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"AVOIDING THE ULTIMATE BREAK-UP" AFTER INFIDELITY: THE MARKETISATION OF COUNSELLING AND RELATIONSHIP-WORK FOR WOMEN IN A SOUTH AFRICAN ADVICE COLUMN (1)

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Abstract. This paper uses a Foucauldian discourse analytic approach to amplify, through exploration of the structuring effects of discourse, the relationship between psychologized knowledges about monogamy rules, counselling technologies and women's subject positioning within Hollway's Have-hold discourse. The formal features and narrative of an advice text from **Couple Clinic**, a specialist site of psychological advice about "relationship crises" in a South African women's magazine, constitute the object of interpretative analysis. The ways in which women readers are impelled to labour on themselves and their (heterosexual) relationships to effect normalization after an instance of a male partner's sexual infidelity are examined. Psychotherapeutic technologies produce rewards of power for women, and these powers are critically discussed in terms of various readings of and strategies for women's empowerment in a South African context.

BACKGROUND.

This paper is forged within a Foucauldian approach to subjectivity, and explores women's positioning in Hollway's (1989) *Have-Hold discourse* (hereafter HHD). Within the HHD subject position, heterosexual women - having procured the committed, emotionally bonded "relationship" they need to contextualize sexual activity - are impelled to take responsibility for the policing of sexual exclusivity within that relationship in order to maintain it. This entails, for women, resistance to the discursive ways in which men are positioned in terms of a *Male Sex Drive discourse* (hereafter MSD), which posits male sexuality as biologically driven and opportunistic.

Hollway's (1989) analytic interpretation of these gendered positions - why we persist in taking them up in heterosexual relationship practice, for example - draws on various Lacanian and Kleinian machinations of desire, M/Other and splitting. Widdicombe's (1992) critique of Hollway's work takes a stronger Foucauldian position. She argues that what is lost in Hollway's reliance on psychoanalytic theorization is a broader sense of the complex social, discursive and/or institutional practices in which women's sexuality and subjectivity is embedded and forged. Within this view, then, psychoanalysis - or "psychology", more generally - becomes a discursive and institutionalized means of reproducing normative understandings of women, men and relationships. Thus, psychological discourses structure the ways in which we talk and think about, and experience, ourselves and our relationships with one another.

Writing from within a Foucauldian framework, Rose (1990) refers to this process as "psychologization". This involves critical attention to the processes of rendering the body, the self, or the relationship visible to psychologized and/or disciplinary systems (e.g. through confession), where they are evaluated in terms of established norms. Mechanisms of motivation and reformation are then employed to "optimize" experience and functioning according to those norms.

For example, in describing the operation of confessional technologies in the institution of psychology - that is, the imperative to *talk about* problematic experience (cf "the talking cure") - Foucault (1978:61) draws attention to "the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, forgive, console, reconcile". The advice column genre provides such a confessional space, where problems are shared, scrutinized and "resolved" by expert, institutionalized knowledges, thus reinforcing power-knowledge relations and professional hierarchies, for example between knowledge-seeker (usually female), and knower and expert. Several authors have alluded to advice columns as sites of confession, surveillance and subjectivity (Coward, 1984; McRobbie, 1991), but there has been little discourse analytic examination of these processes in praxis (2).

This paper, then, explores the ways in which psychological techniques and practices - here, confession and couple counselling - reproduce ideological effects by propping up women's emotional labour in relationships (Hollway, 1991). This focus draws together various content analytic strands within a developing body of diverse academic and popular writings about advice columns. Using a discourse analytic approach, my aim is to articulate theoretical and analytic links between these hitherto unrelated findings.

The first strand of findings are unanimous accounts of the preponderance of "love" or "relationship" problems in the advice column genre (Kent, 1979; Coward, 1984). This thematic trend appears to have been exacerbated by a shift of advice columns from newspapers to "women's magazines" during the 1950s (Winship, 1987). Thus, the advice genre is reproduced as "feminine", with women positioned as needing assistance from experts, and committed to "work" on themselves and their relationships to effect promised fulfillment and happiness (Carter, 1988).

Second, several authors have attended to the historical development of psychologized vocabularies in advice columns - frequencies of jargon such as "self-

esteem", "depression", "neurotic", etc - and increased numbers of "referrals out" to clinical psychologists and counsellors as empirical evidence of increasing professionalization of the institution of psychology and its pervasive, informative effect on a "lay" audience of writers and/or readers (Brinkgreve & Korzec, 1979; Weinberg, 1989).

A third strand has documented the historicized replacement, within advice columns, of the tacit wisdoms of kindly "agony aunties" by more "information-based" knowledges of institutionalized experts and professional advice-givers, e.g. gynaecologists, sexologists, clinical psychologists, professional counselling agencies, etc (McRobbie, 1991; Mininni, 1991).

There are two important caveats at this point. First is the dearth of research on South African advice columns. Literature reviewed above and referred to throughout this paper (*except* Weinberg, 1989; Wilbraham, 1994; Wilbraham, in press a & b) details trends in mostly British women's magazines and/or advice columns. I return to this point in the concluding discussion by drawing attention, with reference to Hollway's (1989) discourses, to the ambiguities of positions occupied by white women in South Africa (e.g. assumed similarities between white South African women and well-educated, "first world" women in Britain), and to the marginalization of other (more African?) cultural contexts and experiences this implies (3).

Second, it is important to emphasize that this paper does not articulate an anti-psychology stance: the above-mentioned trends of "relationship problems" and increasing institutionalization of advice do not necessarily oppress women per se. However, these trends do produce contradictory operations and effects of power for women. In order to analyse the relationships between knowledge and dis/empowerment, I have used McRobbie's (1991) categorization of three kinds of readings of advice columns. Within a *realist* or *humanist* reading, individual women with "relationship problems" are empowered by experts. Thus, knowledge is seen as "neutral", offering insights, choices, strategies of reformation, support, etc. A broadly *feminist* reading would be concerned with "politicizing" the "personal problems" to which women are allegedly prone. Such a reading challenges the neutrality and individualism of a humanist position, and seeks to expose and transform structures and practices perceived as reproductive of existing power relations which disempower women.

Lastly, a *Foucauldian* reading is concerned with the interstices between subjectivities (that is, how we come to know and experience ourselves), confession, surveillance by institutionalized discourses (for example psychological knowledges and techniques), and power. A Foucauldian model of power is resistant to more traditional views of social structures of domination, or modes of subjugation. Foucault's (1982) micro-analysis of power focuses on "capillaries of power" in local relations, and attends to the technologies and operations by which power is exercised and dominance produced. Thus, rather than oppression by some external, ideological force and/or sovereign being or group, "disciplinary power" involves the processes by which individuals assume responsibility for exercising control over themselves, thereby becoming "subjects" in/of discourses (see Rose, 1990; Parker, 1992; Wilbraham, 1994). It is in this sense, coextensive with society

and subjectivity, that institutionalized knowledges are understood to infuse their individual users with power.

Although McRobbie's (1991) distinctions between these three readings are fairly simplistic, fetishizing differences between positions and obscuring contradictions within positions and multi-positional stances, they are used here to broadly introduce tensions in approaches to power. All three will be drawn on to critically explore the reproduction of power relations and ideological effects achieved through deployment of psychological discourses in an advice column.

READING AN ADVICE TEXT: PARKER'S DISCOURSE ANALYTIC APPROACH.

Parker's (1992:3-22) discourse analytic approach was adopted because it incorporates Foucauldian ideas about subjectivity and surveillance within a workable procedure. Parker (1992:7) (4) suggests two "preliminary" analytic steps - taking texts as the objects of study, and exploring the discourses at work in these texts - which I will use to briefly set out my orientational and analytic approach to this advice column.

First, a text - a demarcated piece of discourse - was selected for analysis from a monothematic forum of "relationship advice", **Couple Clinic** (in **Femina**, a monthly, up-market, "liberal feminist", South African magazine for predominantly white women - see Appendix) (5). For example, the readership of **Femina** is estimated at 80% female and 20% male, and 65% white and 35% black (AMPS, 1993). I return to these points regarding readership at several points in this paper.

"When infidelity threatens a marriage" was selected as it was explicitly concerned with technologies of psychological normalization of women in an instance of male infidelity, and contradictory dis/empowerments for women. Furthermore, **Couple Clinic** is one of four sites of advice in **Femina**, the others being more conventional question-and-answer fora specializing in "sex problems", "beauty problems" and "emotional problems". This was found to be analytically interesting in terms of the carving up of women's experience into "problematic realms" requiring different institutionalized experts to issue reformational techniques; and, as **Couple Clinic** uses a case study format, in terms of the effects achieved via formal features of advice columns, for example enhancing "truth" status, thereby making information more difficult to challenge or resist.

The heterosexist positioning of women as "suffering wives" or "victims" and men as "compulsive adulterers" might be interpreted as a pre-selection bias in gendered representations within advice columns. I acknowledge that my analytic focus is functional and selective. Other texts might produce varying discursive foci for interpretation: homosexual relationship practices, instances of female non-monogamy, male angst in relationships, resistance to conventionalized gendered positionings, etc. My focus on heterosexual relationship practice is intended to explore Hollway's (1989) ideas, and I offer concluding comments on the shortcomings of her work within a South African context. I make no claims to the generality of relationship and/or infidelity practices beyond this text, and reiterate that my intention is to produce a reading of the ideological effects reproduced through implication of psychological discourses in HHD and MSD.

Thus, this advice text is used as a "surface of emergence" for the psychologized, discursive construction of monogamy rules, and women's "work" in policing these. The hidden editing operations of what Kristeva has called an "intertextual chain" - from actual discourse between individuals in the counselling sessions, to institutional case report, to a published, media version for a lay audience - highlight Barthes' (1977) notion of the "death of the author". The text is severed from authentic authorship by any particular individual (advice-seeker or advice-giver), and "original" aims and intentions are deconstructed in my interpretation. Establishing the "authenticity" of the case represented here is irrelevant within a productive approach to discourse which reads "real" or "fake" as forged within collective ideological frameworks, and translates arguments about authenticity into possibilities for reader-resistance of norms and dominant meanings (e.g. dismissing advice columns as a "hoax" and/or "conspiracy").

Second, analysis of the psychologization at work in this text proceeds through exploration of the connotations invoked therein, guided by Parker's (1992) definitional criteria pertaining to discourses. Discourses are, inter alia, defined as systems of statements which construct objects and contain subjects. Thus, for example, examination of how "monogamy" (as an object) is constructed within psychological discourses will focus on the particular dialogue, metaphors and practices which are set up in this advice text. A focus on subjectivity requires an analytical strategy of approaching the text as an "addressor", i.e. how it addresses and produces an audience of subjects. Parker (1992:10) suggests that the following questions are germane to a focus on subjectification: who is being addressed by this text?; what are they expected to do when addressed? (adopt particular perceptions and positions, and perform appropriate reformative "work"); and what rights and powers does this discourse bestow on these subjects to speak?

A goal of such an analytic procedure is to explore the reproduction of power relations and ideological effects achieved through deployment of discourses. Any reading comes from a position and is therefore "always-already incomplete" (Parker, 1992:56). For example, my reading is forged within my own positionings as a white, middle class, mostly heterosexual, feminist academic and psychologist. This means that other readers of "when infidelity threatens a marriage" - and indeed, of my account of it - will produce other readings. In explicit resistance to positivist means of establishing "truth" via validity and reliability of findings, the convergence and/or contradictoriness of readings is not believed to detract from the value of a discourse analytic exercise provided it contributes to the progressive unravelling of taken-for-granted practices and the workings of power which hold them in place, and does not disrupt the political appropriation of these insights towards resistance and transformation.

FEMINA'S COUPLE CLINIC: **"AVOIDING THE ULTIMATE BREAK-UP WHEN INFIDELITY THREATENS A MARRIAGE".**

Analysis will frame effects produced for women readers of this specialist advice forum as opposed to more generally focused sites of advice. Notions of infidelity as a normative "crisis" in these more generally focused advice columns have been covered elsewhere (Wilbraham, in press a), and will, thus, not be extensively repeated here. Interpretative commentary will frame effects produced for women

readers of (1) formal features of **Couple Clinic**, and (2) the particular version of relationship-work made visible in this forum. Finally, comments on the effects of (3) the marketization of counselling via **Couple Clinic** are offered.

1. Form: From Q & A to case-study.
The case study form of **Couple Clinic** focuses on one "relationship problem" per **Femina** issue, which are introduced by means of summarizing titles, eg "coping with an elderly parent", "a death in the family", "when infertility comes between you", etc. This diachronic staging of relationship information - rather than several problems simultaneously present in any generally focused site of advice - produces a sense of a cyclical patterning of topics (Mininni, 1991), and implies that a "regular reader" will be more reliably informed about a range of relationship-crises than a "casual" or one-off reader.

"The relationship" is immediately foregrounded by the shifts in form of the page, from questions and answers, to case study. Several British authors (Winship, 1987; McRobbie, 1991) have alluded to a pervasive perception of advice columns as constituted of "fake" or "made-up" letters. If this perception holds within a South African context, then the "case study" form could be interpreted as mimicking medical and/or psychiatric practice (Altman, 1984:118), thus establishing immediate "professional" credibility, authenticity and plausibility in a number of textual ways.

First, a masculine confession or "crisis" is permitted to emerge alongside a feminine one. This powerfully exposes the conflict of crises which produce a "relationship crisis", and lends a sense of balance and objectivity to the forum, i.e. various versions will be heard rather than a single account. This is reinforced by several techniques which establish authenticity: (a) the individuals are named, although readers might recognise these as pseudonyms according to professional conventions of confidentiality; (b) the individuals' own words are used (as direct speech in quotation marks); and (c) staccato sentence structure invokes the emotional, repetitive ways that multi-layered problems are articulated in everyday practice. While provision of names and ages "personalizes" the relationship (refers particularly to Glenda and Mark's problem), the situation of this text within a public media forum addresses a wider audience than Glenda and Mark, and the relationship issues become "everyone's" and/or "anyone's" concerns.

Second, the advice text is divided into demarcated sections - "her story", "his story" and "the counsellor says" - which bring the counselling work-process into visibility via confession, self-examination, confrontation, relationship reflexivity, conflict resolution, etc. This clearly resists the didacticism of a professionally produced "answer" - unassailable information issued by the advice columnist or expert in Q & A format - and implies that an outcome will be "negotiated" or "worked on/through" cooperatively. Thus, professional technologies of silence which guard the nature of psychotherapeutic "work" in conventional sites of advice ("work" is referred out to other therapeutic agencies) produce a desire to know these mysterious, transformative secrets. **Couple Clinic** appears to lower the veil of secrecy and permits readers to look, like voyeurs, into the counselling room, into Glenda and Mark's relationship, and into the counselling work process. The effects are compelling and dramatic (as in soap opera), and powerfully conspiratorial -

trusting readers with confessions, and drawing them into the operation of these professional psychotherapeutic knowledges and practices.

From both feminist and Foucauldian positions, these textual features are read in terms of the various productive and reproductive effects of power. For example, the title, and tripartite division of the text into "stories", suggests that an-other (*Famsa*) has already sorted out, digested and interpreted details to produce a narrativisation (6). In the body of the text, a psychologized gaze (or authorial voice) marks particular details of emotion and appearance, interpretatively framing the (authentic) "direct speech" that follows: Glenda "speaks quickly and angrily", Mark "looks flustered and rather bewildered". The photograph - an introspective woman?, a woman devastated or abandoned? - labours to reinforce the hailing and positioning of women as protagonists and "workers" in the psychotherapeutic narrative.

This reading challenges the "neutrality" of **Couple Clinic** by exposing it as a text produced for an audience of predominantly white, educated, middle- to upper-class, South African women readers who have access to psychologized knowledges, techniques and resources. At the level of an "unusual" formal staging of an advice column in a print-media forum, the narrativized case study might be read as serving the interests of **Femina** by impelling readership (Winship, 1987). Thus, when a site of advice is perceived to fail to serve such interests, editorial staff are empowered to discontinue the forum. For example, **Couple Clinic**'s discontinuance from **Femina** since February 1993 is interpreted by **Femina** as "a change to keep the magazine fresh" (personal communication). What happens, in this instance, to **Femina**'s or *Famsa's* altruistic, humanist motives of service to "countless" individual women with "relationship problems" remains a mystery!

I turn now to interrogation of the interests which are served by the content of the particular "democratization" of psychologized knowledges and practices proffered by **Couple Clinic**.

2. Work is love made visible: The counselling process.

Counselling appears to have been initiated by Glenda, who reported that Mark had "wrecked" a "close to perfect", one-year-old marriage by having sex with a woman from an escort agency. Glenda had "learnt" of the unfaithfulness - via a source other than Mark - two months previous to commencement of counselling. The following "stages" of the represented counselling process are discernible, and structure nodes for the ensuing analysis from realist/humanist, Foucauldian and feminist positions.

(1) *Identification of the problem and "working through feelings".* The main problem was identified as "different views on sex and marriage". Glenda believed in "the sanctity of sex in marriage" and saw Mark's behaviour as "a cruel betrayal", which precipitated derailment of trust and sexual relations. Mark saw his behaviour as "a male prank" and "separate" from his marriage, and not done for sexual satisfaction or to hurt Glenda.

(2) *Deadlock.* Mark refused to be made to feel guilty about the event. He left counselling when it became clear that "his defensiveness was obstructing a reconciliation".

(3) *Individual work.* Glenda continued with individual counselling. She worked on (a) "seeing" (understanding? accepting?) that Mark allegedly suppressed his guilt because he feared losing her, and (b) reclaiming her own projections: "separating feelings about her womanising father" and "humiliated and abused mother" from her feelings for Mark. "Gradually", her anger and "pain of betrayal" lessened.

(4) *Follow-up?* "The couple decided to put the past behind them". Bitterness was said to be interfering with the love and respect they had for one another. Glenda found that "counselling gave her the strength to work at her marriage".

(5) *Happily ever after.* Mark phoned in the outcome: Glenda was "a new person"; he would never hurt her again; and they were going away on "a second honeymoon".

A realist/humanist gaze finds Glenda represented as personally empowered through the counselling reportage: she emerges strong and new and hopeful about herself, Mark and their relationship. Thus, a "crisis" is rearticulated in terms of its "therapeutic opportunities" (Rose, 1990:245), for example a turning-point, a constructive moment for self- and relationship-growth. As Rose (1990:247) suggests, Glenda's allegiance with the counsellor has reproduced particular procedures and vocabularies for making herself and the relationship "thinkable and manageable", and these psychologized procedures will remain with her as ways of making sense of and making choices in her life and/or relationship, enabling her to think of herself as an autonomous individual.

However, a striking feature of this psychologized narrativization is its smooth, predictable transition from "conflict" to "resolution". From a Foucauldian position, critical scrutiny of this smoothness exposes gaps and silences around the intricacies of professional knowledges and practices, held in place by operations of power. Although these gaps are interpreted in terms of the conventions of mediatization - a text produced for mass "lay" circulation - readers are permitted a particular version of the counselling process in at least two related ways. First, conflict is glossed. Mark's departure from counselling, for example, which usefully reflects the discord, non-rationality and emotional strife we have come to expect from such relational negotiations (Coward, 1984:127), is presented as a fait accompli. Furthermore, the time interval is obscured, and readers have no textual means (beyond temporal hints, like "at that point", and "gradually") of assessing whether this process of conflict-resolution took weeks, months or years to effect.

Second, despite the psychologized authorial voice producing the narrativisation, reflexivity about levels of psychotherapeutic directiveness is absent. For example, how did it become clear that "[Mark's] defensiveness was obstructing a reconciliation"? Was this a "coercive interpretation" from the counsellor (Rose, 1990:247)? Was Glenda's continued individual counselling negotiated, and why? Where and how was the decision made "to put the past behind them"; did Mark repent privately or return to counselling? Thus, the institutional jargon colonizes and guards the "work" (which is unelaborated) and the "insights" (which appear "magical"), thereby masking its own operations. This reproduces the personal and/or relationship "choices" as cooperatively negotiated, autonomous decisions. I relate elaboration of these liberating, democratizing, positive effects to commercial "marketization of counselling" in a subsequent section.

I wish explicitly to avoid invocation of operations of an intentioned apparatus of conspiracy against women (eg by Famsa / **Femina**) in an examination of my own feminist disquiet around the advice text. My reading of specific nodes in the reported counselling process - Mark's symbolic "exit" and the soap operatic resolution - seeks to embed these moments within hegemonic discursive assumptions about men, women and sexual relationships, and expose how operations of psychologization labour to hold these assumptions in place.

Marks' departure - interpreted as due to his defensiveness, suppressed guilt and fear of losing Glenda - indicates his ability, via operations of power, to "exit". For example, he was able, through exercise of patriarchal power, to resist responsibility and guilt for his infidelity (a "prank" in terms of hegemonic MSD meanings); and thus, to side-step the counselling process and avoid psychologized subjectification and/or inscription (that is, self-examination, self-reflection, talking about it). That the counselling didn't collapse, and that the relationship was (dubiously) "saved", was due, oppositionally, to Glenda's inability to "exit". The relationship crisis (Mark's "prank") effectively becomes her crisis, and readers are drawn in to witness her emotional labour in grappling with his suppressed significations (a coercive psychoanalytic interpretation of his motives), and "working through" her tangled projections onto Mark (a coercive psychoanalytic interpretation of her motives).

Glenda "stays" and "works" - on her self, on her marriage, and on Mark's behalf - and in several disciplinary ways, this work becomes a source of power. Thus, through the legitimizing knowledges and practices of institutionalized psychotherapeutics, Glenda may act in powerful ways (regaining control in the relationship, or control over herself), or she may learn to read and use power in different ways (the power of insight, emotional articulateness, forgiveness, accommodation, flexibility) (7). This is made clearer through considering hypothetical implications of Glenda's "exit". For example, her exit - either from counselling or from the marriage - implies that (a) she would be "obstructing reconciliation", but this would put her appropriate subject positioning in HHD in jeopardy; and (b) she would be shirking her psychic responsibilities to herself in not working through a crisis (the psychoanalytic Catch-22 whereby all evasive action is interpreted as defensive against or avoidant of an underlying "truth": see Rose, 1990; Parker, 1992).

However, the asymmetrical targeting or interpellation of women in psychologized technologies - Mark was not impelled to confront his guilt or "know" himself and/or Glenda more intimately - perpetuate gendered positions in hegemonic, patriarchal discourses about relationships and sexuality. Thus, gendered power relations are played out textually via "absence" and "presence" in positions made available in "public" and "private" spheres. Thus, while Mark's physical presence "obstructed reconciliation", his exit/absence facilitates and structures Glenda's psychologized work "inwards". Glenda comments that she feels "freer to express herself" after he leaves. However, while she is very present, via psychologized subjection, in the private self- and relationship-work of the represented counselling process, Glenda's voice is notably absent in the reported outcome. Here, Mark's presence publicizes, to counsellor and readers, (a) his resignation from MSD positioning, that is, the reconciliation is based on the non-repetition of his "prank",

(b) Glenda's psychologized "progress"; she is "confident" and "a new person", and (c) the success of counselling - the "second honeymoon".

Glenda's disturbingly mute public voice is evocative of Foucault's (1986:175) ideas about feminine compromise and acquiescence to hegemonic assumptions about male sexuality in patriarchal discourse. Foucault wryly notes that if a husband's "indiscretion" or "weakness" becomes publicly known, or is publicly challenged by a wife, she risks losing her subjective status as a wife, as a partner capable of monopolizing his sexual pleasure. Thus, Foucault (ibid) concludes that a wife is obliged to privately concede to, forgive or tolerate her husband's indiscretions because (a) it saves her social and/or sexual honour as a wife, and (b) it proves her continuing love and affection for him.

Thus, Glenda's subject position in HHD - belief in "the sanctity of (sex in) marriage" - produces "normal" responses of anger, emotional devastation and social embarrassment (Glenda comments: "they're all laughing behind my back") around a partner's infidelity; and institutionalized psychotherapeutic techniques are deployed to defuse her crisis, and effect a truce within, rather than challenge or transform, patriarchal discursive confines. This critique of the social decontextualization and individualism inherent in psychotherapeutic technologies is documented in various political and/or feminist writings (Coward, 1984; Dawes, 1985; Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1986; Taylor, 1990; Pilgrim, 1991; Burman, 1992).

I have argued in this section that through an institutionalized production of male sexual infidelity as a "resolvable relationship-crisis", gender differences with respect to sex and relationships are normalized, as is women's private, emotional and relational labour to "compensate" for, or to "accommodate", those differences. The counselling process made visible to readers in the above **Couple Clinic** advice text was read as forged within these discursive contours, enabling women to speak privately and labour invisibly, with institutional affirmation, as subjects of HHD.

3. Marketization of counselling.

Couple Clinic is "sponsored" by a professional counselling organization, *Famsa*, who produces both the expertise and the case study material for this forum. This has become standard practice in current South African women's magazines, where fora of expertise are bought in, as regular features. This section sustains the focus on form and content of **Couple Clinic**, and addresses possible "marketization" effects produced through the insertion of this professional "window" into psychotherapeutic technologies in a magazine for women.

I have showed how, in the above text, through psychologized rearticulation of "crisis" or "danger", a partner's sexual infidelity might be re-interpreted as "a therapeutic opportunity" (Rose, 1990:245). The "danger" refers to the normalized status of non-monogamy as a "crisis", which accords it the power to wreck relationships and elicit personal damage and/or destructiveness, that is, a form of "normal pathology" (ibid) (8). "Therapeutic opportunities" refer to the possibilities for personal growth, self-esteem, clarity on relationship issues, freer lines of communication, etc. in such a situation, and draw in "the healing potentials hidden within each normal person" (ibid).

But, "therapeutic opportunities" also refer to possibilities for intervention by professional psychotherapeutic technologies, and colonization of domains of "problematic experience". Thus, the sexual infidelity of a male partner is a "crisis" which is colonized by counselling technologies: readers of advice columns are referred out to another agency for marriage-guidance counselling, or drawn in to witness the operations and effects of such a counselling process.

I have written elsewhere of a professional hierarchy of psychologized referrals, where "serious psychological problems" were referred out to clinical psychologists or psychiatrists, while allegedly "less serious" issues were directed to counsellors (Wilbraham, in press b). It might be argued, then, that advice columns lay down signposted paths of professional referral for current and future use, by sorting out (a) what constitutes a "problem", (b) what needs to be done to resolve this "problem", and (c) what "problem" should get taken to which "expert" (eg eating disorders to doctors or clinical psychologists, marriage problems to counsellors). Fairclough (1992:99) refers to this process of aggressive proliferation of counselling technologies - the "problematization" of realms of experience in particular ways, and the creation of a market demand for particular professional interventions - as the "marketization of counselling" (cf also Cushman, 1990; Rose, 1990; Giddens, 1991).

Within **Couple Clinic**, the metacommunicative statements which ritually - at the level of form - frame this site of advice, clearly function as advertisements of and/or discursive injunctions to *Famsa's* counselling services. Mininni (1991:78) explains that such assertions - through emphasizing the power of psychotherapeutics - "lead readers to acknowledge the gap between their problems and the solutions they can only find outside themselves". In this advice text, first, the "*countless* desperate couples" (emphasis added) who face relationship-crises are explicitly addressed, establishing the pervasiveness of this domain of "normal pathology". Second, the adoption of particular psychologized positions (confession) and engagement in a particular psychotherapeutic technology (couple-counselling), are set up as pre-conditions for and/or injunctions to reconciliation. Thus, "*by* spelling out your feelings honestly and seeking compassionate counselling together, *you can* put the crisis in perspective and avoid the ultimate break-up" (emphases added). Third, telephone numbers and addresses of national *Famsa* centres are provided for easy reference.

That the **Couple Clinic** case study presents a "positive" or "successful" outcome - a reconciled couple, and the resolution of a particular "relationship crisis", namely male sexual infidelity - reproduces counselling as an appropriate, imperative psychotherapeutic intervention in such instances; and warns against the dire consequences, particularly for women, of neglecting to, or resisting, this institutionally prescribed "work" - failing to "avoid the ultimate break-up", or worse still, desiring break-up. Thus, psychologized criteria are set up which police women's options, motives, sources of support and resistances. Altman (1984:118) captures my own feminist misgivings to the touted success of the outcome by claiming that mediatization of "case studies" which use heterosexual couples as "units for counselling", labour as "propaganda for psychiatry, marriage and female dependence on men" (9).

A feminist reading might beg questions about the absence in this advice forum of an array of alternative options available to women. For example, a career and other interests, activities or friendships in which Glenda might be embedded, would serve to defuse her overwhelming HHD positioning by resisting the assumption that sexual relatedness subsumes women's whole existence (Coward, 1984). Similarly, visibility of psychotherapeutic technologies "other" than the cloying rituals of Rogerian counselling - eg behaviour modification, assertiveness training, feminist therapies - might challenge the undisputed "truth" of the normative psychotherapeutic process and/or outcome as presented. What ideological interests might be served by these absences?

First, these interests should be read in terms of the context of an "informative" media forum produced for predominantly white female readership. Advocation of collective, politicized resistance to social conventions and norms - for example, Reichean resistance to the sexual repressions inherent in the ideologies of marriage and nuclear family, and the psychotherapeutic imperative of relationship dissolution for self-liberation and growth (Reich, 1942) (**10**) - would deny individuals the rights and powers to seek solutions to "crises" which are perceived at a personal level in everyday lives; and would, perhaps, lay the magazine or counselling organisation open to litigation for willful relationship dissolution by irate, deserted (male) spouses.

Second, historically, "counselling" - though not a unitary technique - is thought to have developed out of "humanist" psychological theory and therapeutic practice (cf a Rogerian model), and is associated with focus on conscious, short-term crisis-intervention or life-skills training to improve current functioning -communication skills, focussed listening, sex therapy (Weinberg, 1989; Cushman, 1990; Rose, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Fairclough, 1992). It is also understood to be oppositional to psychoanalytic approaches which advocate longer term, "intra-psychic" work, the exploration of historical and/or unconscious determinants in present functioning, and "transferential" issues (Bejin, 1985).

As I have shown in my analysis of **Couple Clinic**, "opposition" between counselling and psychoanalytic discursive practices do not produce mutually exclusive psychologizations, as both are implicated. However, within this site of advice, counselling is easily marketed due to its accessibility: routes of referral are clearly set out; and the counselling process made visible is democratically intelligible to a "lay" audience. Furthermore, the focus on the individual - and the interior dynamics of private sexual relationships - is politically unthreatening. The humanist promises of individual choices, freedoms, opportunities for agentic "work", optimization of potential and improved current functioning, and thus, personal fulfillment and happiness in heterosexual relationships, effectively obscures (a) any "socio-structural" readings of gendered or classist oppression, and options for social transformation, and (b) any readings of directive and/or ideological operations of power-knowledge in psychotherapeutic counselling technologies (Lambley, 1973).

This feminist reading critically highlights that, within realist/humanist and Foucauldian positions, powers are accorded to individual women in

conventionalized "feminine" positions within a patriarchal order (cf Foucauldian notion of "docile subjects"). Thus, women readers of **Couple Clinic** may be empowered through engagement with psychotherapeutic counselling technologies, or through "working on/through" feelings or relationships in similarly psychologized ways. This valorises access, for women-in-relationships, to more "indirect" operations and effects of power - insight, feminine flexibility, subtle manipulation of men - and equips women readers who are "single", in keeping with **Femina**'s "liberal feminist" profile, with the feminine and psychological skills for a future with a man in it.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS.

Within a project which sought to put Foucauldian ideas to work - to produce an exposition of the operations and effects of the processes of psychological subjection within monogamy rules and gendered positions in heterosexual relationship practice - reportage of conclusive "truths" in the form of verifiable findings, or clearly commendable "solutions", is anathematical. Instead, I adopt a discourse analyst's reflexive engagement with theoretical and methodological issues, dilemmas at the level of everyday practice, and more questions. In many ways, I conclude with a beginning, for much of the work - by way of political appropriation of the insights produced - lies ahead. In concluding, then, I will draw together several key threads which have run through my reading of **Couple Clinic**; and, in light of a focus on empowerment within a South African context, address several ways in which this analytic work may be taken forward.

First, my reading of **Couple Clinic** contributes to the scanty literature on form and function of South African advice columns. A Foucauldian reading of the advice column genre posits a site of confession of problematic experience, surveillance by institutionalized knowledges of resolution, and subjection, by providing useful techniques of self-knowledge and optimization of functioning and experience. It is understood within this framework that these processes impel docile subjection even if readers don't write into advice columns themselves. While the discursive determinism in this Foucauldian reading is grim, the reported scepticism of British women with regard to the "authenticity" of the advice column genre (Winship, 1987; McRobbie, 1991), is a hopeful sign of the ways in which women readers are able to dismiss, subvert, challenge and resist the "truths" purveyed by institutional experts. I have produced a reading of the **Couple Clinic** text which implied that techniques used to establish authenticity of the forum might operate to anticipate and/or undermine such forms of reader-resistance. In keeping with the shift from "author" to "text" in contemporary analyses of cultural texts, however, what would be required to extend this paper is to access how advice columns are read, used, talked about and/or resisted by differently positioned South African women: working class or rural black women, or white, middle class women.

A discursive approach would emphasise that different readers (a) have differential access to advice texts and/or psychological knowledges and resources - issues of literacy, magazines' explicit target-audiences, far-flung rural populations, apartheid health structures of yore - and therefore, have differential access to resistance of these knowledges (Wilbraham, in press a); (b) read advice texts in different ways, according to differential social and/or subjective positions like gender, educational

level, class or culture; and (c) read advice texts for different purposes - for "truthful" information, for voyeuristic titillation, for entertainment, for academic study, for ridicule. These aspects are implicated in the second point of discussion below, that of the contextualization of Hollway's discourses within a South African context.

Second, my analytic reading of **Couple Clinic** has usefully extended Hollway's (1989) work on gendered subjection within discourses of sexuality in a more Foucauldian direction (Widdicombe, 1992): implicating the operations and effects of psychologized knowledges and technologies, and power, in the reproduction of monogamy rules. Within such an endeavour, theory and method are embedded in one another in productive ways, and this begs the question of the "goodness of fit" between Hollway's HHD and MSD discourses - extracted from discourse between British, university educated wo/men - and a South African context. It was assumed in my reading that there would be a fair amount of discursive convergence between Hollway's sample of "British" participants and the "liberal", well-educated, middle- to upper class, white South African women which constitute the target audience of **Femina** magazine. Beyond this, "universalization" of Hollway's HHD and MSD discourses, and readership of other South African advice texts, founders on South Africa's heterogeneity of cultures, contexts and stratification of classes.

Thus, to continue the classist example: do working class wo/men in South Africa draw on discourses similar and/or other to Hollway's HHD and MSD to conventionalize gender positions in heterosexual relationship practice? How do institutionalized knowledges mediate the operations and effects of these discourses? And, in the absence of psychological discourses, what knowledges and skills are drawn on to understand sexuality within heterosexual relationships?

Sexual exclusivity or monogamy in relationship practice is a topical issue in South African gender politics. I have shown in my reading of **Couple Clinic** that psychologization posits sexual exclusivity in relationship practice as a normal, universal requirement for "good relationships" and "good mental health", that is, self-esteem, trust, intimacy, emotional containment, happiness, and ultimately, sexual satisfaction. Resistance of monogamy rules or the concomitant, gendered division of labour which holds them in place, speaks of the dire consequences of "turning one's back on one's own needs". Ironically - and this operates against a notion of monogamy as a universal and ahistorical ethic - these psychic needs (for monogamy) are understood to be structured and reproduced by participation within psychological discourses, and forge the cultural imperative within post-modernity to "care for the self" (Foucault, 1986; Giddens, 1991; Parker, 1992).

Of course, psychologization is not the only system of knowledges and technologies which embed monogamy rules, and germane here is an intersection with medical discourses around AIDS-transmission and safer sex practices (11). Within HIV-awareness campaigns in South Africa, Strebel (1992) argues that men remain firmly positioned within hegemonic MSD assumptions, whilst women, in terms of HHD, are the targeted protagonists to police sexual exclusivity and condom usage in heterosexual relationship practice, even within existing socio-structural, economic and/or cultural power relations between the genders which render women less powerful. The black, working class, HIV+ women in Strebel's study,

for example, in the absence of the rights and powers accorded by psychological and/or medical knowledges, resorted to "traditional" discourses of culture and/or religion - often couched within wider patriarchal discourses - to explain their fates.

Third, the above points introduce discussion of power. The Foucauldian and feminist positions I have articulated in my reading might be interpeted as articulating an "anti-psychology" stance; or, seemingly more absurd given the dire consequences of AIDS I have outlined, as an "anti-monogamy" stance. Both these possible interpretations are simplistic and lack understanding of the contradictoriness of the power relations I have sought to unravel. Foucault (1986) has devoted much critical attention to how, historically, monogamy rules have come into being. I have sought here to expose how such rules are embedded in institutionalized knowledges of them; how they are negotiated and policed - and by whom - in practice; what the consequences of transgression are; and how re-commitment to the rules forms the basis of both "reconciled" relationships and normalization.

Within such a reading of monogamy, then, psychological discourses produce contradictory effects of power for women. These contradictions constitute the major tension which has been grappled with in this paper. This involves, on the one hand, constraint of what may be known, acted on and how; and thus, what may be resisted (Young, 1987). For example, a feminist reading might argue that this constraint constitutes a broader kind of socio-structural or discursive hegemony, subjugation or oppression of all women within patriarchal discourse. But, on the other hand, psychological discourses facilitate informed choice between strategies which optimize experience (Young, 1987), such as insights into the self, self-esteem, and personal fulfillment, which enable individuals to speak more powerfully about "rights" and "needs" in relationship practice. This encapsulates a more localized form of power relations - "disciplinary power" - within a Foucauldian framework (Foucault, 1982).

If discourse analysis is not to be seen as a radical or progressive "tool" in or of itself (Burman, 1991), the question to ask at the end of an analysis of the operations and effects of power-knowledge in psychotherapeutic practice is not "is this analysis true?", but rather "what can it do?" I have already mentioned that one way of taking this work forward, within a goal of resistance, transformation and empowerment, would be to access other readings of advice- and allied texts. Of particular interest might be those South African readers who are resistant to HHD or MSD positions, and how these resistances may be reconciled with, or used to challenge, the maintenance of individually empowering effects produced by psychotherapeutic technologies. This could be achieved through focus group discussions, by gathering "talk" which could be subjected to further analytic interpretation.

Another way forward is through publication of this and similarly critical papers in fora which reach audiences beyond the "already-converted" discourse analytic communities. Publication in mainstream and alternative psychological journals, for example, would reach trainers of future clinicians, trainee counsellors, clinical psychologists, and various other purveyors of psychological sub-disciplines, which would, in turn, facilitate fruitful argument and emergence of other resistant,

creative and supportive readings. Beyond an academic audience, debates which are "critical" of the institutionalized information we receive, might be usefully insinuated into more "popular" fora, newspapers and women's magazines, to broaden awareness, critical skills and resistant options available to readers of all persuasions.

An anticipated problem with this drive towards publication for a non-discourse-analytic audience is, of course, one of accessibility. Stereotypically, the style of discourse analytic writing tends to be turgid, abstruse and fiercely jargonised (12). The so-called "intentioned opacity" of writings by Lacan, Derrida et al has been defended on theoretical grounds: in terms of the death-of-the-author, there exists no one "real", "true", "simple", "originally intended" meaning of a text; and, thus, impenetrability of the style of discourse analytic writing is intended to highlight the subjective production of meaning by readers themselves (see Barthes, 1977; Parker, 1992). Reflecting on my own prose in this paper, I am aware, with considerable irony, of my embeddedness in the very practices of power-knowledge I seek to expose and transform, as a white academic in a psychological institution. Furthermore, discursive jargon undoubtedly labours to elevate advice columns to a more sophisticated level of complexity which impels a thoughtful response rather than outright dismissal or resistance.

However, the power of a politicized discourse analytic approach is in its imperative towards interrogation of what is real, ongoing talk and challenge, and research action in issues of social and/or institutional transformation and empowerment (Parker & Burman, 1993). In resisting the last word being spoken on advice columns, we might recast the genre as a site of struggle towards new identities for women and more democratic forms of heterosexual relationship practice, and in addressing the role of psychology towards those ends.

Notes.

1. This article is an extended version of a paper which was originally presented at the Centre for the Study of South African Literature & Languages Conference, University of Durban-Westville, 13-16 September 1995.
2. Carter (1988) and Mininni (1991) are the only studies which have explicitly used discourse analytic methodologies. Given the diversity of discourse analytic methods available, these studies produce sharply divergent foci.
3. I make reference at several points in this paper to racial categorizations of readers of magazines. I use these categories in keeping with published statistics on readership (eg AMPS, 1993), to explore effects of exclusionary practices. I acknowledge that this reproduces the salience of racial categorization which operates at multiple levels of South African society, but hereby note my resistance to such categories and practices.
4. A comprehensive review of the diversity of different approaches to discourse analysis has been conducted elsewhere (see, for example, Macdonell, 1986; Fairclough, 1992; Parker, 1992; Burman & Parker, 1993; Wilbraham, 1994). Parker's approach is a "narrative" one, producing a reading of a demarcated text in ways that are critical of power relations and ideological effects achieved.
5. This paper is a re-worked fragment of a larger study which compared the operations and effects of 8 different sites of advice in several South African

magazines, along dimensions of psychologization and medicalization (see Wilbraham, 1994).

6. The case material for this forum is provided by *Famsa*, a South African counselling organization which specializes in family, marriage and relationship problems (see "Marketization of counselling").

7. This formulation draws on Carter's (1988:70) analysis of the contradictory effects achieved by normalizing discourses in women's narratives - wracked with the "ambiguities" of feminine subjectivity - in advice columns. Effects produced by expert advice might include, for example, "closing" options available to women, but re-reading women's capacity for flexibility and adaptation as sources of power, hope and strength.

8. I have examined this aspect of normalization of monogamy as a "crisis" to which all relationships - even those "close to perfect" as is the representation of Glenda and Mark's relationship - are vulnerable, in more detail elsewhere (Wilbraham, in press a). This is largely predicated on the assumption of voracious, biologically driven male sexuality in terms of MSD.

9. As a point of accuracy - not intended to "discredit" my feminist scepticism - it is noted that **Couple Clinic** does document counselling processes which do not effect reconciliations. In a 1991 sample of **Couple Clinic**, three case studies out of 12 (25%) ended in separation, divorce or relationship termination. Analyses of patterns and/or contradictions in these "failures" of psychotherapeutics, while interesting, are beyond the scope of this analysis.

10. Frosh (1987) provides a useful, historical overview of the Reichean contribution to psychoanalytic thought.

11. Glenda's risk of AIDS is explicitly voiced in **Couple Clinic**, presumably because Mark's sexual liaison was with an individual in an allegedly high-risk group - "call-girls" / "sex-workers". I have examined the implication of medical discourses in monogamy-rules in more detail elsewhere (Wilbraham, 1994). The counsellor's dismissal of Glenda's fears about AIDS are noted in this forum, as is the targetting of Glenda for psychologized work (rather than use of medical discourses, for example).

12. Parker (1992) and Burman & Parker (1993) have produced fairly user-friendly "how-to-do-discourse-analysis" texts which would be suitable for "beginner" discourse analysts.

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THE COUPLE CLINIC

with Elisabeth dos Santos

Every week, every year, countless desperate couples are faced with what appear to be insoluble problems – financial, physical, emotional, or all three. By spelling out your feelings honestly and seeking compassionate counselling together, you can put the crisis into perspective and avoid the ultimate break-up

When infidelity threatens a marriage

PHOTOGRAPH: RUSSELL TRAVERS

GLENDA'S STORY

Glenda is 29, and speaks quickly and angrily. "Two months ago I learnt that my husband had been unfaithful to me. He and a few of his colleagues picked up some women at an escort agency and slept with them. I would never have found out if the wife of one of the other men hadn't told me. Mark and his friends apparently did it simply for the hell of it and found the whole thing a huge joke.

"My husband and his friends picked up women at an escort agency"

But I can't put this incident out of my mind and it's ruining my marriage. I've never experienced anything so traumatic. How could he have done something so sleazy and sordid, and also so early on in our marriage? We've only been married for a year. I think about it so much that sometimes I feel I'm going out of my mind.

"Our marriage was as close to perfect as anyone could wish, before Mark went and wrecked it. I don't understand how he could have come back and made love to me after he'd been with that woman. Afterwards, did he compare me to that call girl? Sex between us used to be special, but now it's out of the question. Sometimes I feel as if I can see right through him. The things I could live with quite comfortably before now irritate me immensely. I'm convinced he's dishonest and devious about a lot of other things, and I see an

ulterior motive behind all he says and does. In short, I feel totally betrayed and humiliated.

"I expect everyone at Mark's work knows about his fling, and I suppose they're all laughing behind my back. I'm also terrified that he may have picked up a venereal disease, even Aids, which he could pass on to me. If he'd ever really cared for me, he would never have shamed me like this and even put my life at risk.

"So my marriage is a sham. Although Mark has said that he's sorry and that he loves me, he can't simply shrug it off. He says it wasn't important, but then what is important to him? How will I ever be able to trust him again?"

MARK'S STORY

Mark is 34, and looks flustered and rather bewildered. "I thought the whole incident would have blown over by now, but I realise that it's become quite a sore point for Glenda. I honestly can't see why she's making such a fuss. It was just a bit of high jinks and nothing else. Most husbands commit an indiscretion at some point in their marriage, so I'm no worse than other men.

"The way it happened was that my company had reached its annual target a month early, so we were all in high spirits. The company director said he'd treat the whole team to dinner. The idea to call in escorts wasn't mine, but I must say that the thought of indulging in something a little forbidden and risqué seemed very exciting at the time. Afterwards I did feel guilty, but I would liken it to sneaking off and having some cake when you're on a diet! Anyway, as I never thought Glenda would get wind of it, I put the whole thing out of my mind. I don't even know the woman's name.

"It was like being hit by a bombshell when I arrived home one evening to find that all my things had been moved into the spare room. Glenda wasn't prepared to hear my side of the story, and now married life has become unbearable. I've said that I'm sorry and feel that I've been punished enough. I've been tested for VD and I'm clear, so Glenda doesn't have anything to worry about. What more can I do? If Glenda can't forgive and forget what has been my only slip-up, then that's her problem. I'm not prepared to feel miserable for the rest of my life."

THE COUNSELLOR SAYS

"The main problem in this relationship was that Glenda and Mark had different views on sex and marriage – men and women often do. Couples enter into a marriage each with their own set of values. These are instilled in us by our own families and are further moulded through life's experiences. It's not surprising then that partners will often disagree vastly on their interpretation of what is right and wrong.

"We started by focusing on Glenda's reaction to Mark having slept with another woman, even though he'd brushed it off as having been only a one-night stand. Glenda had very serious and idealistic views on the sanctity of marriage. She didn't see the incident as merely a fling, but rather as a cruel betrayal. She also came to question whether their sexual relationship had ever been good enough for Mark, and this made her unsure of her own sexuality.

"Because Mark had tried to keep the incident a secret, Glenda began to wonder what else he was keeping from her. It emerged at this point that Glenda's father had been a womaniser, who'd humiliated and abused her mother. Glenda now felt she was in the same position her mother had been in, and that her trust had been betrayed forever.

"Mark, on the other hand, interpreted the incident as a harmless male prank, to which society generally turns a blind eye. He was able to view it as something totally separate from his marriage. For him it didn't signify that there was anything wrong with his marriage, and he clearly didn't do it to hurt Glenda. It had simply been his way of being 'one of the boys'. He could understand, though, that Glenda felt hurt when she found out, especially as it reminded her of her mother, but throughout counselling Mark kept insisting that he wasn't prepared to feel guilty about it. He kept repeating that Glenda had no right to punish him.

"Men and women often have different views on sex and marriage – Mark saw his fling as something separate from his marriage, while Glenda felt it was a cruel betrayal"

"At this point, we reached a deadlock and Mark discontinued counselling when it became clear that his defensiveness was obstructing a reconciliation. Glenda wished to continue with individual counselling, feeling much freer to express herself. Glenda could see that her husband did feel guilty, despite his protestations to the contrary, but that he was trying to suppress this, because he feared that he'd lose her.

"Glenda next concentrated on separating the feelings she still had about her parents from what she felt towards Mark. She discovered that she still loved Mark dearly, and gradually the pain of his betrayal became less.

"The couple decided to put the past behind them, because the bitterness between them was destroying the love and respect they still had for one another. Glenda found that her anger dissipated and that counselling gave her the strength to work at her marriage. Mark phoned me shortly after that to say that Glenda had become a different person – confident and sure of herself – and that he had promised her that he'd never hurt her like that again. He added that they were thinking of spending a few days up-country on a second honeymoon." □

WHERE TO GET HELP

The Couple Clinic is based on cases from the Family Life Centre, Johannesburg. Names and other details have been changed to conceal identities.

The Family Life Centre is a branch of Famsa – Family and Marriage Society of South Africa – which has branches throughout the country.

Look up your local branch of Famsa in the telephone directory, or contact the society at its National Directorate, PO Box 2800, Kempton Park, 1620, ☎ (011) 975-7106/7.
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