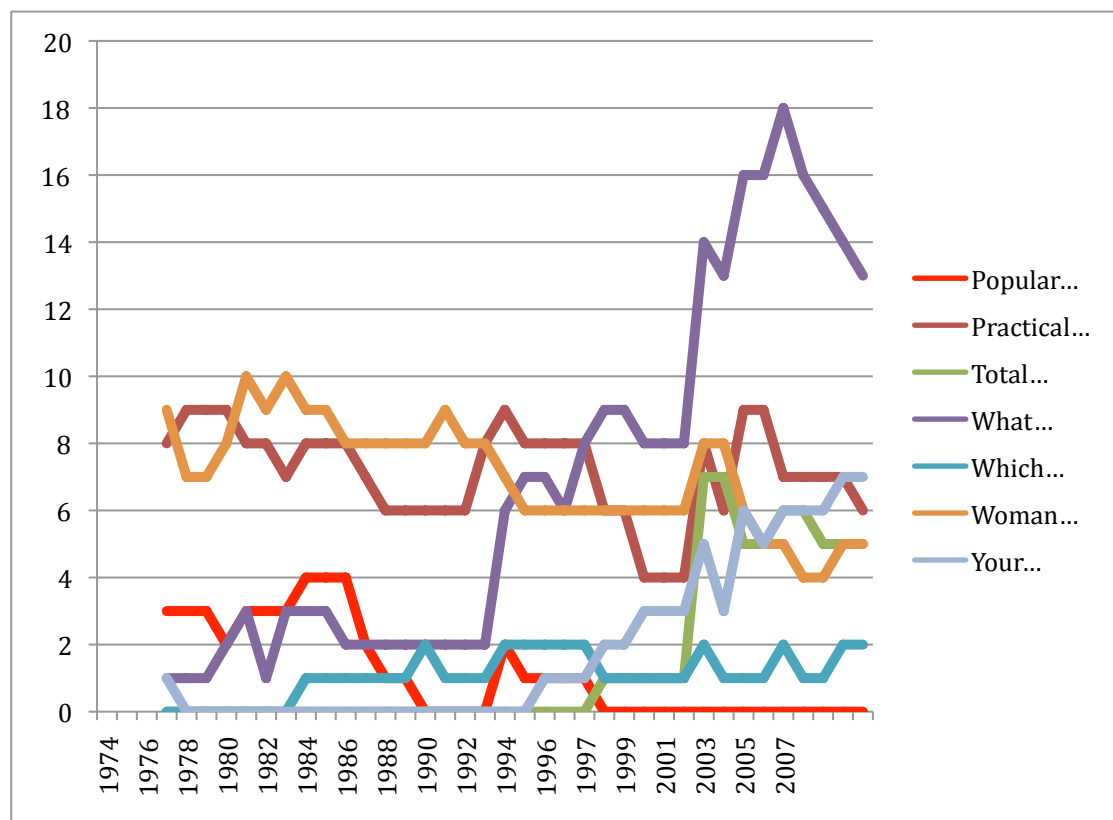


means that it is easier to pick up market dominance and as the magazine industry is dominated by a few larger companies this may be part of the strategy adopted by these companies meaning that there is no significant drop in launches over the years of recession or post recession. McKinsey Quarterly support this as they conclude that in times of recession there is an increase in spending on reading material in contrast to other entertainment which see a drop during recession. (2009 issue 9/p85-89). The survival analysis shows that the average survival is 12 years, that existing magazines in a sector can help the survival chances of new launches but that recessions and post-recession years are more risky periods in which to launch a magazine but existing magazines are less likely to fold in a recession. The technological influences that created a significant amount of noise in the industry business press and the effects of the changing technology which are talked about in great depth by the interviewees has over the time period 1974 to 2008 showed no significant impact on the amount of launches. However, cultural changes can be seen as the interest and size of the categories change over time which as Thornton (1995) points out when talking about youth “the music and style press are crucial to our conception of British youth: they do not just cover subcultures, they help construct them” (1995: 151). This comment could also be applied to other areas of subculture, where the cultural formations are created and maintained by magazines for other interest groups.

### Trends

In effect magazines, but particularly magazine launches, have to follow the mood of public consciousness; this is more than a structural condition. The cultural realm influences and interacts with both the structural emergent properties and the agents as they socially interrelate. In effect they pick up on the zeitgeist of the current time. Archer defines language as part of the cultural realm, it constrains and enables our action but the interaction takes place over a different time period to structure. The data from Nielsen can show an influence from the cultural realm on magazine launches and how this occurs.

The next chart indicates the waves of popularity around title genre. A title is incredibly important to a publication and once chosen it rarely changes. This chart shows how the fashions and the zeitgeist of an era are reflected in a title. The data was taken from Nielsen who collected data showing the advertising expenditure on magazine brands it indicates waves in popularity around a genus. For example magazines with a ‘What’ in the title remain fairly steady at around two or three magazines. These titles are likely to be fairly practical titles covering one generic area with a listing section giving product reviews, in effect infotainment (Graber 1994).



These magazines are consumer driven based on the idea that the reader intends at some point to purchase a product from their listed range, or to gain an encyclopedic knowledge of products in the area. Before 1982, there appear to be around three titles using ‘what’ in their title. In 1982, this dropped to just one. There were two magazines with what’ in their title for six years until 1996, where there was a rise to six magazines. It hovers around six to eight magazines rising to nine and then dropping back to eight until 2001. Then there is a continued increase in the number of titles using this title until 2007 when there are 18 magazines with

‘What’ in their titles. The end of the Cold War motivated a new hope for global interaction and growth, which fuelled a new zeitgeist of optimism, taken together with the rise in digital technology, the Internet and the dot.com boom according to Gordon (2008), it was common in this era to predict global prosperity, and a rising standard of living. Which gave rise to a need to ascertain information about consumer purchases. The readers of ‘what’ genre magazines are more likely to be more male. Compare this to titles of the ‘popular’ genre, which were similar in editorial content but not in current fashion, and where there have been none since 1997.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion magazines appear to have a natural product life cycle, suggesting that launches are needed as they have the ability to rejuvenate the magazine market. Launches are necessary for companies, as there is a pressure from stakeholders for growth. The structural emergent properties of other industries, suppliers and even the government have an indirect influence on the production of magazines. The influence of other structures is triggered as they have a vested interest in the profitability and content supplied by magazine publishing houses; and therefore activate their structural emergent properties creating a demand for magazine launches; their influences are both economic and regulatory. Magazines have a pressure from many sources to grow. They adapt to this pressure by constantly launching re-launching and acquiring other magazine titles, to enhance their own stable of magazines.

Business models of the large publishing houses have changed over time in terms of the categories that are published, the effect of international competition, growth and the rivalry between individual players in the industry sector.

Launches cannot be solely attributed to economic determinism, or even modified economic determinism as they happen even when advertising is not buoyant, and are not reducible to an economic formula. There is an indication that there may be a counter cyclical boom and bust trend in relation to the economy, however it is not simplistic. Agents create magazine launches as they mediate and interact with other agents, which forms the structure and culture

that surrounds them. Launches are a complex process reliant on many different factors not just the structural social forms but also elements of culture.

Despite the current credit crunch and the rather bleak outlook for magazines in 2009 the industry was not bereft of launches in the first half of 2009. H Bauer launched *low-cost cooking magazine Eat In*. During the period Future also launched *The Knitter*, *Triathlon Plus* and *Guitar Aficionado*, while Condé Nast launched *Love* and *Wired*. The survival analysis showed that the average lifespan of a magazine over the period was 12 years, that launching into an established niche was beneficial but the survival chances of magazines that launched in recessions was reduced. The analysis showed little impact of technology on the likelihood of survival.

Launches are necessary to revitalise the industry and for growth, development and the profit of individual companies; however launches are becoming so prohibitively expensive that it is rare for any publishing apart from the major players to be able to afford to launch<sup>19</sup>. In the words of Shortlist Media chief executive Mike Soutar "The cost of launching on the news-stand is now quite extraordinary," says Soutar. "On a normal, orthodox news-stand launch for a new weekly that aims to get into the top three in its sector, you can easily spend £12m in year one. Newsstand magazines have never been riskier." (Media week: news; 12/5/2009)

Creating a launch is not simply a reflex to the structural properties of economic pressure. Agents form a vital part in the industry, they are the industries assets and although companies build brands, brands eventually have a natural life cycle. Most companies have a comparably high proportion of intangible assets; in effect most assets walk out the door at night, which continues to put pressure on companies to find launches or expand into new markets and diversify. However even though magazine company assets are largely un-saleable, their employees are tied into a very small industry sector. Although individuals may be very skilled, their skills are not saleable on a large scale. A constant interaction between

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<sup>19</sup> This too may result from deliberate action by major magazine publishers to increase their competitor's costs (see Sutton, 1990).

government, economic drivers and the individual agent, both readers and staff ties the industry together making launches the linchpin of the magazine industry.

The next chapter provides a re-description through the views of the interviewees of the magazine launch process. This chapter also provides background information on the magazine publishing industry, and the lives of the people that work in it.

## Chapter Five

### **Empirical findings**

The previous chapter studied structure, looking at the concept through the morphogenetic cycle showing empirical examples of the structural influences that affect magazines. The chapter related how structural emergent properties created a demand for consumer magazine launches using a specific view prescribed by Archer's theory. This chapter acts as a re-description of the launch process through the eyes of the individuals that work on a magazine (see re-description Hartwig 2007). The purpose of this is to re-describe phenomena including the unacknowledged conditions that may be present that are not represented within the theoretical model. It provides insights into working on launches and it illuminates the importance of the relationship between the magazine and the readers. In addition it in part acts as a corrective to the charge that I am fitting the data to the theory. However, as the questionnaire was inspired by critical realism and more specifically categorizes the empirical data into themes for organisational purposes. Broadly speaking the chapter is divided into two areas. Firstly, structure is explored interviewees discuss industry changes, which sets the context for the market and the connection with the reader, this is striven for in order to understand the target audience for a launch. It highlights the different approaches to market research; it begins to unravel the agential relationship between the creative producers and their managers. Secondly, Interviewees discuss their experience working on launches. The questionnaire was based on my theoretical approach and a fuller discussion of this can be found in chapter 3.

#### **Interviewees**

None of the interviewees had worked in the industry for less than a ten-year period. All of them were aged over thirty in order to have gained ten years experience. Most people had

been in the industry for over twenty years. Everyone had worked for more than one publishing company, on launches dated from 1994 to 2008. All had experienced working in large media multinational organisations, at some point in their career, and half still were. Two people were senior personnel in design departments and the rest were broadly spread across the range of hierarchy found in editorial departments. About one fifth were men.

Gender	Agreed to be interviewed	Did not agree to be interviewed	Total	% agreed
Men	3	4	7	42.8%
Women	13	17	30	43.3%

My interviewees experience spanned three decades from 1980s-2008; many had worked across three decades. The creative freedom and influences of the eighties affected the type of launch produced. The eighties into the late nineties produced launches where the market was segmented. For example Emap's successful launch of Smash Hits (launched 1978) was followed by Emap's launches of similar titles like Just seventeen (launched 1983), and then a number of 'me too's' like Mizz (launched 1985), and Looks (launched 1985) and More! (launched 1988) Emap continued this trend until they felt that the teen market was saturated, after Bliss (launched 1995) and Minx (launched 1996)

Position of Staff within Magazine Launch	
Publisher	1
Editor	6
Editorial writer or Commissioning editor	6
Art editor	3
Total	16

### **THE PRE-EXISTING CONTEXT**

This section is most concerned with the pre-existing structure of a magazine launch context, it tries to establish both the constraints and enablement's.

#### **Context and market**

*Has the industry changed much, since you have been working in it?*

The chosen sample illustrates the wide variety of comment. The dominant comment was that technology had changed dramatically, since the interviewees had been working in the industry. During the last twenty years magazines have undergone a massive change in their production process. Two different strands were discussed, indicating the structural context within which the interviewees work: firstly, the cost to produce the title and the power within publishing, secondly, the cultural context was highlighted.

Person A has started her own business. The pre-existing structural context had changed this individual thought that new technology had reduced the cost of producing a new title, *'it makes producing a magazine far easier'*. Previously her cost would have been prohibitive but as her specific launch was small scale with production values. The market is somewhat different depending on the type of title launched, as the cost of launching a mainstream title has increased. (See Carroll and Hannan 2000, and Chapter one for a full discussion).

Person "L " was a designer and had entered into the industry receiving creative satisfaction from her job, which two decades later she was finding increasingly hard to satisfy. She saw design as a role that had essentially been de-skilled within the structural context that she worked by the gradual assault of new technology. She also commented on the change in the power structures found in publishing organizations *"Since I have been working in it, it is a lot less creatively based and a lot more business, money and marketing orientated."*

Person B commented on the rise in celebrity culture, which is encompassed within the cultural realm. Although you could identify the celebrities as part of the agential realm as agents act culturally but in this instance the interaction appears to be a socio-cultural interaction where both the interviewee and the celebrity try to adjust the existing condition to their own making. Noting that the rise in popularity of celebrities has given the celebrities immense power. Person B thought that

*"the biggest change is the whole reality TV its huge, but the biggest change we are finding is the power that the celebrities have, which they didn't necessarily have before .... it feels more like your playing their game, than they are playing yours"*



These quotes indicate the scope of the changes over the period that the interviewees work in magazines. Firstly, technology has changed beyond recognition in the workplace, although the evidence in chapter four is that technology does not seem to have effected the number or survival chances of launches.

### **Workplaces of respondents.**

*How did the company ethos compare with other places where you have worked?*

*Probe: Was the Culture hierarchical or democratic*

This produced a range of answers and with such a small sample it was hard to find many commonalities. It would more or less depend on the company. However there did appear to be a link between the amount of autonomy and the amount of budget that was available for each interviewee. Person P was given a huge amount of personal independence and the capacity to make decisions, however their project was not sanctioned from the company hierarchy (see Sutton 2001) and therefore had no allocated budget.

*'I was given a huge amount of freedom so no one [restricted me.] It was money more than anything, company H was very prudent in terms of management and stuff, how they never killed me and stuff I will never know, because I was young and idealistic and hot headed and I would go in and say empower me or fire me, but lets do something! By rights, they should have fired me, but they never did. Money may be, I think that's because it was a project that was never officially sanctioned right from the very top it was, OK you have got a great idea if you can make this fly we will steal money from elsewhere from within our existing budgets to make it go.*

This company seemed to have a slightly different management structure making the company culture different to other big companies. There seemed to be a balance or trade-off between autonomy given to individuals and budget. The larger companies provided less autonomy but spent more on research and development of new projects.

From the broader context the next set of questions illuminate interaction and change as the interviews turned toward the particular launch.

### **Major influences**

*What were the major events or influences on the launch?-Were they political, economic, social, or technological*

Major changes in the social technological or political structures can open up opportunities of change, which may open up opportunities for new publishing ventures. The responses varied but two projects, both successful, were identified by the respondents as driven from a change in social or technological structures.

Person 'Ps' and Person 'B's' project was, as noted before driven by a change in the technology, and Person 'G' thought their project, which was a 'lads mag' for the under twenties had been influenced by social and economic change, which she also suggests in the previous question.

*Social, I suppose you would have to say, again you are seeing this rise in well, in Boys reading things actually- think about it- a lot of boys never read ... that was they other thing men had always have specialist hobby mags, but there was this great big gap for a sort of general social magazines like they way you have women's social magazines, ... Plus the fact that you know these kids have got lots of disposable income. So there is an economic element to it as well.- GM*

However most of the respondents commented that the launch was driven by economic circumstances which was conflated with the pressure on a publisher to make more profit. The comments were not reflexive about the situation and no-one commented on any specific economic change driving a launch. Instead publishers more or less presented to the employees, the existence of a gap in the market, which was given as a statement of fact precipitating a launch. Magazine companies try to employ staff akin to their target audience wherever possible, the personnel seem to be informed on a narrow range of information surrounding the launch. The wider context tended not to be discussed. Reflexivity is not encouraged. The magazine opportunity was couched in terms of connecting with an audience at a deep level. In making this connection the interviews went on to consider the structural constraints within the magazine workplace starting with finance.

### **The Launch process**

*Can you talk me through the process of deciding to launch your particular project?*

Most of the respondents' projects were launched into an established market.

Person G considers their launch was influenced by a ‘social factoid’<sup>20</sup>, of an increase in masculine reading habits and a gap in the market. This shows the complexity in launching a product, and trying to get the audience right. In this instance the structural and regulatory constraints have to be negotiated as the editorial team have to aim at one age group in order to obtain advertising, but know their readership is likely to be younger.

*... So in the market at the time there was Loaded, Maxim and FHM and that was it, and the owners of Kabal had spotted a slot in the market for lads mags, for younger boys, for teenagers whose parents wouldn't be too, you know, too anti them looking at these magazines, because a lot of the photography in Maxim and FHM it is quite soft porn and its got harder as well, as it were, so it was supposed to be a bit more irreverent sort of aimed at the younger guy The idea being, that the age it was being pitched at, was 18 but you knew that 15 year olds would pick it up. Because that's the experience of women's magazine, you always know that your readership, well, the spread of it will go a few years younger the main age. But we did pitch it at 18 years olds mainly so that we could advertise alcohol in it because you have got to bear this in mind.*

All of the interviewees could perceive of an audience for their project that would be an important part of working on a launch. The staff would have to understand the perceived audience that was leading the project as opposed to being content driven, and later finding an audience. Thus part of the process of launching the magazine was the attempt to connect with the audience. The employees clearly understand the readership group they are aiming to capture.

### **Material constraints**

*Were you aware of any financial constraints?*

A few of the respondents commented that on their launches financial constraints were no tighter than normally found on magazines. This could probably be attributed to the greater resources and previous launch experience, of the dedicated publishing companies.

Respondent ‘L’ in a dedicated publishing company noted a difference on a sliding scale as the launch progressed.

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<sup>20</sup> “Social factoids” are presented in the media as facts in this example it is taken as a given that boys don’t read.

*Not at the beginning, because they wanted everyone to be free thinking at the beginning, once we started and the thing got into production, then the purse strings got pulled in.*

Alternatively Person 'G' was working for a newly set up company she commented...

*Being a new company with absolutely, well you know what it's like; So everything was being done on a shoestring, and the staffing levels for the magazines at Kabal were quite low compared to what it would have been at IPC, certainly on the Women's titles.*

Reflecting that there were no special structural constraints as it was company specific.

## **SECTION 2 -THE MARKET**

The next section of the questionnaire inquired about the market, which would indicate awareness on the part of the interviewee of the larger business environment within which the magazines were launched.

This question brought a variety of responses and in some ways may indicate the amount a particular company buys into the myth of the knowledgeable producer verses the quantitative nature of market research.

### **Strategy**

*Did you launch wanting to compete or dominate in the market?*

(Probe; Definition of 'dominate' is wanting to be the biggest selling - Niche or mainstream?)

Everyone wanted to dominate and Person L- summed up the general feeling well

*'Oh to dominate, I think that is everybody's idea when they launch, I think if you launch with the idea of only trying to compete, then you are going to fail*

This gave the impression of the 'buoyed-up' feeling of working on a launch. Before the magazine hits the shops everything is possible. Publishers do occasionally launch to balance a portfolio of existing magazines, to dominate the advertising potential in that sector. For example, if a publisher published three car titles - vintage car, sports car and a company car title, they may launch a generic second hand car title, to balance their portfolio. Two of the respondents saw their launches as entering new or niche markets which meant the rest were launching into established markets, where their publishers wanted to extend their portfolio as they wished to dominate a whole market area.

The gamesmanship of wanting to win and dominate the market was actively encouraged. This question may have highlighted that reflexivity is not encouraged, because the individuals understanding of the wider market was not considered important.

### **Spoilers.**

*How do spoilers interact with the market?*

This question is essentially about game theory (von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1944) which highlights the interaction between structure and culture. Companies have to account for other companies strategy when making decisions, rather than solely optimising their own utilities as an individual company. The colloquial term within the industry, which marks this behaviour, is a spoiler. As their name suggests a magazine is produced to spoil a competitors proposed launch or story, with the aim of dividing their potential readership. The initial setup cost is not even, as one company may have made considerable investment in market research to ascertain there is a potential market, while the other companies free-ride on the information spoiling the available market. Companies produce spoilers as at best they become a market leader if their product is better than a competitor, or at worst they become a 'me too' making the behaviour low risk. This behaviour enables competitors to have the potential to harm prospective launches. You have to understand your competitors really well to create a successful spoiler and it can only work in oligopolistic markets. However the pool of potential editorial staff is small and heavily networked, meaning that information and gossip about new launches is likely to travel. If the market were entrepreneurial and open there would be too many players, to understand and thereby harm. Spoiler articles are also used in newspapers, and other areas of publishing like for example, one newspaper may run a story to spoil another's exclusive.

There is an element of serendipity for example '*What's on TV*' was launched as a very low budget spoiler with one sixth of the staff of their competitor, at an opportune point in time. A number of other companies also launched similar new products creating a spill over effect. However '*What's on TV*' ended up being the best selling magazine in the country, which indicates how potentially profitable this strategy can be. I was interested to find out if any of

the interviewees had been working on known spoilers, which are often concealed even from the staff who work on the projects.

Person L- *Well I think some spoilers are more successful than the magazines that were launched in the first place. It very much depends on how much money and time and energy is spent on a spoiler. If they are literally brought out and... Well I think readers know if they are brought out temporally and they are not going to last. But if you bring out a good product and people buy it, then it is no longer a spoiler is it?*

### **The effect of spoilers**

*Has that affected you in any way?*

Person G- *We didn't have any spoilers but the Crime magazine that never launched in the end had massive spoilers because IPC got hold of the idea, and introduced 'Chat crime and passion', which killed ours stone dead. We just couldn't do it*

Spoilers came across as a rapid response to potential competitive threats, often from the dominant player. This aspect of the launches highlights the complex interaction mediated by agents between culture and structure.

This section of the interview has shed light on the strategy of new launches suggesting the rhetoric is to dominate a new niche but the reality is one of intense competition. The chapter so far has shed light on the experience of working on launches, as well as the strategy, deployed by companies.

### **AGENCY**

The previous questions have highlighted the structural constraints and enablement's. The next section is more concerned with agency.

### **Market research**

*How much influence did market research have on your work?*

This aspect probes more deeply into whether publishers creating a launch are more likely to utilise editors for their cultural knowledge or employ market research to understand their

readers. Market research is expensive, but promises a fallible description of the audience in addition it provides figures for the board of directors and other financial stakeholders. The simple explanation is that companies decide to use market research based on their ability to pay. Therefore smaller companies may find the economics of market research too expensive so would rather poach a cheaper member of staff with specific market knowledge, from another company. However this is self-serving and explains an unwillingness to finance market research only in terms of financial outlay.

Market research needs to be viewed at different levels of analysis. Firstly on a competitive level (Sutton 1991, Hannon and Freeman 1977) Hannon and Freeman (1977) distinguished two methods of strategic launches (See conclusion chapter for a fuller explanation). One method is to flood the market with many launches, without a lot of support, let some die but support those that survive. The other strategy is to nurture and invest heavily in one launch, particularly with regards to market research and focus groups, which would be used extensively at various stages of the project. It is conceivable that this is also strategic on the part of larger companies by constantly racking up the amount spent on new launches (See Observer Sunday 11 March 2007, where EMAP is reputed to have spent 16 million pounds on the launch of *Grazia*). This behaviour would lead to a reduced market of players or publishing companies as the initial outlay precludes new entrants unless they have considerable financial backing in an intensely risky environment (Sutton, 1991). The former strategy of flooding the market tends to be the preserve of the larger companies; this may be attributed to financial rather than purely strategic reasons.

There were some respondents who had no knowledge of market research, which may be attributed to their position within the company. Both the market research company and the publishing company view the results of large scale market research as confidential, with signatures for non-disclosure required from staff. I know this from past personal experience. Meaning that extensive information was not forthcoming.

*Respondent 'M' '... I am new to market research before the event, certainly it is ongoing and we are researching the magazine on an ongoing basis, yes I went to research groups last week.*

Companies did formal market research or relied on the instincts of magazine personnel. The reliance on gut instinct in magazines is well documented (White 1970) and gives credence to the myth of the cultural producer, empowering them with knowledge and power. The editors constantly struggle for autonomy as it provides them with the sought after power to be able to carry out their job without management interference. There are instances where editors claim to model a magazine on their own personal tastes. For example James Brown reputedly modelled *Loaded* on what he would like to find in a magazine. This gives further credence to his ability to understand the readers and thereby gain autonomy. The next quote displays that neither method is infallible.

*Respondent 'G' 'They did obviously do market research, we are going back to Front here, but a lot of it I think was gut feeling the main owner of Kabal, or the main driver was Sally O'Sullivan who as you know is one of the grand dames of British magazine publishing. ... And I think the way that Sally worked like a lot of very good magazine people work, is on gut instinct. You can only do a certain amount on focus groups, I mean look what's happened to the Labour Party when its run on focus groups it's a complete bag of shite, it doesn't always work sometimes you have to go with your gut feeling, and that is what being a good editor is all about.*

Essentially this is a debate about qualitative data verses quantitative data and probably not easily solved within publishing. However the existence of gut instinct has to be ratified for each separate occasion, as each individual editor will have different experiences, which may be relevant or not to the launch situation, in certain circumstances over confidence may be found in place of experience. This emphasises the publishers judgment as to how knowledgeable available the editor really is, and whether to trust their judgment over and above anyone else's, which in itself is an imprecise science. The use of editorial personnel to understand the cultural real favours the socio-cultural interaction over and above the less mutable knowledge about the cultural system or structural realm. In addition the issue of



market research versus editorial is an unresolved tension that relates to the distribution of power within publishing.

### **Influential enablements**

*Who or what made the biggest difference to facilitating things to happen, on the magazine?*

This question highlights individual agency. In reply to this question, people either cited the root cause as money or people, although one person cited that it was the hours. However, that could really be construed as money; had they had more staff there would have been less need, to put in long hours. Most people felt their teams had a reasonable amount of agency.

It may be that the age of the company had influenced the amount of agency employees enjoyed within their company. Routines are more entrenched in the more established companies. The response of ‘the editor is the biggest facilitator’ was more common in large companies, while the employees of the younger companies found money and budgets more constraining.

The exception to this would be the designer whose ability to rival competing titles can be constrained by budget. Some of the designers work relies on up to date technology or other individuals being commissioned like for example, photographers or illustrators, to enhance their work.

G really believes in her own agency, she is a fantastic problem solver and man-manager using communication skill to negotiate obstacles until she arrives at an immovable obstacle which she is unable to negotiate and that is time!

### **Norms**

*How important is it that your staff hold similar values and beliefs?*

People took this question in so many different ways, which made the answers broad ranging from, knowing who the reader was in marketing terms; to having an in-depth knowledge about the subject; to having similar work ethics. The following two show the range, person M took the question literally and said,

*I don't know about beliefs but it is very important that everyone knows who we are aiming the magazine at and knows who are target audience is. That is very important, as you need*

*to have that person in mind to make a good range of decisions across the whole magazine, it is probably going too far to say you have to have the same beliefs.*

Person P took the question to mean conformity,

*Don't care. I wanted them to have their own opinion. We'd discuss it. It's far more value that I think this is a good idea or I think we're doing this wrong. And then we would have it out, in a pretty frank way and move on*

This question probably works best in conjunction with other questions but it comes over quite strongly that all the respondents wanted to work in a team with common aims.

### **Constraints**

*How much freedom or restriction do you consider you have concerning the content of the magazine?*

The two people who had been in the industry the longest and were arguably the most senior editorial staff thought they had the least say, but they are both currently working in newspaper magazines which are influenced by the huge hierarchical newspaper culture. The other interviewees felt as though they had quite a lot of control. The size of the companies they worked for varied, all were specialist magazine publishers therefore the greater control may reflect this because the projects were relatively new launches without heavily established routines.

On the other hand, some magazines within smaller publishers had a more informal culture, Person G said

*Interesting one! Well, in production you tend not to have a lot of input about what is decided to go in, but because you edit it you tend to have quite a lot of input, by default. Because there was one issue when the editor and the deputy editor didn't appear, so it was quite an interesting situation where we had me and Catherine who are both woman in our thirties de-facto editing a magazine aimed at randy young boys of about fifteen. Which was a very amusing state of affairs! So at the end of the day we would have a lot more control than you might imagine, we were the gate keepers of legalling things, I mean they (the writers) would always want to be slagging off MacDonald's- you just can't do it! We could have done, but quite frankly I didn't have the time to check it out. So you did have quite a lot of control, not starting with it but ending up with it.*

Similar to the previous question, that sought to uncover aspects surrounding personal agency within a context, and demonstrated the importance of agency. This question demonstrates the personal concerns that motivate individuals to work on a launch.

### **Personal motivation**

*Thinking back, what were your motives for working on a launch?*

Most responded that it was a challenge, it was seen as a dream job or an opportunity. This is because it is seen as something of a professional accolade, however you have to be a risk taker as the launch may go wrong and then you are out of a job. Some people would be more confident of picking up work if things did go wrong than others, so it is about confidence and risk, but also previous experience, for example if the person had freelanced before and made a success of it they would be more inclined to do it again, making the risk appear more measured. A launch would present the opportunity to influence the look or editorial style of publication offering more creative freedom than an already established magazine. With modesty, one responded ‘*Yes I think there is a lot of right place right time*’ another was flattered ‘*I was approached and it was a nice offer!*’

The variety of responses demonstrated the range of personal motivations, but most saw the opportunity as a method of gaining autonomy, but this was measured against the individual’s perception of risk.

### **SECTION 3, REFLEXIVITY**

The following section was designed to examine the ultimate concerns of the individual within their work environment. Reflecting how they view their role at work and how that fits into their personal lives, and their fundamental concerns. Although the questions were not specifically about launches it reflects the personal context of individuals.

### **Ambitions**

*Could you describe your future artistic and commercial ambitions?*

These answers reflect the insecurity felt by employees in magazines and the rather fluid nature of their job, there is no indication that there is any clear job progression or that it is seen as a job for life. Individuals are judged on what they are doing in a particular month or week, providing an intense pressure to constantly perform.

Only one person 'A' really had ambition within their current career structure and she was running her own business, where she could have far more autonomy. An art editor who had worked for both small companies and national newspapers suggested that her ambitions were '*A lot less than they used to be, to stay in a job that at least gives me some artistic credibility*'. She indicate that there is less autonomy available in really large companies, but small companies tend to be micro managed, however working in larger companies provided higher salaries and greater prestige.

Person M- *Just to keep paying the mortgage and not get thrown out on the street, um no, maybe I would like to be an editor, it would be nice to think before I end my career that it would be quite nice to have a shot at doing that*

The variety of answers was interesting but essentially the employees appear jaded, desiring the creativity, and autonomy, which hasn't been forthcoming in their employment.

### **Personal identity at work**

*Have you made the job part of yourself or do you play a role when at work?*

This question indicates how people identify with the job Person L commented '*we all play a role to some extent.*' Connecting the answers with the previous question shows that the more people are inclined to play a role, the less they perceive their long-term goal as being part of the media industry. In effect, there is some internal struggle about whom they have to become to continue in their current job, and the sacrifices that need to be made in order to stay in the industry as a whole.

The two people who claimed not to play a role at work were the ones who felt they had the most agency and they felt most places that they worked were democratic. Like Person P- '*It's me I live it.*' To further explore the work-life balance the interviewer outlined the following scenario.

### **Work life boundaries**

Can you define where your current job ends and your social life starts?

Person S- *The hours got a lot better the longer I was there, but that was partly to do with getting more staff and a dedicated production editor, initially the magazine was making inroads into my personal time but a lot more than by the end*

This question was about the work life balance, the indication is that although they say it is balanced they are fairly work orientated. Person 'P' 's answer is realistic as he swings between wanting to put work first, which he knows he has to do in order to progress but also being aware that family should come first.

*Do you often meet socially with colleagues, friends, and discuss any aspect of your job or the media industry?*

People habitually network in the media industry it is linked with the job insecurity the need for information and the high intensity of freelance staff. Historically journalism as an industry like the newspaper industry is linked with pubs, a culture the industry has tried to reduce, however it forms a valuable service and successful cultural producers continue the process, a support network is useful whatever stage your career is at. The long hours are endemic and numerous people have to sign a waiver to get round the European directive on long hours in the workplace. This question highlighted some of the problems of working in the industry, people perceive you have power and try to call in favours and if you put your job first family and friends are inevitably let down.

Person L- *Yes, yes, I think if you spend the amount of time in work that I do, your social life does revolve around your work and particularly if you work unsociable hours, the only other people you meet in those hours are the people that you work with, and also people who understand that you can't always be there on time and you can't always drop everything, because you have to be flexible where work is concerned.*

### **Networks**

*Are your social networks important to your job?*

This question was very direct and made people uncomfortable, which meant interviewees gave very short answers, the only person (person S) who said *no* was no longer planning to work in the industry. It may be a rejection of the casting couch stereotype that is perceived as prevalent from outside the industry. Alternatively it may just be circumstance, as when working long and unsocial hours it maybe easiest to socialize with, those within your industry. However networks are important; yet people don't want to be seen as networking for instrumental reasons, as it makes them feel manipulative.

### **Nepotism**

*Do any of your family and or close friends work within the industry?*

Unsurprisingly all the people had friends in the industry, even though they had been uncomfortable in the previous question about network within the industry, all identified their friends in the industry as close friends, but only one had family, she had had uncles who worked in Fleet Street, as printers.

This section stresses the emphasis of work and how it is intertwined with other aspect of the interviewees life. It is clearly not a 9-5 job that is left behind at the end of the day.

## **CULTURAL INFLUENCE**

### **SECTION 4 – TREND SPOTTING**

In the next section the aim was to view the cultural influences on magazine launches. I considered this would support the notion of the star creative, or unique individual who is capable of spotting trends. This ties in with the previous issue of connecting with the audience, where the agents mediate between the structural and cultural realm.

In order to explain trend spotting or zeitgeist to the interviewees I give the following example.

***'Publishers might use a PEST analysis (Political, Economic, Social, and Technological) looking at these aspects it might be possible to establish there are certain trends. For example, there are a large number of ABC1's over 50, but this does not mean launching a magazine for the over 50s would be instantly successful. This implies there is knowledge, mood or spirit out there that is unspoken (tacit), and is possibly gathered from the cultural environment. This knowledge I am calling a zeitgeist.'***

### **Originality**

*When a launch is created is it a totally unique idea, or is the combination of various ideas that are circulating around in the industry?*

This question was trying to probe into the adoption of a trend, which could be emotional, or intellectual that produced a zeitgeist, which the magazine was aiming to reproduce.

Person L- *Nothing is a unique idea, I think a lot of launches of magazines is definitely based on what is currently happening, an interest is created and there is a gap and then you fill that gap*

The interviewees suggest that an idea tends to come from a combination of factors.

Essentially, overall these responses debunk the current myth of the single creative producing unique ideas.

### **Uncertainty, intuition and personal decision making**

*If you have a hunch that your readers would be interested in something new, how would you discover whether your hunch was correct?*

Essentially this is dealing with fundamental uncertainty. I would have expected the respondents to be in favour of the 'do it' approach as this supports the individual as having innate knowledge and power, however market research seemed to be sneaking in too, which is essentially deferring to an autonomous body.

When finding suitable readers for the launch the consensus is represented as

Person P- *Ultimately you have to launch I think that is why some many magazines launch and fail, because you can talk about it and do all of those things but until its on sale that's when you find out and I think that is implicit in so many publishers budget. They realize that they are going to spend x million a year launching things that don't work.*

However the question could also be interpreted differently, which is more about keeping the readers happy and committed to buying the product on a regular basis. As once you've acquired them you would have to introduce new things to stop them getting tired of the product.

Person B- *I don't know a lot of it tends to be based on if you look at people in your life that you think are in your target market, so what I'm thinking of is something for Weekend magazine, say, I think of my uncle, who is a typical Daily Mail reader. So if I was working*

*on that sort of hunch, then I'd suggest something for the magazine and it got passed then we'd just run it! So and then you get, obviously, there are very Daily Mail readers are a very interactive lot. So if they don't like something you will soon hear about it because the phones start ringing and they send letters in. And if you don't hear anything then you think they must like it.*

This seems to suggest that amongst the interviewees there is no strong belief in research or the cultural myth of the individual, essentially any launch is uncertain.

### **Trends**

*Can you verbalize what is currently the inspirational trend for your magazine?*

Most people verbalized their trend in marketing terms often highly defined and in person B's case a very sophisticated take on a cultural idea rather than a more vague notion. It was ascertained almost like a reflex, and even those who couldn't put their finger on it answered with conviction, almost like a mantra. It follows therefore that the dominant logic in the business of producing magazines is to have a clearly defined target market. These are quite detailed ideas.

*Person B-I think what they are trying to tap into is this slightly younger semi affluent family market, who you know the sort of families who one or both of the parents live and work in London during the week, but at the weekends are off in the country side pretending they are Hugh Fernley Whittingstall. You know that sort of caring sharing I am very green but still driving the four by four. That's what they are looking for.*

However as part of the discussion an art editor pointed out that there are wider issues when talking about trends. Although understanding your readership is vital an overview of the market is also necessary.

*Person L- I think a lot of magazines fail because of trends, interest comes and goes basically. But also magazines can fail because they flood the market, so a particular magazine is successful in a particular area and ten other magazines come out in that area. Well, they are not all going to survive.*

These examples support the earlier response given when talking about ideas, the consensus was that there is no single influential factor; instead there are a number of interconnecting factors.



### **Creating a trend**

*Do you think most magazines today lead or follow current trends?*

Everyone I asked thought that magazines follow trends rather than creating them.

*Person G- Follow, Difficult to say but I think most of them follow, because I think the internet leads, when I say the internet I mean things like My Space and You Tube and facebook they are the sites that are creating the trends, but those trends are created by the people that are on them, it is a much more democratic experience than anything that happened in the past. And then I think other agencies are picking up on them and going with them... yes*

This implies the power is not in the grasp of the producers however they can choose to amplify and pursue certain trends in favour of others. If the cultural producers are following trends then they are not creating them, and therefore it cannot be their intention to manipulate the readers or have a cult following. (see Ferguson, 1974)

### **Personal identity and the job**

*If a magazine establishes an inspirational zeitgeist how does it affect individual staff?*

*Probe: For example how did Loaded effect James Brown, Or Wallpaper effect Tyler Brulè,*

This question was aiming to find out how important the individual was seen to be.

*Person L- If you think that you are riding high on a new trend then it gives you a slight feeling of power and superiority, which you enjoy while it lasts.*

**Yes?** *It doesn't last for long, but it makes you feel as though you are on top of your game.*

The respondents were clearly of the view that magazines followed trends with a keen attention to their readership; nevertheless, people attributed success to an individual. This may be an attribution error in that people believe that the success of a magazine is down to a creative individual rather than a situation or environmental cause. For example one interviewee ascribe it to riding high or being at the 'top of your game', which is to ascribe an individual the ability to ride high and thereby the individual has the power to make a magazine a success or a failure.

### **The key to success**

Finally, the interviews probed what the interviewees thought were the key success factors,

asking : *Why do you think some magazines fail and some succeed?*

Most interviewees were not sure what made a success or failure but attributed it to a number of factors including timing, economics, and the market. This question seemed to elicit a reply in which an individual was described as creating a success, but the structure or the company was at fault if the launch was deemed a failure. It may be a kind of loyalty that makes interviewees reluctant to criticize fellow cultural producers which does not support the previous answer. However this sort of self-efficacy is useful especially where launches are concerned, as people would work harder and longer on something that they believe is in their power to change.

*Person G- I think some of them fail because they are a great idea for a magazine, but nobody has actually thought about exactly how many people are going to actually read them and how you are going to attract advertisers into them. You have some hilarious ones there was one launched called Icon it was a men's magazine, and they decided they didn't want any advertising in it because that would spoil the magazine derrrr.... it lasted two issues and folded hundreds and thousands of pounds, and couldn't pay all its freelancers. The economics of it is so much, to buy the paper, to buy the print and to distribute it and your cash flows are such that you tend to pay a lot of stuff up front and only get the money back a long time afterwards, you have to have that revenue stream from the ads. So identifying your ad sector is very important, you might identify a great bunch of people you would like to write for, but they might not have the ads. [Advertising revenue stream]*

Notable in this response was that the respondents tended to comment on magazines that they thought were good but that had failed. There was no clear factor. The high levels of uncertainty meant that success was seen as a lottery, not attributable to individuals.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter reported the experiences of the magazine employees; it gives insight into the meanings or phenomenological perceptions of the participants, including their perceptions of their constraints and enablements of their task. It shows the reflexivity of the participants and gives the impression of the working conditions of creative employees.

This chapter has highlighted two key themes, which divide into different areas. Firstly, the successful launch of a magazine appears to be contingent on the search to make a deep

connection with a readership that is iterative. This is situated in the form of a reciprocal understanding between the readership and the magazine, the magazine needs to provide items of interest to the readers, but also the readership must trust the magazine to provide information that is accurate and not biased towards the needs of advertisers or sponsors. The process of understanding the reader is not an exact science and so becomes an area where publishers turn to market research in addition to their editors. It was interesting that the interviewees attributed successful launches to individuals whereas failures were viewed as the result of external factors. The publishers are likely to be more adept with and trust statistics and figures while the editors are more concerned to understand their readership in order to gain trust and loyalty. Both the publishers and editor require an iterative system of judgement and trust. Prowess in these areas is used to communicate with their managers.

The success of the editor and the influence of market research were seen as important insofar as they helped to find the connection with the reader. Publishers seek to find an editor they believe is able to culturally connect to the subject matter and able to soak up the cultural knowledge in both the areas of the launch and other more generalised cultural arenas. This requires an individual who is interested enough in the subject and wider issues to acquire the status of a cultural polymath.

Respondents reported that in order to show their value the editors stressed their ‘intrinsic’ nous to culturally connect with their readers using tacit knowledge. The belief that an individual is imbued with such qualities plays to the idea of an individual’s unique strengths and capabilities, and the myth of the individual star creative.

Secondly, the experience of being on a launch seemed to require individuals to be part of a team where unquestioning commitment to the project was paramount and there was a blurring of social and work roles as the producers of the magazine worked long and potentially unsocial hours. The strategy of the magazines, before their launch, was to try to dominate a market, like a game that must be won, although after the launch, most accepted they were just competing with the existing titles, and scoring small points over the competition. The reward for working on a launch was the potential perception for more autonomy that allowed you to

be creative, this was most likely because in new environments rules and routines are much more fluid until established routines are in place.

There appears to be an overall lack of reflexivity in the editorial staff, it is almost as if it is frowned upon to think too widely about the context of a magazine launch. The agent is just required to do a job and not think too deeply about the bigger picture. To question or seek too much information is seen as questioning the management and is therefore viewed as disloyal. This unawareness of the bigger picture seems to contribute to a feeling of a lack of agency. All levels of employees seem to strive to obtain autonomy, which would give them more control over their working life but nobody quite achieves it. Trust, judgment and cultural acumen are all important in an arena where there are no measurable certainties. However a number of the questions seem to reflect the way individuals are, or feel micro managed. This gives the impression that although autonomy is sought after and is assumed to be given, managers have a tendency to monitor and assess every step of the process, which avoids real delegation.

This chapter has highlighted more nuanced information in connection with the individual agent and their autonomy and reflexivity.

The purpose of the next chapter is to re-introduce the morphogenetic theory examining examples of the empirical work collected from the interviews concerning the causal mechanisms that influence the events that surround a magazine launch.

## Chapter Six

### **Findings through the theory**

The purpose of this chapter is to examine examples of the empirical work through morphogenesis using structure, agency and culture; viewing the interaction between the strata: and considering the causal mechanisms that influence a situation in order to better understand the complete picture. Through the thesis so far it has become evident that companies have a launch imperative. This chapter uses the interviews with editorial staff on magazines to apply Archer's theory of morphogenesis. The aim of this chapter is to show various stages of the morphogenetic cycle, which may happen over different time frames for different aspects of the strata. Therefore the following examples show different aspects where agents interact with cultural, structural and agential emergent properties. Rather than expect any one example to show all aspects, eight are used. All the interviews were analysed in terms of Archer's morphogenetic cycle. Examples were chosen that clearly illustrated aspect of Archer's theory. While this is open to criticisms as fitting the data to the theory it illustrates the advantages and drawbacks of using Archer's theory to view magazine launches. Finally, there is a discussion on the influence of culture, as it is particularly relevant to this specific field of research.

The outline of the chapter is as follows. There are eight sections, each of which has one or more examples within them taken from the interviews, they move through the morphogenetic cycle. The first two exemplars highlight the importance of structure, both structural emergent properties and constraints. The third example highlights the importance of agency. The fourth example is more concerned with the interaction between different strata. Exemplar five, introduces culture which is a theme continued by examples six and seven. The final example highlights the importance of time where there is a mismatch between structure agency and culture resulting in a launch failure. The later examples show the importance of the

interaction between structure and culture highlighting some difficulties with Archer's approach, taking the eight sections in turn.

**1. Structural constraint and also structural elaboration**, the exemplar of *What Car* shows how the national pricing of cars affected a magazine causing a structural elaboration. The magazine used the constraint of car pricing and by responding to the interaction from its readership it created a campaign that helped to change car pricing in the UK in conjunction with the introduction of the Euro.

**2. The structural constraint of a launch**, this exemplar illustrates a more recent scenario where a publisher in a magazine company discussed the external structural pressure from media buyers, that created the need to make a choice for his company to either: buy another magazine in the same sector in order to deal competitively within the market, or consider selling their product and leaving that niche market.

**3. Structural emergent properties and agents; contexts of the launch** this exemplar looks at *Personnel Today* noting the action that could have been taken by a group of recruitment agents who had the potential to behave as corporate agents.

**4. How structural changes are dealt with by primary agents** looks at technology as a structural emergent property and the way that agents react and adjust to the changes.

**5. How cultural trends are dealt with by agents** looks at an example of the interaction between socio-cultural interaction and agency which one company try to use to their advantage, riding short-term cultural trends.

Within this section are three examples, which look specifically at the interaction between the different cultural elements that are subdivided into the cultural system and socio-cultural interaction. In particular a mismatch between the cultural elements and their interaction with the structural realm appears to produce a magazine failure.

**6. The interaction between structure and culture** example shows a disparity between the cultural aspect of the company's dominant logic and the contemporaneous technological environment where the two strata appear mismatched.

**7. The interaction of structure and culture** discusses two exemplars of magazines that have not been successful, using the specific example of a publishing company that is looking to find an opportunity to re-enter a market with a new computer title.

**8. The interaction of structure and culture** highlights a disparity between the cultural aspect of the company's dominant logic and the contemporaneous technological environment. This exemplar discusses the pressures surrounding first mover advantages, in general using the specific example of *BeMe.com* a web based woman's magazine produced by IPC in 2001. These exemplars provide evidence for the applicability of Archer's theory in discussing magazines but they also indicate the complex interaction and mechanisms that are present. In particular the relationship between structural emergent processes and cultural emergent processes are problematized. Although Archer stresses the importance of the ability to analytically distinguish culture and structure in many of these examples both cultural and structural phenomena are intertwined. For example, technology has aspects of both phenomena as emergent properties, and is therefore used twice once for each strata.

Exemplar One: *What car price guide*

The example from 2001 shows how corporate agents both acted as a group and changed the way cars were priced in the UK and supported a magazine launch about new and second-hand car prices. This example shows structural elaboration on a bigger scale, represented in the national pricing of cars in the UK, rather than the competitive rivalry of the previous two examples.

Traditionally *Parkers Car Guide* were the market leaders in the second-hand listing market, however in this scenario another magazine *What Car* launched a spin off price guide that was more feature led. *What Car* had already created a loyal proactive readership and was similar, in its editorial role on the newsstands, to *Top Gear* with its cult following (Ferguson 1983).

In the following quote the interviewee sets the scene.

*“Yes we were in the right time right place, absolutely. Because if you remember at the time there was all those campaigns about rip off Britain, and how expensive cars were, - and all*

*of that. So it was definitely a right time, right place. Cars were very, very expensive, we were paying massively more for the same product than people in Europe; despite the fact that the product was being made by the same labouring skills, in the same factories, - the dealerships in this country had had it all their own way. So there was very much a consumer groundswell, a lot of ambient noise if you like. They said, actually here is a campaign- that we can do”*

The interviewee is building a picture of the events surrounding the launch of What Cars Price Guide. It was reported widely on the television and other sections of the media that equivalent cars, to those sold in Britain could be bought a lot cheaper on the continent. The BBC reported that by 2001

*“Car firms will now have to offer their dealers the same discounts as fleet buyers. The move follows an investigation by the Competition Commission, which showed that British buyers were paying on average 12% more than other Europeans for their cars.”*

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/905618.stm> Friday, 1/8/2000, 06:18 UK.

However to expound further on the structural condition, the forthcoming introduction of the Euro in January 2002, coupled with the consumer pressure and the media demanding parity with Europe, may have influenced a change in pricing of UK cars.

Essentially, the interviewee stressed one aspect of this market, which was the consumer pressure. However, there were three influences: firstly, consumer pressure; secondly, price transparency, that would become obvious with the introduction of the Euro; and thirdly, what the OFT referred to as the ‘new car market differential’ (Hansard 1999). The issue of the ‘new car market differential’ was eventually referred to the competition commission who put in place the ‘new car order 2000’. This recommended that dealers should offer the same discount to private buyers as those offered to fleet buyers. The three different pressures simultaneously brought about a market change, which demonstrated the complex nature of change as a combination of structural and cultural emergent properties, although the interviewee emphasised only one aspect, which was, in his view, the catalyst.

The next quote demonstrates how the interviewee perceives this pressure was brought to bear, and how the media had helped to influence the change.



*P: Yes I think we did chase a trend and that was very much consumers waking up to the fact that the motoring industry had had it all its own way for a very, very long time and that it was something they could do if enough pressure was brought together through media and through buying, literally voting with their wallets-then they could have that and we have seen it with the price of cars tumble, I mean new cars, yes much, much less expensive than they used to be*

Using Archer's (1995) morphogenesis this example indicates how a group of corporate agents from the media and other motoring bodies had campaigned and acted to change things. The cult like following of the media campaign supported the structural change of car pricing, accordingly *What Car Price Guide* magazine was launched right at the end of the wave of consumer pressure and the media campaign. This change in the market context helped to support the new magazine, the combination of consumer pressure, which in part, was driven by television programmes, which encouraged consumer action, and the impetus from external factors (structural enablements) such as the competition commission and the introduction of the Euro, which made price comparison with Europe more transparent.

This exemplar creates a picture of the kind of complex interaction that takes place between agents, both as agents and corporate agents, socio-cultural interaction and the cultural system, in order to produce structural elaboration. The structural elaboration in this example is constituted in the material value of cars.

## **2. Structural constraint of a launch**

The next example looks at the way that the pre existing structure constrains the launch environment. It also highlights the interaction between the cultural and structural realm and the resulting generative mechanism.

The magazine industry is set up in such a way that it favours big companies. The interviewee brings up a number of interesting points, as he highlights a deviation by Haymarket Haymarket publishing company from the 'dominant logic' (Prahalad and Bettis, 1986) that

normally prevails within this company. Dominant logic is a common strategy across an industry; it presupposes a particular way of doing things in order to be successful.

### Exemplar two

A pre-existing condition existed (T1) where most publishing companies own magazines in niche subsectors. Media buyers act as a structural constraint because media buyers like to deal with companies who have a stable of magazines as they provide better opportunities to make deals. Eve <sup>21</sup> is a single stand-alone woman's magazine, for Haymarket. Having bought the title the company are being squeezed on the advertising rates that they receive from the media buyers. The way that Haymarket usually does business within their ideological and cultural mindset (dominant logic) is to launch a number of magazines within the same area. Culturally and structurally, therefore, Haymarket has either to launch more titles, or buy more women's magazines; both options require a huge financial outlay or withdraw from that market.

The cultural realm supports the structured realm, each stratum reinforcing each other (see Lockwood 1964). The culture of the dominant logic within the company is reinforced by the structural constraint of the media buyers who wish to deal with a stable of magazines. One of the generative mechanisms for this dominant logic is the preference of associated businesses or stakeholders for dealing with larger magazine companies where they can procure multiple purchases, presumably indicating that bulk orders are more likely to acquire favourable deals. (For media buyers and social relationships see Stinchcombe 1990) This sort of pressure is a structural constraint, where companies can accept the constraint or try and compete by increasing their market share in particular sectors.

*Erm... Largely it's the same group of people running the company now as it was then, they would like to think that they are a much more enlightened bunch of people, than they were then, but I am not sure that you can teach an old dog new tricks, and I think much the same*

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<sup>21</sup> The BBC had to sell EVE as it had no direct link with a specific Television program

*thing would probably apply. I think the kind of strategic launches that I talked about earlier on, where you are just growing off a base, where you are already strong has continued a pace, we continue to see the company developing much in the way that it has historically always done, very successfully in areas where it was already strong. Where the company struggles and continues to struggle is when it has to go in to areas that it doesn't play in, and take a punt in those areas, with the risk of competing against other substantial media owners to established position. The great exception to that was the purchase of EVE. Which entered us into the woman's market and was a very un- Haymarket like exercise for any number of reasons.*

The interviewee explained that he should support his company's decision to buy *Eve*, which had been a successful product for the BBC. Rather than 'giving account' (Scott and Lyman 1968), the interviewee conveyed his opinion that, although his company could improve *Eve* that would not be sufficient to make the magazine commercially viable for his specific company. This purchase went against the grain of the cultural system for his company. The cultural emergent process, of the dominant logic, impacted on the interviewee's personal views, which showed how much his view was in accordance with the cultural conditioning. The next quote is another example of the interaction between the cultural and structural realm, and the resulting pressure to conform to the company's cultural strategy.

**Yes that is a credibility issue presumably – is it?**

*(Comparative Silence, sigh ).... e...em... knowing the people involved I am still quite mystified as to why they did it, because there is no cheap way of getting in to the woman's publishing market. And what we have done with Eve is indicative of what Haymarket tends to do when it plays in any market that it plays in. In that we have created a magazine or rather we have bought a magazine and then developed it incredibly well, the circulation has continually risen. The editorial product is perceived to be a good product, the market talks warmly of it, but ultimately we are a one magazine publishing house in the woman's sector, and you know, however good that title is, however good the ABC particularly on the sales side, we are selling against group sales activities from much larger companies who have big portfolios of titles, and the muscle that they can bring to the table, particularly when they are dealing with media buyers, is significantly greater than ours. So we will have difficult decisions to make at some point. Whether we make other investments in that market to underpin what we have already got, or launch in that market to underpin what we have already got, or sell on and hope to make a profit on the investment that you have made.*

This example has discussed the structural and cultural constraints that influence companies that launch magazines. Haymarket acquired *EVE* in January 2005 investing heavily, first, in a £500,000 press campaign; then, it became the first UK magazine to sponsor a TV programme, *Grays Anatomy* in 2007. Next, Haymarket re-launched the title in April 2008 and finally closed *EVE* in September 2008. (<http://www.haymarket.com> accessed 2/92011)

This quote from Kevin Costello Haymarket's consumer media managing director highlights that there are a number of contributing factors to the closure, but the major ones are a lack of advertising and declining circulation *"Despite the valiant efforts, Eve is making an unsustainable level of loss that is exacerbated by the recent ABC decline, the continuing strength of its key competitors and uncertain conditions within the UK economy generally."* (<http://www.printweek.com/news> September 2008)

In June 2008, Michael Heseltine the company's chairman confirmed the general structural condition, which precipitated the closure and said:

*"Trading conditions are tightening in many fields. Serious increases in costs and reduced consumer demand urge caution, but caution is difficult to reconcile with the challenges presented by the structural changes through which the media industry is passing."*

The last few exemplars have, in Archer's terms, looked at the conditioning that happens between (T1-T2 see p16). The explanation from the agents reflects the roles that they play within the companies that employ them (T2-T3). This last exemplar explains how a cultural practice, eventually becomes a structural constraint, which could indicate that culture is an epiphenomenon. However Archer (1995 p304) expresses culture as having emergent properties with powers appropriate to it. Therefore the attribution in this instance of a structural constraint as a cultural practice is an example of imperfect reflexivity.

The next exemplar looks at the way that agents behave as corporate agents using the example of *Personnel Today* noting the action that could have been taken by a group of media buyers.

### Exemplar three *Personnel Today*

The example begins with an existing environment where there are two competing titles:

*People Management* a bi-weekly title and *Personnel Today* a monthly one. The situation suits one company *People Management*, as it has the market edge, it also suits the recruitment agencies who advertise in the title, but not the competing magazine *Personnel Today*.

*Personnel Today* decided to re-launch as a weekly title in order to gain a more competitive edge. This was against the advice of the recruitment agents who indicated that they would not buy additional advertisements to support a weekly publication.

#### ***Strange coincidence that they both got nominated for a PPA Award***

**P2** -Yes, I think in both cases the re-launch had done remarkable things because with *Personnel Today* the recruiters controlled the market. The recruitment companies were the bread and butter really and our rival, *People Management*, which was the CIPD one, were about more in frequency. The recruiters liked to control the market and they said to us there is no demand for a weekly and we sort of went of against the grain. I can't really define how they did it, but there was a great deal of resistance to what *Personnel Today* was doing. But it soon transpired that it was the right thing to do.

The interviewee refers to agential action in the business magazine sector, of two magazines *People Management*, and *Personnel Today* and of the power of the primary agents within the recruitment agencies. The exemplar starts in an environment where the recruiters are contented with the status quo. The accepted trade journal publishes bi-weekly therefore the pressure is on the recruiters to advertise in the magazine every fortnight – if their rivals do, in order to maintain their current market position. The recruiters are not very willing to have to advertise on a weekly basis, as this adds additional cost, so they try to deter approaches from the rival publishers who wish to increase the frequency of their title and publish *Personnel Today* on a weekly basis. The recruitment agents could have joined together as corporate agents and frozen the magazines out, by only taking out advertising on a monthly, or fortnightly basis, they might have been able to retain the status quo, although this might be anti-competitive. However as they acted as individual agents and each recruitment company took out weekly advertisements in the new title, they supported the market change and

structural elaboration occurred. This example also shows the difference between corporate and primary agents.

The next example shows how agents socially interacted with the changes that have emerged from the structural conditioning (T2-T3) using the example of technological change.

#### Exemplar four

The introduction of new technology processes has been successfully implemented in magazines and the interviewee is looking back over the last two decades and explaining the changes in the labour process that her job has withstood. The generative mechanism of this technological process was that publishers wished to cut costs and streamline production, in order to achieve that, they introduced new technology as the following quote illustrates-

*J... as much as I love computers and I do, but it has made my job, how can I explain it? Erm- I do more now, because I am a headline setter a typesetter, God! - I am going to be doing, y' know. I do bloody scans – I hate the idea of doing anything in production, I keep saying if they do more production work I am going to be out. - I will swallow those words probably, I will still be there when I am 75, but we are doing more and more, which I love, maybe being more of a control freak. I love it, because I know exactly where everything is going- that heading is going to work there, I don't have to order it, and make it fit. Y' know, I can make it fit. I can make it look the way I want it to.*

This quote demonstrates how the agent saw technological developments as an opportunity to gain more control over the labour process, but at the cost of doing more routine tasks.

Previously she had sent the work to printers who would interpret her design, the new technology had allowed her exact control over the final look of the magazine but the drawback had become having to spend more time carrying out routine tasks. There are different kinds of agents with varying, often competing, interests within the magazine. Some agents will strive for change while other want morphostatis. There is also a constant friction between editorial personnel and design personal, with a 'chicken and egg' scenario. No one wants to read a badly written uninteresting magazine, but if the magazine does not look attractive readers will not buy the product either. For a launch the initial look of the magazine is of upmost importance, as the next quote indicates.

*“Magazine design has always been one of the major determinants of success of any magazine. However, design, like the magazine cover, helps sell the magazine once; the content is what will help sell it a second time” (Husni 2001).*

The existing context is that magazine readers consider design important. The previous interviewee illustrates a process of interaction with design and the structural emergent properties of technology.

The generative mechanism was the desire of the publishing company to cut costs and streamline the production process. The technological environment is a structural emergent property which, when changed by corporate agents, created a situation that activated agents to interact with the technological change; which drove forward a programme of more technological change in order to gain more control of the publishing environment and the labour process. Although the publishers hoped to gain more command over the process when implementing the introduction of new technology, to make the editorial process less risky, more controllable and quantifiable, the unintended consequence of the new technology appeared to be a re-skilling of people, often into similar roles of responsibility that they held before the technology was implemented. This indicates the emergent powers of an additional pre existing cultural influence or dominant cultural logic in the work place. Suggesting the interaction between structure and agency is often mediated by culture.

The next three exemplars discuss launches, some which were not successful. They highlight cultural aspects of a launch, both taken from different companies. Looking at unsuccessful titles helps to highlight the necessary interaction that takes place for a successful magazine launch.

#### Exemplar five – cultural trends

In contrast to some of the previous structural examples, which demonstrated where, change happened over a longer durée. This quote is more concerned with the cultural trends, it shows us the relationship and interaction between magazines launches and markets, using a fashion based trade title it also demonstrates how short lived some of the trends can be. This

highlights Archer's (1995) point that change happens over different time periods in different social realms. A cultural trend is part of the socio-cultural interaction. The particular company concerned has a different kind of strategy; it was more interested in picking up on the cultural trends in 2007 and adapting quickly to the changes in order to make a profit.

*"...although the industry has been lurking for thirty years, ... but you'll have noticed yourself that there are nail bars everywhere ... So the industry itself exploded in the mid-nineties and was really motoring beautifully ... It's currently going through a bit of a decline, ...because it's also to do with trends, it's fashion and celebrity-driven. ... People don't want big, fat artificial nails now whereas there's a massive natural nail care market at the moment. People are having natural nail therapy as part of their regular salon. But there was a massive boom in the nail industry and that leads to loads of products coming into the country, loads of praline and celebrity nail techs appearing- if you like. Like the Nicky Clarke's of the nail industry we've got Leighton Denny and Harriet Newman, who are the two major faces of our industry that go on the TV, they do all the celebrities. – (A. September 2007)*

This magazine was launched into an arena of traditional trade type journals but positioned itself more akin to a consumer title, through its production values and more general features. The owner and editor appear to acknowledge that the peak for the nail industry is over. Later in the interview the editor talked about another new title her company intend to launch. Her strategy was to spot a trend and quickly produce a magazine to exploit it, eventually hoping to sell the title on, which would make a large sum of money or killing off a title quickly that fails to achieve viable sales. These magazines are not quality, up-market titles, with a large staff. The titles are trend-chasing titles looking for new markets where businesses are looking for advertising outlets rather than readers. Mostly funded by advertising any 'cover sales' these titles gain is a bonus. The difficulty with trend chasing titles is estimating the longevity of the trend. Trend forecaster Raymond (2010) suggests it is important to assess the factors that are determining the trend in order to assess whether it will have short, medium or long-term impact. This company makes money by risking entry into markets that may be short-term trends



Overall using the examples so far it has become clear that regardless of the type of magazines, there are conditioning influences and emergent properties, which act on the launch, and happen irrespective of the awareness of the individual. Confirming the importance of the depth ontology.

#### Exemplar six

This example concerns a potential launch scenario for Haymarket publishing company. The directors of the company who are the efficient cause wish to launch new titles, and are prepared to provide by virtue of their position the material cause.

There are a number of interrelated causes that are at play within the scenario, which demonstrates competing generative mechanisms. Firstly, there is the existing context; secondly, there is pressure on the company to be a first mover into a niche area, which is discussed. Thirdly, there is a strong dominant logic in the magazine industry, which presupposes a particular way of doing things in order to be successful. Finally, the mechanism is a distinctly cultural emergent property.

Initially the quote sets the scene; the company Haymarket had previously performed well by creating and selling computer titles, however they had been barred from entering the computer sector for ten years as a condition of a previous trade sale. The interviewee is structurally constrained by the company board. The board wish to launch computer titles, as they have been successful in that market previously. This discussion surrounding Haymarket's launch starts by referring to the sale of the old computer titles, and the conditions of their sale.

*... .. But he [the company owner] had a ten-year exclusion of going back into the computer market at the point of that sale. At the end of that period, the brief was right, we want to get back into the computer market, and the job that I was given was to lead that charge if you like. I was given a team of people and I was given a fairly clear brief- just go and do it! So it was a question of going off and exploring the market and seeing what was there, and determining how we could get into it and do that. At that point there was no clear view of whether...-this is, we are talking 1993, - a clear view as to whether that should be a*

*series of B 2 B titles or a series of consumer titles, or a combination of the two. The view was we want to get back into this market and be in a position where we can be dominant, in some aspects of it. So that was still a strategic thing, and we were seen as - we want to be back in the computer market.*

This is an example of dominant logic, ideas and practices about a particular way of doing things that were very strong. Even though the computer market had changed over a ten-year period, previous success encouraged Haymarket's board to believe that they understood the market, and therefore could repeat their previous success (Cyert and March 1963). The aim of the proposed launch was to re-enter the computer market from scratch; however, there was clearly a strong influence within the company from the cultural system (dominant logic) and this provided a strong dynamic to repeat the actions that had been successful in the past.

*But there was no position to protect or expand at that point, so there it was, more fluid. Then we looked at several different elements of the market place; obviously we looked at what other people were doing; we looked at the trends in different parts of the market to see where we thought there was success and growth.*

*Interestingly the three areas that we ended up really looking at in detail;*

*One was the computer games market, which at that point was just going through its initial real upward curve with Sega- who had just arrived on the scene and then Philips had arrived on the scene with the CDi and obviously Nintendo were the other big player at that point. So, that looked like an intriguing market. EMAP and Future were playing and they were doing rather well with it. We went and nicked a bunch of people out of EMAP and sat them down in room somewhere and told them to develop the right magazine for us that was one route.*

Coincidentally, the cultural zeitgeist of the time around 1993 was the advent, and growth of new technology. There was a great feeling of excitement about technology, not just in the work place but also in the home. The cultural rhetoric is very strong; the following quote expresses the strong cultural rhetoric mood, which is illustrated by the editorial of the first issue of UK Wired magazine (1995)<sup>22</sup>. It expresses the feeling about technology of the time.

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<sup>22</sup> Wired was launched after the success of a sister title Wired in the USA a year or so earlier. The English one folded some years later but the American one still exists.

*“ ... the digital revolution is whipping through our lives like a Bengal typhoon-while the mainstream media is still groping for the snooze button. Because the most fascinating and powerful people today are not the politicians, or priests, or pundits, but the vanguard, who are integrating digital technologies into their business and personal lives, and causing social change so profound their only parallel is probably the discovery of fire.”*

*Louis Rossetto, Editor in chief –Wired UK*

As this quote expresses it was a moment in time that was heralding a digital revolution. Wild predictions were being made about the way leisure time would be used. Books and TV were viewed as past history, Virtual reality was heralded as something that would take over our everyday lives within a couple of years (Wired magazine). Haymarket had identified two strong cultural reasons to launch. The launch of XYZ magazine was planned and situated within a context of considerable excitement surrounding technological innovation in the home. However, excitement possibly fuelled socio-cultural interaction between the cultural producers and early adopters of the new technology. This enthusiasm was countered by the previous knowledge of board members, situated within the cultural system of the company. The company had previously been successful with business-to-business titles. The result of this interaction between the board members and the cultural producers, where the socio-cultural interaction was out of step with the cultural system, produced a hybrid launch. The launch aimed at the business market but launched within the cultural dynamic of the new home technology zeitgeist.

As a company there would be additional pressure on Haymarket to be a ‘first mover’<sup>23</sup> into a niche area preferably ‘the next big thing’ in the computer market in order to gain an advantage over their competitors. In the magazine environment there is an industry folk law that says there is room in the market for an innovative launch and there is also room for a ‘me two’, but a ‘me three’ is too much, indicating a good idea should be launched quickly before someone else launches it. If as Johnson (2010) suggests that ‘chance favours the connected mind’ or that good ideas happen across networks, then speed is important when launching a

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<sup>23</sup> Spence A M 1981 *The learning curve and competition*, Bell Journal of Economics Vol 12(1) P49 -70

magazine. The pressure on this company to launch before other companies would have been significant. In the next quote the employee talks of the options available.

*Secondly, we looked at the windows market, which was just beginning to take off, and we looked at that from a B 2 B [Business to Business] point of view. So we said is there a specialist based windows magazine that we can be doing in the B 2 B market?*

*The third area that we looked at was the Apple World, which was also, then beginning to look interesting, and so I said we should be looking at creating a magazine in that area. So in actual fact we ticked the three right boxes, as those were the areas where the most interesting things ultimately did happen. And we ended up doing none of them..!*

Again, this indicates the companies overriding conservativeness concerning their views on re-entering the B2B market, which was the established part of the company's cultural system.

The socio cultural interactions on the part of the employees were not able to change this view. So, this is an example of cultural morphostasis where the socio cultural interaction does not effect a change on the cultural system, leaving the status quo.

***I was going to say you didn't stay in any of them?***

*No we didn't stay in any of them. And we ended up doing none of them. Which was really quite interesting, because we actually had... Well the weirdest of all of them I suppose, was I got into a conversation, I can't even remember what it was now, but I remember it was a guy from Sony and he was telling me all about Playstation. Playstation didn't exist at this point and he said they would be looking for a publisher to actually take the risk on with them, in taking the Playstation out to market. As the way the model works is that nobody pays anybody to do these things you actually license the brand. And that's what Future was particularly good at and then you produce the official Sega drive magazine or what ever it is. So we had the opportunity to do the... well at least put in the bid to do the official Playstation magazine. But there was a lot of nervousness here at the time -that Sony was really committed to that. Obviously there were these huge market-leading companies at the time Sega and Nintendo didn't look shift-able at the time, so it looked like an odd thing for Sony to be doing. So no one was particularly comfortable that Sony would actually make it and we would invest quite a lot of money in doing a magazine that would fall on its ass. And I think that is indicative of the company as a whole, to a large extent. It is quite a conservative company.*

In addition Sega and Nintendo created a cultural constraint, dominant business logic within the games environment. This duopoly made it harder for outsiders to change the excepted

norm. Meaning that at the time investing with Sony looked as though it would be extremely risky for Haymarket. As it happened Sony changed the market completely and had Haymarket taken the risk, it would have been likely that it would have been a successful partnership. Comparing these quotes some of the cultural and structural constraints can be seen at the time of the launch, which are operating over different time periods indicating that a combination of all three aspects, Structural agential and cultural, together make a successful launch.

The next example re-iterates the importance of cultural emergent property (CEPS) and structural emergent property (SEPS) working together in a magazine that ultimately closed.

#### Exemplar Seven

The next quote shows how important time is demonstrating an incident where the CEP of technology was acted on by a group of agents unfortunately in advance of the structural technological changes that needed to be present for their project to work.

***Em yes but you had ...um a Fantastic...you had XYZ, which was before its time, you had 'What Car CD Magazine' which was way ahead of its time. -That's not conservative is it?***

*No, they were both me, I am delighted to say. Em... actually XYZ was quite interesting as that bucked the trend a bit. I said about the Print launches and XYZ was one of those that came out of that group, but that came out of the really emotive thing where we felt that this was a brill, - a really interesting opportunity to explore the new world of technology and its impact and the way in which creative industries would work.*

*You are right it was way ahead of its time, because we were actually pitching it, to people who weren't actually using it, and they couldn't understand why they would want to see it. Particularly... we would send it to the repro house, or what ever and the repro houses really weren't that interested in the creativity elements of it, they just wanted the practical business elements of how can we nail this piece of work and make as much money out of it as possible. So it was wrong for the time probably.*

Haymarket also launched the *What Car* guide used in the previous example which suggests as a company they were adept at picking up 'consumer noise' in order to develop consumer launches. However the XYZ launch may have picked up extraneous noise from its employees as the final reader analysis showed instead of selling to printers they ended up selling to

designers and 'techies', which was not an area that had a large enough market to be able to support the title, in practise their employees were likely to be the same profile as their actual readers, rather than the intended readership of printers. At the time their employees would have been considerably computer literate for the time due to the nature of their work and environmental proximity to London. The employees' attachment to the product may have clouded their judgment about its viability for the timing and envisaged market of the launch. The interviewee expanded further on the rationale behind XYZ.

*But it is quite interesting that both of those must have picked up on some kind of zeitgeist some kind of trend, even though you claim you are conservative there must be something going on that makes you want to look at these sort of things. I mean are you allowed to experiment? em... like some companies you know 3M marketing or what ever every, on a Friday afternoon they are supposed to go off and work on wacky ideas or what ever, is there something within the company, within Haymarket that says we like everybody to.... is there some kind of process where they would like everyone to come up with ideas?*

*Then or now?*

*Ar... difference is there... can you tell me both?*

*Then yes definitely, obviously- as they set up a little unit to do this kind of work. There was a difference between a magazine like XYZ, which was a relatively low investment, it was a nice magazine but it wasn't actually a huge drain.*

*It was a punt?*

*Yes it was a punt, and it was coming out of a successful group of titles where there was a considerable amount of profitability, which had been generated by that group of titles, therefore there was a little bit of fallback against that as well. There saying the punt comes from central group but it also comes from out of the specific, if the thing fails it is not going to be a huge problem-basically.*

*Launching a mainstream computer title against other publishing companies, where you are seeking to position yourself, in a way that will allow you to dominate that market place and then the encouragement to have the ideas is great. The facilities that were made available to us at that time to develop those ideas to talk to people to create dummy magazines, to get research, it was brilliant, all the rest of it was brilliant, But the decision making process was kind of stymied by fear is not quite the right word, as they would say sensible caution, but a bit of both probably.*

This division of Haymarket appears to operate and work within the environment where structural causes have effect, but the company vacillates between making the best use of the

efficient causes created by the agents within the company, which is demonstrated in the example of *PrintWeek*.

In this example of XYZ culture and structure are working over different time scales, meaning that the zeitgeist of the moment was more attuned to a new group of people, than the structural or cultural system, which would eventually support it. The mood of the moment was orientated toward new technology, but the magazine had no definable group of readers that could be supported by advertising. Although the company had targeted the print industry as the buyers of the product, the print industry could not see a use for it. As the cultural and structural elements of the launch did not synchronise over the period of the magazine lifetime, the magazine closed. Again, it is the interaction of cultural and structural emergent processes that were important. In the XYZ example, the cultural aspects of the producers and consumers were incompatible.

The next example shows a similar incompatibility between the cultural hype surrounding new technology and the structural requirements to provide the return on investment.

### **8. The example of *BeMe* and the pressure to have the first mover advantage**

This section discusses the cultural emergent processes surrounding ‘first mover’ advantage, using the specific example of *BeMe.com* a web-based woman’s magazine produced by IPC in 2001. Stinchcombe (1990) notes that generally first mover advantages are rooted in the strong relationships that become established with the clients; in this example *BeMe.com* was keen to gain early adopters of a new magazine format and establish them as readers. Although Stinchcombe (1990) comments that this is not the only way to gain an advantage and suggests that ‘first mover monopoly’ is more important. He identifies this as a network, which takes three forms:

- 1 A diversity of contacts, which strengthen the tie between client and provider.
- 2 The client becomes technically or economically dependent on the provider
- 3 The client may develop implicit trust in the vendor’s product and develop suspicion about a competitor’s product.

In essence Stinchcombe (1990) describes the first mover monopoly as creating a social system advantage. Although these points are difficult to apply in the magazine market, as the

magazine market is a dual market reliant on both advertisers and readers; however the general theory of creating a social system may be seen as applicable.

Leyshon et al (2005) point out that during the dot com. boom there was such a strong rhetoric surrounding e-commerce that business proposals were built and lent to, on the rhetoric of being part of the first movers in a new technological era. However in some examples the financial rhetoric was not in tune with technical capacity of the average user, which meant that users could not make use of the innovation being provided. In addition many sites were technically over specified.

BeMe.com an electronic magazine produced by IPC was an example of the strong rhetoric surrounding e-commerce. It was aimed at users who were still using dial up to access the Internet but the full capacity of the site-required broadband. Beme.com claimed to be attracting more than 2.5m page impressions per month.

It had signed up to sponsor Channel 4's Ally McBeal in a £3m deal and had forged ties with other websites including MSN, but this was not sufficient.

IPC competed with other publishing companies and outside businesses, such as Boots plc, which produced similar sites. After investing millions of pounds in the site's development, it quickly folded. Group strategy director Julian Drinkall commented:

*"It's clear that the performance of some of our online activities has not met the original projections. We are therefore refocusing our digital strategy with full commitment behind those sites whose business models are sustainable."<sup>24</sup>*

IPC as a large company would have a higher performance threshold, than a small dot.com entrepreneur. This was an example of a corporate venture investing a large amount of money, but equally expecting large returns. The evidence for this can be seen in the amount of journalists quoted (40) working on the project.

The following quote from an ex-employee expresses this-

*XV. "However with that kind of online venture when you have got to support 40 journalists producing that kind of content, day in day out 24/7 - there were no commercial deals*

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<sup>24</sup> IPC closes BeMe, Brand Republic News 23 Aug 2001 [www.brandrepublic.com](http://www.brandrepublic.com) > Home > News accessed 12.10.2010



*done... ... It never made any money unlike magazines that can rely on advertising material. The actual amount of money, Well – it was a huge content beast and you have to feed that content, and without being able to support that financially it just didn't stand up... ... It had cost 6 million pounds to launch it was one of those insane times before the bubble burst, where everyone was saying content is king, so it really doesn't matter if you don't have the finance in place – and of course it did...” 2008*

This demonstrated the feeling of engendered panic that made companies compete to be one of the first movers in the e-boom with flawed business models. Before the 1990s business models had not been considered important. Dot.com companies in the 1990s borrowed money from venture capitalist, assuming that websites had to attract large numbers of visitors in order to make a profit. However this did not necessarily win their custom, thereby there was no profit. This phenomenon caused many Dot.coms to fail, emphasising the importance of an accurate business model. This example highlighted the structural constraints since sufficient material benefits were not produced despite the strong rhetoric surrounding the new Internet based platform. The cultural rhetoric was not sufficiently matched to the cultural realm either through socio-cultural interaction, which could have been sufficient to drive advertising to the site. Neither was there sufficient coded knowledge embodied within the cultural system to enable the effective use of the new technology.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown through the examples how, within Archer's morphogenetic cycle, structure and agency needs to be augmented with culture. Whilst the first two examples showed how structure and agency impacted on changes within magazines; it became clear that in later examples that cultural practices such as the 'dominant logic' played an important, independent role. The chapter highlights the relationship between structure and culture that is mediated by agents and the importance of the interaction between the two realms, by viewing the process through morphogenesis it becomes clear that there are numerous generative mechanism that work together in order to make a successful magazine.

One of the limitations of the theory is that it was difficult to distinguish between social and cultural interaction; agents were interacting and also socio-culturally interacting. This chapter has demonstrated that Archer indicates that SEPs, CEPs, and PEPs are all elaborated over different time periods; however, agents can be influenced by structure and culture at the same time.

As could be seen with the definition of technology, which throughout the chapter was both, cultural and structural at different times depending on the contexts. This is discussed further in the next chapter.

Although analytically there is a distinction drawn between the two concepts, of structure and culture, the real issue relates to the way in which the two concepts interrelate but over different time scales, which can be seen quite clearly in the example of XYZ magazine where the cultural changes in gaming and other new technology moved forward at a different pace to the structure supporting it.

In addition had this study looked solely at structure and agency then the importance of the cultural influence would not have been made apparent. After all, at face value there was no indication that the media buyers might prove a problem to a company who wished to move into another area and bought a single, successful Woman's titles without owning any other titles within the sector. It could easily be assumed that a launch or in this case re-launch, was merely dependant on the quality of its editorial and the size its readership.

The next chapter discusses the implications of using culture, structure and agency, and discusses the importance of the interaction between the strata in magazine launches.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the launch of magazines through the lens of Archer's morphogenesis, a variant of critical realism. Archer used the morphogenetic cycle to theoretically analyse both structure and agency and culture and agency, which made her theory very applicable to cultural artefacts such as magazines.

In this concluding chapter, I assess whether the thesis objectives, both empirical and theoretical, have been fulfilled.

There are three main points that my interrogation of Archer's theory has uncovered. First, culture was necessary to view magazines as agents can act both culturally and structurally. Most interviewees identified causal influences that were both structural and cultural. The research has uncovered magazines failures that may be attributed to a discrepancy between structural and cultural aspects. In chapter six, XYZ reflected cultural discrepancies between the technological awareness of the magazine editorial and the target audience of printers.

Second, by using the morphogenetic cycle, Archer (1995) enables researchers to identify missing elements for a fuller explanation. This section uses two alternative explanations of magazine launches: the organizational ecology approach, and the star producer explanation.

The research identified missing elements of these explanations to argue that the organizational ecology approach exhibits downward conflation and that the star producer takes a narrower, overly agential view. Using the morphogenetic cycle questions the view of the star producer.

Third, by interrogating Archer the relationship between structure and agency in tandem with culture and agency is found to be problematic. The thesis suggests that Archer conflates culture and agency when she analyses structure and agency while holding culture constant, i.e. when using the analytical separation of SEPs, CEPs and PEPs. The thesis proposes an

amendment to Archer's figure 19 in *Realist Social Theory* (1995: 309) as its major contribution.

### **Situating the Empirical Findings with Existing Literature**

Broadly speaking on the empirical level the previous literature has concentrated on two main areas within magazine publishing. The first is probably the most popular, and seeks to understand how the reader interacts with the content of magazines. Secondly there is a limited amount of literature that looks at the production of magazines; this is biased towards magazine publishers as a group rather than identifying the individual companies and their differences. Previous literature is generally confined to using a single unit of analysis.

Friedan (1963) McRobbie (1977), Winship (1987), and Hermes (1995) were interested in ideology, the use of woman's magazines and how the readers received the information in them. Friedan and early McRobbie assumed that information in magazines was consumed and absorbed; similarly see Jackson, Stevenson and Brookes (2001). This thesis was not interested in the message that the magazines produced or how the readers interact with the content of magazines; rather this thesis has set out to explain the interaction that takes place in order to launch a magazine.

This thesis has contributed to the literature on magazines adding to Crewe (2003) and Gough-Yates (2003) and Mort (1988) suggesting that a successful launch is about a set of circumstances, a conjunction of emergent properties. As these authors seek to understand cultural production in magazines it also adds to the debate surrounding creative industries, which has been contributed to by Hesmondhalgh (2002) and Nixon and du Gay (2002) by their suggestion of the star producer.

### **CULTURAL SYSTEMS AND SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERACTION**

The following section is much more theoretical and introduces the first theme. It became evident through the interviews and data that culture was playing a prominent role and that structure and agency needed to be augmented with culture for a better explanation. It became

evident that culture was required to situate the experiences of the respondents. It was clear from the interviews that respondents reported external changes, which had causal effects on the launches of magazines. Essentially, my interviews suggested that there are different types of launches, which seem to have been popular at different times, most interviews identified both cultural, and structural effects on the industry. This posits the question as to how much a launch is affected by cultural influences in addition to structure influences.

In terms of morphogenesis, Archer ([1986]1996) sets out culture as relational and contextually dependent. She views culture as separated analytically into two distinct parts: cultural systems (CS) and a socio-cultural level (SC). This section sets out how magazines fit within the cultural environment and Archer's framework of analytical dualism. Archer ([1986]1996) identifies that cultural systems are other people's ideas, which are logically related, and dependent on a context. The socio-cultural level comprises of other people's interaction, the outcome of which may be causal. It would therefore follow that a book is an item that is part of the cultural system because it is ideological in content, but may be left dormant for a period of time in a library for example, it could be returned to and used over different time periods, maintaining a cultural system. There is no interaction with the ideology found within the book, it does not change but stays constant. Although some books may be taken up at different times becoming part of the canon, whilst others gather dust, new books are added to the CS all the time making it a constant cycle.

In contrast a magazine is a very different item. It is disposable, and ephemeral acting for a short period in a socio-cultural environment; it is dependant in part for its existence within a current cultural conversation, and is therefore part of the current ideological thinking of the time tapping into the current zeitgeist, although it may draw on the cultural system.

The following example shows how the readership of a particular magazine interacts with the cultural zeitgeist of celebrity, but also the age, gender and structural emergent properties, of status. This quote demonstrates the interaction (although limited, and mainly constrained to focus groups) that takes place between the reader and the magazines they read. The quote indicated how the magazine used celebrity in conjunction with the readers' wishes.

*They don't like to see us as being intrusive therefore they would be condoning that.*

**Yes**

*Even though they are interested in celebrity, they really don't like the....., oh you know, they don't like the nasty side of it.*

**Yes.**

*If you shot outside a.., if the photograph was shot outside a restaurant someone's coming out of, that's probably okay, or they're going to a premier of something but doing the sort of ahem oh I don't know.*

**The sneaky paparazzi?**

*Yea, the sneaky they don't really like that they don't approve. Even though they would like to look at it, they don't like to promote it in any way.*

*So do you do..., I don't know, set up shoots on the cover?*

*Oh Yea since the re-launch, we do a lot more photography.*

J 2008

The interaction shows magazines as part of the socio-cultural element. This is a theoretical generalization. You could argue that a magazine like *The Economist* is more like a book and less disposable but over a period of five years the surface level of the specific political policies would date and change making it obsolete at the socio-cultural level. However it is perfectly possible, given the right context, that cultural ephemera may over time become rooted in the cultural system, for example 'retro' items become highly valued in a certain contextual environment.

It is clear that the structural and cultural value of an item can change over time. It is not fixed and is highly dependant on the relational and contextual circumstance. The contextual cultural conditioning may be different to the structural conditioning, making the interaction dependant on context at a given moment in time.

Archer uses 'time' as a (ordinal) variable, in essence 'time' is something that is positioned in a relational sequence from T1-T4. Rather than identifying culture, structure and agency as three different strata it may be more applicable to identify culture as a variable (ordinal). (That is to say not more or less culture but, situated in a more or less structured position within the cultural system or/and with more or less cultural interaction.)

This is perhaps best expressed in its mathematical form of -

Y/Outcome T4 = (Culture system) T1Context T1 \*(1+ Other Generative Mechanism T1  
Socio-Cultural interaction) T2,T3

Or in its simplified form

$$y T4 = c T1 * (1+gm (C) T1,T2,T3)$$

The morphogenetic model, can be applied to either cultural or the structural domains (Archer, 1995; 1996). As Archer shows, there is no pre-set form or preferred state of the cultural domain: it is fashioned by agents and stems from the intended or unintended consequences of the agents activities. This cycle functions over time.

(T1) However the cultural (or structural) domain lays out the conditions that enable or constrain, which influences the action of agents. (T2 –T3) The action of agents takes place within these conditions, their interaction causes some form of reproduction or transformation of the structure- or culture.(T4)

In a later book, Archer (2003) is concerned with how the objective part of society (structure) influences the agent, she emphasizes that although structure and culture condition the manner in which agents behave, the ultimate concerns of the agent are also very influential in explaining the agent's behaviour. She suggests that an agent's ultimate concern is a missing link between structure and agency, and although she does not propose it, by implication a link between culture and agency.

Much research on magazines is within a framework that sees magazines as congruent with cultural conditioning (McRobbie 1996; Ferguson 1983; Tuchman 1978). The ideas within the magazines are absorbed and become part of the continuation of cultural reproduction. In these authors' work the morphogenetic cycle is censored to function between T1 stopping at T2 missing out interaction at T3 and ending at T4 (see diagram theory, chapter 2). This progression would function as an additive process. That is to say, McRobbie (1996) acknowledged that magazines were part of the cultural conditioning process, in her opinion 'virtually everything in the woman's magazine connects with oppression' (McRobbie, 1996 in Curran, Morley and Walkerdine 1986:172). However, she acknowledges little interaction on the part of the reader with the magazines. While other authors like (Crewe, 2003)

concentrate on viewing magazines as part of the cycle at (T2, T3, T4), this loses certain aspects of the structural context (T1), which leads to an over-emphasis on agency.

Socio-cultural interaction is reliant on the ideas of others that are already in existence, making magazine launches reliant on the cultural media trends. When launching a magazine the publisher is slotting into a cultural ethos that is already in existence.

### **Cultural Interactions**

The cultural ethos is evidenced in various interactions: the next section highlights three different types of interaction of magazines within the cultural realm. Firstly, magazines have an ability to provide and deliver new information relatively quickly; it is part of their success as a commercial product, disseminating information about new cultural forms to interested readers. However it is their role within the social cultural interaction that is of paramount importance for the longstanding success of the launch of a magazine. The skill of the editorial staff is in developing a feel for what is going on, sieving out the dominant ideas and ones that are going to stick thereby reinforcing already existing trends. This type of knowledge is acquired through being immersed in the zeitgeist of a particular set of ideas, understanding its logic and possible growth (Raymond, 2010). For example within the woman's fashion magazines this may be a particular colour, new fashion designer, material, or look and within the special interest titles it could be a new material or technology.

Secondly, the readers of an established magazine, who are essentially the receivers of the product, interact and influence changes on a magazine title. Again, ideas are dependant on the cultural context.

Thirdly, cultural influences are not only in the context of the magazines but also in the approach to managing it. Essentially, the structural influences are always present in any business as the exchange of goods for money is by definition the driving force, and this takes place in a market arena. However, ideas about the best way to organize and run a business (dominant logic) change over time and this may be identified as part of a cultural system.

The essence of a magazine is the exchange of ideas in relation to a specific target group.



Cultural knowledge is exchanged and as a magazine is part of an interaction with its reader, it also makes the magazine part of the process of cultural reproduction. Cultural influences were clearly felt by the interviewees, in terms of the dominant logic and also the need to be around the hub of cultural ideas. For my interviewees, networks were more important than today as there were no forms of technological social networks.

The period following the early 1980s for about ten years was defined by some of my interviewees as the golden age of magazines; which was a predefined cultural condition.

*‘I suppose it is down to money like we were saying the other day, I think the 80s was the golden age of publishing there were more photographers and illustrators, and part of it is to do with computers, as much as I love computers ... .. But through that we don’t use illustrators, like we used to, which is down to money. Because there are so many more magazines’ out there each one has to make more money either through advertising or sales.’*  
J 2008

That is not to say that my interviewees defined a golden age in terms of the numerical number of magazines, but a golden age in terms of the creative freedom allowed to produce them.

The economic affluence of the 1980s encouraged consumerism (Mort 1996). There was more demand for advertising space, boosting revenues for magazines. Style magazines divested information about the latest ‘must haves’ in music fashion and entertainment. Design in the 80s was venerated and apart from encouraging consumerism, it was also viewed as an important part of the magazines themselves. Designers and workers in the creative industries in all fields were perceived as having a special type of autonomy in the work place (see Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Nixon, 2003). The creative industries were viewed as an enviable form of employment.

In summary the cultural environment plays an important role in the socio-cultural interaction that takes place in order to launch a magazine<sup>25</sup>. Magazines launch into a predefined cultural condition and environment. Part of their role is to translate this cultural information to its readers.

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<sup>25</sup> Agents emphasized the editorial judgment and implications of understanding the market back in chapter 5 p173

### **Changes in the types of magazine launches in the period studied**

The previous sections have looked independently at the structural and cultural influence on the magazine. We have seen that magazines are affected by politics and regulation; the economic environment; the cultural context; technological environment and also the social aspect of structure. But in practice all these domains interact over time, this can be seen most clearly in the changes in the dominant logic or business practices in the magazine industry. The dominant logic within the magazines industry has changed over time, and altered the types of launches that are created. Launches can be categorised into two main groups. The first one is a strategic launch into an established market and is the more usual of the two. The second is about diversification and finding new markets. The diversification launch has higher status as it taps into the cultural zeitgeist, rather than dominating and/or current business areas. A magazine launch that developed a new area, if successful, could produce the biggest profit but with the largest risk.

One of the interviewees highlighted this in a discussion about his company's current policies.

*"We need it in order to get the kind of domination that we think is going to drive ultimately the kind of profit that we want to see out of our control of this business ... So it tends to be here is a market we play in, let us work hard at developing this rather than opening up five other markets that we don't currently play in. So it is a quite conservative business from that respect..." X 2008*

The interviewee highlighted the rationale for the strategic launch, firstly that of dominating a segment of the market, which corners the advertising market in that area. Secondly, dominating a segment of a particular sector but this time the interviewee is talking about achieving a reputation in one specific area in order to become the de facto company for business-to-business magazines. Which is the core business of a number of companies

*"...the culture of the company is very much then about really getting inside the places that we operate in as a business, and really inside the businesses that we operate in. so that we become if you like, the de facto, the company that understands this market better than anyone else does. So its relatively few markets done incredibly well is the kind of philosophy and make your money through that, and that if you like broadly informs most of our B to B activity" X 2008*

But essentially from the 1990 onwards launches have been about strategy as opposed to credibility and creativity.

*“We have gone out and acquired titles rather than launching titles, but also, well actually a mixture of the two really with launches as well. But exactly the same philosophy as the one I have described. It’s a strategic view that we need to dominate that market place and become the leading player in there. Launching magazines in holes were we don’t currently have titles in order to plug the gaps and to make sure we have the thing in the round. So, that’s a strategic launch.”*

The causal mechanism for the change from creative to strategic launches is probably born out of an environment where the senior personnel are answerable to a more structured environment, which may be shareholders or just board members. The cultural business environment has changed. The cultural aspect of dominant logic interacts with the structural aspect of finance and technology. Essentially the current strategic launch process can be perceived as more economically deterministic. Circulation figures are expected to be higher than in previous decades. The length of time that a financial return is required is short and tightly defined. In the 80s where the dominant logic previously in vogue was of a more creative ideology, publishers were prepared to shore up a prestigious title on the back of another more profitable one. The current view is more about dominating whole markets. It is as if the ethos of economies of scale taken from other industries like engineering, has dominated the thinking in publishing.

This highlights some interesting contradictions, the structural aspects of DTP was originally perceived as giving publishers the ability to cater for more niche markets, as the cost of printing small runs would no longer be prohibitive. In fact, it appears that there is more pressure to use the economies of scale and publish magazines with larger circulations than previously, in addition there is pressure to dominate a complete market or sector, for example, all computer games titles, or equestrian titles. There are also other obvious structural changes that effect the magazine launches from the 1980s onwards. I asked one of the interviewees about the effect of foreign publishers entering the market who have a longer time horizon on their profit margins. I then go on to posit the question that;

*‘As magazine launches are becoming more expensive has this meant that companies have to be of a certain size to launch in the first place, squeezing out smaller companies without the economic ability or specialist magazines on the periphery’.*

*“I think there has been, you are talking about consumer launches now and yes I think there has defiantly been a change on the newsstand over the last sort of ten years, which has made it more difficult, I think for publishers who are smaller to actually launch into the UK market, and that is because of a formula publishing success, You are right it has always been the case of course that the bigger companies with deeper pockets, have been able to sustain launches much more successfully than smaller companies” X 2008*

There are three reasons why culture cannot be subsumed into structure and agency when looking at magazine launches. Firstly, chapter six showed quite clearly the need for the synchronization of the cultural and structural context in order to produce a successful launch. Secondly, in order to tap into the zeitgeist the magazines have to be part of socio-cultural interaction surrounding their specific niche. Finally, the ideological element present within companies has led to different types of launches producing a dominant logic for its era.

### **Analyzing the Launch Process : Corporate Demography versus Morphogenesis**

So far the chapter has established the importance of culture in addition to structure and agency and the way they interact. In order to show the usefulness of Archer’s framework the next section demonstrates how morphogenesis improves on an alternative way of looking at launches. Given that the launch is the central theme of this thesis, corporate demography, which has been used in the American sociological literature, provides a good alternative way to examine launches.

In considering that the launch of a magazine is reliant on both cultural and economic factors Hannan and Freeman (1989) would consider it is useful to distinguish two alternative biological strategies that may be used when launching magazines. Looking at a more biological metaphor demonstrates the problem of viewing the launch process within a more structurally determined view. Hannan and Freeman (1989) identify two evolutionary natural selection models that use the two different types of strategy, that of r and K.

Humans and elephants follow the 'K strategy', when procreating a small number of offspring are produced with a high rate of survival, in return for intensive nurturing over a relatively long period. In contrast the r strategy of fruit flies and mosquitoes, produces large numbers of offspring with little nurturing over a short period. Both these strategies have been used in publishing in the last twenty years. Future publishing produced many titles with, relative to other companies, less expenditure on market research and promotion, and the expectation that some will fail. IPC produced fewer titles but at greater cost, with fewer closures, over the same period. Generally speaking K strategy can withstand rivals but are slow to change whereas r strategy is favoured in conditions dominated by high uncertainty.

However, Hannon and Freeman (1989) are population ecologists, they are only interested in a one-way causality. In this biological metaphor the firms do not interact or operate to change the environment. The environment is in this example a causal power. Using Archer's morphogenetic cycles of both culture and structure, the interaction between the environment and the culture can be viewed. For example, by spending more on promotion and market research bigger companies follow a strategy that requires large amounts of capital to launch a magazine. This drives up the costs of the rivals (Sutton 1991), which coupled with the changes in strategy from distributors like W.H.Smiths creates further pressure on smaller publishers, pushing them out of the generalist market. This example shows the larger companies using their power to manoeuvre themselves into a stronger position showing that although the environment acts upon them they also act on the environment.

It could also be argued that the strategies of magazines are congruent with niche marketing, which may well support another population ecology model (generalists vs specialists). Carroll (1984, 1985) argued that companies targeting the broad-spectrum of a business environment leave open many small-specialised niche markets. He produced a model based on deaths of companies as oppose to their founding's. Carroll (1985) termed this model 'resource partitioning'. The amount of niches is dependent on the concentration in the market, which changes over time. In an un-concentrated market the generalists engage in intense competition over the centre of the market, until one or more of the generalists is defeated or acquired,

leaving the specialists the periphery where there is little competition. The niche markets are partitioned into small segments shared between the generalist and the specialists.

Carroll (1985) and Hannan and Freeman (1989) views agents as epiphenomena they are not interested in an agential level of analysis, asserting that populations and industry can be defined in a demographic analysis. If this type of model were accurate then the publishing industry and launches would become economically deterministic. Although much of Carroll's (1985) 'resource partitioning' model is applicable to the findings. Carroll could conceivably argue that the cycle is near its completion with three or four big companies left dominating the market, and a number of smaller one around the periphery of the industry (see example below). Carroll's (1984) specific publishing example is the West Coast American newspaper industry and later studies on the related music industry, book publishing, brewing, and ICT, are all industries that are characterized by economies of scale in their production process, which experiences a resurgence of specialists after the economies of scale production process has been driving the organizational set up for some time.

However I would argue, it is not always the big three or four main magazine publishing companies who create successful launches or the smaller 'quick to react creative ones'<sup>26</sup>. In essence by viewing it though Archer's morphogenetic cycle it highlights the mixture of both the –social and cultural interaction at distinct periods in time which enable and favour different companies. There are different launch strategies: certain conditions privilege the more financially able; other conditions favour those who are quickest to market.

The market share could be illustrated by Carroll's (1984) resource partitioning model of the present magazine publishing industry players -

Magazine Companies	Market Share
IPC, (Time Warner)	20 %
EMAP (Taken over by Bauer early 2008)	17.5%
Bauer	8%
BBC	7.8%
National Magazine (Hearst)	7.3%

Figures by Magforum.com

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<sup>26</sup> The exception was Carlton publishing producing *Essentials* magazine and *ME* in 1989, which were eventually absorbed back into IPC which was a shareholder in the initial launch.

These companies have a majority holdings of all the consumer titles published in the UK, this then provides two big generalist players in the centre, IPC holding 20% and Bauer holding 25.5%, with numerous small specialist companies around the middle, like for example Future Publishing and Dennis Publishing.

This is possibly becoming a duopolistic environment as Carroll (1984, 1985) might suggest. The causality is unclear; however, it is perfectly possible that when the regulators required the BBC to sell its magazines not directly linked to television programmes, they inadvertently decreased the size of the next biggest player in the market leaving a virtual duopoly. Although this intervention is a structural one, it has had a casual effect making it clear that it is the interaction between cultural and structure aspects, coupled with the reaction and the change that this causes in the agents behaviour, which gives a more rounded picture of the magazine publishing industry. This does not comply with Carroll's model, as Carroll would suggest that the process is predestined. As has been previously discussed in the chapter, there is also the need for the ability to tap into the cultural zeitgeist of the specific target audience.

All the structural constraints of the large publishing companies in the UK are arguably situated within other structural environments, National Magazines, a subsidiary of Hearst and IPC a subsidiary of Time Warner both operate within the American stock market environment. Bauer is German owned and operates within a different style of financial market requiring a less burdensome share return, giving the company a distinct advantage.

Finally, the BBC with a reasonably small market share is the only British owned company. It could be suggested that the market is becoming global although Carroll would dispute this, as he maintains that competition is only applicable at a local level. Certainly within the magazine market, business is culturally constrained at the local level, this can clearly be seen from the recent forays by successful magazines trying to reproduce the same format in the USA only to find they flounder and close. In essence, it is reasonable to attribute this to the structural and cultural enablements and constraints working at very specific local level.

However, population ecologists, Carroll and Hannan's (2000) use a macro unit of analysis for their model which is not concerned with how the population interacts with its environment,

this is essentially the effect that the agents may have. By missing this interaction population ecologists do not provide a complete picture of the magazine industry. Instead they concentrate on discrete moments in time, represented in Archer's model at T1 and then again at T4 which Archer would describe as downward conflation.

### Summary

In summary, the last sections on structure, culture, interaction and corporate demography have looked at the interaction of culture and structure highlighting the changing process of industry dominant logic, and emphasizing the difference between the 1980s, which was more concerned with credibility and creativity, to the strategic, dominant logic of the 1990s onwards.

The interaction of cultural and structural influences affect the magazine industry not just at certain key points in time but over the long durée and it is the agents that act as a link. This chapter has shown structural and cultural interaction to be influential, not just at certain discrete points but also throughout the whole process. However it has been identified by a number of researchers from Ferguson (1983) to Crewe (2003), who have concentrated on the cultural producers, that the key players in magazines are the agents, they are significant to the process and therefore the next section turns to the role of the agents as viewed through morphogenesis, highlighting the second theme.

### AGENTS

This section looks at the second theme interrogating Archer has highlighted. I argue that by using Archer's Morphogenetic cycle from structure and culture through multiple interactions it is possible to identify the missing elements from alternative explanations thereby providing a fuller explanation. This has identified the creation of a myth surrounding cultural producers. This section looks at corporate agents versus the individual agents, who play a role and who act as the catalyst for a magazine launch.

Essentially, the editorial team is made up of individual agents who are acting a role and seeking to deliver a cultural ideology that legitimates their own knowledge and existence. To



achieve this they must reach a wider audience than the particular ideology is associated with; thereby justifying their own existence increasing the market share of the corporate agents. Agents' matter they have causal powers, without which magazines would not exist. From a theoretical perspective, agents play roles and interact according to the needs and wants of other corporate agents. The corporate agents are constrained but shape the context for other agents; this action is more than the sum of one powerful individual, and however corporate action is always constrained.

Members of the editorial team convince corporate agents of their viability via the creation and maintenance of the idea that the cultural producer (usually the editor) has a tacit knowledge of the readers and the market (Ferguson, 1983; Crewe, 2003). Once individual agents stop convincing corporate agents of their special knowledge they become redundant to the commercial process.

In the literature chapter, some authors took an agential view, for example Crewe (2003), Hermes (1995), Ferguson (1983), McRobbie (1999) and finally, Gough-Yates (2003). These authors gave evidence that cultural producers:

- have large, informal networks
- work within a strong, dominant industry logic,
- edit their magazines from a perspective of informed guesswork, either as a professional editor, or an instinctive editor who is intensely creative, personifying their creation of a magazine

In support of this, my interviews found evidence for large informal networks and a strong dominant industry logic; however, it is the role of the editor that is most in question. The evidence gained from my interviews suggests that agents convince publishers of their project's viability. This is done via the creation and maintenance of the myth of the single individual who is potentially a star cultural producer.

The cultural producer plays the role of interpreter, interpreting the cultural environment and delivering the reader to the corporate agents. The amplification of the myth may have reflected the interview sample used by others, for example the more high status the individual; the more chance they will spin a myth to suit their position. Editors with high

status have more interest in the perpetuation of the myth than writers. In recognizing that people give account when they are being interviewed (Scott and Lyman, 1968), my interviews were conducted with middle range professionals rather than the high profile editors.

The production of the myth can be so powerful that the agents channel it into self-belief, which is then supported by other editorial staff. The myth may further an individuals career and self-esteem, however on the downside it may contribute to the lack of reflexivity about the success and failure of projects that individuals work on. This lack of reflexivity appeared to contribute to a sense of dissatisfaction from the agent. Evidence from my interviews shows the importance of myth creation. For example in an interview with X where this interviewee has to strategically influence the people on the board of directors who have control of the purse strings in order to influence the presentation of an idea<sup>27</sup> (for example *Four Four Two*). Part of the success of this particular process relies on the board's trust in the individual that is pitching the idea. Essentially this indicates that senior managers find it difficult to evaluate ideas so they make judgments about individual agents instead, as do venture capitalists and bankers (Wickham, 2006). Part of the strength of interviewee X's argument hinges on the ability to make other people believe he is right and call in favours, thereby influencing the power structure. That is not to say that the colonization of the myth is solely found in editorial, a successful magazine launch will be embellished by any number of editorial, advertising, and managerial staff wanting to capture the myth in order to promote themselves or their credibility.

Interviewee A demonstrated this by making herself credible when launching her business. She did not have the financial ability to do market research but believed, in addition to those around her, that her knowledge of the readers was sufficient to launch a business. Individuals perceived their pride and professionalism to be queried when outside 'bodies' like market research dictated the direction of their work, with no expertise in the their specific field. This

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<sup>27</sup> One publishing company put together a group of people to specifically work on launching a computer title, which they had extensively researched and felt would be a viable option for their company and existing titles. The agents worked on several dummies for computer titles but on the fly without official sanction from the board worked up a football dummy in the same grids and format as the computer title. The end result was the launch of *Four-Four-Two*, a very successful Football magazine!

is perceived as a threat to their myth creation and career success as the following quote indicates (see p148 for the discussion of market research).

***How much influence did market research have on your work?***

*It influenced it a lot. It didn't influence my work as much as other peoples, because I was trying to do the visual creative side of things. But it probably influenced the subject matter, what particular items we went for. How we executed them was not led by market research, because that was for me to decide how to execute these things. L*

Also see Crewe (2003), White (1970) and Ferguson (1983) who confirm this.

**The reason and perpetuation of the myth.**

If the cultural producers, particularly editors are established as the makers of a success or failure of a magazine launch, then the need for the individual to mythologize their ability becomes more pressing. In addition the industry wants to believe that the myth is true.

Therefore, the industry structures or culture enable this to happen. Historically, this may be fuelled by the inclination in times of uncertainty for people to appeal to the allure of magic (Stinchcombe 1990). Magazines are an industry that operates within an environment of risk. The industry is uncertain creating strategies for survival; questionably anti-competitive practices, but used as normal practice. For example, advertising is strategically sold in blocks, so if you have a cluster of magazines within the one genre, then advertising rates can be set within that area of magazines, or 'contra-deals' can be struck.

This risk and uncertainty may contribute to the belief that the editor is perceived as having almost special, cult-like powers when it comes to understanding the reader (Ferguson, 1983).

The myth is an historical organizational form (necessary before the common use of quantitative methods for market research) venerated as the instinct of the editor (see White, 1977). This is longstanding, as described by White (1970). Initially after the war women's magazines were sources of information and they were seen as educating the readers. In the 1950s, magazine road shows travelled the country to meet readers in order to understand them better, relying totally on the editor's judgment.

In addition to the industry sanctioning the myth, for the individual, the form or embodiment that the myth takes is a variant of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001), where individuals believe that their action and judgment can produce the desired effect. At the individual level self belief is a powerful force in bringing an outcome to fruition, a strong sense of self efficacy (agential power) will make a person work harder with more effort for longer to achieve their goals. This plays an important part in the process both for the individual and for the magazines themselves; cultural producers endorse and venerate the behaviour as individuals and as a group.

*‘Yes it is like betting on a lottery and I think that sometimes magazines aren’t given long enough to settle down. We were talking the other day about Heat and how awful it did in the beginning and EMAP persevered and persevered and kept it running for a year and look at it now. Where ‘So London’ by the former editor of night and day originally launched and ran for two issues and then closed down, and actually I think it was a good magazine launching in a very tough market, but it probably wasn’t given long enough, but then it was a small publishing company so it probably didn’t have the money to keep it for an indefinite time, so I am sure financially things do play a bigger part in it’ B*

The myth can further individual careers and create esteem amongst workplace colleagues; once established the myth becomes so strong and self-fulfilling that it becomes believable. It can also be worked at and acquired. This means being in touch with and understanding your readers inside out, having good networks. Essentially, it entails being a polymath. Fads, fashions and trends are generally more obvious in London, some fads pass through hardly touching the regional cities. As Raymond (2010) suggests networks need face-to-face contact, as virtual networks are not as good as physical ones, which may help to explain one of the reasons why magazines centre on London.

The strong drive for the myth also seems to contribute to a lack of reflexivity about the real reasons behind success and failures in launches. When asked directly about the success and failure of launches the interviewees produced a sense that a launch is about individuals, particularly when they are successful. However interviewees attributed launch failure to

market structures, which makes individuals seem infallible which helps to support to the creation of a myth.

It could be questioned as to whether the myth is a myth at all. Parts of the interview shows indications of the different groups jostling for power, although this is not unique to the creative industries, Hesmondhalgh (2002) would suggest 'creatives' are awarded more autonomy. The early 80s launch rationale would probably support this, however it may no longer be the case with the tendency for more strategic launches.

Interviewee T expressed the view that today the market research people have too much power, and that the launch process was more complex than quantitative research could show. The editorial team viewed market research as fallible and a constraining influence, interfering at the editorial level. T reflected that ideas get over-researched, for example and the research data may suggest going in another direction moving away from the original idea. This secondary idea is developed further and taken back to research and focus groups where it is ultimately killed off, as it is not what the reader's say they want. She thought that if publishers had stuck to their original idea the magazines would have been nearer to the reader's aspiration. This scenario indicates that market research is fallible as readers may be unable to express what they want or they tell you what they think you want to hear in research groups. This interviewee supports the hypothesis that launches have become strategic. Chasing the zeitgeist is not a simple process, as David Hepworth an industry consultant originally from EMAP quipped. This quote does indicate an awareness on the part of industry personnel that the process is uncertain.

*When we launch a magazine, we follow a formula. I'll tell you what it is. Before launching Q, we relied on quantitative research. We produced a dummy. We did qualitative research, assessed the advertising market and planned distribution for the first two years. Then we took a chicken onto Dartmoor at midnight during the full moon, slit its throat and read the entrails. And if I had to choose just one of these methods, it would be the chicken every time.*

(Hepworth, 1991)

T expressed the fallibility of market research, which you could put down to individuals jostling for power. In magazines, there is a difference between actual power and perceived

power as the following interviewee demonstrates a magazine is made up of more than one decision maker. From the outside, one might imagine that the editor has all the power and sub-editors in production would have very little, however the next quote shows how different the power structure can be in reality.

*“Well, in production you tend not to have a lot of input about what is decided to go in, but because you edit it you tend to have quite a lot of input, by default. Because there was one issue when the editor and the deputy editor didn’t appear, so it was quite an interesting situation where we had me and Catherine who are both women in our thirties de-facto editing a magazine aimed at randy young boys of about fifteen. Which was a very amusing state of affairs! So at the end of the day we would have a lot more control than you might imagine, we were the gate keepers of legalling things, I mean they (the writers) would always want to be slagging off MacDonald’s- you just cant do it! We could have done, but quite frankly I didn’t have the time to check it out. So you did have quite a lot of control, not starting with it, but ending up with it” G*

In this scenario, the person has control over the end product. This suggests that the process is more than the sum of one individual and the whole team is important, at different stages.

However in the interviews, one of the personnel describes how the editor affects other people in the team, suggesting that magazines vary considerably. The editor is often seen as the face of the title, which is why on the surface they are often the only person linked with the success of a title, however every group has more than one dominant person acting within it.

The editor is an important member of staff, but as is shown in the previous quote not all power is obvious as other members of the team contribute.

*“We had an editor that was very charismatic but had no experience of editing and we had a deputy editor who was also very charismatic and a shed load of experience, and actually should have been the editor, and I think had been brought over to Kabal with a view of probably being the editor. ...There was a lot of angst in the editorial team between those two, which was not conducive to getting work done all the time. He [the editor] was just typical in that he had been promoted above his level of capabilities as a man manager, because that’s what a lot of Editing is about, and was scared shitless and so took it out by being stroppy with everybody. So that really limited a lot of stuff, in the fact that we had a lot of discontent on the team, people were constantly scared that they were going to get shouted at. It was a very happy team in some respects but there was an undercurrent of instability, you were never sure what was going to happen next ...’G*

It is also conceivable that appointments at editor level are made for a variety of reasons. For example as the next quote demonstrates with little budget the editor who has the ability to create media interest is perceived to be more valuable than a good manager.

*“.... There are two really easy ways in life that I know to blow a fortune. One is to open a restaurant and the other is to open a magazine or publishing company. It is a great way to take a large fortune and turn it into a small fortune. So everything was being done on a shoestring... So we decided for the launch that we didn't have loads and loads of Ads out there, it was more a matter of getting publicity, it was more viral in a way, I mean that*

This quote shows the variety of ways that individual editors affect a launch, which in turn affects the team.

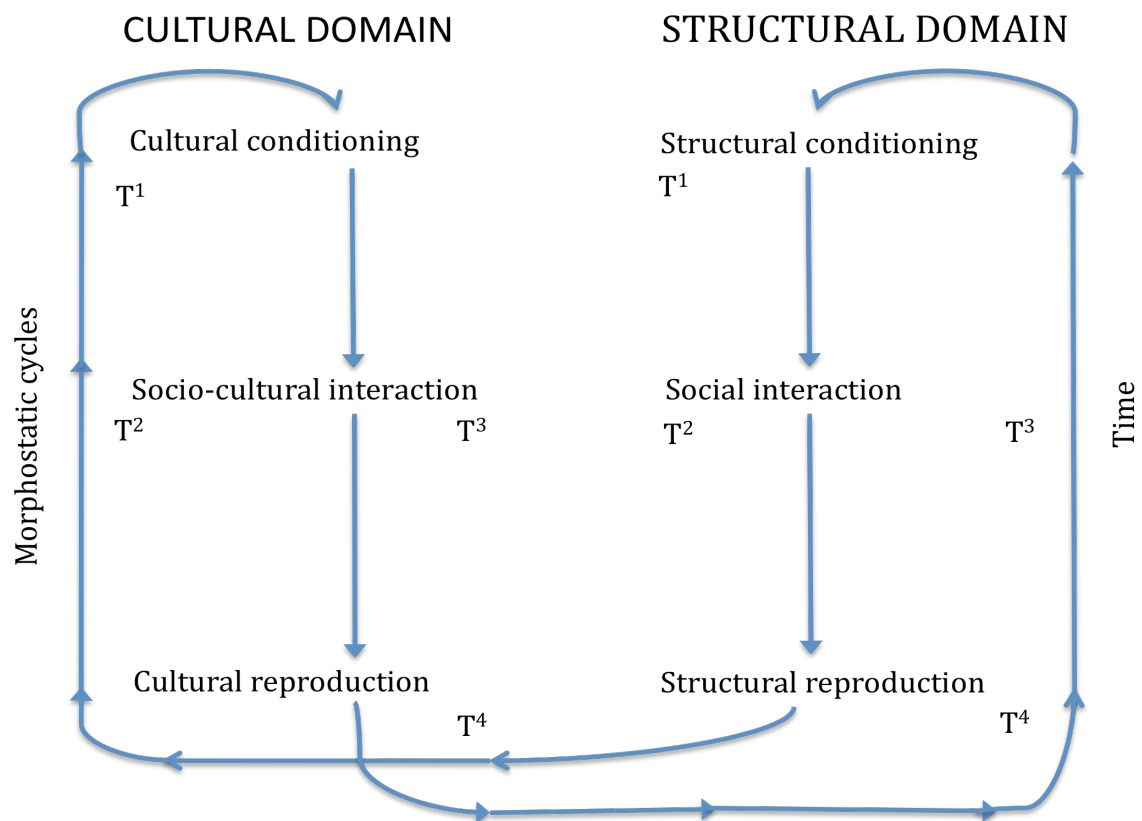
The eighties and nineties produced big name figurehead editors at the helm of successful magazines and their publicity value was part of the magazines success. However to date the trend setting magazine of the 2000s (mainly celebrity) have been silent about their editors suggesting a change in fashion. The veneration of the individual enhances their power and esteem but also has the effect of rubbing off on the individual title. However, if the star producer were imbued with particularly special cultural knowledge then a repeat or serial production of successful titles would be possible, conversely it appears that individuals rarely have multiple successes, one possibility is that the editorial team was of influence rather than the single individual. In summary, there is a myth surrounding the star producer.

Cultural polymaths are still vital, although as discussed within this section it is reasonable to conclude that cultural producers are groups not individuals as the myth suggests, see also Southwell (1998) and Becker (1982)

This section has shown the importance of perpetuating the myth of the star producer and why it is attributed to the editor, suggesting it is not simply the editor but the editorial team that have influence. This chapter identified missing elements of two alternative explanations to argue that the organizational ecology approach exhibits downward conflation and that the star producer takes a narrower, overly agential view. Using the morphogenetic cycle questions the view of the star producer, by producing a fuller explanation.

### MODIFYING ARCHER'S THEORY

The third theme is now discussed. By interrogating Archer the relationship between structure and agency in tandem with culture and agency was found to be problematic. This thesis suggests launches are the result of an interactive process between structure and agency and culture. Archer's theory acknowledges interaction between culture, structure and agency (see Archer, 1995)



Source Archer diagram (1995: 309)

but does not posit how much and at what point. It becomes clear from my interviews that there is interaction at Archer diag. 19, (1995:309) at T2/3 publishers act as the link between the economic (material) requirements of publishing and editorial agents provide the ideational aspects of publishing. However, it is the agential interaction between the cultural and structural domain that creates the launch process.

The interviews show how environmental factors influence the type of launch, for example the projected plan both in terms of the forecast for advertising and circulation, and its position within the market, which ultimately has a bearing on its success. The quantity of market



research and the budget is defined by the finances of a company, not the viability of a single idea for a magazine. The other major influencing factors discussed were the interaction with the cultural environment, highlighting the part of agents who develop cultural acumen absorbing cultural knowledge and feeding it back to their editorial groups, which also affects the outcome. It is clear that magazines are more than 'cultural conditioning for the masses' there is an iterative process by agents of interaction and elaboration which is an important part of the launch process.

The current literature tends to elucidate the magazine industry as a process: where either agents are an epiphenomena and the process is portrayed as structurally driven where agents become irrelevant to the end process; or structure is an epiphenomena where agents are the sole drivers of the industry and their creative abilities are perceived as the single defining significant factor. In reality a successful launch is a conjunction of structural, cultural and agential emergent properties.

### **Theoretical modification**

It has become evident that cultural influences are important as they interact, one part of the social strata alters another aspect; the strata adapt causing an almost constant elaboration. This cycle as Archer (1995) suggests repeats as agents, unhappy with the modification, act to change the status quo.

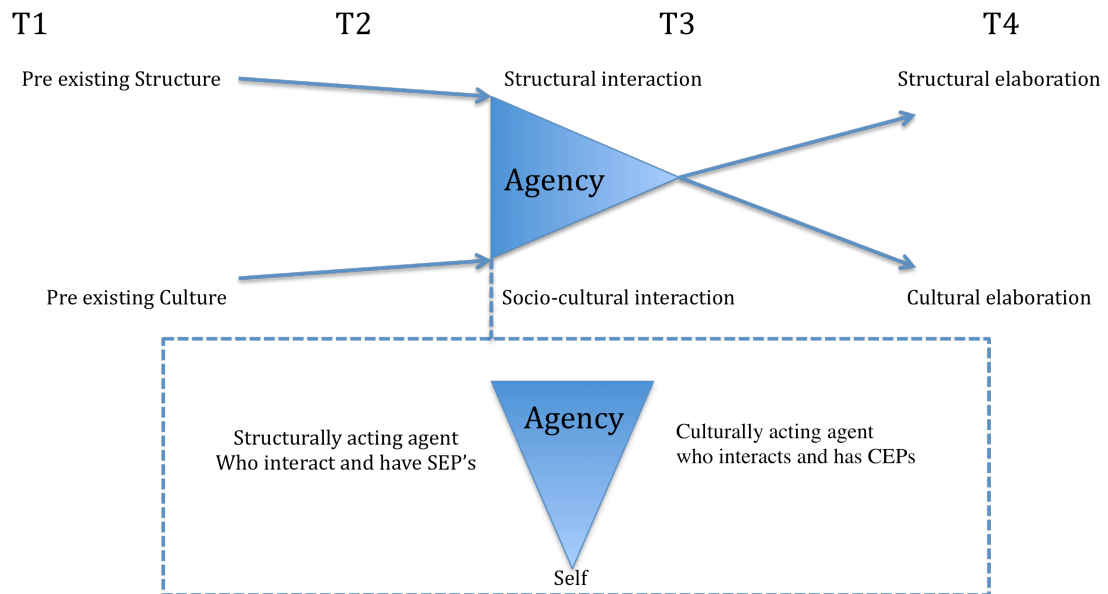
In carrying out this research and looking at the way Archer (1995) uses morphogenesis and handles culture. I suggested that Archer conflated agency in her morphogenesis of culture. In order to better explain this process the chapter has indicated that further theorisation is necessary, as the current theorisation of Archer's morphogenetic model of culture and agency gives rise to central conflation and potential double counting.

When Archer incorporates culture with structure and agency (1995) she holds culture constant (analytically) while she examines structure and agency, however culture, or more particularly CEPS, consists of both cultural systems and socio-cultural interactions. If the research is carried out using the morphogenetic model with structure and agency there is no problem and

the areas of division are quite clear, but as culture was subdivided it was treated differently, therefore the use of the morphogenetic model with culture and agency was problematic. The problem is that the sub-division of culture into cultural systems and socio-cultural interaction, requires agents to interact, however as they have been bracketed off for social cultural interaction it becomes impossible to bracket off the agents to look at agency, as they have already been interacting in the socio-cultural division of culture.

Similarly, Cruickshanks (2003) who produces a good straightforward guide to empirical studies in critical realism suggested using a general meta-theory using CEPS, SEPS, and PEPS. Using Cruickshanks's (2003) approach highlights the same problem, where the same agents might produce personal emergent properties but also be a necessary part of the agency in the CEPS. Therefore it becomes difficult to distinguish between emergence as a product of CEPS and when would it be the product of PEPS. In the example of James Brown, his interaction with *Loaded* could be considered a cultural emergent property, but when James Brown used the magazine for his own ends to have a good time then the magazine might be considered a personal emergent property.

I propose a small modification to Archer's morphogenetic cycle. She suggests culture and structure are separate but have interacting properties and only through the action of agents are the structural and cultural realm capable of interaction. However, Archer brackets off structure and agency analysing culture separately I argue that you cannot bracket off culture, as agents act structurally and culturally at the same time, since culture (Archer, 1996) consists of both cultural systems and the socio-cultural element. One approach is to move the socio-cultural element to the level of the agent. Agency is theoretically sub-divided into an analytical triad consisting of culturally motivated interaction, structurally motivated interaction, and interaction that is 'self' motivated or to use Archer's later term 'ultimate concerns'. The diagram below illustrates this.



### **The overall thesis in summary**

My study that interrogated Archer's morphogenetic cycle has contributed to the empirical work on critical realism, and increased our understanding of the pitfalls and contributions that can be made using this perspective.

Many academics have theorised around critical realism rather than applying it. Possible future areas of research that arise from this thesis would suggest, a good empirical study of applying Archer's (1995) morphogenetic theory is still lacking. Given the potential broad resonance of this framework a large-scale research project would benefit the sociological field. It would provide a platform from which to expand in subject specific areas.

In terms of guidance, Sayer (2000) suggested using intensive studies, (such as case studies, for criticisms see Holmwood, 2001) and on a small scale has been influential in this suggestion leading to critical realism being associated with case method (for example Mutch's, 2007, brewing industry study). Bhasker was less prescriptive and inclusive of multi-methods and therefore much wider in his suggested methodological application of critical realism. My interpretation of critical realism and Archer (1995) was broader than Sayer (2000). I aimed to use different methods (see chapter three) and to discover the structural influences, and agential influences separately, as structure and agency worked over different

time frames, structure being over the long *durée*. In addition to the interviews I also used secondary data to support the structural element.

There are three main themes that my interrogation of Archer's theory has uncovered. First, culture was necessary to view magazines. Second, by using Archer's (1995) morphogenetic cycle, it enables researchers to identify the structural, agential and cultural mechanism for a fuller explanation. Third, when interrogating Archer the relationship between structure and agency in tandem with culture and agency is found to be problematic. These themes have been uncovered in this thesis by taking a theoretical viewpoint, analysing the literature through this specific theoretical lens, critically analysing empirical data with and without the theoretical lens. Then finally, re-analysing the theory to understand what issues were found deficient when interrogating the theory.

The first theme concerns my theoretical choice of Archer's morphogenesis (1995), which was motivated by working to view the interaction between individuals and their environment.

Initially, the research focused on interrogating the morphogenetic cycle of structure and agency. However, as the project progressed it became clear that the cultural environment was very different to the structural realm and a more nuanced approach to culture needed to be added in order to fully understand the process. I had initially toyed with using the morphogenetic cycle of culture in addition to structure and agency, but was advised that the project might become too large with the inclusion of culture in addition to structure and agency. Narrowing it precisely to structure and agency provided a clearer focus initially but eventually became untenable. The unique aspect of magazine launches is that they study a cultural artefact and straddle all three realms, not viewing the cultural interaction in particular would have led to some limited findings that may not have highlighted the mechanisms that produce a launch.

The second theme arose while carrying out the data analysis. Operationalising structure and agency with culture was problematic. The option suggested by Archer was to analyse the empirical data through the morphogenetic cycle firstly with structure and agency and then repeating the process with culture and agency (see Archer, 1995). I approached the analysis

firstly though structure and agency; however, while analysing the data it appeared there were times when an agent might operate culturally in order to effect the structure, and this interaction might be unseen or misattributed, I therefore perceived this to be problematic. In order to avoid this issue, I tried using culture as a variable, as culture was ever present surrounding magazine launches. But as culture needs agents to trigger it, it becomes hard to theoretically disentangle it from agency and a possibility of double counting agency is present, where for example agents act culturally to affect a structure. Therefore, it is hard to separate the agential action from the socio-cultural interaction.

The inability to separate the agential action from the socio-cultural interaction and therefore potentially double counting was present in Archer's original morphogenetic cycle of culture (1995). This led to me conclude that by combining the two morphogenetic cycles into one in order to be able to view for example the structural elaboration that is created by cultural mechanism, and visa versa would be necessary. Modifying the process from a cycle to a model, which showed the interaction of both culture and structure at the same time. The advantage of this model was to be able to enlarge the view at the T2-T3 section of Archer's morphogenetic cycle, where I have reworked the combination of structure, culture and agency.

Archer is a British sociologist and one of the most influential theorists from the critical realist tradition. This thesis has examined the launch of magazines through interrogating Archer's (1995) morphogenetic cycle, which highlights interaction, and was an appropriate theory for this study of magazines. The literature review was carried out in a unique and appropriate manner for this field of study and analyses and synthesizes through Archer's theory four main types of literature that contributed to this thesis (see p2). The methodology was congruent with this particular variant of critical realism (p14) and the methods used were congruent with the methodology (p79). Through interrogating Archer (1995) I have concluded that in reality a successful magazine launch is about a set of circumstances, the action of agents and most importantly a conjunction of emergent properties from the social realms. The thesis uncovered three themes one empirical and two theoretical, which concludes by, modifying

Archer's morphogenetic cycle, producing a unique contribution to knowledge and fulfilling the objective of the thesis.

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