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**Age in Action:
Membership Work and Stage of Life Categories
in Talk**

By


Pirjo Nikander

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted as a partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of Doctor of Philosophy
of Loughborough University

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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis on the discursive practices through which people make sense of and manage their membership in a particular age category. The data comprise of a corpus of over 800 pages of transcribed talk from interviews with Finnish men and women, all close to their 50th birthday. Throughout the analysis of these accounts I will be addressing wider methodological and thematic issues and debates in discursive social psychology. These include arguments about how identities, the membership or non-membership in particular categories, are managed in talk; the analytic possibilities and relevance of discursively mapping people's membership and categorisation work in interaction; and more specifically, the interactive processes through which participants in an interview situation display, apply, and mobilise notions and descriptions of age and ageing. The analytic focus is firmly on participants' communicative and interpretative sense making: on the tacit reasoning practices, and on the kinds of interactional business achieved by *age categorisation in action*. The wider empirical focus throughout is on how people use categorisations and self-descriptions to accomplish certain kinds of interactional work.

In the analysis of the interview data, empirically grounded observations are made

- (i) On how people orient to and display the factual nature of the human life course as a progression, and how overlap in between age categories is managed
- (ii) On the discursive practices through which membership in an age category is either warranted or resisted
- (iii) On the discursive formulations of personal change and continuity, and
- (iv) On the moral nature of age description

The analytic and theoretical contributions from this work are of immediate interest to both discursive and ageing research. The work shows the benefits of discursive theorising and analysis for understanding arguments and descriptions about age. Simultaneously it makes a contribution to the existing literature on identity and categorisation in talk and interaction.

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Materials based on the research undertaken for this thesis have been published in various forms elsewhere:

Nikander P. (2000): 'Old' vs. 'Little Girl': A Discursive Approach to Age Categorisation and Morality. *Journal of Aging Studies* 14: 4, 335-358.

The research process also gave impetus to a jointly edited book on *Women and Ageing*, and indirectly influenced the writing of the following chapters published therein.

Nikander, P. (1999a): Elämäkaaresta elämäkulkuun: ian muuttuva merkitysmaailma [From lifespan to life course: the changing meaning of ageing] In Kangas, I. and Nikander, P. (Eds.): *Naiset ja ikääntyminen. [Women and Ageing]* Tampere, Finland: Gaudeamus. 27-45.

Nikander, P. (1999b): Ikääntyvä yhteiskunta ja tulevaisuuden ikääntyvä nainen. [The Ageing Society and the Elderly Woman of the Future]. In Kangas, I. and Nikander P. (Eds.) *Naiset ja ikääntyminen. [Women and Ageing]*. Tampere, Finland: Gaudeamus. 211-228.

Contents:

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Contents	iv
Part one: Re-Contextualizing Life Course Research	
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Theorising the Life Course in Discursive Terms	19
Part Two: Age in Talk and Interaction	
Chapter Three: Managing the 'Natural Facticity' of the Life Course	49
Chapter Four: Warranting and Resisting a Category	79
Chapter Five: Mobilising Change and Continuity	109
Part Three: The Morality of Age Claims	
Chapter Six: Talking Against Linearity	143
Chapter Seven: Producing Morally Insulated Accounts	174
Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Contributions	205
Appendix 1: Transcription Symbols and Notes about the Art of Translation	219
Appendix 2: Description of the Data: The Interviewees and Procedure	226
References	229

Part One: Re-Contextualizing Life Course Research

Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis is about the everyday discursive practices, by which people make sense of, accomplish and manage their membership in a particular age category. In particular, I focus on the accounts, anecdotes and stories produced by men and women who, by their chronological age, have, or are about to 'turn fifty'. Throughout the analysis of these accounts I will be addressing wider methodological and thematic issues and debates in discursive social psychology. These include arguments about how identities; the membership or non-membership in particular categories are established, handled and warranted in talk (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998a); the analytic possibilities and relevance of discursively mapping people's membership and categorisation work in interaction (Edwards 1991, 1995; Hester and Eglin 1997a; Sacks 1992; Widdicombe 1998a); and more specifically, the interactive processes through which participants in an interview situation apply, mobilise, and manage notions and descriptions of age and ageing. The thesis focuses on the tacit communicative competencies through which notions of the human life course are constructed, managed and oriented to in talk, and provides detailed analyses on the practices by which membership in stage of life categories is ascribed and rejected, displayed and refused in the course of interaction. The wider empirical focus throughout is on how people use categorisations and self-descriptions to accomplish certain kinds of interactional work.

The data, upon which this thesis is based, comprise of a corpus of over 800 pages of transcribed talk from interviews with Finnish men and women, all close to their 50th birthday. In the analysis of this corpus of talk, participants' descriptions are not taken as straightforward manifestations of 'age identity': as deliveries of factual information, or as reflections of mental events that are simply conveyed in the interview talk. In other words, although I am working with an interview corpus, the participants are nonetheless not treated as 'informants' (cf. Sacks 1992, Vol.1: 27; Antaki and Widdicombe 1998b). The unit of analysis is talk in the interview situation itself, not some internal psychic entity that lies 'behind' the talk.

Consequently, the analytic focus is firmly on participants' communicative and interpretative sense making: on the tacit reasoning practices, and on the kinds of interactional business achieved by *age categorisation in action*.

The work presented here, as the title also clearly indicates, seeks to contribute to what could be called the 'identity in action' tradition in discursive social psychology (e.g. Antaki and Widdicombe 1998a; Shotter and Gergen 1989; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995). In contrast to cognitive psychology that concerns itself with a more mechanical model of categorisation (c.f. Billig 1985, 1997), this discussion emphasises the prime importance of studying categorisation as situated and dynamic discursive practice. As a result, identity in discursive social psychology is removed from the realm of cognitive processing and placed firmly into the social, everyday arena. In line with the arguments of 'the identity in action' tradition, I take categories of age, like any categories by which we understand and organize the world around us, to be '*for talking*' (Edwards 1991, 1998). Given this, the key starting point for analysis in this work is the centrality of age categorisations '*in action*', i.e. their analysis in various discursive and argumentative contexts.

In addition to participating and contributing to what has come to be known as discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Edwards and Potter 1992; Potter, Edwards and Wetherell 1993), this work also participates in the broader ongoing discussions concerning the benefits of approaching the life course from a qualitative language-centred perspective (e.g. Coupland and Nussbaum 1993; Gubrium, Holstein and Buckholdt 1994; Nikander 2000a; Taylor 1992, 1994; Wood and Kroger 1995). Doing this, I wish to participate in building human action and interaction more systematically into the practices of theorising about the life course (Dannefer 1989). The arguments and analyses presented in this thesis are, in other words, geared towards elucidating the advantages resulting from the cross-fertilization of discursive psychology and life course research. Whereas discursive perspectives into identity and the 'identity in action' tradition within social psychology themselves are not new, their detailed introduction to life course studies and to questions of age categorisation remains something of an uncharted territory.

Age as a topic for 'traditional' and discursive research

The focus on age categories and age identity adopted in this work differs noticeably from some, 'more traditional' social psychological research on age and ageing (e.g. Spacapan and Oscamp 1989). On the whole, one could claim that the majority of social scientific research on age is still marked by *theoretical and analytic à priorism*. This means that age is often treated as an unproblematic and independent background variable that exerts its influence on the individual. Unlike research on other social categories in which membership is obligatory, like gender (e.g. Butler 1990; Skevington and Baker 1989; Stokoe 1998; Wetherell 1986), or race and national background for example (Rapley 1998; Ullah 1990; Wetherell and Potter 1992), research on age and ageing has been somewhat slower to adopt language-centred, discursive or interactional approaches. Treating age as a variable among others, has instead afforded research that takes age as an autonomous social category and the ageing individual under scrutiny as a bearer of a particular 'social fact' called age, the effects of which can then be observed or measured.

The unfortunate oversight in many of the studies focusing on age identity is that they overlook the central importance of occasioned language use in situ. Thus they also fail to detail the interactional processes by which meanings of age are mobilised in the multitude of immediate local contexts that make up the everyday (see e.g. Holstein 1990, and Murphy and Longino 1992, for a discussion). This oversight, as well as the ideal of identity *measurement*, is apparent in the following quote from The Encyclopedia of Ageing under the heading 'Age Identification'

'Self-perceived age identification is a major component of one's self-concept over the life course. Age identity is a personal assessment of one's relative position in an age-graded system. Operationalization of this widely used concept often takes place by means of adjective check-lists, semantic differentials, and self-selected descriptions of one's age. Multivariate analyses suggest age identity is composed of a number of subfeatures (Kastenbaum, Derbin, Sabatini & Arrt 1972). Among these are biological and physiological, psychological, demographic, socio-economic, and social-psychological (Barak & Stern 1986). This last measurement is usually elicited in response to some variation of the query "Would you describe yourself as young, middle-aged, or old?" Occasionally, a comparative slant is put to the question: "Compared with others your age, would you say you are younger, about the same, or older?"

(Hendricks 1995: 34)

It seems then that the criticism put forward by discursive psychology vis-à-vis cognitive, social and developmental psychology categories (e.g. Edwards 1991, 1995) can be extended to the criticism of at least some ageing research. Similar to some social psychologists, social gerontologists, in other words, at times confuse the 'the descriptive with the ontological' when treating age categories as unproblematic givens (Wetherell and Potter 1992: 146). In contrast to the apparent à priorism and lack of interactional considerations and perspectives in much of this literature, the focus in the current work is exclusively on the communicative and dialogic processes in and through which situational meanings of age and ageing emerge in interaction. The focus is thus less on 'components or measurement of identity', and more on dynamic meaning-making, and on the interactional business achieved by age categorisation. Simultaneously, age categories, the processes of categorisation and 'traditional life course' research are re-contextualised into a discursive framework (cf. Shotter 1993a).

The perspective on age categorisation in this thesis is not without precedent, however. In fact, discursive work on age and the life course has been gaining momentum over recent years. Despite the fact that the relative number of social gerontological and ageing research approaching age from the point of view of situated action and communication is still low, we now find examples of books (Coupland and Nussbaum 1993; Green 1993; Gubrium, Holstein and Buckholdt 1994) and special issues (e.g. Coupland and Ylanne-McEwen 1993; Williams and McEwen 2000) that not only combine substantial contributions and examples of empirical projects on the way, but also discuss and point to future prospects and to the centrality of research on age from the aspect of language, everyday communication and interaction (Coupland and Coupland 1990; Gubrium and Wallace 1990; Light 1988).

The emergence of terms like 'discursive social gerontology', 'narrative gerontology' (e.g. Manheimer 1989; Wallace 1992), 'sociolinguistic gerontology' (Coupland, Coupland and Giles 1989, 1991), or 'lifespan sociolinguistics' (Coupland, Coupland and Nussbaum 1993) indicate the variety of methodological stances that have language use at the centre of their analytic focus. There is also a growing body of literature building on an ethnomethodologically oriented version of social

constructionism (e.g. Gubrium, Holstein and Buckholdt 1994; Paoletti 1998a, 1998b) and of studies focusing on age in both everyday and institutional interaction (e.g. Bodily 1994; Gubrium and Wallace 1990; Henwood 1993; Holstein 1990; Ylänne-McEwen 1999). It would seem then, that not only *qualitative* research of age, but also *discursive* research on the same topic is quickly 'coming of age' (cf. Gubrium 1992). Simultaneously discursive studies into ageing are beginning to prove their innovative nature in reframing traditional and rigid conceptualisations of life-stages and the life cycle. I would like to see my own work as a contribution to, and as part of this ongoing development.

Aims of the study

As previous sections clearly indicate, the scope of this thesis intersects with two different areas of research: discursively and ethnomethodologically oriented research on identity and categorisation in action on the one hand, and life course or ageing research on the other. The aim is to extend the methodological scope of the latter by following through an analysis that focuses on the detail of membership and categorisation work in talk. As a reflection of this work intersecting with two different disciplinary fields, the aims can also be described as two-fold.

First, the main objective is to produce empirically grounded observations on some communicative practices through which age identity and age categories are applied, modified, and challenged in talk. I will argue that the positioned nature of stage of life categories (Sacks 1992), the fact that human ageing is commonsensically conceptualised as movement through a pre-set collection of stage of life categories, gives age a particular, factual character (Atkinson 1980). Given this special nature of age as a membership category, studying the on-the-ground, in-situ features of people's active and situated age-categorisation functions as a case in point, which has wider relevance to ethnomethodologically oriented work on interactional categorisation processes more generally (e.g. Hester and Eglin 1997a).

Looking at my data then, I am interested in how people 'do age' in concrete interactional situations. I ask questions like: how do people make themselves and

others available for specific categorical designation in lifetime terms? How do they orient to and manage notions of facticity, progression, and age-appropriateness in their talk about age? How are identities ascribed and rejected, displayed and refused in interaction? And finally, are there noticeable characteristics to age talk that can justifiably be approached and depicted in terms of morality?

In addition to drawing on the Sacksian analytic tradition of membership categorisation, and contributing to earlier ethnomethodologically oriented research on stage of life categories in talk (e.g. Atkinson 1980; Baker 1981, 1984, 1997a; Hester 1998; Paoletti 1998a; Sacks 1992), this work also draws upon and contributes to discursive studies on factuality and quantification (e.g. Potter 1995; 1996b), contrast structures in talk (Cuff 1994; Dickerson 2000; Edwards 1997; Hester 1998; Smith 1978), discursive morality (e.g. Jayyusi 1984; 1991; Bergmann 1992, 1997, 1998), and the analysis of emotion talk in social contexts (e.g. Edwards 1997, 1999).

In the analysis of the interview data, empirically grounded observations are made

- (i) On how people orient to, and display the factual nature of the human life course as a progression, and how overlap between age categories is managed
- (ii) On the discursive practices through which membership in an age category is either warranted or resisted
- (iii) On the discursive formulations of personal change and continuity, and
- (iv) On the moral nature of age description

The analytic and theoretical contributions from this work benefit and are of immediate interest to both discursive and ageing research. The discussion on discursive morality – the detailed analyses of participants' orientations to possible moral interpretations of their self-descriptions – is one example of this. I aim at clarifying and further elucidating the somewhat fuzzy concept of discursive morality on the one hand, and provide alternative perspectives and new analytic angles into traditional questions of age-appropriateness and age norms, on the other. Analytic observations on morality are then linked back to discussions within qualitative and cultural ageing research, with special reference being made to postmodern theorisations of age.

Before turning to detailed introduction on how these themes are treated in subsequent thematic and analytic chapters, I will say a few words on the data.

Analyst's glosses on the data

The data I will be working on consist of talk jointly constructed in interview situations. This, however, is but one possible way of describing and constructing the origins of the data. Other characterisations might include already revealed contextual detail, like the notion that the interviewees were all Finnish and shared the common characteristic of being, by their chronological age, in their fifties. New detail, consisting of participants' socio-economic background, the means by which interviewees were contacted, or the detail of the interview location could similarly be included.¹ An analyst's gloss on context could also read as follows.

The interviewees were asked questions on how they viewed issues of aging and the passing of time, in sessions that typically lasted from an hour to two hours. The interviews were structured to the degree that the same set of questions formed a base from which the interview situation could unfold. The interviewer's role varied from situation to situation, from a more active role (Holstein and Gubrium 1995), to parts where the interviewees talked in length, illustrating their experiences or opinions with numerous anecdotes uninterrupted by the interviewer. (Nikander 2000a: 339)

A multiplicity of other equally "correct," and constructed-as-relevant categorizations, exists. Among them one could note the interesting time period at which the interviews were conducted. A demographic contextualisation would indicate that in 1997 the biggest so-called baby boom cohort in Finnish history – those born in 1947 – turned fifty, and that a part of the participants were members of this precise cohort. A further analyst's contextualisation on the data, this time on a more cultural note, could be the general public visibility of 'turning fifty' in Finland. Reference could, for instance be made to the somewhat peculiar and persistent tradition in daily broadsheets to print birthday interviews with various prominent members of the society: pop singers and film directors (as in the examples below), businessmen, academics, artists etc.

¹ A more traditional and detailed analyst's characterisation on interviewees and procedure can be found in appendix 2

Specifying and listing various identity categories or cultural background detail for the participants is not unproblematic, however. Instead, as Edwards (1998), and Schegloff (1997) among others point out, such information – relevant as it may sometimes be for reaching an understanding of what goes on in the data – is also in danger of moving our attention away from the actual goings-on and orientations of the participants themselves. Therefore rather than starting off with providing readers with routine and constructed-as-neutral background information, or with necessarily selective, and therefore possibly misleading descriptions of context, researchers in the field of discursive and conversation analysis prefer to emphasize the importance of starting with a sensitive analysis of participants' actions and orientations that in the end make up the context in question (c.f. Schegloff 1991; Silverman 1999).

This is very much the emphasis throughout the analysis provided in this work as well. Instead of imposing the relevance of cultural items or analyst's descriptions onto the data and thereby fixing their meaning prior to actual analysis, the focus is on the detail of the data and on participants' actions and orientations. The variety of cultural 'texts of identity' (Gergen and Shotter 1989), the constructions of identity and age we are constantly surrounded by in our day-to-day life, undoubtedly provide and ascribe potential materials and/or communicative genres for people's ways of self-referencing and self and other description. Journalistic and iconic calendar marking practices that culturally consolidate rituals linked to age, like the ones seen above, as well as lifespan representations in popular autobiographies (Gergen and Gergen 1993), in film (Manheimer 1989), in advertisement (Coupland 2000; Ylänne-McEwen 2000), or in TV (e.g. Bell 1992; Harwood and Giles 1992; Nikander 1994) remain an area of research to itself. The centrality of such available cultural genres remains, in this study however, something that needs to be established and made relevant by the detail of speakers' actions, invocations and demonstrable orientations.²

² The cultural detail and the day-to-day visibility of 'turning fifty' materialised in the clippings above, does however shed light on the wider background of the current study. Their reproduction in this context could be taken as detail that positions the author's motivations when choosing an age range for her study, and the rhetoric and arguments in use when applying for funding for it. It is in that capacity that they are provided here, not as a gloss on the data themselves

An un-apologetic interlude

A final possible descriptive gloss on the data in this study is the obvious: the data's interview nature. The material used is, in other words, describable as non-naturally occurring and thus as subjectable to a negative evaluative gloss from a general discursive/conversation analytic perspective. Numerous writers have brought forward the limitations and special properties of interview material. In a similar vein, the emphasis in textbook characterisations of suitable and recommendable data within discursive psychology has moved from mentioning interview data alongside interactional, 'naturally occurring or 'naturalistic' data (e.g. Potter and Wetherell 1987, 1995a), to the predominance of really recommending only the latter (Potter 1997; Potter and Edwards 2001; Potter and Wetherell 1995b; see also discussion in Gallois and Pittam 1995, and in Hamilton 1999).

Given the increasing influence of more conversation analytically oriented discursive work in social psychology, the emphasis on naturally occurring data as well as the increasing practice of measuring the appropriateness of data by the level of researcher involvement, is understandable. The gradual change in emphasis when setting standards and ideals for discursive data collection and production is but an interesting reflection of this. According to Potter (forth.) for instance, the demonstrated success of conversation analytic research, which discursive psychology has important areas of overlap with, is reflected in the move from research based on conversational interviews to studies using records of natural interaction. Therefore whereas much of the work done in the 1980s and early 90s still used interview material (e.g. Billig 1992; Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992), more recent work resorts to naturalistic materials and texts.

Does this mean then, that there is cause for worry and for some extra accounting that explains and rationalises the use of interviews in this study? Is the chosen mode of data collection/generation outdated, and should one therefore make an attempt at introducing the data in the slight apologetic mode detectable in some other work (Dickerson 2000; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995)? Before doing any of the above, let us have a closer look at the criticism, and at the pros and cons of using interviews.

The central concerns put against using interviews in the discursive psychology literature include that they are based on a pre-allocated turn-system, and that the one-way flow of questions from the interviewer systematically constrains the talk of the participant (see e.g. Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995 for a discussion). These concerns thus clearly reflect the interests and perspective of sequential (conversation) analysis. Interviews have also been seen as an environment that encourages general and normative formulations and self-monitored talk, as something of an environment for 'interactional performances' rather than for free flowing talk. As a result, interview talk is claimed to have features of a public performance to it (cf. Edwards 1997). Interview data is also characterised as inappropriate and unhelpful because as a method it '*generates* categories instead of looking at how categories are ordinarily deployed' (Silverman 1998: 60).

But it is not all bad news. For example, in a textbook introduction to analysing membership categorisation in interview accounts, Baker lays out some specific guidelines and principles for the analyst to follow. According to Baker then, in order to use interview material to unfold categorical work in interaction, we need to consider the following three points (Baker 1997b: 131)

- 1) Interviewing is understood as an interactional event in which members draw on their cultural knowledge, including their knowledge about how members of categories routinely speak;
- 2) Questions are a central part of the data and cannot be viewed as neutral invitations to speak - rather, they shape how and as a member of which categories the respondents should speak;
- 3) Interview responses are treated as accounts more than reports - that is, they are understood as the work of accounting by a member of a category for activities attached to that category. This accounting work is the core of the analysis of data. In this accounting work, we look for the use of membership categorization devices by the interviewer and the respondent, and show how both are involved in the generation of versions of social reality built around categories and activities.

On the whole then, my take on the analysis of interview material recognises the general starting points, outlined by Baker. I also follow the analytic stance adopted by Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995). This means that I see *the interview situation as a particular interactional arena for the practical business of identity work and as*

a discursive site where social categories are refined and re-worked. In line with the often-cited characterisation on interview material within discourse analysis I therefore analyse interviews 'as interaction in their own right' (e.g. Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992). This entails understanding questions as a central part of the data, and addressing and analysing participants' orientations to the relevance of their talk as interview talk. In a discursive analysis of interview material, the 'interviewness' of the data, as well as potential interview orientations and constraints are, in other words, rendered analysable. Specifiable aspects of the interview context can be shown to shape the utterances and what actually happens in the interaction. Not wishing to go so far as to make the interview features of the interaction the primary focus of analysis (e.g. Button 1992; Hester and Francis 1994; Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki 1997; Rapley and Antaki 1998), I nonetheless wish to raise issues of how the things said bring forward the context (Peräkylä 1997: 213; see also Silverman 1999) whenever the data clearly indicates the need to do so.

So to a degree, I find it important to recognise, point to, and to take into account the limited 'naturalness,' and the special characteristics of the data under analysis here. Throughout the analyses, I will therefore always be implicitly and at times explicitly, prefacing my claims with the phrase 'in this site of accountability the interviewee does X, Y or Z.' At the same time, however, I acknowledge that characterisations such as 'natural' or 'ordinary' language are problematic and that the edges of 'ordinary' are blurred and hard to define. I therefore concur with Silverman who reminds us that 'we can become smug about the status of 'naturally-occurring data.'" (Silverman 1993: 208; see also Potter 1997: 149; Jorgenson 1991; Potter and Wetherell 1995b).³ For despite the obvious limitations of interviews as data, the fact remains that not only do interviews 'carry a really powerful, compelling nature' (Silverman 1993: 209), but also that some of the most convincing and influential empirical analysis within discursive analysis has originated from studies relying on interviews (e.g. Billig 1992; Wetherell and Potter

³ At the time of writing this I am also collecting and analysing 'naturally occurring', videotaped data as part of a research project focussing on inter-professional decision making in meetings. Drawing on that experience I can see the benefits of such interaction as data, but also agree with Silverman in that no data is self-evidently 'pure' nor natural in any simple sense of the word. Instead all data is mediated, produced, and 'done' (Hester and Francis 1994) in one way or another.

1992; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995; Wooffitt 1992; see also Gilbert and Mulkey 1984).

I also trust that the phenomena, the discursive devices and practices identified in this work, are not simply artefacts of the interview situation. As certain discursive features and communicative patterns re-appear in the course of the interview material in analysable and summarisable ways, I can presuppose that they have some currency outside the confines of the interview situation as well (cf. Baker 1984). Members have communicative recourses they use when engaging in any kind of talk. Therefore it does not seem likely that a special set of communicative competencies would apply and be set aside for interviews (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995: 73; cf. Atkinson and Silverman 1997).

Having thus stated the characteristics and potential limitations of the material used in this work, and noted the means in which they are taken into account in the analysis of it, it is time to move on and to have a closer look at the contents of the chapters to come.

Overview of the chapters

Chapter Two: Theorising the Life Course in Discursive Terms sets the analytic starting points for this study. In it, I continue to position the perspective adopted in this thesis in relation to the existing literature on membership and categorisation work on the one hand, and to the traditions of qualitative ageing research on the other. This positioning allows me to further identify the methodological concerns, and what I find are the weaknesses and blind spots in the ageing studies literature. The discussion also functions to position this study in terms of the identities in action tradition. The chapter thus rhetorically builds up a justification for the concerns in this thesis, and an argumentative niche for the analysis to come.

Chapter two also provides an account of the empirical stance pursued in the analytic chapters. I outline the Sacksian tradition for the analysis of membership work in talk, and show how Harvey Sacks' classical early treatment of identity categories

and description has been taken up and expanded on by Membership Categorisation Analysis, and by representatives of the 'Manchester school'. Drawing on previous work on stage of life categories in talk and interaction, I also provide an account of how similar concerns have featured in research on life course research. The work by Carolyn Baker on the discursive management of overlap in between lifetime categories (1981, 1984), as well as her work focusing on membership categorisation in interview accounts (1997b) will be of special interest here.

Part Two: Age in Talk and Interaction

The three analytic chapters in *Part Two* each focus on a particular analytic theme. Chapter three focuses on the management of the factual and positioned nature of stage of life categories, chapter four outlines the practices of warranting and resisting particular category ascriptions, whereas chapter five examines the kinds of interactional work the mobilisation of descriptions of personal continuity or change achieve for the speakers in the local contexts of talk.

Chapter Three: Managing the 'Natural Facticity' of the Life Course, begins the empirical mapping out of stage of life categories and age identity in interaction. The chapter works on two levels. The first part addresses the issue of cultural pre-giveness or naturalness versus the indexical nature of stage of life categories, as described by Sacks (1992) and others after him. Ethnomethodology's key concept, indexicality, is discussed as a way into the factually given, ordered nature of stage of life categories on the one hand, and their situationally and locally occasioned usage on the other.

The latter part of chapter three focuses on the empirical examination of the tacit communicative competencies through which the factual nature of the human life course is established and oriented to in talk. In the analysis, a distinctive discursive device for *doing provisional continuity* is identified. This re-occurring feature based on an identifiable A-B-but A –structure is introduced as an argumentative device that produces acknowledgement of change, while at the same time affords the speaker to place him or herself beyond change. Examples from other empirical

research are then presented to support the claim that the '*provisional continuity device*' identified is a more generic feature of talk and thus not simply restricted to talk about age and ageing.

Other communicative detail analysed in chapter three include the practices of *factualisation through quantification*, and facticity as a *default formulation* for the interview as a context for talk. The analysis in this chapter is thus also an example of how the things said in talk bring forward the interview context. The interview-quality revealed by the organisation of exchanges between interviewer and respondent in parts of the interaction are focused on. The details in the descriptive activities are discussed through reference to the specificity of the interviewer's actions, and by making reference to speakers' manifest orientations to the evolving discursive context.

The variety of ways in which age categories function as flexible sense-making resources for the participants – the discursive practices of doing the business of age and identity – are discussed in detail in chapters four and five. *Chapter Four: Warranting and Resisting a Category*, continues the examination of discursive action – the interpretative and reasoning practices – through which membership in a specific age category is achieved. The analytic focus is on the discursive detail of self-categorisation, and on the organisation of age descriptions. This clearly demonstrates their dynamic, fluid and contradictory nature (Antaki, Condor and Levine 1996; Coupland et. al 1991). The chapter provides further evidence on the benefits of approaching identity negotiation and membership or non-membership in categories through a detailed analysis of the talk by which they are accomplished and managed. The chapter not only examines the scope of communicative features involved in 'age in action', but also takes up the wider range of discursive practices to do with the organisation of descriptions and categorisation more generally.

The empirical analysis in chapter four concentrates on the flexible usage of age labels as an intricate means of establishing warrant, of generalising and sometimes ironising the grounds for membership in age categories. In addition to single examples, one longer narrative is chosen for a step-by-step analysis to show how conflicting accounts and categorisations are negotiated and managed. The analysis

takes up and builds upon the notion of *contrast structures in talk*, and also shows the descriptive devices through which people structure lengthy, monologic accounts.

Descriptions of age - whether literary or everyday - typically centre on notions of change and continuity. *Chapter Five: Mobilising Change and Continuity*, moves on to examine the kinds of discursive work descriptions of personal continuity or change do for the speakers in the local contexts of talk. Drawing on the work on *extreme case formulations* in talk (e.g. Pomerantz 1986; Edwards 2000; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995), on Lena Jayyusi's (1984) concept of *type categorisations*, and on the discursive device of *show concessions* (Antaki and Wetherell 1999), the chapter draws a detailed picture of the discursive mobilisation and negotiation of life course change and continuity.

In the analysis in this chapter, the mobilisation of notions of change and continuity is treated as part of the discursive practices and means of locally evidencing and displaying certain features of one's identity. Again, necessary reference is made to the interview provenance of the data. The analysis on descriptions of personal change and continuity in the chapter focuses on three descriptive devices or culturally available resources that clearly permeated the action of doing age description in the data: the construction of *extreme personal continuity*, the discursive *mobilisation of type categorisations* and the practices of *evoking axiomatic notions of change*.

Part Three: The Morality of Age Claims

In the last two empirical chapters in *Part Three*, the analytic focus shifts. Instead of looking for variability or for the specificities of category mobilisation, I concentrate on elucidating a single feature of age talk: its *moral nature*. The analytic perspective and objectives set in chapters six and seven are thus sharply delimited.

The objective in *Chapter Six: Talking Against Linearity* is to look into the variety of ways in which 'morality' or 'moral discourse' have been conceptualised within discursive and conversation analytic research. Looking into social interaction and

morality, I also explore some claims about the analysability of 'moral discourse', that is, how analysts typically substantiate their observations of instances of 'moral discourse' or 'moral accountability'. I will point to some conceptual and analytic problems with the use of the term 'morality', and to instances where it is used interchangeably with other terms like 'rationality', 'sensitivity' or 'delicateness'.

Following the discussion and review into some empirical research on morality in discourse, the second objective in chapter six is to explore the kind of analytic mileage to be gained from adopting and utilising the term 'moral discourse' when looking at the age data at hand. To do this, I present potential candidate examples of 'moral accounting' or 'moral descriptive work' from my data. The key analytic task in the chapter is to consider whether sufficient ground exist to grant an analysis that builds on the terminology of discursive morality, or moral work.

Following the somewhat more theoretical introduction to discursive morality in chapter six, *Chapter Seven: Producing Morally Insulated Accounts*, then moves on to enlarge on this discussion. Several additional examples on the ways in which morality comes to life in the interview data are provided in the chapter. While the focus in the previous chapter was on the *potential* morality of age claims, the focus in chapter seven is on speakers' *explicit* mobilization of right and wrong, or appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

The analytic observations in this chapter are based on a variety of communicative features and descriptive detail by which speakers display, configure and manage the morality of their accounts. These include 1) *Self-initiated qualifications of prior accounts*, 2) *Appealing to feelings and the inner reality of the speaker* and 3) *Monitoring the scenic features of accounts*.

The chapter approaches the discursive intricacy of morality in talk from several perspectives and builds something of a hologram view on how accounts – parts of interview interaction as well as talk in other possible interactive sites – may be produced in ways that work to insulate them from moral reproach. Simultaneously, it draws upon and contributes to earlier research on *emotion talk* and on the argumentative currency of reference to one's inner reality.

In the concluding *Chapter Eight*, I assess the contributions my work brings into the study of categorisation in interaction, on the one hand, and into the broader field of life course research, on the other. I revisit the analytic threads and promises outlined in the beginning chapters and evaluate the degree to which such promises of analytic and theoretical contributions were fulfilled.

In addition to evaluating the contributions and implications to discursive psychology and to life course research, the chapter also opens up a discussion of the potential wider relevance and directions for further analysis that the discussions presented in this work as a whole may offer. In this context postmodern theories of ageing are viewed in the light of the detailed analysis on the morality of age claims in chapters six and seven. The chapter then concludes with a discussion over potential issues and questions for further discursive research on ageing and stage of life categorisation.

Chapter Two: Theorising the Life Course in Discursive Terms

'There is no researchable, discussable old age in the manifold of reality unless categories of language inscribe it there.'

(Green 1993:109)

As the introductory chapter clearly indicated, this study aims at the cross-fertilisation in between 1) qualitative, language-centred life course research and 2) discursive, social psychological work on categorisation. In the current chapter, I set out to provide a more precise picture of the state of the art in both these fields, and to identify the analytic and theoretical resources drawn from both.

Before moving on to the analysis of jointly constructed interview accounts about age and ageing, three points of theoretical and methodological concern need to be covered. *First*, a further look at qualitative social scientific ageing research, to the variety of methodological and analytic stances that inform the field, is needed. *Second*, general assumptions of discursive analysis, discursive social psychology and the 'identity in action' tradition in particular need addressing. *Third*, and most importantly, the Sacksian analytic legacy of membership categorisation as an increasingly influential field within ethnomethodology needs to be considered. Towards the end of the chapter, I will also review some, both theoretical and empirical, work on stage of life categories in talk and interaction. In addition to the classic work by Harvey Sacks, these will include studies by Atkinson, Baker, Green, Hester and Paoletti.

In all, the current chapter works to position the theoretical perspective adopted, the methodological and conceptual choices made, and the analytic stance pursued in the five empirical chapters to follow. I wish not to present theoretical and analytic considerations in a one-off manner, however. Instead, analytic and methodological arguments will be taken up, and revisited in subsequent chapters in a way that develops on, and further fleshes out the discussion in the current one.

Assessing qualitative and language-centred life course research

Age functions as one central means of self-definition and self-categorisation throughout the life course. This self-definition starts with a child clumsily putting up fingers to answer an adult's apparently important question: '*And how old are you?*' and continues in various ways in our day-to-day interaction to the day we reach retirement age, and beyond. Straightforward descriptions in terms of chronological age are but one example of the ways in which ageing surfaces in the myriad of everyday interaction and our situated activities. On a closer look, day-to-day talk and interaction is full of calendar and age marking, of subtle and more direct 'age-telling,' and of interactional and institutional displays and appraisals of life course positions. These may take the form of ticking boxes on a form, of conveying indexes like music or clothes preferences, of conversations, actions, topics, styles, and rituals with potential age-referencing, age-appropriate, or age and life course implicative meanings. Age categories and other interactional formulations of age, in other words, surface, and are made relevant to us, in implicit or explicit ways, as we position each other in lifespan implicative ways, or describe and account for our own and others' actions in talk.

Language use and routine, everyday descriptive processes thus function as the key arena for the construction of our understanding and for our ways of conceptualising age and the life course. It seems all the more surprising then, that qualitative and particularly discursively oriented research has only of late started to establish itself as a distinctive field within ageing research. Instead, the theoretical and analytic à prioriism of much social scientific and social psychological research into age and ageing, has meant that this field has been somewhat slower to see the centrality of active language use, and to adopt discursive or interactional approaches.

The theoretical and analytic myopia of much lifespan and ageing research has, in practice, meant overlooking the interactional processes whereby age and its meanings are accomplished. Instead, research into human development and the life course has for long concentrated on the careful description and mapping out of, what are conceptualised as, the predictable and rule-governed stages of our passage from

childhood to adulthood and old age. Developmental models of the human lifespan are often built on a nomothetic narrative of individuals going through distinct stages of human maturation, facing specific crisis and challenges and either failing or succeeding in solving them.

The normative and prescriptive nature of theorising in the field of ageing research is nicely captured by the pronouncedly individualistic notion 'successful ageing,' which in itself suggests a division between, 'pathological' or 'deviant' and 'normal' ageing. Putting it a bit sarcastically, this Western ideology of individualism (Shotter 1993a) constructs a picture of successful ageing where the autonomous and rational self-made-man manages the challenges set by ageing, travels through the 'seasons of a man's life' (Levinson et. al 1987), and comes home a winner. The aversion to human interaction in much theory building has, in other words, meant reducing human beings to the status of passive, determined and predictable objects of study (Dannefer 1989:10).

In the social psychological literature on ageing, the human life course has typically been approached by either focusing on role transitions and socialisation (e.g. George 1980) or by focusing on the inter-relationship between a person's life-situation and his/her internal psychological states. Due to the 'social problems' origins of the field (Marshall 1986:10), research has tended to concentrate its efforts on seeking and measuring correlates and variables that would best explain and predict the 'life satisfaction,' 'well-being', 'happiness' or 'morale' of people in various stages and changing situations of their life. Much of the research is normative in nature in that it, for instance, views 'adjustment' to change, as a natural and self-evident goal that research efforts should also aim to support (e.g. Dannefer 1988, 1996).¹

The above criticism should not be taken to mean that the analytic myopia of lifespan research vis-à-vis situated language use and dynamic interactional processes is all

¹ For criticism of life satisfaction measurement, the ways in which images of life and satisfaction are presented to the subjects, and then entered into the process of measurement see Gubrium and Lynott 1983 For a discursive criticism on psychological quality of life interviews see Antaki and Rapley 1996.

encompassing. Instead, an extensive self-reflective literature has emerged to unsettle and re-assess fundamental assumptions built into lifespan concepts and theorising (e.g. Andrews 1999; Coupland, Coupland and Giles 1991; Dannefer 1989; Green 1993, Jaffe and Miller 1994; Katz 1996; Levin and Levin 1980; Marshall 1986; Nikander 1999a; Seltzer 1992; Tornstam 1992; Wershow 1981). Nor is the field insensitive to, or untouched by the 'discursive turn,' but rather, studies treating age as merely an unproblematic background variable are increasingly giving way to qualitative, constructionist, critical and language-centred research on age. Practitioners of life course research have also incorporated theories of rhetoric (Hazan 1988, 1994), discourse (Wood and Kroger 1995), and narrative (Gergen and Gergen 1993; Luborsky 1990) into their methodologies, and language and socially grounded research is rapidly becoming more common in the literature (see Coupland and Coupland 1990; Wood and Kroger 1995 for overviews).

Assessment of three, partly overlapping strands of emerged and emerging fields of research is due here. I begin with a somewhat more general discussion on the increase in qualitative research that focuses on participants' accounts. Second, I examine social constructionism as an analytic stance and as a general theoretical undercurrent in much ageing research. Third, I discuss recent sociolinguistic and discursive research into age and ageing.

The discussion in this section is not offered as a thorough overview of the long-standing developments and debates in the field of ageing research. Instead, it provides a sketch of the research landscape, and helps me to identify and underline some key methodological concerns, and, what I find, are the potential weaknesses and blind spots in existing literature. Although a wealth of both empirical and theoretical work on language and the life course exists to draw upon, there is also room, and a need to reconsider and redirect theoretical and analytic foundations to move arguments and debates forward. One way of achieving this is, I propose, by looking at age categories 'in action'.

The qualitative quest in ageing research

The upsurge of qualitative research in the field of social scientific life course research has of late been combined with the increasing interest in participants' accounts, narratives and life stories. It seems then, that where something of an absence or a lack of qualitative members' accounts existed before, we now find a landslide of research focusing on narrative accounts and oral histories, and of studies utilising biographic and autobiographic texts.

What makes this upsurge in qualitative accounts of interest here is their advocative nature. This variant of research seeks in other words, at least in part, to counter stereotypically negative images of ageing by bringing forth more holistic and understanding narratives of later life. The focus on recollection and narrative – the 'narrative quest' in ageing research – has, according to Manheimer (1989) for instance, resulted in research where the 'genuine voices of ageing participants' are used in order to make sense of, but also to pose ideals on specific life stages, later life in particular. This quest for participants' accounts also runs the risk of resulting in research literature, where 'the seemingly negative becomes positive; limitations becomes possibility' (op cit.: 240). The upsurge of such work can, according to Manheimer, be explained by the somewhat romantic notion that tapping into the recollection of the old, for instance, helps us replace the fragmented space of the meaning and purpose of later life, increasingly vacated by religious interpretations.

Similar romantic and advocative notions about story telling and narratives, this time as a means of achieving purpose and a well-adjusted, healthy and normal ageing, can be found in much theorising around reminiscence. Bornat (1989, ref. Buchanan and Middleton 1993: 55-56) for example points out, how reminiscence work has become a social movement with an agenda that is 'as much political as it is therapeutic or recreational', and how an increase in gerontological reminiscence research and literature has helped to inform and boost the movement. According to Buchanan and Middleton this literature has done little to establish the detailed grounds of beneficiality of reminiscence as social action, and 'ignored the diversity of

conversational acts that might be so named' (Buchanan and Middleton 1993: 56; see also Saarenheimo 1994).

One could claim then, that in some social research into ageing, people's accounts are granted the unproblematic status of research evidence. In such cases then, we can detect preconceived theoretical notions of language and memory (cf. Edwards & Middleton 1986; Edwards and Potter 1992; Middleton and Edwards 1990) and of their relationship to psychological well-being informing the research practice. At the same time, the beneficial nature of communicative practices such as story sharing, or reminiscence for example, that both target to deal with life course change or 'adaptation' to it, is rarely grounded in detailed analysis of the pragmatics of talk and interaction.

In addition to research into personal narrative and reminiscence, several, both classical and more recent, ethnographic studies can be found, where the voice of the researcher offers convincing and persuasive stories on ageing communities (e.g. Myerhoff 1978) or on institutional narratives about age (e.g. Diamond 1992). Such narratives are often based on long-term fieldwork, on first-hand involvement with the participants, and/or in-depth interviews. Due to their persuasive format, such studies have often, and in important ways, proven influential in affecting public policy or the views of the larger public. The means of providing and securing credibility for the findings in qualitative work that relies extensively on participants' narratives, leaves much to be desired, however. According to Manheimer (1989: 239):

However the storytelling is done, the aim of the qualitative methodologist is similar: to let the individual instances, the voices of actual older people or literary depictions of aging, stand for general truths of later life. In a sense their narrative methods are linguistic structures that aim to show that about which they speak.

One should not conclude from the above, that all qualitative or narrative life course research overlooks the situational and action-oriented nature of language use and story telling. The problem with studies that do, however, is two-fold. First, their persuasiveness often relies on the extensive illustrative function of the narrative data gathered, rather than on detailed analysis. When based on the written down impressions of a researcher, the reader has no direct access to the data and to the

actual goings-on the descriptions are about. Instead, she is left to take on trust that the descriptions and observations, the choices and words of the researcher, do justice to the 'reality' and to the initial interactions. This immediately raises questions of explanatory adequacy.² Second, qualitative research of this genre often relies on the romantic notion of authenticity and trusts that 'pure experience', or underlying psychological processes are simply conveyed and transmitted through talk.

Contrary to the illustrative and persuasive function given to participants' accounts in the research genre described above, the present study wishes to build notions of discursive action more systematically into the terms whereby age is analysed and theorised (c.f. Dannefer 1988, 1989). The interview accounts are not measured in terms of their authenticity, or in terms of the truth-value of what participants choose to 'reveal' to the interviewer. In contrast to the romantic notion of talk revealing, or standing in for inner truths or experiences, the analytic interests here is solely on participants' joint meaning making, and on the detailed analysis of situationally unfolding categorisation and description.³ To further establish analytic and theoretical anchorage for the discursive analysis of participants' action, let us have a brief look at social constructionist and discursive life course research.

Constructionist re-framings of aging research

During the past few decades, various, both theoretical and cultural, developments have worked as catalysts in the process whereby naïve notions of authenticity, also in the field of biographical and ethnographic studies, have been called into question. Social constructionism has extended its influence over a variety of qualitative work to the extent that it can be said to function as a broad umbrella term: as something of a theoretical background canvas, referred to in a variety of qualitative empirical

² For a discussion on the rhetorical construction and selection of field notes see e.g. Atkinson 1992, Warren 1988. For questions of validity when working with field notes as opposed to recorded and transcribed data, see Peräkylä 1998; Seale 1999).

³ It should perhaps be pointed out that this analytic stance adopted vis-à-vis the data does not equate with mistrusting, ironising or disbelieving participants' accounts.

research, qualitative ageing research included (e.g. Gergen 1994; 1999; Nikander 2001; Shotter and Gergen 1989).

With constructionism, strictly romantic notions of language use have changed, and, as a result, lifespan issues of 'maturity', 'stages', 'development', 'old age', 'childhood' etc. conceptualised quite differently from earlier work. Instead of treating age categories as self-evident starting points for research, constructionist notions recast them as products of interpretative practice (e.g. Wallace 1992, see also Dannefer 1989). The aim then is, to analyse 'how these things are produced through interaction and how they are used to make sense of experience' (Gubrium, Holstein and Buckholdt 1994: 3). Social constructionism thus functions as a basic starting point for much empirical research interested in explicating the ordinary, academic, and institutional activities and interpretative practices that are key to the constitution of meanings of age and the life course. Consequently, it is also one ingredient and a (largely invisible) theoretical undercurrent for the analysis in the present study.

Social constructionist influences can be detected in studies that approach age as a historically constructed and changing concept (Covey 1988, 1992; Kirk 1992; Roebock 1978), and as the backdrop for much of the self-reflective and self-critical work on academic knowledge production concerning age (e.g. Burman 1994; Green 1993; Hazan 1994; Katz 1996; Raz 1995). Constructionism also functions as a theoretical springboard for empirical research focusing on the relationship in between lay and academic theorising (e.g. Gubrium and Wallace 1990), for a variety of research on situated language use like story telling (e.g. Van Langenhove and Harré 1993; Wallace 1992) and for studies interested in age in everyday (e.g. Gubrium, Holstein and Buckholdt 1994; Kears and Hoag 1984) and institutional settings (e.g. Bodily 1994; Grainger 1993).

In sum, social constructionism has provided a new basis for rethinking old assumptions in lifespan studies. It has challenged the assumption that ageing is the same 'for all people, at all times, and in all situations' (Wallace 1992, see also Kaufman 1994) and recast ageing as a topic to be studied as an interactional, situational and social process (e.g. Bytheway 1997; Luken 1987; Ward 1984). At the

same time the focus of analysis has moved towards the ways in which age is established in everyday descriptive practices, and to the detailed analysis of discursive action. While providing general starting points and analytic assumptions (see e.g. Gubrium, Holstein and Buckholdt 1994, chapter 2), constructionism does not, however, provide any specific method for the detailed analysis of situated interaction practices (c.f. discussion in Potter 1996a, see also Burr 1995; Greenwood 1994; Nikander 2001). This means that work carried out under its general rubric is often couched in theoretical terms, and that, in empirical studies, the practices of actual analysis vary considerably according to the analytic approach adopted.

Discursive research on ageing

One area where constructionist conceptual concerns have successfully been translated into an empirical research programme is language-centred research, particularly discursive analysis. Within qualitative life course research, studies under the general rubric 'discursive', vary from a Foucauldian perspective on discourse as a disciplining, regulating and controlling power (e.g. Latimer 1997; Katz 1996), to the analytical and methodological perspectives developed and summarized within sociolinguistics and discursive psychology (e.g. Coupland, Coupland and Giles 1991; Coupland and Nussbaum 1993, see also Giles and Coupland 1989).

A common thread running through most discursive research into ageing is the wish to focus on how cultural, institutional, and situational meanings of age are worked into being in and through our everyday discursive practices and texts. With this common ground as the starting point, discursive research into ageing can be said to cover a wide range of topics that include *age identity* (Henwood 1993; Jolanki et, Hervonen and Jylhä 2000; Paoletti 1998a; Shotter 1993a; Ylänne-McEwen 1999), *the morality of age categorisation* (Nikander 2000a), *institutional discourse and decision making* (Coupland and Coupland 1998; Grainger 1993; Holstein 1990; Nussbaum 1991), *the discursive production of frailty* (Kaufman 1994; Taylor 1992, 1994), *intergenerational discourse* (Coupland, Coupland and Grainger 1991; Coupland et al. 1988; Ng 1998) *the role of life course metaphors* (Hockey and James

1993; Kenyon, Birren and Schroots 1991), *identity functions of reminiscence* (Buchanan and Middleton 1995; Middleton and Buchanan 1993), *age stereotypes and discourse of ageism* (Bodily 1994; Coupland and Coupland 1993; 1999; Coupland, Nussbaum and Coupland 1991; Harwood and Giles 1992; Ng and McCreanor 1999), and *the discursive and textual production of gerontological knowledge* (Green 1993; Hazan 1994; Katz 1996; Raz 1995).

The list above already brings forward the variety in theoretical and disciplinary background in ageing research potentially listing the term discourse in its title. In order to throw some light on this disciplinary and analytic variety, I choose here to discuss some of the research done in the language sciences: in the fields of language and social psychology and sociolinguistics in particular. All through this discussion, the aim is to compare and contrast the analysis typical to these fields to the markedly discursive social psychological stance adopted in this work.

Age and language

One starting point for a review of this area of research is to state the obvious common field of interest to issues of age and ageing shared by social psychological and sociolinguistic studies. The fact that ageing, and the dynamics of everyday age description and categorisation in particular, have for long remained an under-researched territory in discursive psychology, makes language sciences and sociolinguistic discourse analysis clear forerunners in this field. More recent developments that show linguistic, social scientific, and interactionist contributions engaging in genuine interdisciplinary discussion (e.g. Coupland and Nussbaum 1993), make research in this collaborative field an obvious and important starting point for the current study.

Starting with more traditional sociolinguistic research on age and language use, we can note, first of all, that extensive research in this area has focused on the relationship between different social statuses or categories (like age, gender, class) and language. The analytic perspective adopted in such studies, is on language and

communication styles: on the mapping and comparison of specific speech practices or codes in cross-cultural, inter-gender or inter-generational situations for instance.

Other, more specific topics dominating the research on language and age include the focus on acoustic and articulatory characteristics, voice quality, sentence production, or vocabulary choice, and patterns of information seeking and delivery (see Coupland, Coupland and Giles 1991, for an overview and evaluation). Research on intergenerational communication is another dominant area of interest. This field consists predominantly of studies on the use of simplified addressee registers like patronising talk (Harwood and Giles 1996; Ryan, Hummert and Boich 1995), elderspeak (Kemper et al. 1995, 1998), or infantilising talk (e.g. Whitmer and Whitbourne 1997), but also on self-disclosure (e.g. Coupland, Coupland and Giles 1991). The work on communication features has also sought to identify possible consequences and effects of age specific communication practices. Encounters between generations have, for instance, been examined for their effects for optimal health care efforts, and for their supportive function. Singling out particular stylistic detail of *talk to the elderly*, identifying the variety of parameters of dysfunctional or potentially ageist communication, and turning such findings into schematised typology forms, lies very much at the heart of this research.

In sum, one could say, that the focus in communication studies on age, has been less on the unfolding processes of interaction, and more on the discovery and detail of communicative practice and rituals. Many of the studies have also typically taken place in laboratory or other test-like circumstances. Consequently, situated language use is seldom approached in itself, but rather, examined for the correspondence in terms of separately and from-the-outset conceptualised phenomena (Maynard and Whalen 1995; Watson 1992). One could say then, that whereas linguistic discourse analysis starts with analyst's notions and theoretical categories, and from there proceeds to see how communicative items so labelled function in various interactional 'information games' (Coupland et al. 1988), the perspective in this work, seeks in more emphatic ways to focus on members' own orientations.

Lifespan sociolinguistics

More recent sociolinguistic work on age and ageing has moved distinctively beyond the traditional realms of research outline above. In this emerging work in 'sociolinguistic discourse analysis', that antedate the current study, the constitutive role of language, and the interactive and relational formulation of life positions is both recognised and emphasised (e.g. Coupland, Coupland and Giles 1991: 8). Consequently, the leap from sociolinguistic research to more interactionally framed analysis may prove smaller than anticipated. The development toward interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation has, among other things, meant adopting and utilising perspectives and vocabulary from other neighbouring fields, and engaging in discussions and conceptualisation that cut across disciplinary boundaries in fruitful and exiting ways (e.g. Coupland 1988; Coupland and Nussbaum 1993).

These contributions emphasize the need for a recontextualization of lifespan research and its embedding into a discursive context. This can, according to Shotter for instance, only be achieved by concentrating on the 'living utterances of particular individuals voiced in concrete social contexts' (1993a: 7). Important analytic and empirical extensions in this direction have been made in studies that focus on interaction in different interactional and institutional sites: in geriatric medical consultations, and other health and caring interactions (e.g. Coupland and Coupland 1998; Grainger 1993; Wood and Kroger 1993) at the travel agents (Ylänne-McEwen 1999) and in conversations between the elderly (Boden and Bielby 1983, 1986).

The developments listed here are proof of sociolinguistic discursive research on ageing moving out of laboratory confines on the one hand, and of the interdisciplinary common ground within interactional conversation analytic and discursive research on age, on the other. Simultaneously, the exclusive focus on talk to the elderly that has, in some cases, worked to distort the activity and agency aspect of people in interaction, is enriched by social psychological research genuinely focussed on contextual and interactional social processes. As a result, deterministic assumptions about social categories and their effects upon linguistic

performance are starting to be replaced with interactional analyses on language use and age in situ.

Summing up the discussion in the sections so far, we could conclude that the research variants and the theoretical underpinnings discussed offer valuable starting points and insight into what qualitative and language-centred approaches into human life course issues may look like. It is also obvious that the longer analytic tradition in communication sciences and social psychology of language feeds into and implicitly or explicitly informs other discursive approaches (see Gallois and Pittam 1995; Giles and Coupland 1989 for a discussion). In the current work, the lessons learnt from existing research traditions focusing on age and communication, are expanded and built upon, by adopting perspectives developed in discursive psychology and ethnomethodology. This combination takes us to a more detailed discussion on the methodological and theoretical starting points of the current study.

Methodological and theoretical starting points of the study

The key theoretical and analytic traditions informing the perspective adopted in this work, come from two distinct directions. First, discursive social psychology and the identity-in-action research as a distinct theme within this tradition is a major influence. Second, the analysis draws and builds on the ethnomethodological, and particularly Sacksian tradition of membership categorisation and the analysis of members' use of categories in talk. These two analytic and theoretical starting points do not stand as separate from, or as indifferent to each other, but rather ethnomethodology forms one of the pillars upon which discursive work in social psychology builds on. For reasons no other than clarity, I discuss these starting points in turn.

Discursive social psychology

The label 'discourse analysis' as a broad umbrella term is applied in different ways in the social sciences. Also within social psychology several discourses of discourse

analysis with different theoretical underpinnings exist side by side. The two most commonly identified analytic strands are those associated with the tradition started by Potter and Wetherell's (1987) book *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour* on the one hand, and with the writings of Ian Parker, on the other (1992; also Parker and Burman 1993).⁴ The different theoretical origins and therefore different analytic punctuations and levels of analysis, are obvious in the commenting, criticizing and debate that representatives of these two strands have, particularly in the past, participated in (e.g. Parker 1990a, 1990b, 1998; Edwards, Ashmore and Potter 1995; Potter et al. 1990; see Nikander 1995, 1997 for overviews).

Given that excellent summaries and reviews on the differences and debate in between these two types of social psychological discourse analysis exists elsewhere (e.g. Gill 1995; Widdicombe 1995; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995, see also Burr 1995; Parker 1998), suffice it to say here, that when discussing 'discursive' work in social psychology, I am not referring to Foucauldian ways of conceptualising and understanding 'discourse'. This variant, that seeks to examine the power implications of various transindividual discourses, and consequently informs an explicitly political frame and reason for doing discourse analysis, is associated with Parker's work in particular. Instead, I share some of the concerns and concepts evolved within the analytic and theoretical work associated with Edwards and Potter (1992) and Potter and Wetherell (1987), particularly those featured in the continuously evolving work on categorisation (e.g. Antaki and Widdicombe 1998a; Edwards 1997)

The distinguishing features and the theoretical background of discursive social psychology, as it is referred to in this work then, developed from sociological studies of scientific knowledge (Gilbert and Mulkay 1984; Potter and Mulkay 1985), but has

⁴ The story about 'two camps', re-enforced here, seems to be the one circulating in descriptions of the field (see Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995, chapter 3 for an excellent overview) One could easily, however, raise the number of variants and the analytic richness of discursive work within social psychology by including and acknowledging seminal feminist contributions within this field (e.g. Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1995).

since been strongly influenced by the developments within ethnomethodology, conversation analysis (e.g. Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Garfinkel 1967), and rhetoric (e.g. Billig 1996). In the course of the past 15 years, central psychological concepts ranging from remembering, categorization, attitudes, and identity have been reworked from this discursive perspective to the extent that “discourse analysis can form the basis of *a distinctive discursive psychology*” (Potter, Edwards and Wetherell 1993: 384). The focus of attention in empirical, discursive analysis shifts from internal psychic or cognitive structures to the relational, interactional and cultural processes between people, i.e. to the action orientation of talk-in-interaction (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Potter, Edwards and Wetherell 1993; Wooffitt 1993). The wealth and analytic strength of research conducted within this variant of discursive psychology is obvious also in the way it continues to generate discussions across disciplinary boundaries (e.g. Wood and Kroger 1995).

Discourse analysis provides means for the analysis of social processes and language practices, and of the actions that constitute them. It provides an alternative to the cognitivist paradigm dominant in psychology and social psychology. Thereby it also brings in a shift in former epistemological and ontological assumptions (Potter, Edwards, and Wetherell 1993). The quotation in the beginning of this chapter, although from a somewhat different source, can be used to illustrate such a shift. The quote: *‘There is no researchable, discussable old age in the manifold of reality unless categories of language inscribe it there’* (Green 1993: 109), can first of all, be interpreted as underlining the centrality of language use as action, and the notion that we only come to understand and construct age by the means it is referenced and inferred in the myriad of social, everyday arenas. The quote can also be heard as referring to the multitude of possible ways in which a person can be categorised, age being only one amongst many available. Consequently, Green’s words also question the possibility of any simple, neutral, or from-the-outset fixed means of description, and problematise the existence of a privileged epistemological basis – academic or otherwise – for engaging in such description.

Despite the somewhat extreme and perhaps exaggerated emphasis on language, the quote from Green encapsulates the starting points for the analyses in this work. The

quote, or rather its reproduction in this context, should not be taken as an outright *denial* of the existence of biology-based, materially, psychologically and physically evidenced and concretely experienced age and ageing. Instead, what the quote conveys is, that in order to make sense of, or to share meanings, conceptualise or theorise age and ageing, we need to step into the worlds of language and to inscribe meanings via the categories it provides us.

Categories and identities in action

From the above it becomes obvious, that the theoretical assumptions about categorisation and identity – the identity in action tradition – as a part of the way in which social psychological concepts have, and continue to be reformulated within discursive psychology, are of central importance to my analysis (e.g. Antaki, Condor and Levine 1996; Antaki and Widdicombe 1998a; Edwards 1997; Shotter and Gergen 1989; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995). In contrast to the more mechanical model of categorisation, typical to cognitive psychology (c.f. Billig 1985, 1996, 1997), the discussion and analysis on the interview data in this work, underline the importance of studying categorisation as situated and dynamic discursive practice. In line with the arguments of ‘the identity in action’ tradition, I take stage of life categories, as other categories we use to organize the world around us, to be ‘*for talking*’ (Edwards 1991, 1998). Given this, the key starting point is the centrality of age categorisations ‘*in action*’, i.e. their analysis in discursive and argumentative contexts.

In a seminal article on cognitive and discursive bases of categorisation (1991), and in numerous elaborations thereafter (1997, 1998), Edwards shows the importance of examining categorisation as a social practice, as a form of social action. According to him:

Categorization is *something we do*, in talk, in order to accomplish social actions (persuasion, blamings, denials, refutations, accusations, etc) From this perspective, we would expect language’s ‘recourses’ not to come ready-made from the process in which people are trying their best to understand the world...but rather, or at least additionally, to be shaped for their functions in talk, for the business of doing situated social actions ”

(Edwards 1991: 517, emphasis in the original)

Edwards also lists implications that a discursive starting point to everyday categorisation processes brings with it (op.cit.: 517-18) He points out, among other things, that categorisation does not happen 'in the abstract', but rather as a part of utterances, texts, arguments, descriptions, accounts etc. Therefore categorisation is understandable only as a part of accomplishing a social action, like a blaming, or a justification, for example. Edwards also points to the ways in which situated categorisation performs moral work on the world described, on the interaction and on the participants producing and receiving the description. Given all this, categorisation is most fruitfully examined in terms of the interactional work it accomplishes for speakers in locally unfolding social interaction.

Another focal and influential criticism against cognitive and simplified conceptualisations of categorisation comes from rhetorical social psychology. Billig's classic treatment of categorisation and particularisation (Billig 1985, 1996, first published 1987) shows how people do not mechanistically, and according to some inevitability of mental processing, simply place objects into categories. Social stereotyping and prejudice then, for instance, are not automatic results of people's cognitive and perceptual machinations. Instead, in addition to stereotypical categorisation, people also engage in distinguishing and differentiating between things. Particularisation – drawing attention to particulars and exceptions – unavoidably includes the deployment of categories and argumentation via actively *using* words and verbal categories (Billig 1996: 170-85).

Drawing our attention to the rhetorical organisation of everyday talk and to the inter-relatedness of categorisation and particularisation, Billig's work simultaneously strongly suggests the centrality of systematic empirical study of people's argumentation (see e.g. Billig 1989; Billig et al. 1988). In the case of the interviews on turning fifty then, we have speakers entering a discursive or argumentative space with shared resources for defining age. Rhetoric and justification are central incumbents of the space, and statements of opinions or attitudes, as well as participants' descriptions, often include a readiness to argue matters of some controversy (Billig 1997: 44, also 1989, 1992). Dialogic arguments and counter-

arguments – a variety of discursive practices of manoeuvring within a contrary theme – are, in other words, an inescapable part of the rhetorical business at hand.

As a basis for empirical analysis, discursive and rhetorical social psychology draw our attention to people's situated and occasioned descriptive action and to the detail in which categories are mobilised, justified, warranted, or contrasted with each other in arenas of unfolding interaction. Categories do not simply display our abstract understanding of the world. Rather, they are used to constitute states of affair, to imply specific personal motives, qualities, responsibilities, blame and stake, to warrant actions, or to normalise, generalise and to factualise accounts and descriptions (e.g. Potter 1996b; Watson 1978; Wooffitt 1991, 1992, 1993).

Categorisation is also of immediate interest to any attempt at examining the various ways in which identities become attached, displayed and ascribed in the course of people's ongoing descriptive practice (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998b; Schenkein 1978; Watson and Weinberg 1982). Identities are ascribed by and for us largely as speakers affirm, reject, avow, allude to, and display their own or other people's characteristics, and thereby, membership in specific categories. Therefore, analysing the practical and tacit communicative means of doing membership or non-membership and the detailed analysis of category affiliation is also a key to the examination of identities in action (e.g. Widdicombe 1998a; 1998b).

To further elucidate the theoretical and analytic starting points for the analyses in this work, a more detailed review of the ethnomethodological and particularly Sacksian tradition of membership categorisation analysis needs to be included. For the remainder of this chapter, I will therefore first show how, drawing upon the much longer tradition of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, and particularly on the notion of *membership categorization* (Sacks 1974, 1992), discursive psychology has produced research focusing on the deployment and use of categories in talk. I will discuss some of the central themes and concepts introduced by Sacks, and show how the Sacksian tradition for the analysis of membership work in talk, and his classical treatment of identity categories and descriptions, were taken up and expanded on by representatives of the 'Manchester school' and others.

Drawing on previous work and empirical examples on stage of life categories in talk and interaction, I will then sketch a picture of the research landscape to which my own analyses seek to contribute. The work by Carolyn Baker on the discursive management of overlap in between lifetime categories (1981; 1984), as well studies by Atkinson, Hester and Paoletti are of special interest here.

The Sacksian tradition of Membership Categorisation

In his early work and lectures, Harvey Sacks (1979, 1992) was particularly interested in people's ways of using categories in interaction. Dealing with conversational data, he noticed, for instance, that first-time conversations were characterised by questions like 'What do you do?', 'Where do you come from?' etc. (1992, Vol.1: 40). Setting out to describe what this type of exchanges were about, and to systematically describe people's ways of using particular 'category sets,' led to an extensive and influential treatment of categories in talk.

Continuing the ethnomethodological programme of research proposed by Garfinkel, Sacks sought to describe 'the methods persons use in doing social life' (1984a: 21; cf. Garfinkel 1967; Heritage 1984a). Doing this, he also introduces the notions of *membership categorization device* and *category bound activity*, and, central to the concerns of the current analysis, distinguished features and uses of, of what he referred to as, the *stage-of-life collection* (Sacks 1974, 1992). The aim for Sacks was to describe the cultural 'machinery' - a set of rules - by which members produce recognisable descriptions and category selections.

Membership categories, as defined by Sacks, are classifications or social types that may be used to describe persons. By way of illustration, culturally available resources for the identification and description of people might include 'politician,' 'born-again Christian,' 'former convict,' 'grandmother of three,' or 'young black female.' Sacks also notes that for any person there may be an endless number of categories that 'correctly' describe her. Categorisation therefore always includes selection, and, via that selection, simultaneous constitution of the context, of the nature of the occasion at hand (e.g. Schegloff 1991).

Sacks also claimed that membership categories may be grouped into collections, that he called *membership categorization devices*. The device 'family' includes categories like mother, father, son, daughter etc., whereas the 'stage-of-life device' covers categories like 'baby', 'toddler', 'child', 'adolescent', 'teenager', 'young woman', 'middle aged man', and 'old woman'. According to Sacks, categorisation devices (referred to, in earlier lectures as 'category sets) are 'which types.' As Sacks put it (1992, Vol.1: 40):

I call them which-type sets because questions about any one of these can be formulated as, "Which, for some set, are you?," and "None" is not a presumptive member of any of these categories.

When doing describing, or answering questions typical to first-encounters, for example, members need to select a single category from a cluster of possible alternatives making up the device. Categories within a device are mutually exclusive in the sense that once identified by one category within a set: male, elderly psychologist for instance, further categories form the same collections: sex, stage of life or occupation, are simultaneously excluded.

By category boundedness, Sacks referred to the notion that categories come with strong expectations and conventions associated with them. Members of a particular category are, for instance, expected to engage in particular activities (e.g. baby-cry, doctor-cure). This means that conventional expectations about typical and proper activities, about the rights and obligations of incumbents in a particular category typically follow the voicing out of, or mobilisation of membership in a category. This characteristic of categories is encapsulated in the term 'inference rich' (1992, Vol.1: 40). By this term Sacks sought to underline that when we use a single category-term or description like 'he's seventy' for instance, we also receive a multitude of 'extra' culture-specific knowledge stored into that category. In addition to activities, categories can invoke other characteristics such as knowledge, or competencies. This is clear in the way we routinely link specific competencies, or knowledge to professional categories like chef, teacher, or nurse, for example.

Just as categories are bound to, and mobilise notions of activities typically linked to them, activities, on their own, can be described in ways that make relevant the

membership in a particular category. For instance, seeing someone working in overalls in a garage filled with cars makes relevant the category 'car mechanic'. Similarly, when hearing that someone has been rushed to the hospital, we hear this activity as having been done by 'paramedics'. Linking activities to categories may include much more subtle inferential work however. Going to pub for instance, may, with certain exceptions, be an anybody's activity, a thing that an 'ordinary person' might do. Including inferences into the description that convey the kind of a pub is in question, the age or gender of the pub-goer, the location of the pub (as in the red light district or elsewhere), or the frequency and length of the visits already adds additional layers as to what kind of an activity, and what kind of a pub-goer is being described. Simple description thus sometimes goes together with ascription of (moral) meanings (e.g. Jayyusi 1984, see also Watson 1983).

The ways in which the mobilisation of membership categories immediately invokes cultural and conventional knowledge about the qualities, motivations, or actions of the incumbents so categorised, can be made clearer by a further example. In earlier feminist and women studies literature the author often prefaced her text with an identity-rich characterisation of herself. This description might read as for instance: '*as a white, heterosexual, middle-class woman and a mother of two, I ...*' This co-selection of descriptors delivers at least two things for the reader. First, each of the categories and descriptions provided, brings along, and refers to, a list of potential, unvoiced characteristics of the writer: to her motives and access to knowledge not only as an academic, but also as mother, for instance, to her interest, the bases and limits of her understanding, her politics etc. Using such categories, the author, in other words, simultaneously mobilises what is conventionally known about, and expected from a member in them. The selection thus helps the reader to pigeonhole the author as one in a set of people conventionally sharing the characteristics inferred to.

Second, the author's actions, the claims and conceptual choices she later makes in her writing for example, can be understood in terms of her incumbency in the categories previously listed her actions become understandable in the light of them. In addition, while providing warrant for specific actions, the deployment of

membership categories also rhetorically attends to, and rules out, alternative categorisations and inferences (Sacks 1992, Vol.1: 206, 307; Edwards 1995).

A further characteristic of categories, which will be looked into in more detail in chapter three, is their indexical and occasioned nature. This means that categories do not come with a set of fixed-and-ready definitions. Instead, all language is indexical, i.e. the understandability of an utterance, a category etc. depends and gains its definition in the circumstances and occasion of its use (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970). The categorisation and characterisation 'old', for instance may receive different circumstantial meanings according to whether we are talking about wine, about furniture, about a person getting married, or a person who just died, as well as, sometimes, on the age of the person doing the describing (see chapter three for a full discussion). The indexical and occasioned nature of language thus makes objective, context-free and universal categories an impossibility, and guides our analysis towards the methods whereby orderliness in everyday language practice is achieved 'as an ongoing, practical accomplishment of every actual occasion of commonplace speech and conduct' (op.cit.: 341).

To reiterate briefly, Sacks' work showed the methodical ways in which members make sense of contextual particulars, and how they make sensible and understandable selections, categorisations and descriptions (e.g. 1992, Vol.1: 588). He also identified a set of possible rules for the application of membership categorisation devices in talk (see Silverman 1998; Hester and Eglin 1997a for overviews). His foundational work on membership categorisation devices is pertinent to this study in two ways. First, he revealed the analysability of recorded and transcribed conversation as the domain where traditional 'face-sheet' variables like gender, age and class (Silverman 1998: 182) become analysable in action, i.e. in the locality of their use. This means approaching such categories, not as made-up starting points picked up and decided upon by the scientist, but rather, *as member's categories* (Sacks 1992, Vol.1: 40-48, 243-251).

Second and relatedly, Sacks discussed the stage-of-life device specifically, and pointed to its positioned and hierarchical construction. By positioned, Sacks referred

to how the next category in the device can be heard as higher (as in baby – toddler – adolescent) than the preceding one (1992, Vol.1: 585, also 1974: 222). He also referred to how the positioned nature of lifetime categories opens up descriptions using these terms for potential praise or complaint, for evaluations and assessment in terms of conventionally age-bound activities and characteristics, for example.

The centrality and detail of Sacks' work, its vital importance for discursive work, as well as the positioned nature of stage-of-life categories will be revisited repeatedly in subsequent chapters. At this point however, it is time to move on to address some later developments that took Sacks' fundamental work and developed it further. The emphasis, in the following then, is on assessments, and on empirical and theoretical re-workings on Sacks' legacy. This discussion also moves us closer to empirical and theoretical studies that focus on stage of life categories in interaction.

Assessing Sacks' legacy

Membership categorisation, very briefly outlined above, represents only a part of Sacks' much wider project and influence. He introduced and discussed categorical organisation of talk-in-interaction particularly during the beginning parts of his, what was to be a short career. This has opened up the floodgates to a debate over the centrality of categorisation as part of his legacy. While the overall status, merits, and differences in analytic emphasis in between different strands of ethnomethodology remain an issue under continuous debate (see e.g. Coulon 1995; Maynard and Clayman 1991; Sharrock and Anderson 1986; Ruusuvuori 2001), wide discussion also prevails over the relative significance of investigations into the organisation and the use of categories, on the one hand, and sequential, conversation analysis, on the other (e.g. Schegloff 1992; Silverman 1998; Watson 1997).

The theoretical and methodological debate over sequential and categorical aspects of interaction ranges from an outright denial of worth, and an exclusion of concern with membership categorisation (Schegloff 1992), to claims that seek to document the also later significance of categorisation in Sacks' work (e.g. McHoul 2001) and to

claims of mutual constitutiveness (Hester and Eglin 1997a; Silverman 1998; Watson 1997). Schegloff's introduction to Sacks' lectures, where he also assesses, comments upon and evaluates his work, constitutes one influential line in the much longer chain of debate. In the introduction to volume one of *Lectures on Conversation*, Schegloff for instance claims that Sacks abandoned the notion of category-bound activities. According to Schegloff this happened:

“because of an incipient ‘promiscuous’ use of them, (i.e. that some activity was bound to some category) as an element of an account on the investigator's authority, without deriving from it in any analytic pay-off other than the claimed account for the data which motivated its introduction in the first place.” (1992: xlii)

According to Schegloff then, analysis focusing purely on categorisation is in jeopardy of lapsing into purely commonsense observations. Therefore, according to Schegloff, Sacks gave up upon categorisation analysis, and its place was taken up by an increasing interest in sequential analysis. These claims have been countered particularly by Watson (1997) and by Silverman (1998). Reminding us of the ‘folding back effect’ of utterance production (Cicourel 1970), Watson sees sequential and categorical aspects as mutually and reciprocally elaborative. He, in other words, points out that both speakers and analysts operate a ‘back-and-forth’ procedure between these aspects when making sense of talk (1997: 54). Both Watson and Silverman thus refuse the opposition and dualisms set up by Schegloff as unhelpful, and support notions of collaboration as opposed to war (see also Silverman 1999). Both also emphasise that the alleged ‘promiscuity’ of research centring on categorisation is a risk, which can be solved by embedding the analysis of categorisation in a simultaneous address of sequential concerns (Silverman 1998: 129).

A somewhat stronger emphasis on ‘young Sacks’ and on categorical processes at the expense of sequential analysis is put forward in the ethnomethodological strand of inquiry referred to as Membership Categorisation Analysis, MCA (Eglin and Hester 1992; Hester and Eglin 1997a, 1997b; Hester 1998). This thread of inquiry starts with the notion that the conversation analytic focus on sequential features has resided at the expense of categorical aspects. Starting with an emphatic Sacksian focus on categorisation processes membership categorisation analysis:

'directs attention to the locally used, invoked and organized 'presumed common-sense knowledge of social structures' which members are oriented to in the conduct of their everyday affairs' (Hester and Eglin 1997a: 3).

In addition to predominantly Sacksian overtones on categories, membership categorisation devices and category bound attributes, this strand of categorical analysis also draws attention to implications not topicalised by Sacks. According to Hester and Eglin (1997a: 20) for example, Sacks' emphasis on the local use of categories not only brings forward the practices whereby members use cultural concepts to do things, but also that culture becomes constituted and exists only in action.

Taking up these concerns and debates over the significance of attending to sequential and/or categorical organisation of accounts, the current analyses can be described as taking the Sacksian analysis of categorisation at heart, without seeking to downplay the importance of sequential concerns. In addition to categorical organisation, however, I make extensive use of other parallel analytic topics raised in social scientific and social psychological discursive analysis. These include processes of factualisation, the construction of category contrasts, concession structure in talk, the ascriptive functions of categorisation, as well as the analysis of emotion talk in social contexts. On the whole, the 'sequence – categorisation ratio' in this work (Watson 1997: 51), is one where the focus is predominantly on the practices of categorisation, without sequential aspects of talk receding to the background altogether. Instead, as already emphasised in chapter one, the effects of the pre-allocated question-answer turn-system, for instance, will repeatedly be taken up in the course of the analyses.

Extending and re-working Sacks' legacy

Despite ongoing debate on the significance of categorical analysis, Sacks' initial notions of category devices and category bound activities have also been taken up, extended and further developed by subsequent researchers. In a discussion on the relevance and implications of Sacks' work to social psychology, Edwards, for example sees his writings of central significance to anyone interested in

understanding the workings of language and action, their relationship to everyday knowledge, categorisation and communicative practices (1995: 580). Despite the fact that Sacks' work was mainly oriented towards the re-establishment of sociology's foundational assumptions, it is also of wider analytic and theoretical interest. As Edwards puts it:

'if we are interested in categories as conceptual and cultural tools, it will not be enough to base psychology on conceptual analysis and decontextualizing methods of investigation. We shall also have to follow Sacks and look at how people use categories interactively. (1995: 582)

Edwards notes that deriving a psychology from Sacks' work is not a straightforward matter (op cit.: 580). Edwards' own empirical work, on counselling interaction for example (1998), works as a showcase example, however, on how Sacksian interests in categorisation can be translated into robust social psychological analysis.

Other significant, and somewhat earlier re-workings on Sacks original work on categorisation include those by members of the so-called Manchester school. Sharrock's '*On owning knowledge*' (1974), for instance showed how knowledge, just like activities, can become linked to categories, Lee's classical analysis of the headline '*Girl Guide, aged 14 raped at Hell's Angels convention*' (1984), worked as a compact example on category-bound activities and attributes, and Cuff's work on radio talk show data extended Sacks' initial machinery of categorisation (1994, originally 1980). Cuff showed that not only do we have devices like 'the family' or standard relational pairs like parent – child, but that rather, several *versions* of such devices or category pairs may be employed in naturally occurring social interaction.

In studies from the same time period, Payne and Hustler (1980) explored categorisation work in classroom situations, and Atkinson and his colleagues (1978) the re-commencement of a meeting. In both studies interactants' practices of treating relevant membership categories and action-selections are shown to mutually constitute meanings. Working with the Sacksian apparatus, Watson, in a series of articles (e.g. 1978, 1983, 1986, 1990; Watson and Weinberg 1982) studied category relevancies, practices of categorisation, authorisation and blame negotiation as well as the categories of 'victim' and 'offender' in police interrogations.

These later developments of categorization analysis extended Sacks' thinking and moved categorisation analysis beyond the 'apparatus' he initially identified. Extensions to his work meant, for example, that category-bound activities were now seen as just one type of *predicate*, which can be imputed and mobilised on the basis of a particular membership category. Other category-bound predicates, according to the extensive re-workings include rights, obligations, knowledge, competencies etc.

Finally, the work by Lena Jayyusi (1984, 1991), as something I draw upon in later analysis, deserves a special mention. Her book '*Categorisation and the Moral Order*' (1984), gathered, discussed and developed Sacks' initial thoughts and also introduced several important new concepts. Jayyusi's work represents a remarkable and systematic elaboration of Sacks' ideas and a thorough development of the 'socio-logic' of members' practical activities of describing, inferring and judging (see Eglin and Hester 1992, for a review). The concept 'type-categorisation' introduced by Jayyusi, as well as her way of viewing the relationship between categorisation and moral ascription, makes her work central to the analyses presented in this work.

Stage of life categories in talk

As the final area of analytic work discussed in this chapter, I will have a brief look at research that directly focuses its empirical and theoretical ambitions on stage of life categories in interaction. It has already been mentioned that Sacks was careful enough always to include age into his treatment of categorisation. The detail of his treatment of stage of life categories, and the examples he used, will be discussed in more detail in chapter three. What is noteworthy though, is that despite the wealth of research into categorisation, membership and identity inspired by Sacks work, age still remains a relatively untouched area of empirical research.

Some empirical studies can be listed, however. Direct attention to stage of life categorisation practices in talk have – in Sacksian terms – been raised in Paoletti's work on older women's age and gender identities and categorisation processes

(1998a, 1988b), in Green's work on academic categorisation and establishment of gerontological expertise (1993), and in Hester's work on the construction of the institutional category 'deviant' in referral meetings in between teachers and educational psychologists (1998). In this work, Hester examines categorical organisational features of situated descriptions, and throws light on how notions of maturity or immaturity of the children in question were mobilised and used as a means of building category contrasts and of making decisions. Notions of maturity, and the ways in which maturity and immaturity can be 'mapped onto the stage of life' (1998: 140), will be re-visited in subsequent analysis in this work.

In a somewhat earlier publication: *'Some practical uses of a 'a natural lifetime'*, Atkinson (1980) elaborated and extended upon Sacks' notions of stage-of-life device. Using mainly examples from literary sources, Atkinson discusses the category-sensitivity of identifications of action. Following Sacks, he also aims to show the practical reasoning 'whereby members produce and witness normal 'lifetime' behaviour without obvious plan or effort' (op.cit.: 34), and how the stage of life device is methodically used to accomplish commonsense recognitions. Atkinson also developed Sacks' notions of stage of life positionness further in ways that raised issues of the natural facticity of lifetime categories to the centre stage of analytic interest. These themes: the ways in which speakers orient to the positioned nature of age categories, and the practices whereby notions of inevitable and factual lifetime change are mobilised in speakers' accounts, will be taken up and developed upon particularly in chapter three.

Finally, Baker's work on membership work in adolescent-adult talk (1981, 1984), as well as her other empirical work developing notions and concepts of membership categorisation (1997a, 1997b), are of central interest to me. Looking at the conversational practices of 'adolescents' talking to an 'adult', Baker, for example (1984) reminds us of the practical uses of the stage of life device. She points out that the discursive work that speakers do with devices such as 'stage of life' is always done by already positioned members, who, at the same time, can be characterised as 'transitional' within the device (op.cit.: 301-2). Her study also shows, in detail, the

difficulty adolescents have in achieving a position in the 'stage of life' device when talking to an adult interviewer.

According to Baker, adolescence, as a social category, is by definition characterised by in-betweenness, marginality, and transitionality. This means that achieving a position may involve managing the overlap with "childhood" on the one hand, and with "adulthood," on the other. Drawing lines in between adulthood or childhood in the adolescent is thus part of the practical work being done, by both participants in the interview situations analysed by Baker. One of the many examples she gives is the following (1984: 302-3).

*Are there any ways in which you consider yourself to be a child in some ways?
To have some leftovers of childhood still in your personality?*

Yeah.

What kinds of things?

Well there's still things I like doing like y'know, exploring, maybe going down to the creek, y'know having a rock fight or something like that ((laughs)). Still things like that

Do you think that those kinds of interests are ones you'll always have or ones that you're going to drop, as you get older?

Probably have to drop them, as I get older.

Why?

Well, like there's, there's other more responsible things that you have to do, you won't have time to do any of those things.

Baker points out how notions of stage of life categories and activities bound to them function as conversational resources to both speakers. She also points out that dealing with residue from 'earlier' stages of life, and dealing with overlap in between lifetime categories, is an issue particularly in 'adolescence talk'.

What Baker's seminal work (see also Baker 1997a, 1997b) shows us, is that interactants actively manage the accomplishment of category-boundness or non-boundness of activities in their talk, and that in-between-ness, marginality, and transitionality were analysable conversational 'problems' for the interactants. While Baker sees and treats transitionality and overlap as features specific to adolescent talk, the analysis in this work will show, that dealing with overlap in between stage of life categories is a more common, or a potential feature of any situated talk centring on age. Dealing with overlap, and the discursive practices of coming to a decision on the criteria for what constitutes membership or non-membership in a

particular category, are thus one of the distinctive themes discussed throughout the analysis in this study.

Discussion and summary

In this chapter, I set out to review and discuss a range of theoretical and analytical concerns that inform the stance adopted in upcoming analyses. The aim, in other words, was to position the theoretical and analytic perspective adopted in this thesis in relation to the existing literature on membership and categorisation work, on the one hand, and in relation to the traditions of qualitative and discursive ageing, research on the other.

Two general observations can be made on the basis of the discussion in the sections above. First, it became obvious that earlier qualitative research on ageing, especially the empirical work within language and ageing, offer important starting and comparison points for the current work. Second, it became clear that the Sacksian project of membership categorisation and its later developments, make its status in, what can only be characterised as, 'the variety of ethnomethodological work' somewhat unclear and under continuous debate (Maynard and Clayman 1991). Consequently, navigating an accessible and clear path based on the original Sacksian way of characterising categorisation and turning this into a practical research method can prove problematic as a range of recommendations exist that all seek to outline how to go about doing this sort of analysis (see. Antaki and Widdicombe 1998b).⁵

Amongst all this, I take solace in the excellent examples of empirical work conducted both within social psychology and within life course research reviewed above. For in the end, as Silverman (1998: 48) writes:

What looks like a complicated theoretical solution turns out, however, to involve a quite straightforward direction for research. We must give up defining social phenomena at the outset... Instead, we must simply focus on what people *do*.

⁵ Recent textbooks on 'Categories in Text and Talk' (Lepper 2000) seem surprisingly unhelpful in this respect. Lepper's 'Practical introduction to categorization analysis' seems not to live up to its title and despite helpful examples and exercises, does not, at least in an accessible manner, fill in what seems an obvious gap in the methodology literature

Part Two: Age in Talk and Interaction

Chapter Three: Managing the 'Natural Facticity' of the Life Course

'We were too old to rock and roll and too young to die' (Jethro Tull)

'I was so much older then I am younger than that now' (The Byrds)

This chapter begins the empirical mapping out of stage of life categories and age identity in interaction. The analytic goal in chapters from hereon is to produce empirically grounded observations on the communicative practices through which age identity and age categories are applied, modified, and challenged in talk. The task then, is to describe how the 'stage of life device' is put to use in talk, and how notions of age and the potential membership in a particular age category are managed both as a resource and topic for conversation.

The variety of ways in which age categories function as flexible sense-making resources for the participants – the discursive practices of doing the business of age and identity – are discussed in detail in chapters four and five. As a way into, and in support of the detail of later analyses, I wish, however, to start by discussing the ways in which lay notions of the staged nature of age categories – notions of change and progression throughout life – function as tacit, common sense resources for the participants in the interviews. The first part of the chapter therefore addresses the issue of cultural pre-givenness or naturalness, versus the indexical nature of stage of life categories, as described by Sacks (1992) and others after him. The latter part of the chapter focuses on the empirical examination of the tacit communicative competencies through which factual notions of the human life course are established and oriented to in talk. Through the analysis of extracts from parts of the interaction where the interviewees were either asked to describe their current age, or to describe situations where they come to notice their age, I wish to demonstrate how the facticity of the life course – notions of ordered movement through age categories,

notions of progression from birth to death, and of change – are oriented to and put to use by participants.

The analysis in this chapter establishes how various factual characteristics of the life course become established, re-enforced and preserved in the exchanges between the interviewer and the respondents. Congruent to the ethnomethodological take on analysing categorisation in talk, the central point put forward in this chapter is that both the orderliness of stage of life categories, and the notion of progression are to be viewed as an ongoing practical interactional accomplishment (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970; Hester and Eglin 1997a). In the analysis, the interview materials are treated as a set of locally managed occasions, where notions of facticity are jointly produced in the course of the interaction (c.f. Hester and Francis 1994; Rapley and Antaki 1998). A further analytic point raised in this chapter is that the recognition and rehearsal of such common-sense 'facts of life' functions both as the starting point for the whole interview situation and as the backdrop against which competing or deviant versions and descriptions can later be formulated (c.f. Atkinson 1980).

Tacit cultural knowledge and the life course

As a part of his early studies on categorisation, membership categorisation devices and category-bound activities Harvey Sacks also discussed the uses of the 'stage of life' collection (Sacks 1974; 1992). As already mentioned in chapter two, Sacks referred to stage-of-life categories as "*positioned categories*." By positioned he means "that 'B' could be said to be higher than 'A,' and if 'B' is lower than 'C' then 'A' is lower than 'C' etc." (1992, Vol.1: 585, also 1974: 222). As a collection of positioned categories ($A < B < C$), the stage of life device also provides members with the means of making, or attending to positive or negative evaluations or judgements. A 'child' can for instance be praised for 'being mature for her age' or for 'behaving almost like a grown up.' Similarly for someone who is an 'adult', 'being childish,' 'playing in a rock and roll band,' or 'believing in the Easter Bunny' is a potential cause for disapproval and further explanation. In some situations, however, a child can be judged to be 'too mature for her years', and an adult commended for

'youthful appearance and vigour.' (Sacks 1974, 1992; Hester 1998; Baker 1984, 1997, 1998; Nikander 2000a). Age categories thus furnish speakers with common-sense notions of progression and with conventional expectations on behaviour, rights and obligations concerning the activities of a member of a particular category (e.g. Cuff and Payne 1984; Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998; Silverman 1998; Watson 1986).

In the interesting complement to Sacks' work on stage of life categorisation, Atkinson (1980, see also Baker 1984; Gubrium and Buckholdt 1977) draws our attention to the 'practical uses of a natural lifetime.' According to Atkinson, members presuppose the facticity of the life course, and treat 'the natural lifetime' as

a real-worldly process that "begins" at birth and "ends" with death. The period "in between" is characterized as "growing-up" such that barring "premature death" one moves "from" childhood "into" adolescence and "then into" adulthood. Members regard this version of "a lifetime" as a seriously incontrovertible given.. that is the way the world is whether we will or no."

(Atkinson 1980: 33, emphasis in original)

According to Atkinson, the 'what everyone knows' given nature of natural lifetime categories as staged then allows for 'escapes' from it to be treated as exceptions, as pretence, or as playful talk. For example an adult can momentarily pretend to be a child, and thus escape from what everyone knows, '*in fact*' to be the case. Escape is, however, accepted only as long as the adult knows when to 'return.' Otherwise the person easily becomes placed in categories like 'immature', 'simple-minded', or 'sick' (op.cit.: 34). Deviations to the notion of 'natural lifetime' such as Wordsworth's statement '*the child is the father of a man*' (ibid.), or song lyrics, like those cited above '*I was so much older then I am younger than that now,*' are recognised not as literal or factual depictions of reality, but rather as conveying playfulness or 'metaphorical' meaning.

It would seem difficult then, to refute the idea that people do possess knowledge of, and use stage of life categories as ordered ($A < B < C$), and that this knowledge forms a part of what anyone routinely takes to be an indisputable, culturally given fact. In other words, whereas some objects, concepts, or categories may be constituted in different ways through linking them to numbers, (cf. Potter, Wetherell and Chitty

1991)¹, age, as a concept *in itself* relies on and is built upon, the notion of quantification and progression, and derives its particularly factual, common-sense nature thereof.

Let us now take a time-out to briefly view how common-sense notions of age and time are mobilised, that is, how participants establish notions of progression and change as part of the of interview interaction. The above mentioned shared cultural notions of age and the human life course functioned as the starting point for the interview situation, and the interviewees did not have any difficulty recognising the topic as a valid or worthwhile one. Analysing the following two extracts, I want to point to how the interview format, the 'interview-ness' of the situation, at times in itself elicited reference to general, common-sense, and shared knowledge, and how this, in part, establishes and marks the exchange *as* an interview (e.g. Potter and Wetherell 1995b; Rapley and Antaki 1998; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995; also Heritage and Greatbatch 1991). In extract one, the participant is asked what motivated her to participate in the study.

Extract 1. PN: W10 Anu (Cas 1, A: 2.6-3.7)²

1.	PN:	Was this <u>theme</u> this (.) age or	Oliks tää <u>teema</u> tää () ikä tai
2.		like as a theme something that	tämmönen teema niin jotenkin sellanen joka
3.		that interested you in particular	joka kiinnosti sua
4.		for some reason	jostain syystä erityisesti
5.		or [was] there anything like this	tai [oliks] sinä mitään tällasta
6.	A.	[we ll]	[n:o]
→ 7.	A:	Of course it's interesting	Ilman muuta se on kiinnostava
8.		cause you're right in the middle of	koska itse on just tällasessa polttopisteessä
9.		it all like (.) like in this big (.)	että (.) et tammönessä suuressa (.)
→ 10.		<u>transition</u> point when you ()	tartekohdassa kun (.)
11.		notice that (0 6) a bigger part of	huomaa että (0 6) suurempi osa
12.		your life is like behind you and	elämästä on ninku takanapäin ja sen on
13.		I've like suddenly (0 2) ↑ <u>really</u>	ninku yks kaks (0.2) ↑ <u>todella</u>
14.		realised that I'm in this (.) big	tajunnu että on on sellasessa () suuressa
→ 15.		(0 6) transition point in ↑my life	(0 6) murrosvaiheessa ↑oman elämänsä

¹ Consider, for example that a possible description by a North American, on his or her identity as 'an American' could be the following: 'I'm 25 % Irish Catholic, 25 % Polish. In addition, there's at least some Cherokee and French ancestry in our family'.

² Each extract is marked with identification. This starts with the interviewer's initials followed by a letter indicating whether the interviewee was a man (M), or a woman (W), and the number and pseudonym of the interviewee (in this extract PN. W10 Anu) The rest of the identification refers to where the extract is to be found on the tape. For further detail on transcription and translation, see Appendix 1.

	16		that like what what have the		suhteen että et mitä mikä on ollut
	17.		past time been and (0.2)		se mennyt aika ja (0.2)
	18.		that kind of a time <u>this really</u> is		mitä aikaa <u>todella</u> <u>tää</u> on
	19.		cause somehow everything		ku jotenki kaikki
→	20.		changes with your (0.2) with your		muuttuu oman (0.2) omien
	21.		own <u>parents</u> with your own child		<u>vanhempien</u> oman lapsen
	22		with your own (0.2) life (0.6) like		oman (0.2) elämän (0.6) tiimoilta että
	23.		although nothing special		vaikkei mitään ihmeellistä
	24		(0.2) is going on		(0.2) oo tapahtumassa
	25.		but still a lot happens		mutta silti tapahtuu paljon
	26	PN.	Yes		Joo
→	27.	A:	So just this time (.) this time thing		Et ihan tää aika () aika-asia
	28		like changes		nun muuttaa
	29	PN.	mm [mm]		mm [mm]
→	30.	A:	The biological clock is [tick]ing		Tää biologinen (.) kello [tikit]taa
	31.		in many ways		monella tavalla

This extract comes from the beginning parts of the interview exchange. We can see, first of all, the participant doing work to acknowledge and justify the question put forward by the interviewer, and to warrant both the question and the topic of the interview as reasonable and worthwhile (line 7: *of course it's interesting*). More central to the point I want to make here, is that as grounds for this acknowledgement, she draws on and mobilises a variety of common-sense notions of progression and change. This is done through reference to her own position in time (lines 11-12: *a bigger part of your life like behind you*), through reference to different generations (lines 19-22: *everything changes with your (0.2) with your own parents with your own child with your own (0.2) life*), and by using lay terms from developmental psychology (*transition*, lines 10 and 15 and *biological clock*, line 30).

It is worth remembering that the interviewees were approached *as* members of a particular age group and that chronological, or clock age as such was built into the topic of discussion. So the "speaking identity" (Hadden and Lester 1978; Baker 1997b, see also Frith 1998), or the category assigned to the participants from the outset was one of 'a person around fifty'. The interviewees, once asked to speak from this position, had to mobilise available resources of cultural knowledge in order to participate in the interview, mainly on the interviewer's and the situation's terms (see Baker 1997b).

Anu, in extract one can be heard as producing something of a 'token list' of characteristics that works to establish the area of potential interest for the interview,

and herself as 'a good interviewee'. This includes the usage of lay academic terms such as 'transition' and 'biological clock', that work to warrant her account and to establish Anu not only as a good interviewee, but also, as someone who possesses knowledge of and specific terms for the treatment of the topic (c.f. Gergen 1989). Glossing her own turn on lines 27-28 she also makes implicit reference to the themes of the interview with *So just this time (.) this time thing like changes*. Establishing, or listing parameters of the topic at hand, especially in the beginning of the interview, thus acknowledges it as a factual and a valid one and simultaneously marks the talk as interview talk (cf. Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995).

Let's look at another example where the relevance of talk as 'interview talk', is manifest in the data, this time with a rather surprising outcome.

Extract 2. PN: W2: Anita (Cas 1, A: 17.4-17.8)

1	PN:	Well (0.2) so if we talk about the	No (0.2) tota jos puhutaan tosta
2.		like about () ageing and time	nunkun () ikaantymisestä tai ajan
3.		passing then what do you like ()	kulumisesta niin mitä niinku ()
4.		<u>what</u> sorts of things do you think	<u>mitä</u> kaikkee saa aattelet
5		when you think about time passing	ku saa aattelet niinku ylipäänsä
6.		in general we've already talked	ajan kulumista tässä nyt
7.		[about] like=	tullu [jo] semmoset niinku=
8.	A:	[mm]	[mm]
9.	PN.	= like becoming more independent	=tämmöset niinku itsenäistymistä
10	A:	mm	mm
11.	PN.	but like what else does	mut et mitä muuta niinku
12.		time passing mean (0.2) to you	ajan kuluminen sulle (0.2) merkitsee
13.		(1.0)	(1.0)
14.	A:	You mean time passing <u>in general</u>	Sis <u>yleensä</u> ajan kuluminen
15.	PN.	↑That's right	↑Niin
16.	A.	Well the thing that (.)	No se että ()
→ 17.		well I've got no fear of <u>dying</u>	no <u>kuoleman</u> pelkoo mullel oo
18	PN	mm-m	mm-m
19		(0.2)	(0.2)
20	A:	et cetera and sometimes I like think	sun muuta ja joskus mä niinku aattelen
21.		((goes on to talk about possible	((jatkaa kuvaamalla mahdollisia
22.		future scenarios))	tulevaisuudenkuvia))

In the beginning of the extract, the interviewer is summing up earlier discussion on what the interviewee has said about ageing and the notion of time passing. She mentions markedly positive topics already covered (lines 6-9: *we've already talked [about] like like becoming more independent*) and then moves on to pursue the theme and to elicit further description on the same theme. The fact that the interviewer treats the talk so far as not yet sufficient or exhaustive is marked by the

use of *but* (line 11: *but like what else does*). A second's pause then follows, after which the respondent echoes the interviewer's initial question. It is somewhat surprising, however, that although the question is couched in general terms, the respondent comes up with a very specific claim: *well I've got no fear of dying* (line 17).

One possible explanation as to why the participant chooses to say this here is again in the set-up of the interview situation itself. The interviewee can be heard as anticipating or second-guessing the kinds of answers expected from her. From the pre-allocated position of an interviewee, she can be heard as proposing that the interviewer may have made the inference that she possibly *might* be starting to worry about her own mortality. So the preoccupation with death and one's mortality, as a potential feature of people in the 50+-age category, is both mobilised and subsequently denied.³

A further reading of the extract is, that the interviewer's summary of prior, markedly positive topics already covered in the discussion, in itself sets the stage for the opposite to be produced next. '*Becoming more independent*' (line 9) is mentioned as an example as the type of items covered so far, which marks the interviewer's elicitation of further description as referring to something different, other or opposite to earlier talk. After asking for a clarification to the question (line 14), the interviewee then proceeds to provide exactly this.

What I'm noting here is that death, in this context, is offered as a specific, 'par excellence' example from a larger group of markedly negative describables. The '*et cetera*' (line 20) can, in other words be heard as referring to, or marking the existence of a wider variety of listable items. Although this list is never produced, the *et cetera* works as shorthand for cultural commonplaces for 'things in that general negative category'. It is, in other words, an economical, way of making reference to a larger category of negative phenomena that are potentially, or in general (line 14),

³ The extract bears some interesting family resemblance to the example used by Sacks, where inferences to sexual problems or homosexuality were based on occupational categories like 'hair stylist' and 'fashion' (1992, Vol. 1: 46-47)

linked to increasing age while only mentioning one. In this sense the use of *et cetera* also does similar work to general knowledge tokens like *y' know* (see Schifffrin 1987), in that the listener is left to complete or fill in the potentially longer list referred to in the speaker's turn.⁴ Note also that, formulated in this way; the interviewee's answer also manages to fulfil the requirements set up in the reformulated question (line 14) in that the answer combines specificity with generality.

Having looked at the extracts above, I hope to have established that notions of change, progression, mortality and death function as readily available cultural resources through which participants talk about themselves when asked about age and ageing.⁵ Some of their usage, as we have just seen, may be prompted by the interview context. This does not mean, however, that their use could somehow be seen as a distinctive characteristic of 'interview talk.' It seems highly implausible that people would have a separate set of communicative competencies set aside for interview use (cf. Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995; Wetherell and Potter 1992). Instead, similar usage and acknowledgement of irreversible change, and gradual progression is undoubtedly also a feature of everyday talk.

⁴ In this sense the '*et cetera*' marks the account as "relevantly incomplete" (Jefferson 1990: 68, also Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998: 235-237). According to Jefferson's seminal article on list construction, 2 item lists followed by a generalized completer (like *or something*, or *things like that*) may be relevantly incomplete i.e. "not only do the named items not exhaust the possible array of nameables, but a third item would not do such work; i.e., there are "many more" relevant nameables which will not, and need not, be specified" (Jefferson 1990: 68). Compared to the examples provided by Jefferson, the speaker in the extract in question here, only produces *one* item of potentially relevant nameables, and then moves on without trying to exhaust the array of "many more" nameables. For discussion over the '*Et cetera* assumption' as a more general tendency to fill in, or assume that a shared, socially distributed knowledge exists, see Cicourel 1970: 148-9, for an overview see Coulon 1995).

⁵ Studies on the concept of time (e.g. Adams 1995) point out how the role and nature of time is rarely raised in everyday conversation. In interview situations, however, the topic of death repeatedly emerges as an unexpected feature of respondents' reflections, irrespective of their age or personal situation. According to Adams (1995: 5) 'that which is rarely thought about thus constitutes a central component in our tacit knowledge-base.' Numerous sociological studies on death (e.g. Bauman 1992, Seale 1998a, 1998b) have concentrated on establishing how notions of death, mortality and immortality function as part of the social organisation of the postmodern society.

Facticity of the life course: Contextually derived vs. culturally pre-existent

Does the existence of cultural resources and the notion of 'natural lifetime' then lead us to the conclusion that such notions, and the everyday use of age categories is based on pre-fixed, *culturally encoded meanings*, or on *cognitive categories* with a decontextual and transsituational signification? Are notions of change, progression, and death and the ordered movement through stage of life categories somehow culturally pre-programmed to the point that these notions 'shine' or are 'spoken through' us every time a relevant topic is touched upon? In order to answer such questions, and to understand the factually given, ordered nature of stage of life categories on the one hand, and their situationally and locally occasioned usage on the other, we need to re-visit one of ethnomethodology's key concepts: indexicality.

According to Hester and Eglin, Sacks' extensive work on membership categorisation devices, membership categories and category predicates enables several possible readings on indexicality, to the extent that 'an ambiguity between a decontextualized model on the one hand and an ethnomethodological approach on the other hand, can be discerned in Sacks' work.' (1997a: 13). From the ethnomethodological point of view, all natural language is indexical, which means that the meaning and understandability of an utterance, rather than being pre-fixed by some abstract and independent cultural definition, is reflexively related to the circumstances in which it appears.⁶ Hester and Eglin point out, however, that although a careful reading of Sacks' work reveals his focused attention to the contextual (indexical) dimensions of categorisation, support can also be found to claim that he was not totally opposed to the de-contextual model of categorisation.

As a first proof of a de-contextual flavour in Sacks' work, Hester and Eglin point to his analytic model that distinguishes 'between recognisable, common-sense, vernacular descriptions and a machinery or apparatus which accounts for, or

⁶ The term indexicality was originally borrowed from linguistics and refers to the notion that despite transsituational signification, a word also has a situational significance in each particular context in which it is used. Words take their complete sense in the situation of their uttering 'as they are indexed in a situation of linguistic exchange' (Coulon 1995: 17)

generates such descriptions' (1997a: 14, see also Schegloff 1992; Silverman 1998). His work, and the somewhat mechanistic terminology he uses, thus allows a reading of membership categorisation devices as thing-like, pre-existent 'machinery' that makes understanding possible. Sacks also made some statements and comments about the make-up of categorisation devices that can be used as evidence for a de-contextualised reading of his work. These comments include descriptions of devices as collections of categories in a 'once-and-for-all manner' (Hester and Eglin 1997a: 16). For example, talking about categories like sex and age Sacks (1972a: 33) states:

It is our task to show that for any population N (where N is equal to or larger than 1) there are at least two categorization devices available to Members, each of which...(a) can categorize each Member of the population N in such a way that one does not get for any Member of the population the pairing (population Member + no category member), where (b) no member of either device is a member of the other. Any device, that satisfies constraint (a) will hereafter be called a Pn-adequate device...

While many devices...are not Pn-adequate ones, it is perfectly obvious that there are at least two Pn-adequate devices that Members do have available to them and do use. For example, there are the devices whose collections are (1) sex (male, female), and (2) age (young, old).

Here Sacks seems to establish sex and age as somehow more pervasive or fundamental in comparison to other possible categories used to describe members. He can also be heard to be claiming that the categories that make up sex and age devices are *none other* than male-female and young-old, respectively. (Hester and Eglin 1997a: 16).⁷

A third point that can be raised as evidence of Sacks' understanding of membership categories as de-contextual, is the distinction he makes between 'natural' and 'topic-occasioned' collections or categories (Sacks 1992, Vol. 1: 752-763). The test that he suggests distinguishes natural devices from occasioned ones was to see whether members, given the name of the device, say 'stages of life,' would then be able to name the members belonging to that device. One can easily see how the stage of life collection might pass the test with members 'correctly' producing categories such as

⁷ In footnote 7 (1972: 430), Sacks further underlines the special nature of age as a membership category by stating. 'I choose the example of the collection "age" in order to notice a feature that it and some other collections have: 'The device is Pn-adequate over a variety of formulations of the categories that are its members. Categories may be replaced from the collection without affecting its ability to categorize any population N'

'child', 'adolescent', 'adult', 'elderly', and how the stage of life device could therefore be named 'natural.' Topic-occasioned categories or devices, by contrast are those that members would have difficulty naming without knowing the topic of relevance to the device.⁸

We begin to see, then, how Sacks' work might be read to support the de-contextualised and natural view of categorisation, even if this takes the attention away, and goes against the ethnomethodological notion of indexicality. Elsewhere in his writing, Sacks himself, however, provides us with ample examples of the occasioned and local quality of categorisation, as well as examples that further establish the situational 'for-this-time' signification of age categories. Two examples can be mentioned here.

First, Sacks' texts can be used to back up both the claim that stage of life categories belong to the 'natural' as well as the 'topic-occasioned' type of collections. In his lecture on 'Topic' (Vol. 1: 752-763), he claims that the *age class* that a person is placed into is independent of his or her *actual age*, and that the choice of an age class (young - old), depends on the topic of the discussion at hand. He gives the following example:

A: She's quite a young woman, only in her fifties.

Sacks points out that the above characterisation is sensible by virtue of the knowledge that the woman in question has just died. Provided the topic: death, instead of say having a baby, the woman can therefore be described as 'a young woman.' According to Sacks then, although age itself cannot be selected, the age class that persons are assigned to depend on the topic. Therefore: 'for that occurrence, select X age class as an appropriate way to characterize a person. "Quite

⁸ The well-known example Sacks (1992, Vol 1 757) used to show what he meant by 'topic-occasioned' is the following:

A: I have a fourteen-year-old kid

B. Well that's alright.

A: I also have a dog.

B Oh, I'm sorry.

Here the exchange and the relevance of the categories 'kids' and 'dogs' remains puzzling until we are told that the topic of the exchange is 'renting an apartment'.

young" (15 years old). "Quite Old" (six years old). Both of which are perfectly usable sorts of statements turning on what is being talked of' (Vol. 1: 754).

Another example of the indexical usage of age categories found in Sacks' lectures is the distinction he makes between the categories sex and race compared to age and social class. According to Sacks (Vol. 1: 45; see also Silverman 1998: 96):

What you have with these latter sorts of categories is a rather lovely series of things going on. If any Member hears another categorize someone else or themselves on one of these items, then the way the Member hearing this decides what category is appropriate, is by themselves categorizing the categorizer according to the same set of categories. So if you hear B categorize C as 'old,' then you would categorize B to decide how *you* would categorize C.

So if someone calls somebody 'old,' the exact meaning of that depends on how I as the listener of such a description would categorise the person providing the categorisation. If the speaker is 10-years-old then the person in question could be anything from 20 onwards, that is, in other words, quite young. If, however, the speaker is 30 years old, the person being described might be 70 years old. The situational meaning of 'old' depends on who is doing the categorising. Sacks then sums up the indexical nature of age categorisation.

One wouldn't then find that somebody carries around an identity, which is stable for any environment they come into; for example, that they would be 'old' no matter who it is that's around them. Nor would it be the case that for each of the persons around them they would be seen as the same person that they have to see themselves as. There is no supposition of agreement on any categorization for such persons all categorizing each other.
(1992: Vol 1: 46)

Despite the ambiguities in parts of Sacks' work, discussed above, his texts can be read as clear support for the local and occasional nature of talk-in-interaction. His own writings show strong evidence against the notion that attaching culturally encoded pre-existent meanings to people or their actions is a sufficient way of describing human action. Instead, the local and situational nature - the social embeddedness and the indexical and occasioned nature - of our communicative practices is a prevalent and repeated topic in his lectures. (Hester and Eglin 1997a; Edwards 1995; Silverman 1998).

To sum up, then, contrary to the de-contextualised conception of language and category use as based on pre-existent structures or devices, the ethnomethodological approach stresses the contingent and occasioned nature of language use. This does not mean, however, that we should deny the existence of culturally encoded meanings altogether. Instead, as Maynard and Clayman (1991: 399) also state: 'Indexical expressions are a window, then, through which to gaze upon the bedrock of social order.' Cultural devices do not have transcendental or transsituational relevance, however. Therefore, as we now move to look at further extracts from the age interview data, the analytic task is to describe and locate the practical reasoning through which *versions* of the facticity of ageing and the human life course are accomplished and managed by participants *in-situ*, and for *this occasion*. Starting from the notion that speakers *do* possess knowledge of the factual and positioned nature of lifetime categories, my task, as the analyst with similar cultural knowledge, is to identify the sorts of devices and practices *participants* use to establish that facticity, and to locate the ways in which factual versions of age and ageing are put to use in their reasoning. In other words, the task of the analyst is to describe 'how people do the transparently obvious' (Sacks 1974).

Doing provisional continuity

Let's start by considering the following account, where the participant has been asked to describe his current age.

Extract 3. PN: M4: Kimmo (Cas 1, A: 3.2-3.9)

1.	PN·	How would you otherwise if (.)	Miten muuten jos (.)
2		if like (0 2) I mean if this	jos niinku (0 2) toi niin
3		certain insecurity to do with	kun <u>työhön</u> liittävä () tämmönen epävarmuus
4		() <u>work</u> is one thing but how'd	on yks asia mut miten
5.		you <u>otherwise</u> (0 2) describe	<u>muuten</u> (0.2) sä kuvaisit
6		this (0 2) this fifty () <u>one</u>	tätä (0 2) tämmöstä videnkymmenen () <u>yhden</u>
7.		() year age	(.) vuoden ikää
→ 8.	K:	Well I'd () this is still <u>quite</u>	No mää () täähän on vielä <u>ihan</u>
9.		a good age when you're <u>healthy</u>	hyvä ika kun on <u>terve</u>
10	PN.	mm	mm
→ 11.	K·	There's like nothing <u>yet</u>	Eihan tassä <u>vielä</u> mutaan oo
12.		() <u>otherwise</u> to worry about	(.) <u>muute</u> hatää oo
13.	PN·	ye-es	joo-o

→	14	K	mm (0 2) you of course (.) little	mm (0 2) sitä tietysti () pikkuhiljaahan sitä
	15.		by little start to <u>calm</u> down and	rupee ihminen vahan <u>rauhottumaan</u> ja
	16		(0 4) with the <u>years</u> but like	(0.4) ku ikää <u>tulee</u> mutta tuota
→	17.		(0.2) I wouldn't <u>otherwise</u> see it	(0.2) en mä <u>muuten</u> näkis tassä
	18.		as any sort of a <u>problem</u>	minkaanlaisena <u>probleemana</u>
	19.		this <u>age</u> of mine yet=	tätä <u>ikkään</u> vielä=
	20.	PN.	°yes°	°joo°
	21.	K:	=as long as you have your <u>health</u>	=niiin kauan kuin että <u>terveyttä</u> on

Here the respondent has been talking about ageing and his work, after which the interviewer elicits further descriptions with a follow-up question. The speaker's usage of 'still' (line 8-9: *This is still quite a good age when you're healthy*) can be heard as doing *temporal marking* (cf. Schiffrin 1987: 228-266), whereby the state of the speaker's present situation and health is described as transitory, as open to inevitable change in the future. Through his 'health-in-age formulation' (Coupland and Coupland 1999), the speaker can, in other words, be heard as rehearsing and pointing to possible problems that increasing age *normally* brings along with it. Simultaneously he none the less underlines that he himself does *not yet* need to worry about such changes. On lines 14-16 the speaker further acknowledges the notion that changes are an inevitable part of life (*you of course (.) little by little start to calm down and (0.4) with the years*), but states that he himself has not experienced any other significant change *yet* (lines 17-19).

So what I am noting here is the way in which the usage of 'still' and especially the reiteration of 'yet' (lines 11 and 19) simultaneously *both* acknowledges the inevitability and factuality of change *and* pushes it outside the immediate experience of the speaker. The inevitability and factuality of change with age is treated in a similar way in extract 4 below, where Leena describes her age through the notion of crisis. Points of special analytic interest are, again, marked with side arrows.

Extract 4. PN: W12: Leena (Cas 1, A: 3.6-4.6)

→	1.	L:	I must put it this way that	Täytyy sanoo näin että
	2.		I haven't (.) <u>so</u> far at least had	ei mulla (.) <u>toistaseks</u> ainakaan oo viel tullu
	3		any sort of a <u>crisis</u> =	minkaanlaista <u>krisi</u> =
	4.	PN	mm	mm
	5	L:	=at <u>any</u> stage like with this time	= <u>missaan</u> vaiheessa niinku tan ajan kanssa
	6		like somehow with ageing	että jotenki siis vanhenemisen kanssa
	7.		for example () like I think I've	esimerkiks () et kyllä mää
	8		somehow like (0 2)	jotenkin niinkun (0 2)
	9.		niceily adapted to it	oon jännästi sopeutunu siihen

10		like you often hear people say	ninku usein sanotaan
11.		that you <u>always</u> feel like you're	että <u>aina</u> tuntuu että elää
12		living the <u>best</u> time=	sitä <u>parasta</u> aikaa=
13.	PN:	mm	mm
14.	L:	= of your life like for instance	=elämässään et ninku esimerkiksi
15.		now at <u>this</u> moment like (0.2) as a	nyt <u>tällä</u> hetkellä niin (0 2) tämmösenä
16		fifty-year-old so I feel like ()	viiskymppisenä niin tuntuu siltä että ()
17.		this is (.) a <u>great</u> situation	täähän on (.) <u>mahtava</u> tilanne
18.		to be living this kind of time	elää tällasta aikaa
19.		like I've got (.) in principle in life	et mulla on kaikki (0 4) periaattees elämäs
20.		all is possible but like on the other	mahollista mut et kuitenkin semmosta
21.		hand this life experience that you	elämankokemusta et <u>han</u>
22.		don't go along with <u>just</u> (.) like	mihin tahansa ei ninkun (.)
23		anything=	ryhdy=
24.	PN:	mm	mm
25.	L:	=like when you were young you	=ninku nuorena sitte
26.		might've (.) done like without	ois (.) saattanu ninkun
27.		thinking done some stuff so	ajattelematta tehdä jotakin juttuja että
28	PN:	mm	mm
29.		(0 2)	(0 2)
30	L:	so maybe <u>this</u> like ((laughs))	että ehkä <u>tää</u> ninkun ((nauraa))
31.		like brings some (0 6) so but like	siis tuo sitä sellasta (0 6) et mut et
→ 32.		>it hasn't either been a< reason	>se ei oo myöskään ollu
33.		for <u>crisis</u> for me personally (.)	mikään< <u>kriisin</u> aihe mulle itselle ()
34.		for the <u>time-being</u> don't know if it	<u>toistaiseks</u> vielä en tiedä
→ 35		turns into one some day but like	vaikka tulee sit joskus mut että
36	PN:	mm	mm
37.	L:	growing old and age	vanheneminen ja ikä
38.	PN:	mm	mm
→ 39	L:	it's like (0.2) at least at this	et tota (0 2) ainakaan tällä
40		moment (.) I don't feel that way	hetkellä (.) en koe sitä

Similar to extract 3, having problems or going through changes, this time 'a crisis' is described here as something that is a candidate option to happen with increasing age, but one that the speaker herself has no experience of yet. This is followed by Leena's acknowledgement that she might have such a crisis at a later date (lines 33-34: *for the time-being don't know if it turns into one some day*), and by a re-statement that this, however, is not the case '*at this moment*' (lines 38-39).

As a general observation on these two sequences, then, one could say, that the respondents, Kimmo and Leena, both invoke and make reference to possible candidate problems – physical health problems (extract 3) and a psychological crisis (extract 4) – that ageing can possibly bring along with it. They are, in other words, *displaying knowledge of change as a part of human ageing as inevitable*. While acknowledging and orienting to this rhetorical other through negation (see Billig 1985, 1996, also Billig et al. 1988), the speakers simultaneously temporally *distance* (cf. Baker 1984) themselves from it. Note, for example, how Leena, after

establishing the possibility of a crisis (lines 1-3), immediately sets herself as an exception to this, by mobilising notions of adaptation (line 9) and by restating (lines 32-33) that for her 'personally' age has not been a cause for crisis. The existence of change thus becomes established as imminent, as something that is not here *yet*, but possibly *will* be one day. Rather than denying the existence of change as a part of ageing, the participants, in other words, acknowledge decrement and *change as something that is impending*.⁹ Let us look at a final example of this.

Extract 5.

PN: W1: Laura 1 (Cas 1, A: 10.3-10.4)

→	1.	L:	So there's like <u>nothing</u> (.)	Ettei oo ninkun <u>mitään</u> (.)
	2.		that would've <u>clearly</u> marked	tämmöistä jossa ois <u>selkeesti</u>
	3.		(.) that now your age comes in	tullu vielä että (.) et nyt se ika
	4.		the way	haittais
	5.	PN:	yeah	joo
→	6.	L:	I mean it will surely sta(h)rt	Et kyl niita varmaan sit
	7.		<u>l</u> ittle by little when you start to	<u>p</u> ikkuhiljaa rupeen tulema(h)an
	8.		ache here and there	kun rupee kolottaa sieltä ja taaltä
→	9.		But not like (2.0) I can't	Mut ei ninkun (2.0) en ainakaan
	10.		say that <u>yet</u> at least	<u>v</u> iellä osaa sanoa

There are some obvious differences in content and length in between the three extracts shown above. The intriguing commonality in their argumentative structure however, is, in how notions of personal continuity (in the present day) and impending change and decrement (possibly in the future) are built up through the use of a three-component A - B -but A discursive format. This three-part format in the talk can be seen as *establishing personal continuity as a provisional feature* of the present day.

In the first part of this format, the personal meaning of age or ageing is denied, often by using an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz 1986) of the type: '*nothing has changed.*' This statement is followed by an account that works to soften, or qualify the extremity of the previous claim, by acknowledging the *impending possibility of change*, or by acknowledging that *some change* may have happened (cf. Edwards 2000 on extreme case formulations and softeners). The third part then reiterates the initial claim in the format: *but* + initial claim repeated: '*but nothing has changed.*'

⁹ One should add that acknowledging decrement and change is not a decontextualised concern, but rather a possible orientation to the interviewer's concerns, that may include decrement

Below we can see in detail, how these three components function in the extracts shown in entirety earlier.

Doing provisional continuity through an A - B- but A -formulation:

(from extract 3)

...There's like nothing yet (.) <u>otherwise</u> to worry about	A
...You of course () little by little start to <u>calm</u> down	B
... but like I wouldn't otherwise see it as any sort of a problem this <u>age</u> of mine yet	but A

(from extract 4)

...I haven't (.) so far at least had any sort of <u>crisis</u>	A
...for the <u>time-being</u> don't know if it turns into one some day	B
.. but like... at least at this moment (.) I don't feel that way	but A

(from extract 5)

...So there's like nothing (.) that would've <u>clearly</u> marked	A
...it will surely start <u>little</u> by li(h)ttle when you start to ache	B
.. but like (2.0) I can't say that not yet at least	but A

Notice how part B that establishes that the speaker is aware of the inevitability of change, also typically includes such acknowledgement tokens as 'of course', or 'surely'. This second part can therefore be seen as establishing the facticity of change as a feature of ageing. It also works to qualify the former extreme claim, by including restrictions to it (cf. Edwards 2000). Parts A, and but A, on the other hand, both typically include temporal formulations that echo each other: yet-yet, or so far at least - at least this moment.

What makes the A-B-but A -format so intriguing then, is that its use establishes the speaker as a rational person, who is aware of the 'facts of life' such as they are relevant to the topic at hand, and depicts him/her as someone who isn't likely to deny such facts. The skilful use of this argumentative device thus produces an

acknowledgement of change, but at the same time allows the speaker to place him or herself beyond it. The acknowledgement of gradual and inevitable change, as an added qualifier to the initial claim of 'no-personal-change,' works to construct an account that is rhetorically and interactionally more robust, and difficult to challenge. This makes the A - B - but A-format an excellent practical tool for the discursive mobilisation and management of facticity.

What then is the setting-specificity of the argumentative structure identified here? To what extent can we claim that the A - B - but A device is a generic cultural resource that speakers draw on when talking about, describing, or arguing about age or change? Are we rather dealing with a discursive format that merely reflects the constraints and orientations to reciprocity in the interview setting, i.e. with a type of description that does work to manage the interviewee's accountability in this particular situation?

Establishing the generic nature of any discursive structure identified, be it a special kind of turn format in talk on "talk-radio" (Hutchby 1992, 1996), or a means of making 'show concessions' (Antaki and Wetherell 1999), is routinely done by collecting a corpus of examples (see Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998: 110, for a basic three-stage model for building analytic accounts, for a discussion see Antaki 1994, and Coulter 1990a). Some general points in support of the claim that the '*provisional continuity device*' identified above is a more generic feature of talk can also be made here. We can, for instance, note that 'doing provisional continuity' via an A - B - but A -format is by no means restricted to talk about age and ageing. To establish this, let's look at the following example taken from Widdicombe and Wooffitt's (1995, 168) study on youth subcultures. In the following an interviewee who identifies himself as 'a punk rocker', is describing what membership in that category means to him.

- | | | | |
|----|----|--|------------------|
| 1. | I: | is being a punk very | ((smiley voice)) |
| 2. | | important for you? | |
| 3. | R: | yeah very indeed | |
| 4. | | I couldn't imagine myself being | A |
| 5. | | straight at all | |
| 6. | | () like dressing neatly in tidy | |

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 7. | nice clothes an' having my hair | |
| 8. | down and all that hh | |
| 9. | na I can't imagine=probably | B |
| 10. | in a couple of years times | |
| 11. | I'll be like that but I-I- | but A |
| 12. | at the moment I can't imagine it at all | |

In this extract, the interviewee first rejects the possibility of ever dressing differently from his current punk-style. Similar to the examples from my age data, this rejection/distancing is produced in a somewhat extreme form '*I couldn't imagine myself being straight at all*'. This is rapidly followed by a temporal formulation, whereby the speaker indicates that although change is difficult to fathom at the moment, it is nonetheless a possibility in the future (lines 9-10: *probably in a couple of years times I'll be like that*). Similar to extracts seen earlier, the account also closes with the initial statement being reiterated through a 'but +A format': *but I-I at the moment I can't imagine it at all* (lines 11-12). This example shows, that the A - B - but A provisional continuity device can be put to similar kinds of interactional work in other than age related talk settings. In fact, it seems probable that this type of argumentation may be typical to a variety of settings where some kind of personal trajectory is invoked interactionally. Building a more solid analytic case may, however, require collecting and/or analysing other types of data.¹⁰

Establishing the 'out-there-ness' of age: Factualisation through quantification

Earlier in this chapter, I pointed out, how the measurable, clock-time nature of age - the fact that people are taught to both describe themselves as so-and-so many years old, and to evaluate others on the same basis - lends a particularly factual common-sense nature to age as a membership category.¹¹ Numbers are, in other words, used as a routine, reliable and objective way of describing someone, whether or not we

¹⁰ There would seem to be something of a shared common-sense understanding about the recurrent, or cultural nature of the device though This has been obvious when presenting preliminary findings on the 'provisional continuity device' to other academics in the field (Nikander 2000b) On the relationship between commonsense and device identification, see Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998: 111).

¹¹ On the 'mathematisable nature' of objects and descriptions, see Sacks 1992, Vol 1 57-65, on using numbers in institutional settings see Pomerantz 1987

have actually met the person in question or not. Numbers can also function as a bottom-line argument, as the last resort for checking someone's 'objective' age-category.

Referring to people through quantifiable, measures like: 'I think he's around 45 or 46,' also refers to, and invokes inferences and culturally shared images and expectations of what someone belonging to that category is like, and of other possible characteristics, activities or potential interests of that person. This being the case, describing yourself solely through your age is sometimes avoided, or when 'revealing' your age, or the age of someone else, a list of modifiers may be added. The following example is from Sacks (1992, Vol. 1: 44).

A. How old are you Mr Bergstein?

B. I'm 48, I look much younger. I look about 35, and I'm quite ambitious and quite idealistic and very inventive and conscientious and responsible.

Here the speaker's added list of modifiers to the information 'I'm 48', works to preempt possible negative attributes applied to someone in that age category (that someone who is 48 is past their prime, over the hill etc.). Using calendar age when describing oneself makes people vulnerable to possible negative and stereotypical attributions, but also to positive praise, and this is often oriented to by people in their talk.

Quantification then, is a routine and taken-to-be factual way of self-description. In the following, I want to discuss two extracts – one by a male, one by a female participant – where quantification is used to establish age not only as a natural fact, but also as one that applies more generally to all people. Quantification, in other words, functions here *as a means of downgrading the personal significance of chronological age by turning it into a more general 'out-there feature'* that applies equally to others, instead of only to the person doing the talking (on factual description see Potter 1996, for achieving normalization see Lawrence 1996).

Extract 6.

PN: M2: Anssi (Cass 1, A: 14.2-14.6)

1.	PN:	Well, if we talk about like (0 8)	No jos puhutaan tota (0 8) ninku täst
2.		y'know about the present day or (.)	päivästä tai (.) tästä tota (1.2) ee viidenkym-
3.		about this (1 2) um turning fifty	menen vuoden tarteesta
4.		for instance then like (.) what	esimerkiks niin tota () mitä
5.		what kinds of meanings you like	mitä merkityksiä sää ite siihen ninkun
6.		what did you think for instance	mitä sä mietit sillon esimerkiks
7.		when the 50th birthday grew close	kun viidenkymmin synttari lähestyy
8.		(.) was it	() olikse se
9.		(3 2)	(3.2)
→ 10.	A	I di- (0.8) first of all I've	enmä sis- (0 8) ensinäkkin ma oon
11.		taken it to be (.) normal that	pitänyt (.) luonnollisena asiana
→ 12.		people grow older	etta ihminen vanhenee
13.	PN:	yes	joo
→ 14.	A:	Like y'know I'm now like 30 years	ett ett mä oon ninkun nyt 30 vuotta
15.		older than when I finished school	vanhempï kun koulun lopettaessani
16.		and () and and 25 years older	ja () ja ja kaksyvtviis vuotta vanhempï
17.		than when I got married and a lot of	naimisiinmenosta ja monesta
18.		other things so like (0 2) and	muusta asiasta että että (0 2) ja
→ 19.		so (0 6) ↑it's simply more	että (0 6) ↑se on nyt vaan enemmän

In this extract, the interviewer formulates a question, where the respondent is positioned to the category of 50+ through reference to his 50th birthday as something that has taken place in the present time (line 2). The interviewer's question is targeted to elicit an account of how the participant feels about entering the age category fifty. The question is left unfinished in a fashion that invites a completion by the interviewee.

After a long (3.2) pause, the interviewee, Anssi, provides an evasive, even defensive answer, that, instead of formulating an answer to the question asked, works to turn the personalised format in the question into a more general one (cf. Lawrence 1996). He can, in other words, be heard to be reworking the discourse identity assigned for him in the question (see also Widdicombe 1998a). The inappropriateness or delicate sensitivity of the question is thus produced in the (delayed) uptake by the respondent. Anssi's account (line 10 onwards): *'I di (0.8) first of all I've taken it to be normal that people grow older'* then works to move the attention from him *personally* to the notion of ageing as a fact of life more *generally*. From thereon the topic no longer is that the speaker, Anssi, is 50-years-old or ageing, but rather, that *people grow old*. The specific category '50-years-old' explicitly ascribed for Anssi in the interviewer's question, is, in other words, reworked into the more general and broad category device *'people who grow older'* which can also be heard as

'everybody'. The account is also delivered in a way to convey that this statement is not something that the speaker has come up with or produced *only* for this occasion. Anssi has in fact felt the same way for some time, and thus has no special stake in the question in this interview situation.

Having established that *people* in general grow older, Anssi then goes on to list events from his own life. Doing this, he seems merely to be using his own life as a more general example of the normal flow of events in a person's life in general. His former shift from personal to general mode, in other words, allows his life events to function as an example of people's life course more generally.

The list in Anssi's subsequent account takes on a three-part form, which is a common feature in conversational discourse (Jefferson 1990). In this case the three-item list finishes with what Jefferson (op.cit.: 67-68) calls a "general list completer": finished school...got married...and *a lot of other things* (line 15 onwards). What is more noteworthy here though, is that the list is built around a factual chronology of numbers. Talking in terms of numbers of years in between the events of his life course, the focus of Anssi's account moves from ageing as such into a matter-of-fact question of quantity, of what is more and what is less, to what came first and what followed (line 19). The focus in Anssi's account is therefore on the orderedness of life course events as parts of a factual and quantifiable continuum, not on the personal meanings of his ageing as such.

Quantification is used, then, both to generalise the importance of age and to downplay its personal significance. Through quantification, Anssi moves the focus of attention provided in the interviewer's question (personal) into a generalised and matter-of-fact way of talking about age, ageing, and the life course. Similar usage of quantification as a matter-of-fact device can be seen in extract seven. Similar to the previous account, this extract also follows the interviewer's question about the meaning of the respondent's chronological age.

Extract 7.

PN: W1: Laura 2 (Cas 1, A: 21.5-22.1)

1.	L:	And you don't like (1 2) really	Ja sitä ei niinkun (1.2) todella
2.		0 4) like call yourself y'know	(0.4) niinkun itseään osaa sillei tota
3.		at least on yourself <u>you wouldn't</u>	ainakaan itsestään <u>ei käyttäis</u>
4.		<u>use the term elderly</u> ((laughs))	nimitystä <u>ikääntynyt</u> ((nauraa))
5.	PN:	mm	mm
6.	L:	bu(h)t I like <u>middle-aged</u>	mu(h)t mää niinkun <u>keski-ikänen</u>
7.		I <u>do</u> say quite happily=	mä <u>ky]</u> sanon ihan iloisesti=
8.	PN:	yes	joo
9.	L:	=cause <u>that</u> I do admit being	=koska <u>se</u> mä myönnän olevani
10.		I remember for long I used to	muistan mä pitkään
11.		or as a matter of fact I quite <u>often</u>	tai itseasiassa mä aika <u>usein</u>
12.		have like comp- hhh which is quite	oon niinkun ver- hhh mikä on ihan
13.		true cause it always makes more or	totta koska sitä tulee aina suurin
14.		less a similar kind of equation ()	piirtein samanlainen yhtälö ()
15.		compared to my grandmother	mun isoäitiä aina verrannu sita
16.		cause I remember when she was	koska mä muistan silloin kun hän oli
17.		() eighty-something then I was	() kaheksankymppinen niin ma olin
18.		forty-something and now since	nelikymppinen ja nyt kun
19.		she's turning hundred then I'm fifty	hän täyttää sata niin maa oon viiskymppinen
20.		I always say	Mää aina sanon
→ 21.		>that since my grandmother is	>että kun mun isoäitini on
22.		↑ <u>that</u> age then I'm	↑ <u>ton</u> ikäinen niin mä olen
23.		mi(h)ddle-age(h)d	ke(h)ski-ikä(h)nen

The extract begins with the speaker, Laura distancing herself from the age label elderly (line 4) and aligning herself, instead, with the age-category middle-aged (lines 6-7). Adopting this category is from thereon justified by invoking quantified comparisons between Laura and her twice-as-old grandmother. What I want to claim then is, that like in extract 6, age in Laura's account, gains, once again, an out-there nature that affects everyone, and that this 'matter-of-fact out-there-ness' is established through the use of quantification (cf. Potter, Wetherell and Chitty 1991).

There are some differences between the extracts provided. Note however, how Laura's way of justifying her belonging to the category middle-aged, is established through mathematization in a similar manner as in extract 6 and that despite her more personal mode, the account has the sense of working as an example of the flow of time and of the factual nature of different generations following each other. Quantification works to add a matter-of-fact, generalised tone to Laura's account in a *since x, then y -format*: 'since my grandmother is ↑that age then I'm mi(h)ddle-age(h)d' (lines 21-23). Adopting the category middle-aged is thus turned into a factual mathematical equation (lines 13-14: *it always makes more or less a similar*

kind of equation), whereby age and membership in a specific age category is rendered into something that 'just is.'¹²

Facticity as a default formulation

To close up the analysis on the management of facticity, I would like to discuss some further features of the interview exchanges as locally organised and mutually accomplished (e.g. Hester and Francis 1994; Rapley and Antaki 1998; Watson and Weinberg 1982). In the beginning of the chapter, I established how shared common-sense, factual notions of the life course were mobilised, and how the interview as the context for talk, in itself, elicited participants to list, or in their talk, acknowledge notions of change, progression and death (see extracts 1 and 2). In the remaining section of this chapter, I would like to pursue the question of the interviewer's actions in the production of 'good and satisfactory accounts.' To do this, I will look at two extracts where the interviewer, either by repeatedly challenging the interviewee, or by asking particular follow-up questions, marks the accounts provided as not fitting, as invalid, or as somehow lacking. In the first extract, below, the interviewee has been asked to describe 'middle-age'.

Extract 8. PN: M7: Tapani (Cas 1, A: 15.7-16.4)

1.	T:	I guess you could say that (.) I	Sillä tavalla vois sanoa että () elan
2.		lead like yes you could say that	nin kun no voi sanoa että
→ 3.		I lead a very like <u>youthful</u> life	ninkun varsin <u>nuorekkaasti</u>
4.	PN:	yes yes What does [that mean]	joo joo Mitä [se tarkoittaa]
5.	T:	[maybe a bit]	[ehkä vähän]
6.		w ₁ (h)ld e(h)ven	va(h)llat(h)tomastikin
→ 7.	PN:	What does this youthfulness	Mitä tämä nuorekkuus ((hymyilevä
8		((smiley voice)) youthfulness mean	ään)) nuorekkuus tarkoittaa
9.		What does it entail	Mitä se pitää sisällään
10.	T:	((coughs)) Well (0.8) freedom perhaps	((yskii)) No (0 8) ehka vapautta
11		It's maybe <u>easiest</u> to describe	ehkä se on ninku <u>helpoin</u> kuvata
12.		to describe (0 4) as you know () free	kuvata (0 4) nin kun () vapaana
13.		I think () there's this (.) it's ()	Mun mielestäni (.) sillähän on on ()
14		like a <u>stereotype</u> in my	ninku sehan on <u>tyyppi</u> kuvaa mun

¹² I am not alone in this observation Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995: Chapter 8) point out how membership and involvement in a subculture was often described as a 'just is' - feature of the respondents,' as something 'for which measures of importance are simply irrelevant' (ibid 166) Note, however, how Laura's subscription to the age category 'middle-aged' is repeatedly marked by laughter (lines 6 and 23), which would point to some trouble in the delivery of the description.

15.		mind like for like (.) youth in itself	mielestäni niin kun () nuoruudelle sinansä
16.		that in a(h) way that doors are	etta niin kun tiety(h)nlainen ovet
17.		o(h)pen and one has different	on a(h)voimia ja valittavissa
18.		possibilities to choose from	erilaisia mahdollisuuksia
19.	PN.	Yes	Joo
20.	T.	and and very free in that sense	ja ja sillä tavalla hyvin vapaa
21.		(0 8)	(0 8)
22.	T.	So I guess I'd (0 2) describe it	Niin ehkä mä sen (0.2) kuvaisin
23.		that way	niin.
→ 24.	PN.	Yes so you like live with this this	Joo et sä elät sen sen
25.		like (0 2) with these open doors=	sen niinkun (0 2) tammösen avoimien ovien=
26.	T.	Yes	Joo
27.	PN:	=all the time	=kautta kaiken aikaa
28.	T:	Yes yes	Kyllä kyllä
→ 29.	PN.	I mean that in a way goes against-	Koska tuohan menee tavallaan vast-
30.		like (.) contradicts with the idea	niin kun menee (.) ristiin sen kans
31.		that that when a person grows <u>up</u>	et et kun ihminen <u>ai</u> kuistuu
32.		then one () becomes <u>staid</u>	niin sit se (.) <u>jämähtää</u>
33.		one way or another	tavalla tai toisella
→ 34.		that's what they say	sitähän puhutaan

Note how the participant's formulation '*I lead a very like youthful life...wi(h)ld e(h)ven*' (lines 3 and 6) is followed by the interviewer's repeated request for clarification: '*what does that mean*', line 4, and '*what does this youthfulness ((smiley voice)) youthfulness mean*' (lines 7-8). The smiley voice, as well as Tapani's laughter when describing his life as 'wild', can both be interpreted as marking some potential trouble in the account provided, that is, as orienting to a discrepancy between categories like 'middle-age' and predicates like 'youthful' and 'wild.'¹³ Note also how the introduction of the term 'youthful' is brought in through a Bakhtinian dialogic form, with the speaker engaging in something of a dialogue with himself (on the dialogic nature of language see e.g. Bakhtin 1981).

Continuing his account after this display of self reflexivity and searching, Tapani moves to a generalised and impersonal formulation as he provides the interviewer with an elaboration of youthfulness as 'free' (line 13) and as a time when one has various options and possibilities to choose from (lines 13-18). The interviewer's uptake (lines 24-27) then echos parts of Tapani's account, but also reformulates it, and moves it back into a more personalised and extreme mode: *Yes, so you like live with this like (0.2) with these open doors...all the time*'. After this, the interviewer brings in and compares Tapani's account with some common-sense notions of human

¹³ Another possible reading of the data is hearing Tapani's formulation as flirting with the interviewer

development, and points to a contradiction in Tapani's description (lines 29-34: *'I mean that in a way goes against- like (.) contradicts with the idea that...'*). The noticeable feature of talk here, in addition to the self-correction from *'going against'* to the more formal *'contradicts'*, is that the interviewer chooses to mitigate her challenge by grounding her claims in more commonly held opinions and beliefs. So, instead of *'owning'* (cf. Sharrock 1974) the claims about ageing stated earlier, by saying *'that's how I see it,'* she changes footing, and evokes a more generalised and shared formulation *'that's what they say'* (line 34). Her former formulation thus becomes personally disengaged, that is, put across not as her opinion or as the hard facts of *'what happens when you grow old,'* but as one possible way of talking about it; that is if *'they say that'*, maybe some other people including the interviewee want to say differently. So the delicate change of footing here resonates with the discursive practices identified in, for example news interview situations (e.g. Clayman 1992).

What I want to claim then is, that, despite the display of searching and the modalisation in Tapani's account (lines 1-2: *I guess you could say that (.) I lead like yes you could say that...)* the interviewer can be heard as repeatedly pointing to the respondent's failure to talk about the topic at hand in *'appropriate'* terms, and as making Tapani accountable for this failure. The interviewer is, in other words, clearly drawing on, and bringing into the interview situation, some commonsense notions of how *'being a fifty-something, and middle-aged'* should be done in this context and treats the answers provided accordingly.

According to Baker (1984: 316, also 1981), the fact that interviewers aren't traditionally trained to make remarks on the quality of the answers makes *'occasions on which this does occur...instructive.'* She also provides examples from her adolescent-adult interviews, where the initial answers provided by adolescents are not treated as satisfactory descriptions or answers, to the question put forward by the adult interviewer. Here's one of the example she gives.

From Baker 1984, 316:

Are there any ways in which you consider yourself to still be partly a child?

Well, I like to watch T.V. and, uh,
Well adults do that.

Yeah, I still read comics ((laugh))

Adults do that.

That's about, only thing I can think of.

According to Baker, the interviewer in the extract pronounces the interviewee's nominations as invalid and indicates that a valid response would involve noting something children do and adults do not. In the extract with Tapani above, the question is not so much about category-bound activities but rather, about the kinds of predicates the interviewee can link to the age category 'middle-age' without eliciting comments from or being challenged by the interviewer. The *default formulation* seems to be a set of common-sensically congruent and acceptable predicates that fit the factual, what-everyone-knows- notions of stage of life categories. Below we have another example of how certain default formulations surface as the expected model for talking about age. In extract 9, Saara is asked about the relationship between age and her work.

Extract 9. PN: W11: Saara (Cas 1, A: 19.7-20.6)

	1.	PN	How about at work how () how	Entäs työelämässä miten () miten ninku
	2.	S.	Well I'd say that in my opinion	No kyllä se on mun mielestä tommoses
	3.		in like teaching it's an asset	opetustyössä rikkaus
→	4.		(0 4)	(0.4)
	5.	S:	It is () without doubt	Kyllä se on (.) ilman muuta
	6.		when I think that I-I sure	kun ma aattelen että e-en mä oo varmaan
	7.		have <u>never</u> been as <u>sure</u>	<u>koskaan</u> oo niin <u>varma</u>
	8.		and as strong as <u>now</u> in [this] age	ja vahvimmillani ku <u>nyt</u> [tässä] iässä
	9.	PN.	[mm]	[mm]
	10.		yes	joo
	11.	S:	cause you're not like <u>scared</u> (.)	koska ei sitä ninku <u>pelkää</u> (.)
	12.		of anything and and you can take	mitään ja ja osaa suhtautua
	13.		things >you relate to the young	asioihin >nuorin osaa suhtautua
	14.		completely< differently	ihan< eri tavalla
→	15.		(0 8)	(0 8)
	16.	S:	so so it's in my opinion	et et kyllä se mun mielestä on
	17.		without doubt an asset (0 2)	ilman muuta rikkaus (0 2)
	18.		though more generally in working	vaikka yleisesti työelämässä
	19.		life fifty-somethings aren't	ei nyt viiskymppiset niin
	20.		particularly like () preferred	hirveesti oo ninku (.) suosiossa
	21.		but I'd say that like in teaching	mut kyl mä sanon et kyllä opetustyössä
	22.		then (.) it is undoubtedly in my	niin () se on ilman muuta mun
	23.		mind an asset	mielestä rikkaus
→	24.	PN:	yes	joo
	25.	S.	Cause you can like pass on	Koska pystyy ninku valittamaan
	26.		your own life experience also	sitä omaa elämäkokemustaankin myöskin
→	27.	PN	°mm°	°mm°
	28.	S	I mean you can give more than just	eli antamaan muutakin kun
	29.		like facts	sitä tietoa
	30.	PN.	yes	joo
	31.	S:	so yes yes it is like (.)	et kyllä kyllä se niin kun on (.)

	32.		I mean that in a way you adopt	eli sillä tavalla tulee ninkun
	33.		this like broader approach (.) to	semmonen laajempi suhtautuminen (.)
	34.		things to like book learning (0 4)	nihin asioihin tavallaan kirjatietoon (0.4)
	35.		cause you can simply teach what's	kun voi ihan vaan opettaa sen
	36.		in the books and so on but from	mitä kirjoissa sanotaan ja näin mutta siinähan
	37.		completely different points of	tulee ninku ihan eri
	38.		view	näkökulmia
→	39.	PN:	yes	joo
	40.	S:	So I do think it's an asset	Et on se mun mielestä ihan rikkaus
→	41.	PN:	Is there anything negative	Onks siinä sit
	42.		about it then	mitään negatiivista

Contrary to extract 8, the interviewer does not directly challenge the account provided. Instead, I would like to draw attention to the interviewer's use of pauses and minimal response as a means of eliciting further descriptions. The pauses can be heard as marking the descriptions thus far provided as unsatisfactory, or as incomplete (cf. Puchta 1999). The interviewee's turns also orient to this, as they are typically structured around an upgrade of what was said, and of what went on before.

The interviewee, Saara, has initially been asked to describe situations where she notices her age. In the beginning of the extract, she is asked more specifically to describe whether work provides any such situations. Saara begins her account by describing age as an asset in the field of teaching (lines 2-3). After a pause (line 4), she then elaborates her account by describing how she has become more sure about herself, and how she now relates better to the young (lines 5-14). By the end of line 14, Saara provides a second hearable end to her account. When the interviewer once again fails to come in with a comment or with a further question, Saara proceeds, after another pause (line 15), to provide a gloss formulation. Note how she upgrades her initial description 'it's an asset' (line 3) into 'so so it's in my opinion without doubt an asset' (lines 16-17). This time her description is however, accompanied by an acknowledgement that her account could possibly be heard as going against more general notions of 50-somethings and work ('though more generally in work life fifty-somethings aren't particularly like (.) preferred but I'd say that like in teaching then (.) it is undoubtedly an asset'). Saara can be heard as establishing teaching as a special case and as thus justifying her initial description. On lines 25-26, 28-29, and 31-37 Saara provides further detailed evidence to back her claim of age as an asset in teaching and a final repeat of this claim is given on line 40 ('so I do think it's an asset').

On lines 41-42 the interviewer comes in for the first time with more than minimal feedback. Her question '*Is there anything negative about it then*' can be heard as marking Saara's account as lacking not in length, detail or in accurate vocabulary, but as lacking a more complete description of age as having both positive and negative elements in it. The interviewer's delayed uptake question thus treats Saara's lengthy account that revolved and repeated the undeniably positive notion of age as an asset as lacking a sufficiently strong sense of negative descriptions. 'Doing middle-agedness' in an acceptable, plausible and satisfactory ways is, in this exchange, judged against a *default formulation* according to which age should be acknowledged for the fact that it brings negative changes with it.

Summary

To summarise then, in this chapter, I have been concerned to identify some communicative practices and devices through which both parties in the interview situation orient to, mobilise and re-enforce factual or 'natural' notions of the human lifespan. In addition to the discussion over the positioned nature of stage of life categories, the analytic focus of this chapter has been on the practices through which notions of change and progression become hearable parts of the interview interaction. The analysis established how speakers mobilised and managed notions of facticity 1) through the usage of A - B - but A *provisional continuity device*, 2) through the use of *quantification*, and 3) through mobilising *default stage-of-life descriptions* that were made locally relevant. The analysis also shows how cultural common-sense notions are jointly carried into the interaction at different points of the interaction, and defined in terms of what these shared notions mean in-and-for this occasion.

It was also established that the factual nature of change, the notion of age categories as positioned, and the shared notions of the human life course as a progression, functioned as more general starting points for the interaction. Notions of 'the natural' or 'the factual' thus function as central conversational resources that both parties bring into the interview situation. Once established and acknowledged, this shared common sense understanding of ageing and change then functions as the backdrop

against which competing or deviant categorisations and descriptions can be made. This becomes clear as we now move forwards in the detailed analysis of age categories in talk.

Chapter Four: Warranting and Resisting an Age Category

'I'm not a Dirty Old Man - I'm a Sexy Senior Citizen'

(A bumper sticker spotted in Florida, USA)

Given the factual common sense nature of age as a self-descriptor, outlined in the last chapter, categorisation in age terms can be a potentially sensitive business. In this chapter I will therefore be looking at the discursive action – the interpretative and reasoning practices – through which belonging to a specific age category is achieved, and at how membership in an age category is either warranted or resisted. I will focus on the discursive detail of self-categorisation, and on the organisation of age descriptions, to demonstrate their dynamic, fluid and contradictory nature (Antaki, Condor and Levine 1996), as they are put to use locally within the course of interaction. The chapter continues to build upon the recent work in discursive psychology (see chapter 2). This work suggests that identity negotiation and membership or non-membership in categories is to be examined by detailed analysis of the talk through which they are accomplished (Edwards 1991; Edwards and Potter 1992; Potter and Wetherell 1987; also Hadden and Lester 1978).

As already established, the mobilisation of particular age categorisation as part of one's situated self-description also invokes and displays a host of conventional predicates: notions of attributes, actions, rights, and competencies of the person so categorised. The sense of categories is thus temporally and locally contingent (Hester and Eglin 1997a; Sacks 1972a; Schegloff 1972; Watson and Weinberg 1982; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995).

According to Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995, 103-104):

...by virtue of a category membership (either attributed by others or offered by the individual), a person's own behaviour can be glossed, interpreted and characterised in terms of what is known and expected about that category. It is therefore always potentially the case that the sense or purpose of a person's actions, beliefs, opinions and so on, may be understood by virtue of what is known commonly about the category to which the individual can be seen to be affiliated.

This relationship between categorisation and identity – the practical identity functions of age labels – is given centre stage in this chapter¹. The analytical focus is on how the interviewees' descriptions, and the mobilisation of membership or non-membership in a particular age category are done, and how speakers simultaneously attend to the implications, or possible hearings of their categorisations. The starting point in this chapter is, that category entitlement is 'not a fact of nature' (Potter 1997: 137), but rather something that has to be worked at, negotiated, and managed. Despite the factual nature of age, discussed in the previous chapter, meanings of ageing were not automatically, or in some foreseeable or consistent way present in the interview situation. Instead, age, like any other discursively invoked identity, functioned as a 'flexible resource' (Antaki, Condor and Levine 1996; McKinlay and Dunnett 1998; Potter and Wetherell 1987) to be deployed to various argumentative ends in the course of the conversation. The chapter demonstrates not only the scope of communicative features involved in 'age in action', but also the wider range of discursive practices to do with the organisation of descriptions and categorisation more generally.

Looking for the right word

Let us start with a couple of examples, where participants' talk circles around alternative age categorisations, or age labels. In the first one, Arto reflects on the notion of his age.

Extract 1.

PN: M1: Arto (Cas 1, A: 14.5-15.6)

	1.	A.	AND I MEAN it's () this of course	JA SIIS SIINA on () tää tietenkin
	2		this concept of time that you can't that	taa aikakäsitys ku ei ku ei
→	3.		you can't get rid of this linear idea	pääse irtu täst lineaarisesta
	4		(0 4)	(0 4)

¹ The practical identity functions of age labels also become clear in the public and political debate over which age terms should be recommended for use, when referring to specific age groups. Part of the work of special interest groups and organisations like the Grey Panthers or Age Concern is, for instance, to resist pejorative or homogenising age labels when talking about 'the elderly.' Other means of resisting or ironising pejorative age category ascription range from magazine publishing (e.g. The Oldie Magazine, edited by the former Private Eye editor Richard Ingrams), to web sites like 'I don't feel fifty' (<http://www.idf50.co.uk/home.asp>), to book projects (e.g. The Hen Co-op 1993) and bumper stickers (e.g. quote in the beginning of this chapter). Research has also pointed out, how euphemisms (often referring to colours as in 'evergreen' or 'silver') are used to by-pass the potential negative connotations of old age (e.g. Coupland, Coupland and Giles 1991; Nikander 1999b).

	5.	PN:	mm	mm
	6.	A:	((coughs)) except in <u>some</u> ways	((yskii)) paitsi siis <u>jollain</u> tavalla
	7.		of course if you define like your	tietenkin ett jos määrittelee ninku omaa
→	8.		<u>sense</u> of age and not age as such	<u>ikäisyyttä</u> än eikä ikäänsä ninkään
	9.		>like am I old or young or	>siis olenko minä vanha vai nuori vai
	10.		middle-aged< (0 6) then it	keski-ikäinen< (0 6) niin
	11.		somehow () feels that it's	jotenkin () tuntuu et se
	12.		the middle-age () that	keski-ikä on mulle (.) se
	13.		doesn't suit me	mikä ei istu
	14.	PN:	yeah	joo
→	15.	A:	Like being a rascal suits me and	Et mulle sopii nulikkamaisuus ja
	16.		then of course I'd like to be a	sitten tietysti haluaisin olla vanha
→	17.		wise old man .hhh ((coughs))	viisas mies hhh ((yskii))
	18.	PN:	[heh heh heh heh heh]	[heh heh heh heh heh heh]
	19.	A:	[this archety(h)pe kind] (.) >wise	[siis tällanen arkkityypine(h)] (.) >vanha
	20.		old man< but this middle age (.)	viisas mies< mutta siis se keski-ikä (.)
	21.		and being middle-aged () and	ja keski-ikäisyys ja (.) keskiluokkasuus ja
	22.		middle class and mediocre is like (.)	keskinkertaisuus niin se on ninku (.)
	23.		somehow repulsive to me	mulle jotenkin vastenmielistä
	24.	PN:	yeah	joo
	25.	A:	and <u>that's</u> the kind of world	Ja <u>semmosessa</u> maailmassa mä
	26.		I <u>live</u> in none the less and so like	kuitenkin <u>elän</u> koko ajan ja siis
	27.		I don't feel at <u>home</u> in the mid-	en mä nyt <u>viihdy</u> tässä keski-
	28.		(0 8) in the mi(h)ddle (.) of all this	(0 8) kaikenlaisessa (.) kaiken keskell(h)ä
	29.	PN:	yeah	joo
	30.	A:	((coughs)) in middle-age (0 8)	((yskii)) keski-ässä (0 8)
	31.		in middle-class and in mediocrity	keskiluokassa ja keskinkertaisuudessa
	32.		(0 2) which is none the <u>less</u> where	(0 2) missä siis joudun <u>kuitenkin</u>
	33.		I have to <u>live</u>	<u>elämään</u>
	34.	PN:	mm	mm
→	35.	A:	hhh so in that sense I try to hang	hhh et siis siinä mielessä mä yritän
→	36.		onto the (.) scraps of the	elätellä (.) nulikkamaisuuden
	37.		rascal a(h)nd=	rippeita ja(h)=
	38.	PN:	mm	mm
→	39.	A:	= () in me and then you try to	= (.) ittessäni ja sitten yrittää
	40.		pretend to be the wise old man	teeskennellä vanhaa viisasta miestä
	41.		but I think it's a bit (1.0) maybe	mut kyl se nyt vähän (1 0) ehkä
	42.		(0 4) a s-sham this wisdom	(0 4) huijaa-huijaamista on taä viisauus

The extract starts with Arto distinguishing between two separate concepts of time: 'this linear idea' (line 3), and 'your sense of age and not age as such' (lines 6-7). Starting with the notion of one's sense of age, Arto then mobilises two categories: that of 'a rascal' (line 15), and that of 'a wise old man' (lines 16-17). Simultaneously notions of middle-age, as well as attributes linked to it, are marked with dislike (lines: 21-23: *being middle-aged (.) and middle-class and mediocre is like (.) somehow repulsive to me*). One possible way of interpreting Arto's deliverance of the alternative categories is to hear it as abstract 'interview talk' in the course of which the categories 'rascal' and 'wise old man' offer exemplification and elaboration of the features of middle-aged that Arto is resisting. At the same

time, however, the alternative categorisation does personal descriptive work, the detail of which is of particular interest to the analysis.

First of all, at no point are 'rascal' or 'wise old man' talked about as firm, or as from-now-on, factual self-categorisations. Instead, they are introduced through the formulations 'being a rascal suits me' (line 15), and 'of course I'd like to be a wise old man'. Both formulations are brought into the interaction through what seems very detached, for-an-audience reflection, almost as if the speaker is in the process of window-shopping for a suitable age label. Claiming that a category 'suits' the speaker mobilises notions, not of a psychological state, or a category that the speaker claims ownership of (Sacks 1992), but rather establishes the characterisation as an outsider's label or description. Using the category, 'rascal' also delivers potentially negative packaging in a non-negative way. In other words, it delivers a sanitised, or a fond description of badness, or wickedness.

The category 'wise old man,' on the other hand, becomes introduced as a more generally sought-after age categorisation, that the speaker, like many others, would want to claim membership in. The appeal here, particularly through the use of '*of course*' (line 15) works as reference to a shared nature of this type of response (cf. 'obviously' in Baruch 1981). The shared nature of the interviewee's response is further strengthened by '*this archet(h)ype kind (.) wise old man*' (lines 18-19). A more general positive cultural image of old age is, in other words, invoked as well as the notion that *anyone* in the interviewee's place would prefer being able to categorise themselves in this same way. The formulation of **liking** to be a member in this category also manages 'being a wise old man' as an avowal while warding off the potential of being heard as boasting.

Similar delicate features of implicit boasting can be detected towards the end of the extract, as Arto revisits the notion of a wise old man and redefines the claims to this category as pretence (line 35), and as sham (line 38). In sum then, the mobilisation of 'rascal' and 'wise old man' are done in a way that allows room for doubt as to whether sufficient warrant exists for claiming membership in either of these

categories. The self-descriptions are also, to some extent, done in a jocular and ironised fashion, or at least, acknowledged as such by the interviewer (line 18).

Another noteworthy feature of extract one is, that not only does Arto avoid directly claiming or owning the alternative categories 'rascal' and 'wise old man.' Instead, the mobilisation of these categories alternates with reference to linear time and the 'reality' of his life situation. The discursive moves between acknowledging 'the reality' of his age, dictated by the notion of linearity, on the one hand, and the wishful, jocular and ironised self-categorisations 'rascal' and 'wise old man' on the other, marks Arto's talk with fascinating duality. Through this dual, or dilemmatic organisation his description refutes the notion that chronological age would be the *only* decisive feature of the speaker's identity. The formulation '*the scraps of the rascal in me*' (line 35) works to do exactly this while, at the same time, it establishes and produces the speaker as a rational and sensible person, capable of acknowledging the 'facts of life' (see chapter three). Arto's acknowledgement of chronological, linear time, and his way of distinguishing these from a personal sense of age thus work to give him a more acceptable basis to mobilise alternative categories.²

In the next extract, the category 'Madame' is being discussed with Laura. She is describing coming across an apparently age-targeted magazine by this name at a supermarket, and continues to claim that the title is an unsuitable description of her current or future age. Resisting an age category is again accompanied by laughter. In addition, the speaker can be heard as orienting to the potential sensitivity of refusing an age category by moving to generalise her claim.

Extract 2. PN: W1: Laura (Cas 1, A: 17.1-18.0)

1.	L:	The thing I notice is that I'm like	Sen mä huomaan et mua ninkun
2.		(0 4) uh (0 4) I don't know if this	(0 4) um (0 4) en ma tiedä littyyks
3.		has anything to do with the to-topic	tää täh-tahan aiheeseen yhtään
4.		But I loo- saw these (0.2)	Mut ma kat- nain tuolla noita (0 2)
5.		at the <u>check</u> -out these adds	<u>maksikoreissa</u> noita () lööppejä

² A word on translation should be added here. The Finnish translated here into 'the scraps of the rascal in me' would, in a more literal translation read as 'the remnants of rascal-likeness'. The Finnish word 'nulikka' is a fond description that refers typically to a young mischievous boy (or sometimes to children in general) who is up to tricks and who is constantly running into difficulty.

	6.		for Beauty and Health's		ton Kauneuden ja Terveuden
	7.		latest issue that was called <u>Madame</u>		uus numero jonka nimi oli <u>Madame</u>
	8		And I thought that can't be <u>true</u>		Ja mä aattelin että ei voi olla <u>totta</u>
→	9.		like surely we can't be		et eihän me nyt <u>tässä</u> iässä mitään
	10.		<u>Madames</u> in <u>this</u> age		<u>madameja</u> olla
	11.		And I just thought about what a		Mä just aattelin että mikä tommoinen
	12.		Madame is I've started to		Madame mää oon ruvennu
	13.		really think about like ma-madame		oikein miettimään sitä että ma-madame
	14.		like what does it bring to mind		et mitä se tuo sulle mieleen
	15		And you think about this (.)		Ja se tuo just jonkun semmoisen (.)
→	16.		quite a fat		aika lihavan
	17.		Then I started to think		Sit mä rupesin miettiin
	18.		that ↑ <u>how</u> old is she		et ↑ <u>minkä</u> ikäinen se on
	19.		I thought ok she's sixty years old		Mää aattelin et jaa se on kuuskytuotias
	20.		Then I thought that at sixty		Sit mää aattelin et mää kyllä
	21.		I would certainly say		varmaan kuuskytuotiaana sanoisin et
→	22.		that I'm n(h)o (.) ma(h)dame		en minä () mikä(h)än ma(h)da(h)me ol(h)e
	23.		((joint laughter))		((nauravat yhdessä))
	24.	L	Like th(h)at a(h)lso ra(h)ises		Et se(h)kin va(h)rmaan ni(h)in et se
	25.		with your own age		nousis sitä mukaa kun se oma ikä nousee
→	26.		So it's funny		Et se on nunkun jannää
	27.		that there are certain words		et on tiettyjä tällaisia sanoja
	28.		that you don't like () <u>want</u> to		joita sää et nunkun (.) <u>halua</u>
	29.		attach to yourself=		liittää itsees=
	30.	PN·	[mm]		[mm]
	31.	L	=[and] I thought that I wonder who		=[mää] just aattelin että kukakohan
	32.		(.) <u>wants</u> to		(.) <u>haluaa</u>
	33		I mean the magazine () may be		et se lehti (.) voi olla
	34.		a perfectly <u>good</u> one and I checked		ihan <u>hyvä</u> ja mä katoin
	35.		what topics it had >so I'm		mitä aiheita sinä oli >Et se
	36		sure it was quite a good issue<=		varmaan oli ihan hyvä numero<=
	37.	PN:	yeah		joo
	38.	L:	=I just thought the <u>name</u> wasn't		=mä mietin vaan et se <u>nimi</u> ei
	39.		necessarily of the type that		valttämättä ollu semmoinen
	40.		it would <u>appeal</u> to you		et se nunkun <u>veতো</u> ais sinuun
→	41.		I dunno ↑ <u>what</u> it should have been		mä en tiä ↑ <u>mikä</u> sen ois pitäny olla

Note how, when rejecting the category 'Madame,' Laura uses a generalised pronoun form 'we'. Laura can be heard as speaking as a representative of women in her age group and as rejecting the age label as unsuitable for this stage of their life (lines 9-10: *like surely we can't be Madames in this age*). The unsuitability of the category is established through reference to category-bound attributes like *fat* (line 16), and by positioning the category on the age scale (line 19: *ok she's sixty years old*).

The beginning part of Laura's account is built on a detailed description of her initial thoughts at the time of first coming across the term 'Madame.'³ She quotes her

³ Note also that the ways in which the speaker initially came across the term is in itself carefully monitored. The self-repair on line 4 changes from the active form 'I looked' into the more passive formulation 'I saw' (for self-correction in talk see Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977)

thought process in some length and detail for the interviewer (*and I just thought...then I started to think...and I thought ok*). The analytic question then is why does the speaker go to all that trouble? Why does Laura not simply state the unsuitability of the age label in question, but instead engages in this elaborate description of her train of thought on what seems a very mundane occurrence?

Two analytic points can be raised here. First of all the *active voicing* (Wooffitt 1992; see also Potter 1996: 160-162) in Laura's description of her initial thought process can be heard as the speaker engaging in rational and public testing of the applicability of the age label in question. The account, delivered in a non-emotional, distanced and factual manner, simultaneously implies that the speaker has no reason to be emotional about the issues at hand. The second analytic point is that having introduced her own initial thought process, this manner of thinking then becomes generalised into something that *reports* the experience or opinion of a *range* of people.

Note how this happens step by step. After attaching 'Madame' to the chronological age of sixty, Laura goes on to state that she *personally* would probably object to the usage of the category at that age as well. The laughter that accompanies the statement '*I would certainly say that I'm n(h)o Ma(h)dame*' (lines 21-22), does two kinds of work. First, it can be heard as playing down the severity of the claim being made. Second, the laughter can be heard as orienting the hearer to the notion, that such denial of age labels is a more general feature of people's ways of talking about themselves. This interpretation is consistent with the detail of what follows. That is, Laura moving to a more generalised 'you' form: '*Like tha(h)t a(h)lso ra(h)ises with your own age*' (lines 24-25) and particularly when summing up on lines 26-29: '*So it's funny that there are certain words that you don't like (.) want to attach to yourself*'.

Baruch (1981: 289, see also Sacks 1992, Vol. 1) has drawn our attention to how the use of 'you' functions as an appeal to the intersubjective nature of the claim being made. In the example in question here, the repeated use of 'you', in other words, generalises Laura's unwillingness to use certain terms, and turns it into *anybody's*

concern. In his lecture on 'You', Sacks calls 'you' an example of a 'this-or-that' device. By this he means that 'you' builds rich ambiguity into what exactly is being referred to, and that 'when a person hears 'you' they then go through a procedure of deciding what it refers to.' (1992, Vol.1: 165). Note how, in addition to using the generalised 'you' Laura's account also does further work to discount the potential psychologised interpretation that she personally is reluctant towards or avoiding certain age labels. Instead the listener is left to answer her ambiguous question '[and] I thought that I wonder who (.) wants to' (line 31).

In summary then, the analysis of both Arto's and Laura's resistance of specific age labels shows us the discursive detail of the sensitive management of age categorisation, and the intricacy of establishing warrant, of generalising and sometimes ironising the grounds for membership. There are some differences in between the extracts. Arto manages the introduction of alternative age categories through repeated reference that makes clear that he is aware of his actual chronological age and life situation. Extract one also provides an example of how age categorisation is done in an indirect, non-solid fashion that simultaneously wards off potential negative hearings, such as boasting. Laura's narration, on the other hand, can be heard as tailored to manage the potential sensitivity of her age claims particularly through the use of generalisation. Although she does not offer a better or more accurate description to 'Madame' that she would feel comfortable with, her talk nonetheless skilfully manages and generalises the rejection of this age label.

The use of category contrasts

The remaining space in this chapter will be devoted to the analysis of one longer extract. There are several reasons for this. First, choosing a longer extract for analysis further establishes how the relevance and irrelevance of a category – the means of warranting or resisting an age label – are not simply announced, but rather, imbedded in the fine-grained design and flow of narration. Second, focusing on a longer spate of talk by the same speaker affords the analysis of how mutually contradictory age labels and categories are mobilised. As a result, a more active

notion of age in action starts to emerge. Third, the analysis of a longer extract also brings forward the interactional dynamics between the interviewer and the interviewee, develops the analytic themes and topics of *you*-form generalisation and laughter discussed so far, and takes up issues and questions that will be further developed in later chapters.

The longer one-stretch analysis that follows is not meant to be taken as a singular, *sui generis* case study of features of age categorisation. Rather, the analysis builds on and points to the general features and devices at work in the turn-by-turn accomplishment of warranting and resisting age categorisations. It identifies the reasoning processes through which speakers move in between explanations and arguments (cf. Antaki 1994), and how they negotiate multiple and conflicting age categorisations and identities for themselves in the course of the interview interaction.

Special emphasis in the analysis is on the use of *category contrasts*. The construction of category contrasts will be examined as a crucial discursive feature used to arrive at an identity within talk. In addition to this, contrast structures, as 'a powerful, general-purpose discursive device' (Edwards 1996: 237) have been approached from a multitude of perspectives. The coining of the term took place in Dorothy Smith's (1978), seminal article '*K is Mentally Ill*', where Smith used it to examine pathologizing accounts concerning a third party. Since then, discursive and conversation analytic work has explored 'contrast structures' as a feature of discursive reality construction (Potter 1997), as a rhetorical tool for inviting audience applause (Atkinson 1984), as feature of political (Heritage and Greatbatch 1986), court room (Drew 1992), and ideological discourse (Billig et al. 1988), as a practical tool in selling (Pinch and Clark 1986), as a means of categorising children as 'deviant' (Hester 1998), as a means of accomplishing being average (McKinlay and Dunnett 1998), and as a central feature of discursive identity construction (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998a; Dickerson 2000; Edwards 1997; Sacks 1979; for a discussion see Wooffitt 1993).

Exploring one longer stretch of talk by the same speaker, my wish is to establish how comparisons and contrasts are used as flexible conversational resources for arriving at versions of discursive identity. The analysis of the longer account to follow, affords looking not only at instances where speakers draw a direct contrast between themselves and others (cf. Dickerson 2000), but also to investigate the fascinating dilemmatic fashion in which different versions of the speaker herself are constructed and managed. Towards the end of the chapter, I will extend my observations to a more general discussion on the discursive practices that display an orientation to the sensitivity of doing membership and non-membership by applying similarity or contrast.⁴

'Old' versus 'Little Girl'

In the following then, I will be looking at one lengthy extract from an interview with a soon to be 50-year-old interviewee called Laura. The extract comes from the beginning of the interview. As we are about to see, Laura's narration follows a two-fold structure based on a contrastive age-categorisation 'old' vs. 'little girl.' Numerous other examples of contrastive use of age categories could be found in the data, but it was the particular structure of Laura's account that made me want to explore the discursive intricacy through which being both 'old' and 'a little girl' are managed and accounted for, and to analyse how, despite such apparent contradiction, her narrative is rendered coherent. Towards the end of my analysis, I will show how the interviewee herself also attends to the sensitive nature of her account, and treats parts of it as requiring further explication.

The reader should, again, be reminded that participants' talk is analysed here without commitment to any 'fact', 'truth' or 'actual experience' of which it is an account. Instead, all talk is analysed as action-oriented (e.g. Edwards 1997; Edwards and Potter 1992). This means, that the logic of accounting – the production of sets of criteria for membership or non-membership in particular categories or groups, and

⁴ Parts of the discussion and analysis presented in this chapter have been published in Nikander 2000a

the ways in which activities and predicates become attached to categories – form the focus of analysis.

We join the interview at a point where the interviewer is introducing her research and asking what made the interviewee want to participate. The question is then followed by a lengthy exchange in which the interviewer's turns are reduced to a minimum. I include the initial introduction and question to my analysis as an integral interactional move that does more than simply opens up the exchange (for a discussion on interview interaction see e.g. Baker 1997; Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Potter 1997b). These first turns can be heard as cementing the roles of the interactants as ones of interviewer and interviewee. This allocation of roles started before the actual face-to-face situation, as Laura was one of the interviewees to contact me after reading the feature on ageing in a women's magazine that also stated that I was looking for research interviewees.⁵ In the first extract, the interviewer opens the interaction by referring to the letter she subsequently sent to participants who were willing to be interviewed. I will introduce the longer extract in shorter sequences.

Extract 3. PN: W1: Laura (Cas 1, A: 2.6-)

1.	PN.	um (1.2) like I think (0 2) I may	umm (1.2) tota niin kuis (0 2) mää taisin
2.		have said in the letter () when I	kirjeessä (.) kun mää lähetin näita kirjeitä
3.		sent letters to those of you who	tota niin teille jotka otti
4.		[con]tacted me=	muhun [yhte]lyttä=
5.	L:	[mm]	[mm]
6.	PN·	=I think I must have (.) mentioned	=niin mä siina varmaan () totesin jotain
7.		that that I was interested in what	että että mää oon kiinnostunu ylipäänsä
8.		people in general think or	niinkun ihmisen ikään ja ikaantumiseen
9.		[feel] about age and ageing	littyivistä [ajat]uksista ja tuntemuksista
10.	L	[yeah]	[joo]
11.	PN:	but do you remember w-what	mut muistaks saa ite m-mika sai sut
12.		initially made you (.) reply	sillon niinkun alkujaan (.) vastaamaan
13.		to the feature in (.) Anna	sihen Annassa olleeseen (.) juttuun
14.	L:	It was mainly this that	No lähinnä just tää sus kun mää
15.		I'm (0.4) maybe simply that this	oon (0 4) ehka just tää kun lahestyy
16.		fiftieth birthday is coming so (1.0)	taa vuosikymmentpäivä ni (1.0)
17.		so I was like (1 0) uh >naturally	niin mua niinkun (1 0) uh >tietysti
18.		the <u>idea</u> in itself is one	se <u>ajatuksena</u> se on just semmoinen et se
19.		to sort of like< (0 2) <u>makes</u> you	niinkun< (0.2) <u>pane</u> sut
20.		<u>think</u> about <u>age</u> =	<u>ajattelemaan</u> tätä <u>ikä</u> =
21.	PN	mm	mm

⁵ See Appendix 2 for details on interviewees and procedure.

	22.	L:	=but I think there's (.) I've felt	=mut musta niinkun on () mä ä oon kokenu
→	23.		that there's a real big <u>difference</u> ()	et sinä on hirveen iso <u>ero</u> (.)
	24.		in how I feel about myself at <u>work</u>	miten mä koen itseni <u>toissää</u>
	25.		and how I feel at other times	ja miten koen itseni muuten

What is noteworthy here is how, while introducing her interests in general terms, the researcher (PN) implicitly places Laura into the larger category of interviewees (lines 2-4: *when I sent letters to those of you who [con]tacted me*). By this the interviewer describes the relationship between herself and Laura as one of an interviewer and an interviewee, and the interview situation as a voluntary action on Laura's part. This opening sequence thus does some complicated management of the participants' prior agency and simultaneously establishes the distribution of rights (to ask questions) and obligations (to provide answers) within the interview situation itself. In other words, the interview is constituted *in situ* as based on a particular distribution of turn types (cf. Hester and Eglin 1997b), and the speakers can be heard as "tacitly performing common sense 'membership analysis' upon each other" (Watson and Weinberg 1982: 60). This also includes the distribution of the categories 'interviewer' and 'respondent.'

Studies of the beginning of school classes (Payne 1976, also Payne and Hustler 1980), and of meetings (Atkinson et al. 1978) have shown how interactants build on the establishment of standard relational pairs, such as chairman-member, teacher-student, and here, interviewer-interviewee, when establishing the recognisability of relevant action and identity. In this beginning spate of talk, the interviewer is, for instance utilising shared interactional indexicals like reference to '*the feature in Anna*' (line 13), to a letter she sent to potential participants (lines 2-4), and to the contents of what was said in the letter (lines 6-9). All this works to establish the interactional basis for the interview situation.

The interviewer's way of constructing both the introduction and her initial question is marked by false starts hesitation and pauses (lines 1-2: *mm (1.2) like I think (0.2) I may have said*, and line 6: *I think I must have (.) mentioned*) and she introduces her research in general terms as being interested in "*what people in general think or feel about age and ageing*" (lines 7-9) Her initial question is formulated to reduce the accountability of the individual, and to afford her own positioning vis-à-vis the topic

of ageing. The informality and the searching nature of her style of questioning can be taken to be a more general and intrinsic feature of qualitative interviewing, that functions as discursive scene-setting for the forthcoming interaction (see Puchta and Potter 1999 for a discussion, and Lawrence 1996, on facilitative news interviews). The question's generalised and de-personalised mode is echoed in Laura's reply (lines 18-20: > naturally the idea in itself is one to sort of like< (0.2) makes you think about age). This can be interpreted as doing inter-subjective marking that justifies the question put forward by the interviewer warranting it as a reasonable one, and thus as further establishing the interview situation.

The de-personalised formulation and especially Laura's self-repair (lines 14-16: *It was mainly this that I'm (0.4) maybe simply that this fiftieth birthday is coming*, and lines 17-18: *so I was like (1.0) uh> naturally the idea in itself*) can be heard as downgrading any notion of the speaker having a special or *personal stake* (Edwards and Potter 1992; Potter 1997) in questions of ageing. Laura anchors her reasons for wanting to participate in the research into events (line 16: *this fiftieth birthday*) rather than on herself. This also works to naturalise her account. Turning fifty, and *this fiftieth birthday* are talked about in abstract, as thing-like cultural institutions that are likely to put pressure on anyone, and that anyone, not just Laura, would therefore naturally be interested in talking about them. As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the use of the generalised form 'you' can be heard as 'anybody.' This de-personalised and generalised form is a recurrent feature of Laura's talk and will be discussed further later.

Lines 22-25 are of particular interest to the analysis. It is here that Laura introduces a dilemma or contrast between how she feels at work and at other times.

→	22	L:	=but I think there's (.) I've felt	=mut musta ninkun on () mää oon kokenu
	23		that there's a real big <u>difference</u> ()	et siina on hirveen iso ero (.)
	24.		in how I feel about myself at <u>work</u>	miten mä koen itseni <u>töissä</u>
	25.		and how I feel at other times	ja miten koen itseni muuten

After this Laura's narration takes up a line of argumentation based on this contrast as she goes on to describe herself at work and outside work. Both accounts specifically illuminate and centre on issues and categories of age.

Work equals 'old'

Having introduced the idea of a contrast between how she feels at work and at other times, Laura begins to describe her job in an advertising company. In the following she describes her work, and marks the fact that she's going to hold the floor by saying that her feeling old at work "i-is (.) is due to maybe (.) several (.) several things."

Extract 4:

Work = Old

	26.		Like here at work I really	Et taällä töissä mäa todella
→	27		feel like I'm ↑old	tunnen olevani ninku ↑vanha
	28.	PN:	°uhhuh°	°aha°
	29.	L:	and I mean that i-is () is due to	Ja se tota se-e () johtuu
	30.		maybe (.) several (.) several things	ehkä () monestaki () monestaki asiasta
	31		but one of the main reasons	mut se on et yks pääasia on
	32		of course is that	tietysti se et

After this, Laura builds her narration out of anecdotes and stories, each of which provides the listener with more detailed evidence of 'the several things' that make it so that she feels old at work. 'Feeling old' (line 27) is treated as accountable and Laura's narration builds a catalogue of features of her job and of the requirements she is forced to deal with. Her subsequent accounts also build on a variety of categorisations and category contrasts (e.g. Smith 1978; Hester 1998) that work to warrant the initial category entitlement of 'feeling old at work.' In extract 5 below, Laura starts by describing the nature of advertising as 'a job for the young' (line 33). After this, she provides the interviewer with a variety of anecdotes and descriptions of her work to further explicate this claim. The use of different personae in her descriptions is particularly interesting.

Extract 5: Category Contrast 1: 'Young' - 'Our middle-aged generation'
(Continues from extract 4 with lines 31-32 repeated)

	31.	L	but one of the main reasons	mut se on et yks pääasia on
	32.		of course is that	tietysti se et
→	33		this is like a job for the <u>young</u>	tää on ninkun <u>nuorten</u> ala
	34		and (1 4) and it's like terribly	ja sitten (1 4) ja tota sitä hirveesti
	35.		in a way <u>emphasized</u> () like	sillei <u>korostetaan</u> (.) ninkun
	36.		from the customers side as well	asiakkaittenkin puolelta tehtävissä
	37		Like no matter what	Et ninkun mikä tahansa vanha
	38.		old product >say well-known	tuotekin >sanotaan ihan sūs
	49.		coffee brands brands	kahvimerkitkin nää tutut
	40		brands like Juhlamokka and	kahvimerkit Juhlamokka ja
	41.		Pressa<=	Pressa<=

	42	PN:	mm	mm
	44	L:	=that are uh (.) I mean coffee	=niin tota jota () siis kahviahän
	44.		is (.) mainly consumed by	(.) käyttää emten just tää
→	45.		our middle-aged=	meijan keski-ikäisten=
	46.	PN.	mm	mm
	47.	L:	=generation and they are like (0 2)	=sukupuolvi ja ne on arvan siis (0.2)
	48.		when you look at (0 2) sales	ku katotaan niitä (0 2) myyntitilastojakin
	49		records or what at consumption	tai keta niitä kuluttajatilastoja niin ne on
	50.		records this is the case () but but	on just nää (.) mutta mut
	51.		all customers have this fear that	kaikilla asiakkailla on tää pelko että
	52.		once this bunch dies then	sitten kun tää porukka kuolee niin sit
	53		their <u>brand</u> will die with it	heidän <u>merkkinsä</u> kin kuolee
	54		So they have a tremendous	Että niillä on hirvee tarve koko
	55.		need to attract these <u>new</u> consumers	aika saada näitä <u>uusia</u> kuluttajia
	56.		and therefore like	Sen takia kaikkien niinkun tällaisten
	57.		advertising for like (0 3) let's say	niinkun (0 3) sanotaan ihan
	58.		for usual brands and for	tavallistenkin ja tavallisille ihmisille
	59.		usual people is directed	tarkoitettujen merkkien mainonta
	60		(0.2) they <u>want</u> to direct it to a	niin suunnataan (0.2) <u>halutaan</u>
	61.		considerably younger group	suunnata huomattavasti nuoremmille

Laura starts by describing the business she's a part of as more suitable for a young person (line 33). A detailed account of advertising for coffee is given as an example of how advertising works in general. A category contrast is built in between 'our middle-aged generation' (lines 45-47) and 'them' the customers who, despite everything, want to direct all advertising to a young audience (lines 60-61). 'Our middle-aged generation' establishes affiliation, and clearly marks the speaker (and possibly the interviewer) as members of a specific age group. This type of reference to age-related categories has in earlier research been identified as a way of doing age-marking in talk (e.g. Coupland, Coupland and Giles 1991). What is analytically interesting here though, is not so much identifying markers of age in a simple, lexical sense. The analytic interest is more with the implications the choice of category formulations has in any particular context, and on how the categorizations are taken up and further developed in the talk that follows.

For instance, having established the category 'our middle-aged generation' and contrasted it with advertising 'as a job for the young', Laura then pursues this contrast. In extract 6 below, she does this by relating what happens when one (belonging to the middle-aged generation) is "*placed to do advertising for some twen (.) twenty-five-year-old*". This move is marked by "*and then (0.2) when*" (line 62).

Extract 6. Category Contrast 2: Laura - '25-30-year old customers'

62.	And then (0.2) when you are in	Ja sitten (0.2) silloin kun
63.	a situation where you're placed	tällöisessä tilanteessa kun sut pannaan
64.	to do advertising for some twen (.)	tekemään mainontaa jollekin kaks (.)
→ 65.	twenty-five-year-old () twenty-	kaksvitoselle () kaksvitonen
66.	five thirty-year old even then like	kolmikymppisellekin niin tuota
67.	and the <u>brand manager</u> may	ja se <u>tuotepäällikkö</u> saattaa
→ 68.	well be thirty-something	itse olla kolmekymppinen tai
69.	or under himself (0.2) then you	allekin (0.2) niin sitä vaan
70.	just like (.) <u>realise</u> that (.) that (.)	ninkun () <u>tajuaa</u> sen (.) et (.)
71.	this is like this is no longer	tää ei oo ninkun tää ei oo
72.	under my <u>control</u> plus you	mulla enää <u>hallussa</u> plus että
73.	also see that the customer's	sä näät senkin että se asiakas
74.	staring at you who may be ()	kun se tujottaa sua joka voit olla ()
→ 75.	well maybe not <u>twice</u> his age	et sa nyt <u>kaks</u> kertaa vanhempi
→ 76.	but anyway clearly twenty years	mut kuitenkin selkeesti parikyt vuotta
→ 77.	older then he <u>also</u> like	vanhempi niin <u>sekin</u> ninkun
78.	thinks that that one is no	ajattelee ettei tää homma oo enää
79.	longer on top of things	tolla hallussa

Laura seems to orient to some category features of age that serve as evidence that she, as a member of the middle-aged generation, is in fact (too) old. She mobilises the notion of age difference and sets a contrast between 'a thirty-something brand manager' and herself as someone almost twice his age. Note how the chronological age of both the client (*the brand manager*, line 67), the target group (*some twen (.) twenty-five-year-old*, lines 65-66), and Laura (lines 75-77: *well maybe not twice his age but anyway clearly twenty years older*) are referred to and compared throughout the extract. Thus membership in an age category again becomes warranted in a matter-of-fact manner, by using quantified description (see chapter 3, Potter 1996; Potter, Wetherell and Chitty 1991).

Another noteworthy detail is, again, Laura's use of the impersonal pronoun 'you'. Instead of saying, "when I am placed to do advertising," Laura uses the de-personalised pronominal form 'you'. This usage of 'you' can be interpreted as a *distancing device* (Baker 1984) that functions to underline the idea that although Laura's account, in part, has a personal tone, she is *also* describing advertising and the business logic it follows *in general*. The de-personalised 'you', in other words, does not mark clear affiliation. Instead, Laura can be heard as describing her work in terms that make it clear that *anyone* of Laura's age would have to face the difficulties of 'not being on top of things' should they find themselves in the

situation and the business being described.⁶ Laura thus manages to *both* warrant feeling old at work, *and* to mitigate and soften the force of her description through the de-personalised delivery. The powerful logic of the situations she finds herself in is accentuated by the formulation *then you just like (.) realise that* (lines 69-70).

The theme of contrast is further and more sharply developed in extract 7, where Laura tells an anecdote of a specific situation where she was described, by her boss to a client, as ten years younger than her age. Laura builds up a contrast between her honest self and her boss who represents the logic of the advertising business.

Extract 7. 'Young and dynamic' vs. 'Honestly oneself'

80.		And this maybe makes it (1 0)	Ja se ehkä tekee sen että tota (1.0)
81.		plus that this place has ways	plus että täällä muutenkin jotenkin
82.		I remember >I remember very	Mä muistan >siis hirveen
83.		well for example this	hyvin muistan esimerkiksi sellaisen
84.		situation that took place some	tilanteen joka tapahtu joskus
85.		five years back< that we had	viis vuotta sitten< et meillä oli
86.		a new customer (0 2) and my boss	uus asiakas (0 2) tullu ja tota mun esimieheni
87.		() sold him this team	() myi sille ninkun tän tekevan tumin
88.		The customer had (0 2) <u>asked</u> for	Se asiakas oli (0.2) <u>toivonut</u>
89.		this young and dynamic touch	just tällaista nuorekasta otetta
90.		and I was sold then	ja mut myytiin silloin
→ 91.		as someone more or less ten years	just suurin piirtein kymmenen vuotta
→ 92.		<u>younger</u> than my age	<u>nuorempana</u> kun mä olin
93.	PN	heh heh	heh heh
94.	L·	Lik(h)e he more or less	E(h)t hän suurin piirtein
95.		<u>introduced</u> like [here] we=	<u>esitteli</u> et [näinä] nyt nämä=
96.	PN:	[yeah]	[joo]
97.	L·	=have these [thirty]-five-year=	=[kolme]vitokset tässä=
98.	PN·	[mm]	[mm]
99.	L:	=olds and [I was] forty-[five]	=ja mä [olin] neljä[vitonen] silloin
100.	PN:	[mm] [mm]	[mm] [mm]
101.	L:	really at the time so it <u>felt</u> just	oikeesti ja se <u>tuntu</u> just
102.		like that you can't <u>honestly</u>	silta et sää et voi ninkun <u>rehellisesti</u>
103.		be yourself	olla oma itses
104.		(0 4)	(0 4)
105.	PN:	Yeah	Joo

Here Laura describes advertising as putting outer demands on her that are in conflict with her inner, honest self. The account is delivered in the form of personal reminiscence that begins by a story preface that marks that a longer turn is to follow (Jefferson 1978; Polanyi 1985) *I remember >I remember very well'* (lines 82-83). The speaker also uses active voicing when describing the words of the boss (lines

⁶ See Sacks 1992, and Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995: 127-128) for a similar usage of 'everybody descriptions.'

94-98: *he more or less introduced like here we have these thirty-five-year-olds*).⁷ Both work to add rhetorical eyewitness credibility to the account. The story can almost be heard as having characters of a spoken morality play, as Laura displays and aligns with the need to 'be honestly oneself.' In contrast, her work environment is depicted as forcing her into the dishonesty of trying to pass for someone ten years younger. Laura's story and its moral quality thus also encourage the listener to empathise with her difficulties at work (cf. the discussion on moral tales in Baruch 1981 and in Silverman 1993). Laura's display of honesty (or the confession of forced dishonesty) and the way she draws upon her inner feelings gives her account rhetoric persuasiveness, and the account remains unchallenged by the interviewer (cf. Edwards 1997 and Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995 on 'displays of authenticity').⁸

In her talk so far, Laura has mobilised several sets of age categories and used them to warrant and justify her claim of feeling old at work. In extracts 6 and 7 membership in an age category was accomplished through quantified description and through the construction of contrasts between number categories (e.g. lines 97-100 in Extract 7: thirty-five-year-olds - forty-five really). In what follows, Laura does not, however, stay with this quantitative vocabulary. Instead, she moves on to mobilise a more qualitative age category: that of 'a grandmother.' In this anecdote, that further builds on the theme honest self vs. outer force, Laura describes how she has to hide age-related information about herself at work. The category 'normal granny' is invoked through such category-relevant activities as talking about your grandchildren, an activity Laura cannot engage in, in this 'business for the young'.

Extract 8. Category Contrast 3: Laura - 'Normal granny'

106.	L:	For example things like I haven't	Esimerkiksi ihan sellainenkin et määh en
107.		<u>really</u> talked (0 4) I think	oo <u>kauheesti</u> puhunu (0 4) ma ajattelen
→ 108		that <u>normally</u> grandmothers or	ett <u>normaalisti</u> varmaan isoäidit

⁷ Finnish language does not have gender specific pronouns like he-she. Translating this part of Laura's talk into English, I have therefore needed to 'choose' a gender for Laura's boss. See Appendix 1 for further notes on transcription and translation.

⁸ Another interesting feature of Laura's account is that it can be heard as doing implicit boasting, that is, the account establishes her as someone, who can credibly pass for someone ten years younger than her actual chronological age.

109.	grannies are probably real proud	tai mummot on hirveen ylpeitä
110.	of their grandchildren but the like	lapsenlapsistaan mut et just semmonen
111.	(.) feeling that here you don't	et (.) semmonen tunne et sää et nyt
112.	really want to (.) go on and on	täällä <u>kauheesti</u> viitsi (.) millä
113.	about it here cause (0 2) cause	revitellä kun (0.2) kun
114.	(0 2) generally people's reaction	(0 2) yleensä ihmisten reaktio
115.	to my telling that I have	on se kun mä kerron et mulla on
116.	grandchildren is to look	lapsenlapsia sit ne kattoo kauheen
117.	at me in <u>shock</u> like	<u>järkyttyneenä</u> ja sanoo että
118.	I can't believe i(h)t	ei voi olla totta(h).
119.	PN: ↑mm	↑mm

In summary then, Laura's ways of organising her account of her work in advertising is built on institutional work role categories (the boss, the customer, the thirty-something brand manager). The account of her job also seems shot-through with age, as she links these work categories with stage of life categories and attributes. Her story becomes more fine grained as she goes on, starting with a general description of advertising (extract 5) and ending with more personal and detailed recollections of particular instances where she has come across age specific requirements or qualities (extracts 7 and 8).

According to Baker (1997b), tracing members' use of categories and devices in interview settings not only shows us how identities and social relationships are constructed in talk, but also, how institutions are produced as part of descriptive activities. Looking at Laura's interview account so far, we can see her active sense-making as organising characterisations of people, typical actions and attributes of people, and while doing this, as also *producing advertising as an institutional setting with its own particular age-specific characteristics and logic*.

The complex discursive layers and category contrasts that Laura builds on top of each other in her account hook and orient to the main idea of advertising's age dimension. They thus work, not only to warrant 'feeling old at work' but also to explicate what is meant by 'feeling old' in this context. Laura's de-personalised and generalised description also works to establish advertising as a field where *anyone* in Laura's age or situation would have to face the difficulties and problems depicted. Laura's turns and self-categorisations are, in other words, action-oriented to perform certain activities, such as managing her rationality, authenticity, and stake within the activities and the work scene set up in the talk (e.g. Edwards 1997; Potter, Edwards

and Wetherell 1993; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995). The anecdotes she tells are not random items she happens to produce for the interviewer, but rather analysable as links in a chain of an argumentative whole. Before moving on in the analysis, let us look at how Laura finishes and glosses her whole work narration.

Extract 9.

120.	L·	So (0 4) so this feels <u>funny</u>	Et (0 4) et tää tuntuu <u>hullulta</u>
121		but somehow I really have	mut mulla on todella
122		this feeling that at work one	sellainen tunne etta jotenkin
123.		really can't quite <u>honestly</u>	töissä ei voi ihan <u>rehellisesti</u>
124.		() be oneself like that you should	() olla oma itsensä et sun pitäis
125.		all the time try to be like	koko aika yrittää olla ninkun
126.		(0 4) more <u>perky</u> and more	(0 4) paljon <u>pirteempi</u> ja paljon
127.		(0 4) <u>everything</u>	(0 4) <u>kaikkee</u>
128	PN:	mm	mm
129.		(0 8)	(0 8)
130.	L·	that you are not	jota ei oo

This gloss echos Laura's earlier evaluation (extract 7, lines 101-103) by repeating the idea of honesty and dishonesty, and by constructing a contrast between the outer force of the social setting of her work and her inner (honest) self. Some category-bound features and attributes ("*more perky and more (0.4) everything*," lines 122-127) are mentioned. On line 130, Laura detaches herself from these attributes and can be heard to simultaneously distance herself from the category 'young' in the form that it becomes characterised in this her description of the institutional work setting.

Laura's second account: "But then when I think about..."

What we have seen in the analysis so far then, is how Laura describes her work scene largely by mobilising contrast cases between categories like 'young' vs. 'our middle-aged generation', herself vs. '25-30-year-old customer', herself vs. 'a normal granny', and between 'being honestly oneself' vs. 'being forced to be young and dynamic'. It is at this point that Laura moves to the second part of her two-fold narration. In the beginning of the interview Laura oriented her listener to the fact that a second half was to come (*I've felt that there's a real big difference (.) in how I feel*

about myself at work and how I feel at other times, Extract 1, lines 22-25). The idea that what is to follow forms a contrast to her description of her work is, in the following, made clear by a contrast marker (Schiffrin 1987) “*But then again I when I(.) if I think about what It’s like*”.

The second part of her two-part narration describes Laura in settings outside work, when one is ‘*o-on one’s own or let’s say with one’s friends*’. Category contrasts are in use again, but this time with a different outcome. In other words, the ‘leading lady’ in the story remains the same, but the organisation of description seems to increasingly orient to the potentially sensitive nature of the categorisations put forward.

Extract 10.

‘Little girl’ - ‘Turning fifty’

→	131	L:	But then again when I (.) if I	Kun sit taas kun mä () jos mä
	132		think like what its like	aattelen niinkun et minkäläinen on
	133.		(1.2) um (.) when when one is	(1.2) öh (.) niinkun sillei kun on
	134		o-on one’s own or let’s say	o-omissa oloissa tai sanotaan
	135		with one’s <u>friends</u> then (1 0)	<u>ystäväpiirissä</u> lähinnä niin (1 0)
	136		I actually thought about this	ma oikein mietin sitä et
	137.		I think it was at Christmas time	oisko se ollu joulun aikaan
	138		when I um (0 8) when I was	kun mä tota (0 8) olin
	139		home alone and (0 4) I somehow	yksin kotona ja (0.4) jotenkin
→	140.		I <u>realised</u> that () really that	ma <u>tajusin</u> sen (.) et todella sen
	141.		I will be fifty soon >and	et ma täytän pian viiskyt >sit
	142.		I thought like <u>this</u>	mä aattelin et <u>ei taä voi</u>
	143.		<u>can’t be true</u> < (0 4) like I’m ()	<u>olla totta</u> < (0 4) et mähän oon ()
→	144.		the feeling that like I’m a	sellainen tunne et mähän oon
→	145.		little girl and it was just the	pikkutyttö ja vastahan mä
	146		other day I got married and had	menin naimisiin ja vastahan lapset
	147.		my children like <u>how</u> is this	synty et <u>miten</u> tää on
	148.		possible and like <u>where</u> did the	mahdollista et <u>mihin</u> nää vuodet on
	149.		years go and I can’t possibly ()	menny ja enhän ma nyt ()
	150.		like <u>fifty</u> I can’t possibly	siis <u>viiskymmentä</u> enhän mä nyt <u>viiskyt</u>
→	151.		be turni(h)ng <u>fi(h)fty</u> =	vo(h)ı tay(h)ttää=
	152.	PN	heh heh	heh heh

Laura starts by constructing a discrepancy between life course events, turning fifty in particular, and her inner self. Here a contrast between age categories, of feeling like a ‘little girl’ (line 145) and ‘turning fifty,’ is mentioned for the first time, and Laura expresses disbelief over the passing of time (*This can’t be true*, lines 142-143, and *I can’t possibly be turni(h)ng fi(h)fty* lines 150-151). The idea of surprise and disbelief is enforced in the story line by the idea of sudden realisation as a result of actually thinking about her age (lines 139-140).

Two observations can be made here. First, constructing her awareness of age as a specifically timed realisation can be interpreted as Laura trying to avoid being heard as someone who is constantly preoccupied with the notion of ageing or as someone for whom ageing is a personal problem. Constructed in the way it is done here, age becomes something that Laura has to in fact specifically think about, and only then come to a realisation of it.⁹ Another feature of the extract is that Laura's account of turning fifty, and the interviewer's reactions are, again, marked by laughter (lines 151-152). The laughter, in this context, can be analysed as orienting to potential identity dangers, and as Laura attending to the possible sensitivity of being heard as wanting to deny her chronological age. So laughter is especially recipient designed to offer a candidate interpretation for the way an utterance should be heard, and to mitigate the seriousness of what is being said (for analysis of laughter see Jefferson 1979; 1985).

Having established that she has difficulty believing she is fifty, Laura goes on to further elaborate the alternative category 'little girl.' She draws a contrast between general images of the categories of "*someone (0.8) really old and middle aged*" and herself. Having mobilised two contrastive categories, and placed herself into the category 'little girl', Laura can then be heard as attending to the potential implications of her own description. I claim then, that in the extract below, Laura treats invoking the category 'little girl' and describing category bound activities linked to it as potentially sensitive and as requiring extra accounting.

Extract 11. 'Little girl' as an alternative category

153.	L.	=you get like this totally like	=sinä tulee niinkun ihan sellainen aivan
154.		this like <u>crazy</u> feeling (0.2) when	semmonen niinkun <u>hullu</u> tunne (0.2) et sit
155		you then suddenly start thinking	niinkun yhtäkkiä rupee aatteleen
156		about <u>what</u> fifty is like then you	et <u>mikä</u> sitten on viiskyt et sulla
→ 157.		have this picture in your mind	on niinkun semmoisesta mielikuva
→ 158		of someone (0.8) really	todella jostain semmoisesta (0.8) hyvin
159		old and middle aged and you	vanhasta ja keski-ikäisestä ja sitä ei
160		just don't put <u>yourself</u> into it (1.2)	vaan niinkun <u>itseään</u> pistä siihen (1.2)
161.		it's like you can't <u>place</u> yourself	sä et niinkun osaa <u>sovittaa</u> itseas
162.		into that frame	siihen raamiin

⁹ One could almost claim that Laura's way of describing the sudden realisation of her age turns the ageing experience into something verging on the paranormal. Her description, in other words, comes close to the device identified by Wooffitt (1991; 1992). 'I was just doing X when Y'

163.	PN:	mm	mm
164.	L:	Somehow one is (1.2) I've	Etta jotenkin sitä on (1 2) mä
165.		often (.) like <u>thought</u> that	oon monta kertaa (.) nunkun <u>atellukin</u>
166.		have I ever like in a way	sitä et onks mä ikinä et mulla on nunkun
→ 167.		I've got this feeling that inside (.)	tavallaan semmoinen tunne et sisällä (.)
→ 168.		that in a way <u>inside</u> one is this	et tavallaan <u>sisimmältään</u> on semmoinen
→ 169.		(0.2) somehow a little girl still=	(0 2) jotenkin tyttö vielä=
170.	PN:	mm	mm
171.	L:	=that you haven't necessarily	=ettei oo nunkun ihan kasvanu
→ 172.		quite grown to be a mature	valttamatta aikuiseksi
→ 173.		woman yet (1.4) like one (0 4)	<u>naisekskaan</u> et (1.4) et sitä (0 4)
174.		wants to sometimes like (.)	haluu tiettyissä asiois nunkun (.)
175.		play the fool and somehow even	heittäytyy silleen hullutella ja jotenkin
176.		(.) act childishly and (2 4) and	(.) olla aika lapsellinenkin ja (2.4) ja
→ 177.		then you notice that your <u>friends</u>	sit huomaa et <u>ystävät</u>
178.		are doing exactly the <u>same</u>	tekee ihan <u>samaa</u>
179.		Like I think it's terribly typical	Et just must sekin on kauheen tyypillistä
180.		to y'know to say that we're	että et sitä nunkun puhutaan et
181.		going there and here with	mennaan tyttöjen kanssa sinne
182.		the girls and but it may well be	ja tänne mut voi olla ett
→ 183.		that <u>seventy-</u> year- olds	nun tekee <u>seitsemänkytvuotiaatkin</u>
184.		do the [same]=	sanoo [nun]=
185.	PN.	[mm]	[mm]
→ 186.	L:	=that <u>no one</u> says that I'm	=nun et ei <u>kukaan</u> sano et
187.		going with my (.) auntie	menen nyt noitten (.) tätiystävieni
188.		friends some(h)whe(h)re=	kanssa jo(h)nne(h)kin=
189.	PN	heh heh	heh heh
190.	L:	=so it must be that like the way	=et se varmaan siis se miten
191.		you relate (0 4) to people's	sä suhtaudut (0 4) kanssaihminen
192.		age like it must move upwards	ikään nun se varmaan sen oman iän
193.		with your own age	myöta koko aika se nousee se
194.	PN:	mm	mm
195.		(1 0)	(1.0)

There are of course, once again, several things going on here, all of which cannot be analysed in detail. The key contrast put forward, however, is the idea of an age frame that Laura introduces in line 162, and the category – the inner feeling – of being a 'little girl' (line 169). Laura draws upon several categories from the stage-of-life membership categorisation device, forming a continuum between different stages of maturation: 'little girl', 'middle-aged,' 'mature woman' and places herself into the category 'little girl'. 'Little girl' is introduced as an alternative category to being fifty and middle-aged, and, having introduced the alternative, Laura treats her claim as requiring further explication.¹⁰

¹⁰ In some ways it was the unexpected nature of Laura's self-categorisation throughout the entire narration that initially made me look into this longer stretch of talk in more detail. For me as the interviewer/analyst the contrast case 'old at work' - 'something else at other times' set up an interactional logic or expectation that Laura's second self categorisation would be built on what she is denied 'honest' membership in at work. That is, since Laura is forced to 'act younger than her age' at work, the expectation for the contrast case 'outside work' was that it would somehow center on Laura's honest maturity or middle-ageness. This, as we can see, is not how Laura continues.

The specific detail of Laura's account is once again of interest here. Instead of straightforwardly claiming to *be* a little girl, she bases her category entitlement on somewhat extensive descriptions of her 'inner reality.' Laura, in other words, refers to her privileged access knowledge of getting *this like crazy feeling* (line 154) and on having *this feeling* (line 167).¹¹ Both work to make claiming the category 'little girl' and resisting the category 'fifty' more difficult to be contested. Laura seems, in other words, to be attending to the notion that a fifty-year-old speaker claiming the category 'little girl' can be seen as open to potential criticism. Her utterance "*I've got this feeling that inside (.) that in a way inside one is this (0.2) somehow a little girl still*" works to mitigate the possible hearing of it as a total and outright *denial* of her actual chronological age, and to disarm a range of possible immediate refutations of her claim. The overarching application of the category 'little girl' is also mitigated by the usage of '*somehow a little girl still*' (line 169) and Laura's account is thereby rendered difficult to rebut.

Note also, how, on lines 175-176, belonging to the category 'little girl' and not being a 'mature woman' is first accounted for by reference to such category-bound activities as playing the fool and acting childishly. This is followed by a 2.4 second pause that marks some difficulty within Laura's account (line 176). After the pause, she can be heard to be attending to notions of age-appropriate behaviour such as 'acting one's age' invoked in her previous turn. This is clear in the way Laura works to suspend the category bound implication of the activities 'playing the fool' and 'acting childishly', by moving, once again, to a generalised mode (lines 173-174: *like one (0.4) wants to sometimes like (.) play the fool*), and in how she anchors the activities to *wanting*, instead of providing accounts of actually personally *engaging* in these activities.

The potential delicacy of claiming membership in the alternative category 'little girl,' of not being mature, and of acting in childish and whimsical ways is further played down through *generalisation* (lines 176-177: *and then you notice that your friends are doing exactly the same*). Referring to the standardised relational pair

¹¹ The use of feeling and inner reality in category entitlement will be discussed further in chapter 7.

friend-friend, Laura is invoking same-ageness and similarity, and claims that the behaviour and activities described, are common among people of her own age. This is followed by another example (lines 183-184), where the idea of adopting the label 'girl' is described as a more generally common feature of talk, not only among people of Laura's age, but possibly among seventy-year-olds as well (lines 182-184: *but it may well be that seventy-year-olds do the same*). The potential threat of claiming the label of a 'little girl' and behaving childishly at the age of fifty is thus pushed further away through widening the range of categories of people engaging in similar behaviour. In the end, this behaviour becomes further elaborated through an extreme generalisation "no one says that I'm going with my (.) auntie friends" (lines 186-188).

Summing up then, Laura's generalised formulation provides a nice example of *a move from personal specifics to behaviour universals*. In contrast to the differentiation talk she repeatedly engaged in when describing her work setting via category contrasts discussed in earlier sections, an opposite course of action is adopted here. It is worth noting that Laura's elaboration through generalisation has some resonance with findings in other discursive work on contrast and comparison. Similar to what Buttny (1993) found with his couple therapy data for example, alignment with others here also works to *normalise* Laura's behaviour. Normalisation, in other words, functions to build a *consensus* (Edwards and Potter 1992) in the sense that the speaker mobilises images of what 'most people', and, towards the end of the generalisation chain, 'all people' think or do. To close up the analysis in this chapter, we will briefly look more closely at this construction of consensus through extreme formulations.

Warrant through extreme generalisation

Let us stop to further consider the practices through which Laura resists the category fifty and how the category 'little girl' becomes established as an acceptable alternative category in this interaction. One discursive feature already mentioned is the extremity of "no one says that I'm going with my (.) auntie friends" (lines 186-

188). According to Pomerantz extreme case formulation is one way of legitimising claims, one common usage being 'to propose that some behaviour is not wrong, or is right, by virtue of its status as frequently occurring or commonly done' (1986, 220, see also Edwards 1994, 2000).

Laura's formulation also bears a family resemblance with an example that Sack used when discussing an example of police officers eliciting accounts with the use of correction-invitation device (Sacks 1992, LC1, 21-25, also in Pomerantz 1986). The well-known example was the following:

- A: Do you have a gun at home?
B: A forty-five.
A: You do have a forty-five.
B: Uh huh, loaded
A: What's it doing there. Whose is it.
B: It's sitting there.
A: Is it yours?
B: It's Dave's
A: It's your husband's huh.
B: I know how to shoot it.
A: He isn't a police officer.
B: No
A: He just has one.
B: **Everyone has one, don't they.**

The point Sacks wanted to raise when using this example was how, by naming, in question form, one member, one can elicit accounts that use another member (for example: is it yours - it's Dave's, in the example above). What is central to the discussion here, however, is the last line in the example above: *Everyone has one, don't they*. Sacks referred to this 'as one of the most fabulous things I've ever seen' (op.cit.: 23) and pointed out how such a formulation¹² 'cuts off the basis for the search for an account.'

Turning back to Laura's account then, we can see something of a similar thing going on. Her extreme and generalised formulation "*no one says that I'm going with my (.) auntie friends*" (lines 186-188) works to cut off any further accountability for the claims and descriptions made: for 'if, indeed, such situations are general, no further

¹² Sacks admitted not having 'a terribly elegant name for it' (LC1, 23) and called this formulation an 'account apparently appropriate, negativer', or A3N.

account can be called for' (Silverman 1998, 96). Laura's account, in other words, appeals and *builds up a consensus for how people describe themselves*. The extraordinary feature of referring to everybody (or no one), is that it works to diminish the accountability no matter what kind of an account we are dealing with (Sacks 1992 Vol. 1: 24). According to Sacks, this type of device functions in a similar fashion to proverbs (cf. Drew and Holt 1988) in that they are rarely undercut, because when undercut, 'one doesn't know exactly how we can continue talking' (Vol.1: 25).

Discussion and summary

This chapter focused on the discursive processes - the interpretative and reasoning procedures - through which belonging to a specific age category is either established or resisted in talk. In addition to single examples, one longer narrative was chosen for a step-by-step analysis to show how conflicting accounts and categorisations are negotiated and managed. In the longer extract, we saw two conflicting age-categorisations: 'old' vs. 'little girl' being constructed by the interviewee, Laura. Two separate stages (or topics) were set up: her work scene and her life outside work. Having set up these stages, Laura populated them with casts of characters, their activities and behaviour, and provided the listener with further category contrasts, stories of incidents, circumstances, and evaluations that served as warrants for the initial categorisations made by her. Her work narration was constructed on the discrepancy between the age-specific requirements of the workplace and Laura's honest inner self. In the second half of Laura's narration, the inner-outer divide was between a more general image of middle age and, once again, what was described as Laura's inner feeling of age.

Age, being young or old, functioned in quite different ways in the settings described by Laura. On the work scene, age became an objective, quantifiable category, and a part of the inner logic of advertising. Talking about herself outside work, non-membership in a particular chronological age category was invoked through gendered categories, and personal detail. The contrast between the ways in which

being young or old became constructed in the two-fold narration work to lend rhetorical strength to Laura's account.

In addition to the general focus on contrast structures, the significant discursive feature analysed in this chapter, was the ways in which speakers move between a personal narrative mode and a generalised mode marked by *you, one, or we*. In the analysis, I pointed out how this continuous move between personal and general/universal served several different functions in the talk. First of all, moving to the general served to undermine any specific *personal stake* the speaker could be heard as having, and thus to fend off potential unfavourable interpretations (extracts 2, 4 and 7). General descriptions were also used as a *normalising or generalising device*, especially in parts of the interaction, where the speakers were attending to the potential sensitivity of their descriptions (e.g. extracts 11-12). The use of generalised formulations, and extreme appeals to consensus, thus illustrate how violations in category use, and the delicacy of resisting a category, are actually oriented to and recognised in interaction (cf. Sacks 1992; Silverman 1998).

Third, moving between personal and general accounts also tells us something about the interview situation itself. The interviewees, in this study, were approached as members of a certain age group. Age was then made into the topic of talk, and the interview situation became a site for displaying cultural knowledge and logic about the subject matter (Baker 1997), and the descriptions and stories were specially *recipient designed* to an audience (see Sacks 1992, Vol 1: 580; Polanyi 1985). One central goal of the interviewees' descriptive practices in any interview situation is to produce themselves as 'responsible' and 'sensible' persons (see Silverman 1997). This does not necessarily mean, however, that the discursive features analysed here could somehow be seen as distinctively characteristic of 'interview talk.' Instead similar usage of humour, generalisation, and contrast structures are undoubtedly also a feature of everyday talk.

The analytical and conceptual point to be made from the observations made in this chapter is how membership and non-membership in an age category, as well as the management of conflicting categories, is clearly a discursive achievement that is

routinely worked up, and negotiated in talk. This negotiation may, at times, involve having to deal with the potentially delicate and sensitive outcomes of the categorisations made. The analysis showed, for instance, how positioning oneself outside maturity (e.g. 'rascal' in extract 1), and describing oneself as behaving childishly (e.g. 'little girl' in extract 11), consequently raised the need to generalise or mitigate the descriptions made and the need to ward off potential negative hearings. Analysing the discursive practices of doing membership and non-membership in the interview material thus proved to offer one way of analysing the sensitivity of age identity in talk and action.¹³

The theoretical approach and the discursive vocabulary discussed in this chapter also provide new analytic perspectives into former concepts and topics within the field of qualitative ageing research. Starting with people's accounts – the ways in which age categories are mobilised, warranted and resisted in talk – sensitises us to the ways in which *speakers themselves* orient to issues of age (cf. Coupland, Coupland and Nussbaum 1993). Instead of reading data through a ready-made theoretical and analytical template that forces our observations into already existing coding frames and categories chosen by the researcher, discursive analysis starts off with participants' orientations and formulations. This may, in itself, help to bring forward the variability within the description and conceptualisation of ageing (Dannefer 1988).

The analysis in this chapter offers new ways of approaching and thinking about at least three existing research topics within the field of ageing research: age-appropriateness, age norms (e.g. Dannefer 1996; Foner 1996, Lawrence 1996) and 'denial of age' (e.g. Spacapan and Oskamp 1989; Bultena and Bowers 1978). From a discursive perspective, age norms, or notions of age-appropriate behaviour cease to be understood as situated 'outside' interaction and as simply guiding, causing, or explaining certain types of behaviours (cf. Sacks 1972a: 39). Instead, the analysis in this chapter showed the benefits of focusing on how participants themselves orient to

¹³ This topic will be further discussed and developed in chapters six and seven

the existence of age-specific expectations or evaluations, and on how people actively challenge or re-define the criteria for membership in an age category.

Similarly, from a discursive perspective, the notion of 'denial of age' ceases to be conceptualised as a perceptual-cognitive reality of the speaker. Rather the analysis of discourse starts to distinguish the kinds of *social interactive work* performed through refusing an age category within the specific interactional context at hand. A discursive approach can thus move us away from former static understandings of age identity, and, instead, show us how membership and denial of membership are achieved in talk.

Chapter Five: Mobilising Change and Continuity

'Every age has its springs which give it movement; but man is always the same. At ten years old he is led by sweetmeats; at twenty by a mistress; at thirty by pleasure; at forty by ambition; at fifty by avarice; after that what is left for him to run after but wisdom?'

(Rousseau, Moral letters, 1757)

'The years between fifty and seventy are the hardest. You are always asked to do things, and yet you are not decrepit enough to turn them down.'

(T.S. Eliot, 23 October 1959)

'It's like I hit an oil patch at 35, and now I'm just skidding towards the grave, darling.'

(Edina, in the BBC-series 'Absolutely Fabulous')

The last two chapters explored several discursive devices and communicative practices through which participants theorise age and ageing, and how they negotiate membership and non-membership in specific age-related categories. The analysis in chapter three established how speakers make reference to, and actively orient to the facticity of lifetime change by using what was identified as *'the provisional continuity device'*. Chapter four focused on how resisting specific age labels or age trajectories sometimes proves a sensitive and/or delicate business that, at times, requires extra discursive work. Building on the discussion on categorisation and contrast structures, in the last chapter, and on the discussion on the factuality of ageing in chapter three, this chapter focuses, in more detail, on how personal change and continuity are mobilised and made sense of during interaction. Centre stage will be given to interactional instances where the local practices of self-categorisation and self-description in interview talk merge with notions of change and continuity. The analytic focus is on *the kinds of work the mobilisation and descriptions of personal continuity or change do for the speakers in the local contexts of talk.*

Change, Continuity and Age

Descriptions of age – whether literary, like some of the examples in the beginning of this chapter, or everyday – typically centre on notions of change and continuity.

Change and continuity also occupy a central place in sociological and social psychological theories of ageing. As many critics have noted, social research into ageing has typically reflected theories of biological and physical change, as well as lay, common sense and political assumptions about human ageing (e.g. Green 1993). The classic theories of ageing studies offer an excellent example of this. They reflect various normative notions and political agendas of their day, suggesting that later life, for instance, should be marked by natural, gradual change, followed by withdrawal from social interaction, on the one hand, or by continuous activity on the other. Consequently, the largest theoretical debate within the field of gerontology has in the past been in between 'disengagement theory' (e.g. Cumming and Henry 1961; Cumming 1964; Maddox 1964) and 'activity theory' (e.g. Havighurst et al. 1963; Maddox and Eisdorfer 1962; Loeb 1973). The unsurprising outcome of this debate was the development of the third option often referred to as 'continuity theory' (e.g. Atchley 1971; 1989).

By contrast to the classical social scientific or psychological research on life course change and continuity, the analytic approach adopted in this chapter again starts with the local use of language and the importance of a fine detail analysis of participants' descriptions. Instead of invoking hypothetical or psychological processes either as explanatory constructs, or as the starting point for analysis, the chapter focuses on how change and continuity are discursively 'done' and theorised in talk. In this regard, lifetime change is not approached via some comprehensive framework from the outset, but rather in terms of how people mobilise, theorise and present lifetime change or continuity to each other. In the following then, mobilising notions of change and continuity is treated as part of the discursive practices within the locality of talk and interaction: as means of *locally displaying, evidencing and making relevant certain features of one's identity*. Talk about change and continuity does not, in other words, simply reflect some folk theory manifestations of the participants in question, but rather establishes, and is put to use to establish something interactionally and locally.

I will focus on three descriptive resources that clearly permeated the practices of age description in the data: 1) the construction of *extreme personal continuity*, 2) the *mobilisation of type categorisations or specific category labels*, and finally 3) the

practices of *conceding and evaluating change*. Numerous examples of consistent usage of each could be found in the data, and I will also include examples of deviant usage.

Doing extreme continuity

In their research into youth subcultures, Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995, 137-159; also Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1990; Widdicombe 1993) describe the discursive delicacy through which their participants account for becoming a member (a punk, a hippy, a gothic etc.) in a subcultural group. They also discuss in detail how such accounts can be heard as produced against negative lay and academic assumptions about reasons for affiliation. Widdicombe and Wooffitt show how their participants minimise negative interpretations of sudden change, of shallowness, and how they ward off interpretations suggesting that joining a subculture group can be seen as just going through a normal phase of adolescence¹.

One of the features of talk, discussed by Widdicombe and Wooffitt in this context, is the use of extreme case formulations (Pomerantz 1986; Edwards 2000; see also chapter 4). These were used by adolescents to construct their interest in particular ways of dressing, or in particular subculture-specific activities, as an enduring part of their intrinsic self-identity, and thus to play down the suddenness of change when becoming a member in a subculture.

One of the examples of extreme case formulation in use, provided by Widdicombe and Wooffitt is the following (1995, 140-141, emphasis added):

1. I: wh-when and how did you sort of
2. get into (8) being a hippy
3. (1)
4. R: err dunno someone lent me an Iron Maiden
5. tape yeah? (.) and I really liked it so (.)

¹ Similar themes to those raised by Widdicombe and Wooffitt can also be found in McKinley and Dunnett's study (1998) where they look into how 'gun-owners' differentiate themselves from other groups depicted as 'criminals', 'fringe groups' etc, and how this 'normalises a potentially stigmatised practice' (cf Lawrence 1996).

6. an' then I got into Rush an' stuff,
7. then I started to go to concerts (.1)
8. an' sort of sa'w everyone around you
9. and you didn't really fit in at the concerts
10. an' that (.4) an' it (.) jus felt li-
11. **I've always felt like growing my hair long**
12. **since I was little (.)**
13. I: >mmhm<
14. R: so I jus decided to grow it long
15. much against my dad's will n everything

In this extract, the speaker uses an extreme case formulation to describe the change in appearance 'as an expression of a deep-rooted and persistent inclination' (op. cit.: 143). The mobilisation of a deeply felt commitment (lines 11-12) is, in other words used to ward off interpretations of flimsy, superficial or sudden change.

At first sight, it may seem strange to compare adolescents' accounts about joining a subculture to accounts about ageing. The discursive practices of my interviewees do, however, bear noticeable similarities to those of the adolescents described by Widdicombe and Wooffitt. One major difference could be detected though. Whereas members of subcultures used extreme formulations to account for personal change, and to play down its suddenness, my interviewees used similar formulations to underline and construct extreme personal continuity and 'not-change'. There was, in other words no immediate, or in the same sense, obvious evidence of sudden change that the speakers treated as accountable and/or defensible.

In addition, extreme case formulations in my data were frequently combined with description sequences where long-standing, consistent and continuing personal features became further established by self-descriptions based on a type categorisation, or by reference to a more generic category (we, a person etc). This contrast was typically constructed to depict the speaker in particularly favourable light, but self-deprecating contrasts were also in use (cf. discussion in Dickerson 2000). In the following, I will start by analysing examples of the *discursive mobilisation of extreme continuity*. After this I will show how the use of extreme case formulations combined with the mobilisation of type categorisations (Jayyusi 1984, see also discussion in chapter 2).

In the first extract, the interviewer invites Helena to compare herself to other women of her age.

Extract 1. PN: W7: Helena (Cas 1, A: 17.0-17.4)

1.	PN:	What if you compare yourself to	Mitäs jos sä vertaat ittees ninku
2.		like with women of your age to	saman-samanikäsiin muihin nai-
3.		other women of your age	muihin naisii
4.		[for] example=	[esim]erkiksi=
5.	H:	[mm]	[mm]
6.	PN:	=then () how do you see yourself	=niiin (.) miten sä näät ittes
7.		() as (0.2) well () if we use the	(.) tämmösenä (0.2) no (.) jos käytetään
8.		term middle-aged woman as a	nyt keski-ikäsenä naisena
9.		woman of fifty so	viiskymppisenä naisena ni
→ 10.	H:	I do always feel like I'm one of	Mä koen kyllä siinä aina
11.		the youngest somehow since	olevani ninku nuoremasta päästä jotenkin
→ 12.		I've always been <u>terribly active</u>	että ku ma oon ollu aina <u>hirveen viree</u>
13.	PN:	yeah	joo
14.	H:	and I've had a lot of energy	ja mulla on ollu paljon energiaa
15.		certainly still have this moment	varmasti on vielä tällä hetkelläki
→ 16.		so I often feel like younger	niiin ma koen ninku itteni monesti
17.		even if by age I <u>wouldn't</u>	nuoremaks vaikka ma en iältani
18.		be the youngest in the group	<u>oliskaan</u> sakissa nuorin
19.	PN	yeah	joo

The extract starts with a question that, despite some display of searching, blandly imposes or suggests a membership category on the respondent (lines 8-9: '*middle-aged woman*', '*woman of fifty*'). The interviewer also provides an explicit comparison point as she invites the respondent to characterise how she *sees* herself as a member of this category. On line 10, the respondent makes a shift in knowledge claims by starting, instead, to describe ways she *always feels like*.

Making reference to one's feelings is, once again, similar to the accounting work of the interviewees in Widdicombe and Wooffitt's study. The authors (1995:143) point out how social scientists and 'lay people' alike, draw on the distinction between cognition (such as thoughts, beliefs, attitudes), and emotions (such as feelings, desires, impulses). Cognitive processes are conventionally thought to be under conscious control, and directed by rational thought and decision-making. Emotions, on the other hand, are taken as potentially beyond rationality and conscious control. The implications of each as the basis for self-description or as a basis for one's actions are thus very different. In extract one, we see how, by portraying her claims as based on feelings, the speaker makes reference to long-standing, consistent and authentic personal qualities that are beyond conscious control or deliberation.

Simultaneously she efficiently rebuts potentially taken-for-granted assumptions or ascribed predicates conveyed in the question.

There is something of an equation-like quality to Helena's account that follows. 'Always feeling like one of the youngest' (lines 10-11), is first evidenced by describing the extreme continuity of activities in the past, and then by attaching and extending these same features to apply to 'me-today'. The argument, that works to construct a 'consistent self,' thus follows a format based on temporal indexicals in the following way.

Always terribly active ⇒ lot of energy *still today* ⇒ so I *often* feel like younger

The use of 'so' (line 16) marks the outcome-claim as a natural upshot of the speaker's prior talk and description (see Heritage and Watson 1979). Note that the equation-like argumentation also bears similarities to the example from Widdicombe and Wooffitt's study shown earlier. We saw how '*always feeling like growing one's hair long since little*' worked as an explanation for activities today, and how these activities were then offered as a natural outcome of the speaker's prior description. The extreme formulation '*I've always*', in both these cases, works as the warrant or basis for the description in the here-and-now.

Note, that the speaker also makes explicit reference to her chronological age (lines 17-18: *even if by age I wouldn't be the youngest in the group*). The facticity of chronological age is thus, once again, brought in, and oriented to, in the description provided. Simultaneously, however, the long-standing personal qualities: energeticness and an active way of life are offered as something that overrides the (f)actual, age of the speaker.

In the next extract, extreme case formulations are again used to warrant the description of personal continuity and persistent and long-standing qualities of the speaker. This time, the respondent seeks to persuade her listener that she has always accepted change and that she thus, in fact, embraces her age. Prior to the extract, the interviewee has been asked whether she has anything to add to the discussion that has taken place.

Extract 2.

PN: W9: Briitta (Cas 1, B: 22.9-23.5)

- | | | | |
|-------|-----|---|---|
| 1. | B: | I dunno just the <u>thing</u> when you said | Emmä tira <u>toi</u> vaan että ku sä sanoit |
| 2. | | that everything seems so terribly | sitä että kaikki näyttää niin hurveen |
| 3. | | positive so like (0.2) ((laughs)) | hyvältä niin tota (0.2) ((naurahtaa)) |
| 4. | | I like don't () quite honestly I can't | mää en niinku (.) ihan oikeesti mää en |
| 5. | | like think of anything that like | niinku millään keksi niinku |
| 6. | | that really that that | sellasta oikee että että |
| 7. | | ↑ <u>what</u> could it honestly be that | ↑ <u>mikä</u> mua niinku oikeen nyt niin |
| 8. | | somehow like bugged me in this | jotenkin jurppis niinku tässä |
| 9. | PN: | mm | mm |
| 10. | | (0.2) | (0.2) |
| 11. | B | or somehow that I'd be like <u>worried</u> | tai jotenkin että mua <u>painas</u> niinku |
| 12. | | about or that I somehow | tässä tai etta ma jotenki |
| 13. | | like felt so | niin tuota tuntisin itteni niinku |
| 14. | | terribly old or something | ihan älyttömän vanhaks tai muuta |
| 15. | PN: | mm | mm |
| 16. | B | maybe it's because the the thing that | ehkä se on sinä että että mä en |
| → 17. | | I've like never (.) um | oo niinku koskaan (.) ömm ollukka |
| 18. | | thought that (.) that like <u>youth</u> | sitä mieltä että (.) että joku <u>nuoruus</u> |
| 19. | | would be some like (.) <u>ideal</u> | olis niinku joku semmoneh (.) <u>ihanne</u> |
| 20. | | or that things things like (.) looks | tai joku joku tämmönen () ulkonäkö |
| 21. | | or something else would be like | tai muu olis niinku semmonen juttu |
| 22. | | the thing that you should like | jonka perässä kannattas niinku ni |
| 23. | | terribly [run] after so it's like | hirveesti [hin]kuilla että tota niin |
| 24. | PN | [mm] | [mm] |
| 25. | B | ↑ <u>maybe</u> it's exactly that (.) | ↑ <u>ehkä</u> se sitä juuri on etta (.) |
| 26. | | that you somehow accept the fact | että sitä hyväksyy jotenkin sen tosiasian |
| 27. | | that you simply like <u>are</u> this age | etta sitä nyt niinku <u>on</u> tan ikänen |

Here, Briitta can be heard as trying to convince the interviewer that her former positive descriptions have been an 'honest and accurate' account of how she thinks about age and ageing. Questions of authenticity are thus, once again, an issue for the interaction. The sense of not being 'bugged' (line 8), or 'worried' (line 11) about ageing is constructed as a more persistent, long-standing characteristic of the speaker, and this is done by describing oneself as someone who has '*never (.) um thought that (.) that like youth would be some like ideal*' (lines 17-19). Constructing continuity through an extreme case formulation constructs Briitta as someone who has, in fact, *always* accepted her age, which in turn explains the lack of worries expressed in the here-and-now. The speaker's description can also be heard as mobilising, making implicit reference and comparison to some unnamed group of 'others' that potentially are bugged and worried, or who run after eternal youth. The speaker uses this implicit comparison to position herself favourably, as something of an exception to a more general rule.

In the following extract, the speaker resorts to a much more explicit generalisation about others and subsequently sets herself as an exception to the rule. The extract also shares the qualities of logical, equation-like argumentation and rhetoric of extract 1. This time, more information and personal detail to do with appearance and personality are offered to establish extreme continuity.

Extract 3. PN: W1: Laura (Cas 1, B: 12.4-13.2)

1.	L:	Like maybe if you had the (.)	Et se ehkä et jos sulla ois tällöinen ()
2.		<u>need</u> like () for a relationship	<u>tarve</u> niinkun () parisuhteeseen
3.		and for getting into a relationship	ja pariutumiseen
4.		like <u>then</u> maybe you'd feel	nin <u>silloin</u> voi olla että kokis
5.		that this age is really stopping you	et taa ikä on todella este
6.		and maybe especially for a woman	ja nimenomaan ehkä naisella
7.		like you'd get terribly	just että sulle tulis niinkun hurveen
8.		preoccupied with your looks	ulkonäköfiksottunu
→ 9		But like I've (1 2) I've never	Mut tota mäa (1 2) mä en oo
10		been one to (0.4) one to use a lot	ikänä ollu semmoinen (0 4) kova
→ 11.		of make-up and I've never like (.)	meikkaamaan enkä ikänä oo niinkun ()
12.		somehow (2.5) it just hasn't been	jotenkin (2.5) se ei vaan oo ollu semmonen
13.		like (3 0) like the area that I've	niinkun (3.0) semmoinen alue jolla
→ 14		> I've never used a thing like that<	>mäa en oo ikänä semmoisella<
15.		() to prove my worth	(.) sillä päteny
16.		Maybe because I've had	Ehkä sen takia et mulla on ollu
→ 17.		<u>glasses</u> like always since I was little	<u>silmälasis</u> niinkun aina pienestä lähten
18.		> I think maybe because like	>Mää just aattelen ehkä senkin takia
19		many people feel it's another	kun monet kokee senkin
20.		big step that they have to buy	isona askeleena et ne joutuu hankkim
21.		like< (.) reading glasses=	niinkun< (.) lukulasit=
22.	PN:	yeah	joo
23.	L:	= but since I've had a real	= mut kun mulla on ollu nin kauheesti
24.		strong prescription and I've	vahvasti munusta et mäa vasta
25.		only like (.) <u>half</u> a year back I	niinkun (.) <u>puol</u> vuotta sitten sit
26.		like had the like (.) the (.)	niinkun otin hiukan siihen () sitä ()
27.		like >I now have bifocals<	niinkun >et mulla on nyt kaksteho<
28.		But you can't notice that	Sitakaan ei niinkun missään huomaa
→ 29.		it's like all the same	Et se on oikeestaan ihan sama
→ 30		You always wear glasses anyway	Sä kuljet kuitenkin aina lasit päällä

Similar to the extracts already discussed, extreme case formulations are again used to establish a sense of personal continuity. The speaker starts by establishing looks as a potential worry for some people, and then further specifies this characterisation to apply to women in particular. Lines 1-8 thus construct a generalised and impersonal account that works to acknowledge what the situation might be for someone, or for the speaker herself, for that matter, should her personal circumstances happen to change. After this delicate display of acknowledging the multitude of possible life situations, and the potential feminine preoccupation with

changing appearance, attractiveness, and age, the speaker then moves to offer a contrastive account (marked by *but*, on line 9) in which she establishes herself as an exception.

Not being personally 'terribly preoccupied with looks' is again conveyed via reference to long-standing, consistent and continuing features of one's self. This is done via repeated use of extreme formulations: '*I've never been one to (0.4) one to use a lot of make-up* (lines 9-11), '>*I've never used a thing like that*< (.) *to prove my worth*' (lines 14-15). The use of '*just*' (line 12-13: *it just hasn't been like (3.0) the area that I*) does additional work to establish the simple straightforwardness of the explanation offered. It also further trivialises the personal importance of issues like personal appearance to the speaker (for the analysis of '*just*', see Lee 1987).

Let us stop here for a while to reconsider the contrasts drawn in Laura's description. An implicit contrast is first of all drawn in between Laura and people, particularly women, who have the need to be, or get into a relationship. A more explicit contrast is then drawn between women who are therefore 'terribly preoccupied with looks' and the speaker who is positioned as *always* having differed from this: *always* having been indifferent about her looks. Let us look at the delicate way in which this contrast is drawn, and the nuances that it smuggles into the interaction.

The choice of words and the pauses in the delivery are of specific interest here. The difference between Laura and other women is established through unspecified and vague expressions such as '*the area*' (line 13) and '*a thing like that*' (line 14). Both seem to mark key points and make reference to some specifics of general stereotypical female behaviour from which Laura differs. Note how pauses occur in the delivery of the contrast, especially as the speaker moves into establishing it (lines 12 and 13). In addition to being vague, these expressions hint at, and mobilise potentially pejorative connotations and offer veiled evaluations of women who do consider 'the area' to be central to them and who subsequently 'use their looks'.

Note also, how the speaker immediately moves to defuse her evaluative description by shifting the talk to a relatively non-threatening, practical and everyday topic. Having to wear reading glasses, or to buy bifocals (line 27) is brought up as an

additional, non-threatening and non-gendered marker of change that comes with one's age, and which 'many people,' not just women (line 19) may consider a 'big step' (line 20). The speaker thus moves from a potentially delicate area of gendered description and comparison, into a more everyday, straightforward one. As someone who has 'always wore glasses, since little', the personal significance of this more general change is then also played down (lines 28-30).

The extract can also be seen as providing another example of the rhetorical means of using generalisations and particularisations in descriptions (Billig 1987, 1996, see also McKinlay and Dunnett 1998). Referring to a 'on the average, gendered image' of female behaviour and values, the speaker moves to position herself as a particular case, as an exception that stands outside the rules. The speaker not only manages to systematically mitigate the personal, 'for-me' significance of the change of the age markers established for the interaction, and constructs a consistent self and an image of personal continuity, she also carefully manages potential negative hearings of the discrete generalisations and particularisations applied.

Similar reference to generalised categories is in use in the following extract, where Juha sets himself as different from other men of his age.

Extract 4. PN: M5: Juha 2 (Cas 1:A, 16.7-18.9)

1.	J:	I wonder if this is why	Sitäköhan se sitten johtuu
2.		when people talk about men	kun puhutaan että miehillä
3.		having a mid-life fling	on viidenkymppin villitys
4.		that they try to prove to themselves	et ne yrittää todistella itselleen
5.		[() some]thing	[(.)jo]tain
6.	PN:	[mm] mm	[mm] mm
7.		(0 4)	(0 4)
8.	J:	and get interested in things	ja alkaa kinnostaa asiat
9.		and start running about	juoksee tuolla meneen
10.		I dunno if it's this	en tiiä sitten onko se sitä
11.	PN:	mm	mm
12.	J	well I haven't noticed it	no ma en oo sitä huomannu
→ 13.		I haven't changed into anything	ma en oo mikskään muuttunu
→ 14.		I've always been the sa(h)me(h)	mä oon ollu aina samanlai(h)ne(h)n

In this extract 'men' as a generic category is used as a contrastive other, against which the speaker is then positioned. The characterisation of this generic category is brought in as something 'people' talk about. This creates rhetorical distance from the actual words or claims uttered, and reduces the speaker's own accountability for

uttering them. The speaker acts merely as an animator, and not as the author of the message (on change of footing see Clayman 1992; Potter 1996, 143-149; Abel and Stokoe 1999).

Juha's means of establishing the contrast between himself and 'men' shares some interesting similarities to extract 3 where Laura set herself as different from 'women'. In extract 3, we saw Laura making vague reference to '*the area*' and '*a thing like that*'. It was pointed out how her choice of words functioned both as the key to the contrast and particularisation established, and offered veiled evaluations of the contrastive other. The '*it*' (line 12) in Juha's account does something similar to this. In both cases, euphemistic formulations function as shorthand for a potentially pejorative description of the 'others' simultaneously implied.

In extract 4, Juha's construction of contrast and the extreme personal continuity '*I haven't changed into anything I've always been the sa(h)me(h)*' (lines 13-14) can be heard as implicit boasting. He establishes himself as different from 'mid-life men' as a general category and depicts himself as not having any of the stereotypical symptoms of a 'mid-life crisis' which could be heard as a euphemistically referring to sudden interests in the opposite sex. Instead, the account constructs him as someone who has, in fact always been something of a ladies' man, and has therefore not noticed any change with age.

In sum then, the extracts we have looked at so far show speakers employing *extreme case formulations as a resource to warrant their claims for personal continuity as a natural outcome of deeper, long-term personal inclinations and dispositions*. In extracts 1 and 3, we saw personal continuity conveyed by an equation-like description of the form: I've never/I've always been X => therefore I'm X/ I'm not Y today. Similar to the findings in Widdicombe and Wooffitt's work on membership in youth subcultures (1995), extreme formulations help to make the speaker unavailable for particular categorical designation. In the extracts, we saw speakers differentiating themselves from being 'someone without energy' (extract 1), from 'running after youth and looks' (extract 2), from being 'someone preoccupied with one's looks' (extract 3), or from 'having a mid-life fling' (extract 4).

Simultaneously, the speakers managed positioning themselves as a counter case to such generic and/or gendered formulations.

Mobilising extreme continuity also works as a discursive strategy, by which the speaker can warrant not having noticed X, for not doing Y, or for not being Z. At the same time other people are made potentially available for pejorative categorisations and descriptions. 'I've always,' followed by a positive description, and 'I've never,' followed by a negative one, as formulations work to afford the hearing that, in fact, *other people* more generally may engage in the negatively described activities, or possess the negative attributes described. Mobilising extreme continuity thus works to establish a sense of personal exceptionality for the speaker.

Panicking women, beach types and exercise freaks

In this section, I move to analyse three further descriptive sequences, where extreme case formulations are used to mobilise personal continuity. Extending upon the analysis in this chapter so far, the following focuses on the combination of extreme formulations and *mobilisation and construction of particular category label or type categorisation*. Analysing the next three stretches of talk then, I'll make use of Lena Jayyusi's work (1984; 1991). As already discussed in chapter two, Jayyusi re-worked and enlarged the framework of Sacks' initial notions on categorisation analysis, and introduced several new concepts. Her work is thus a seminal part of the later developments of categorisation analysis, which extended beyond the initial 'apparatus', identified by Sacks.

Pointing to workings of membership categorisations in talk, one of the conceptual differentiations made by Jayyusi (1984:20) was that between membership categories and membership categorisations. By the former she is referring to culturally available category-concepts; like 'doctor', 'poet', 'child', or 'murdered', that members routinely use in the accomplishment of various practical tasks. According to Jayyusi, however, the use of such concepts does not exhaust the conduct of members' categorisational work. In addition to category concepts, people also use other categorisations like 'a nice man', 'a nervous person', 'a pretty girl', 'an

intelligent man', 'a dangerous driver', 'a hippy type' etc. Such categorisation are typically put together of 'Adjective-plus-a-category' (Jayyusi 1984: 20). Type categorisations thus include some detailed description of the persons concerned, assessment of the actions they may perform, of their character etc.

According to Jayyusi, (1984: 24) type construction, as a means of categorisation, is interesting exactly because of the noticeable consequences it brings into the interaction. First of all, doing description in terms of specific types always makes guarded prescriptions and projects actions that are embedded in the features of the categorisation used. For example, 'the Hell's Angel type', or 'the intellectual type', already encapsulate particular sets of both present and future activities and practices of the incumbents in the type described. Type descriptions and categorisation thus display a more general set of features of a perceived class of persons. They achieve transpersonal projection of attributes and of expectable actions. In addition to projecting potential attributes, actions, wishes, motivations etc. onto particular individuals, type categorisations can also be used to make guarded inferences, assessments, and judgements of the group thus nominated.

The ways in which type categorisations work as a practical means of ascribing features and potential actions and attributes to people becomes clearer when looking at some examples. In the following three extracts, type categorisations both of the form adjective + a category (e.g. 'a slow developer' below), and noun + a type (e.g. 'the beach type', in extract 6) are in use.

In the first extract, Anna is describing her feelings about age.

Extract 5. PN: W8: Anna (Cas 1, A: 4.4-6.1)

1.	A	I think I told you that to me age is	Ma taisin sanoakin et mulle se ikä on
2.		just a number all the way but like	sitä numeroita sitten vaan mutta tuota niin
3.		so (1.2) I know like this <u>panic</u>	(1 2) mie tiiän niinku aika <u>panukinomasesti</u>
→ 4.		that some () women have with	jotku (.) naiset niinku suhtautuu siihen
5.		regards to ageing like	ikäntymiseen et
6.		I don't have that kind of=	ei mulla niinku semmosta=
7.	PN	mm	mm
8.	A	=feeling at all so like (0 4)	=tunnetta ole ollenkaan että tuota (0 4)
→ 9.		I've like <u>always</u> felt	ma oon niinku kokenu <u>aina</u>
10.		that I haven't felt at home at all	et mä en oo viihtyny ollenkaan ollu
11.		been like I've been if I think about	et ma oon niiku jos mä aattelen

12.		when I was twenty for instance	vaikka kaksikymppisenä
13.		(0.2) so then I wanted to be	(0.2) niin mä halusin silloin olla
14.		<u>thi(h)ty</u> then	<u>kolmeky(h)mmenta</u> silloin
15.		like you can see a bit	ninku voi nähä vähän
16.		<u>backwards</u> and know where you	<u>taaksepäin</u> ja tietää mikä
17.		are <u>now</u> and what lies <u>ahead</u>	on <u>nyt</u> ja mikä on <u>edessäpäin</u>
18.		[and I] think it was a terribly ()	[ja m]usta se oli ninku kauhean ()
19.	PN:	[mm]	[mm]
20.	A:	difficult time and <u>te:ri:nbly</u> insecure	hankalaa aikaa ja <u>hi rveen</u> epavarma
21.		under no circumstances would I	en missään nimessä haluais olla kyllä
22.		want to be twe(h)nty or () like	ka(h)ksky(h)mpinen tai (.) sitä
23.	PN:	mm	mm
24.	A:	so like (0.2) I must be like	et tuota (0.2) et kyl mä oon varmaan ninku
→ 25.		a terribly () slow de(h)velo(h)per	hirveen () hitaasti ky(h)psy(h)vä
26.	PN:	yes	joo

Anna's account bears several similarities to the extracts discussed in the previous section. An extreme case formulation '*I've like always felt*' (line 9) is used to mobilise a sense of personal continuity, and a reference to '*some women*' (line 4), works to build a sense of Anna being an exception to a more common rule. But Anna's account does something in addition to this. She starts off by downplaying the personal significance of age by referring to it as merely a number (line 2). This is followed by an immediate display of sensibility and rationality, that shows the listener that the speaker is aware that age is a potentially difficult issue to some: '*I know like this panic that some (.) women have with regards to ageing*' (lines 3-6). Claiming that she personally does not have '*that kind of feeling at all*' (lines 6 and 8), and that she, in fact, feels something to the contrary, is then established by the extreme formulation on line 9: '*I've like always felt.*' This is followed by further biographical evidence, as Anna describes how she has always – since she was twenty – wanted to be older than her age, and how she would '*under no circumstances*' want to be twenty (lines 21-22). Towards the end of the extract, she sums up her claim by mobilising the type categorisation '*slow developer*' (line 25).

What does the mobilisation of particular type categorisation then add to the personal continuity established by extreme formulations? In the extract above, the mobilisation of 'a slow developer' works, first of all, to build an oppositional comparison to 'panicking women' and to establish Anna's position towards ageing as a long-standing and a consistent one. 'Being a particular type of person' immediately mobilises notions of constant behaviour, of stability, and of 'natural' character. The interesting feature of this extract is, however, that both category labels 'panicking women' and 'a slow developer' have the potential for being heard

in a derogative sense. Panic, taken to its extreme may refer to irrational, even pathological behaviour patterns, whereas 'being a slow developer' may be interpreted as equally non-desirable and self-derogative. Here one is nonetheless used to counter the other.

Combining an extreme formulation with the mobilisation of a specific descriptive type also works as an *upgrade rejection* of the possibility that the recipient might hear the description as an on-the-spot, just-for-the-interviewer -type account. Anna is, in other words not simply describing separate examples of times when she, *momentarily*, wished that she would be older. The combination of extreme forms and the mobilisation of the type 'slow developer' thus works to provide un-rebuttable evidence that 'wanting to be older' is a more long-standing, personal quality and not simply a locally produced and worked-up description.

In the next extract, Anita uses a similar combination of extreme and type formulations when describing her figure.

Extract 6. PN: W2: Anita (Cas 1, A: 22.9 - 23.4)

	1.	A	Well it's like I've really	No ku ma oon oikeestaan
→	2.		I've <u>always</u> been fat	mä oon ollu <u>aina</u> lihava
	3.	PN:	mm	mm
	4.	A:	etcetera it's like I haven't	sun muuta et mulla ei oo
	5.		had this like (.) that this business	sellasta nänku () et
	6.		with one's figure has not become	kroppahommaa oo paassy tulemaan
	7.		like that at thirty	et kolmekymppisenä niin
	8.		I lost thirty kilos	mä laihutin kolkyt kiloa
	9.		I've gained twenty-five of it back	ma oon lihonu sut kaksikymppiä takasin
→	10.		Like I've <u>always</u> yo-yoed	et mä oon <u>aina</u> sahanu
	11.		I've never been	mä en oo koskaan
→	12.		the beach type=	ollu se uimarantatyyppi=
	13.	PN:	mm	mm
	14.	A:	like in <u>that</u> respect () the only	et <u>sin</u> suhteessa (.) ainoo
	15.		disappointment with my figure	pettymys mikä kroppaan tuli
	16.		came after the first child when	ensimmäisen lapsen jälkeen ku
	17.		((goes on to describe her figure	((jatkaa kuvaamalla ulkokuotoaan
	18.		after giving birth to her first child))	ensimmäisen lapsen syntymän jälkeen))

Similar to the previous extract, Anita can also be heard as orienting to a normative expectation that change with age brings decay, and that this is a potential worry to people. Her formulation '*this business with one's figure*' (lines 5-6), although not as explicit as that by Anna in extract 7, can still be heard as carrying indirect reference

to others for whom this 'business' as 'an issue,' may be a source of disappointment. Anita establishes herself as an exception through the extreme claim '*I've always been fat*' (line 2), and by establishing that her weight has always fluctuated (line 10).

Anita's account is vulnerable to two kinds of potential rejection. First of all, like Anna in extract 5, she could be heard as providing an account of not being worried about her figure, simply with the here-and-now, local interview situation in mind. Second, her extreme formulation '*I've always yo-yoed*' (line 10), to some extent contradicts her earlier claim '*I've always been fat.*' A further source of contradiction is provided by the information that at one point in her life Anita lost thirty kilos (line 8). Parts of Anita's account could therefore also be heard as evidence of her being a person for whom body weight has, in fact, been something of a permanent worry, and who – for that reason – is constantly yo-yo dieting for instance.

Anita's self-description '*I've never been the beach type*' (lines 11-12) works to rebut both these hearings. The question about worrying about one's figure is rendered irrelevant by establishing non-alliance with the category label 'beach type'. Note, that it is not immediately clear how the categorisation 'beach type' should be understood or interpreted here. Not being the beach type could for instance simply refer to a person's body shape. From the context where the type construction emerges, however, it becomes clear that more than mere body shape is being referred to. Rather, the beach type in this context works to project personal motivations, attributes and interests as central properties of incumbents in the category worked up. The negation then – Anita as the '*not-the-beach-type*' – thus becomes hearable as a description of someone with specific longer-term interests, preference structures, values etc. The evocation of the beach type, invokes the notion that Anita has come to terms with her appearance that she has had all her life. Her formulation '*in that respect (.) the only disappointment with my figure came after the first child*' (lines 14-16), does some further work to establish that she is not worried about changes in her figure, but rather has only momentarily noticed and worried about such matters.

In the third example of the combination of extreme continuity and the mobilisation of type categorisations, Esa has been asked about situations where he notices his age.

Extract 7.

PN: M8 Esa 2, Cas 1, A (16.5-17.3)

1.	E:	I have no (.) urge to go and	mulla oo mitään () tarvetta lähteä
2.		run a marathon or something	maratonia juoksee tai jotain
3.		I haven't run one when I was <u>younger</u>	en mä oo <u>nuorempanakaan</u> juossu
4.		and I dunno () so I don't have the	enkä mä tiä (.) eikä mulla <u>nyytenkää</u> oo
5.		urge to do it <u>now</u> either it's like=	siihen sit tarvetta etta=
6.	PN:	right	nun
7.	E	=I've lived my <u>own</u> my own life	=mä oon eläny sitä <u>omaa</u> omaa elämääni
→ 8.		and I've never been a () in <u>that</u> way	enkä ollu ikinä mukaan (.) <u>sillä</u> lailla
→ 9.		a huge exercise (.) freak or wild	hirvee liikunta(.)hullu ja villi
10		or I've exercised quite normally	tai liikkunu ihan nyt tietenkin normaalisti
11.		of course like you do and walk (.)	mitä liikutaan ja kävelen ()
12.		even today [and]=	tanäkin päivänä [ja]=
13.	PN:	[mm]	[mm]
14.	E:	=stuff but I've never been a jog	=tollai mut en mä mikään semmonen hölkkä
→ 15		() the jogging-type of a person	() hölkkäihminen
16		[ever] so	ollu [ikänä] että
17.	PN:	[mm] yes	[mm] joo
18.	E:	(0 2)	(0 2)
→ 19.		more of a house () a househusband	enempi koti (.) enempi koti-isi

The extract offers yet another example of the mobilisation of type categorisations, of typical activities linked to these, and of the construction of extreme continuity. 'Running a marathon or something' (line 2) is introduced as an example of the speaker not wanting to suddenly change his habits when growing older. Note, how 'my urges today' become equated with 'those I had when I was younger' (lines 3 and 5), and how the speaker's lack of interest in activities, like running a marathon thus becomes grounded in his long-standing personal qualities and preferences. Esa distinguishes his preferences and his way of life as forming an oppositional contrast to those of the 'exercise freak' (line 9) or the 'jogging type of a person' (line 15)². He then heightens this contrastive effect by mobilising the alternative type 'house husband' (line 18). The label househusband is invoked in contrast to the predicates, notions of preferences and activities of those invoked by 'exercise freak' and 'the jogging type of a person'.

² The Finnish translated into 'exercise freak' translates literally into 'exercise mad'. It is used, however in the noun form to refer to a particular type of a person

The statement '*I've lived my own my own life*' (line 7), can be heard as accomplishing three things. First, it further constructs Esa's consistency and integrity through time. Esa can be heard as someone who is 'his own person,' and as someone who is not easily influenced or sidetracked into doing things. Similar to the extracts looked at so far, 'living one's own life and therefore never engaging in certain activities' again functions as an upgrade rejection of the account being heard as made up for the occasion. Third, 'being a house husband' and 'living one's own life' also imply that the contrast types invoked, the 'marathon runners' and 'exercise freaks' out there, are potentially people who tend to get sudden urges to change their habits in order to fight the effects of ageing.³

To reiterate then very briefly, the combined mobilisation of extreme formulations and self-description in terms of type categorisations discussed in this section can be seen as accomplishing a range of local interactional business. First of all, the mobilisation of specific type categorisations functions as an additional way of discursively *bolstering what extreme formulations* also accomplish. That is, they work as *upgrade rejections* against the potential accusation that the speaker is simply coming up with descriptions for the interviewer in the local here-and-now. Characterising oneself as a particular type means speaking from the point of authority given by the membership described. The membership within a particular group of people nominated by the type categorisation or a negation of a type categorisation also invokes predicates that render the reported claims, behaviour and stable personal qualities acceptable. Never having engaged in certain activities, or not having had any worries starts making sense, and is warranted, because such worries are moved outside of my type, and instead described as qualities of beach types, exercise freaks or panicking women. In this sense, the discursive mobilisation of type categorisations simultaneously trades off and constitutes motivational predicates or lack of motivational predicates.

³ Note how talk about exercise almost gets Esa into difficulty. Having disassociating himself from excessive exercise he then hurries to add a description that constitutes his habits as normal (lines 31-33). The speaker is thus clearly orienting to the norm that exercise is good for you, and warding off the possible hearing of him not doing his share.

Inter-locking extreme formulations analysed also in the previous section of this chapter, to descriptions of self as a specific type, thus helps the speaker to build a case that is *proof against rebuttal*. Establishing oneself via type characterisations in-and-through talk does some highly economical work in establishing evidence, and justifying the activities and descriptions offered. The interactional locale where membership in particular types becomes mobilised is typically one, where a space for a rebuttal could potentially open up.

Second, the mobilisation of social types functions as explicit (extracts 5 and 7) or more implicit (extract 6) *folk theory comparison*. Descriptions are, in other words, selected to underline and establish categorical oppositions between types, or labels. On the basis of such comparisons, speakers can then establish themselves as exceptions to the more generally derived model. There may be a more generalisable point to be made here: when talking about themselves, people tend to underline personal exceptionality. The combination of extreme formulations and the construction of type categorisations thus works to establish what people are like in general, or to establish that certain kind of change happens as people get older. Simultaneously this combination also enables the speaker to establish her/herself as not following, or as different from such generalised scenarios.

A further point to be made about the extracts discussed in this section is that in each case, the mobilisation of a type categorisation also projects negative assessment and establishes doubt as to the authenticity of the oppositional types described. They thus make guarded inferences, assessments and judgements of the group nominated by the contrastive type categorisation. The descriptions, in other words, *undermine the credibility or authenticity of the contrast case* while depicting it, and the activities this type of person typically engages in, in a negative and derogatory light: as potentially shallow (the beach type), irrational (panicking women), or ludicrous (the exercise freak). The contrast case is built against the derogatory such-and-such type, against the category 'they' Sacks 1992, Vol. 1: 179). Panicking women, exercise freaks and beach types are thus types who have difficulties with their ageing,' and who therefore possibly resort to desperate, extreme and ludicrous activities. But that becomes understandable as 'they do such things' (op.cit.).

The third point we can now make about doing extreme continuity on the basis of the extracts in this and the previous section is that it is not an abstract, for-its-own-sake exercise. Rather, constructing personal continuity also helps the participants' accountability within the interview situation. Speakers, in other words, without fail, do work to acknowledge common sense knowledge about change, and make sure that they are heard as being aware of change with age being a potential problem to some people. Simultaneously to these *displays of sensibility and rationality*, however, participants, at least in the cases analysed here, manage to establish their own personal exceptionality vis-à-vis the image of change.

Means of conceding and evaluating change

In this chapter so far, I have focused on the discursive practices by which participants mobilise and construct personal continuity, and on how implicit notions of personal change are rebutted. In this section, I move on to examples of descriptive sequences where notions of life course change are directly invoked. The analysis of the extracts to follow has been inspired by Antaki and Wetherell's work on '*show concessions*' (1999, also Finlay and Kitzinger, under review).

Contrary to the predominantly formal research on concessions in conversation, Antaki and Wetherell's treatment of concession-making focuses on the variety of rhetorical effects conceding may have in talk-in-interaction. They identify a three-part structure, oriented to by participants, that is used to rhetorically bolster speakers' claims. In contrast to earlier literal understandings, which treat concessions in conversation as 'a participant agreeing to the central issue after his or her prior disagreement' (Kotthoff 1993: 147, ref. Antaki and Wetherell 1999: 7), Antaki and Wetherell note that speakers can make a 'show' of concession and to use it to enforce and protect their claims against suspicion or attack. They then uncover a basic conversational structure that consists of a three-part proposition - concession - reprise structure.

Here is one of the numerous examples that they provide (1999: 8):

- | | | | |
|-----|------|--|--------------------|
| 1. | Resp | there's <u>no</u> way I can influence | proposition |
| 2. | | the federation of Labour | |
| 3. | | I might [hate them you know | |
| 4. | Int | [yeah | |
| 5. | Resp | [<u>willing</u> to go out and shoot the | concession |
| 6. | Int | [yeah | |
| 7. | Resp | whole lot of them [But | reprise |
| 8. | Int. | (((explosive | |
| 9. | | laughter)) | |
| 10. | Resp | I can't influence them | |

Antaki and Wetherell note, how more than mere agreement is going on here. The speaker first *proposes* something: that is, that he has no means of influencing the federation of Labour. After this he *concedes* counter evidence of possible ways of influence and thus orients to the fact that his prior statement is open to challenge in various ways. The third part of the three-part structure then *reprises* the original statement. It is this explicit show of conceding something to the opposite of the original statement that works to bolster the speaker's original claims.

Antaki and Wetherell then outline the concession structure as having (1999:13):

1. Material that could reasonably be cast as being a challengeable proposition, or having disputable implications
2. *Okay / alright / of course / you know* or other concessionary marker, plus material countable as evidence against the challengeable proposition, or its implications
3. *But / nevertheless* or other contrastive conjunction plus (some recognizable version of) the original proposition

The authors then go on to identify and detail the ways in which this three-part structure can be exploited in conversation, and map the variety of its potential usage. Instead of going to the ample detail provided by their treatment of the issue, let me however, shift the focus back to the data at hand.

Building on the discussion on the concession structure, briefly described, I wish to explore the discursive and descriptive practices of conceding personal lifetime change in my interview data. The analysis that follows will show that the concession structure, identified by Antaki and Wetherell, is a recurrent feature of conversational data also in Finnish. In addition to the analysis of complete proposition, concession, reprise structures in the data, the analysis also moves to consider examples where closure to the three-part format is established not via reasserting the initial proposition or claim, but rather by adding an extended elaboration or evaluative

sequence to the concession made. This is where my analysis moves away from the original emphasis of the rhetorical effect of 'making a show' of conceding.

Two points will be raised in the analysis to follow. First, I will provide examples where *speakers concede to axiomatic notions of change*. In these cases the concession is, in other words, made via general reference to everybody, or generic categories such as 'one', or 'a person'. What I wish to establish, is that describing and conceding change in axiomatic terms does work to undermine the specific personal stake in conceding it (Edwards and Potter 1992; Potter 1997). Second, I will draw our attention to cases where conceding personal change is immediately followed by an evaluation of such change. In these cases the three-part concession structure identified by Antaki and Wetherell lacks closure in the sense that the reassertion of the initial claim becomes replaced by an explicit, and sometimes extensive evaluation of the concession made previously. In these cases the act of conceding change also functions as a show of personal rationality, reflexivity and/or maturity of character.

Conceding axiomatic change

One typical means of mobilising change in the data was by conceptualising it as an 'on-average' observation of how things proceed. The examples to follow show how axiomatic and general notions of change are achieved in descriptive accounts where generic plurals like 'we' or non-specific categories like 'a person' are used. In both extracts, participants are asked about situations where they come to notice their age. Note how, in both cases, personal change is conceded via making reference to more general and normative notions of age.

Extract 8. PN: M8 Esa 2 (Cas 1, A: 16.9-17.3)

1.	PN.	Are there then any () particular	Onksit jotain semmosia (.) erityisia
2		(0 2) are there particular <u>situations</u>	(0 2) onks semmosia erityisiä <u>tilanteita</u>
3.		like in addition to this (.) this ()	nyt sitten tän (.) tämmösen ()
4		this business with the blood	tän verenpainehomman
5.		pressure where you come to notice	lisaks jossa sä tuut ninku huomanneeksi
6		that () how old you are	sen etta () minkä ikänen sä oot
7		Ca-can you think of any <u>situations</u>	Tu-tuleeks semmosia <u>tilanteita</u> joltain
8		(1 0)	(1 0)

P →	9.	E:	Well no' well (1.2)	no e n nun (1.2)
C →	10.		oh well one of course	nun no eihan sita nyt
	11.		can't keep up anymore in	tietenkään jaksaa sillä tavalla
	12.		the way (0 4) one used to and stuff	enää (0 4) huseeraa ja noin
	13.		so like it clearly like (.) you do:	että kyllä se nyt selvä että (.) ky'llä
	14.		in <u>that</u> way of course notice it like=	sen <u>sillä</u> lailla tietenkin huomaa että=
	15.	PN:	mm	mm
	16.	E:	=I mean we can't help it	=eihan me muttää sille voida
	17.		that we're=	etta tässä=
	18.	PN:	mm	mm
	19.	E:	=when age comes and	=kun se ikä ikä tulee
	20.		causes a bit a bit of <u>decay</u>	ja vähä vähä <u>rappeuttaa</u>
R →	21.		but like (0 2) I wouldn't <u>otherwise</u>	mutta tota (0.2) en mä <u>muuten</u>

This extract is an example of a complete proposition - concession - reprise structure. The extract starts, with the interviewer's question first being followed by a dispreferred answer: no. This establishes that the speaker has not noticed his age in any other situation, or that he cannot think of any such situations. After a 1.2 pause the respondent moves to conceding counter-evidence to the proposition just made. The concession is constructed on reference to how things publicly and commonsensically are ('*oh well one of course can't keep up anymore*' lines 10-11).

'Oh well' resembles the concession markers identified by Antaki and Wetherell (1999: 13), which include 'sure', 'ok', 'fair enough' and 'obviously'. The use of '*oh well*' works to mark Esa's concession as resulting from a shift in his orientation to the information conveyed. The interactional usage of 'oh' has been characterised as marking information management (Schiffrin 1987), in the sense that 'oh' as a particle is 'used to propose that its producer has undergone some kind of change in his or her locally current state of knowledge, information, orientation, or awareness' (Heritage 1984b: 299). In the concession above, 'oh well' can be heard then, as demonstrating that the speaker is aware, and has knowledge of, how things generally go; that he is not speaking out of ignorance. '*Oh well,*' - especially combined with '*of course*' and the general completor '*and stuff*' on line 12 (Jefferson 1990) - in other words, moves his description onto a more general level of axioms about human ageing and mobilises the sense that publicly known, and common information is being referred to.

Note also, how Esa moves to elaborate and qualify the concession by using the generic pronominal form 'we' (lines 16-17 and 19-20: '*I mean we can't help it that we're...when age comes and causes a bit a bit of decay*'). It is unclear as to which

group of peoples the vague 'we' exactly refers to. Esa could be speaking as a human being, and thus extending the 'we' to include people in general, the interviewer included; he could be referring to his profession as a metal worker as a job that, more so than other jobs, inevitably causes decay etc.

After the generalised and axiomatic concession Esa reprises the initial claim of not noticing change (lines 20-21: '*but like (0.2) I wouldn't otherwise*'). The reassertion is, in this case, delivered in the recognisable form of a negation repeated (see Antaki and Wetherell 1995: 14, for details on reprise markers and closure). His account thus has the typical structure of a show concession where the initial proposition is qualified by a concession, after which the initial claim is reasserted. The concession in Esa's account can be interpreted as orienting to his noticeable failure to point to life course change (line 9), and to demonstrate that the speaker none the less is aware of change as a norm.

AXIOMATIC and general notions of change are also a key to the description in the next extract, where Kimmo is providing an answer to the same question as Esa. In contrast to extract 8, the concession does not achieve hearable closure. Instead the speaker's concession, that again mobilises axiomatic change, is followed by repeated elaboration (E1, E2, E3) of the initial concession.

Extract 9. PN: M4: Kimmo (Cas 1, A: 6.6-7.1)

	1.	PN:	In which other situations (.)	Missä muissa tilanteis (.)
	2.		are there situations where you	onks jotain semmosia tilanteita joissa
	3.		come to notice like your own age	sä tuut huomanneeks ninku oman ikas
	4.		if like at work you notice it	jos ninku töissä sä huomaat sen
	5.		in ce-certain things but like	jos-joissain tietyissä jutuis mut etta
	6.		what about otherwise	entä sit muuten
	7.		(0.2)	(0 2)
C 1.→	8.	K:	Well of course you're no longer	No totta kai eihän sita enää
	9.		the same as (.) say like when	semmonen oo ku () sanotaan
	10.		you were young ((laughs)) so	nuorena ((nauraa)) niin
	11.		sure there are always differences	onhan sinä aina eroja
	12.	PN:	mm	mm
E 1.→	13.	K:	But °one can't° () a person can't	Mut °eihän sitä° (.) eihän sita ihminen
	14.		ever be the <u>same</u> again	voi milloinkaan olla <u>sama</u> enää
	15.	PN:	mm	mm
E.2. →	16.	K:	Sure you notice it in many things	Kyllähän sen huomaa monessa asiassa
	17.		you get tired more easily	väsy paljon helpommin
	18.	PN	↑uh-mm	↑uh-mm
E.3. →	19.	K:	and you don't always have the ()	eikä semmosta () <u>kiinnostusta</u> oo
	20.		<u>interest</u> in things	kaikkeen aina

The interviewer's question is again followed by a more general formulation that establishes that the speaker is conveying something consensual and commonly known. Lines 8-10: '*Well of course you're no longer the same as (.) say like when you were young*' can, in other words, be heard as stating everyday, shared information about change. Having conceded change, the speaker then moves to elaborate his concession by using a generic formulation (lines 13-14: '*But one can't° (.) a person can't ever be the same again*'). This again widens the scope of change to people *in general*, and moves the focus away from the speaker. While the interviewer only offers minimal response, further elaborations are then brought in (lines 13, 16 and 19). All of these: the implicit notion of time ('ever being the same again' on line 14), as well as singular axiomatic predicates (tiredness, lack of interest, lines 17 and 20) are delivered in the generalised you-form. This works to further strengthen the axiomatic nature of the speaker's initial concession.

The two extracts looked at so far have similar concessionary elements in them. Contrary to extract 8, the example above does not have the complete show concession structure. Antaki and Wetherell note, that the distance between the original claim and the reprise may vary, and that the effect of the structure generally becomes more muffled the greater the distance (1999: 23). In extract 9, however, no proposition is made, as the speaker starts off by conceding change. A reprise is also lacking and becomes substituted by repeated elaborations of the initial concession.

The common feature in the extracts above, however, is that in both, the speakers establish and concede change as a more general and axiomatic part of ageing. In both '*well of course*' is followed by a generic formulation that invokes shared common-sense notions of change with age. Characterised in this universal fashion, there is actually no great concession in acknowledging that change affects also me personally. Instead, both speakers merely establish being members in a category ('we', 'a person'), for whom change is an inevitable part of life. In addition to minimising any potential personal stake (Edwards and Potter 1992; Potter 1996) in conceding change, the generalised concession is also in service of the speakers' accountability as it establishes the speaker as a full and knowledgeable member.

Concessions followed by an evaluation

There are other examples in the data where a concession structure is clearly started, but where the proposition - concession - reprise structure, however, remains unfinished. This is the case in the two extracts produced below. In both, instead of reprising the initial proposition (P), speakers move to evaluate (E) the concessions made earlier.

Extract 10. PN: W4: Liisa (Cas 1, A: 9.6.-9.8)

P →	1	Like I don't in that way	Et en mä nunku sillai
	2.	(2 0) feel like I'd be somehow	(2 0) tunne että mä nunku jotenkin
	3.	(0 6) ageing	(0 6) vanhenisin
C →	4	Well maybe <u>the</u> thing that I can't	No ehkä <u>se</u> et ma en
	5.	stay up late anymore	jaksa enää valvoa
	6.	PN mm	mm
C2 →	7.	L· That's maybe one it's the only thing	Se on ehkä semmonen se on ainoa
	8.	that I have that has like (.)	mikä mulla on sellanen tota ()
	9.	that I can't keep up the way	et mä en jaksa enää samalla
	10	I used to when I was young	lailla ku nuorena
	11.	Like I've always been very energetic	Et mä oon aika energinen ollu aina
	12.	and had several irons in the fire	ja mulla on ollu monta rautaa tulessa
	13.	Like I've done loads of things	et mä oon tehny hirveen monta asiaa
C3 →	14.	but now I can't anymore	mut nyt mä en enää jaksa
	15	Like I've () slowed down	Et mul on nunku () vauhti hiljenny
	16	slowed down so so like I don't	hiljentyny et et tota
	17.	fancy staying up late things like	ei ollenkaan kiinnosta se valvominen
	18	that don't interest me (2 0)	ei kiinnosta tavallaan semmonen (2.0)
	19	°how should I put it° visiting people	°mites mä sanosin° kylässä oleminen
	20.	or something like >well I've never	tai joku >no ravintolassa mä
	21.	been one to sit in restaurants	en oo koskaan istunut
	22	but like< but like going out and stuff	mut et< et semmonen
	23	doesn't like interest me	meneminen nunku ei kiinnosta
E →	24.	Like I love quiet (.)	Minä rakastan nunku rauhallisia (.)
	25.	evenings at home with my husband	koti-iltoja mun miehen kans
	26	We drink wine or something else	Juodaan viiniä tai jotain
	27.	lovely like that	tämmöstä ihanaa
	28.	Like (1 4) that maybe in that way	Et tota (1.4) et sillai ehkä kyllä
E →	29.	things have (.) but it's not	on (.) mut se ei oo
	30	like a <u>bad</u> thing	nunku <u>paha</u> asia
E →	31.	It's I think it's (0 2) in some ways	Se on must se on (0 2) jotenkin
	32.	a wonderful thing	vaan ihana asia
	33.	Then on the other hand when	Sit toisaalta niin kun sen
	34	you accept that this is how it is	hyväksyy et näin se on
	35.	PN. Mm mm	Mm mm

This extract is a part of a longer answer to the question 'when do you become aware of age'. In lines 1-3, the speaker states that she does not feel like she's ageing. Her proposition is then immediately followed by a concession. Note how the concession is done in parts, and how the first concession (line 4-5) is immediately produced

again and reformulated on lines 9-10. The initial concession, which in this case starts by the thinking token 'well,' consists, of the predicate 'not being able stay up late' (lines 4-5). This is later elaborated into 'not keeping up the same as when younger' (lines 9-10). These signs or age-specific activities are mentioned as singled out by the speaker, and established as the 'only thing' (line 7) that the respondent has noticed.

A self-description in the form of extreme personal continuity then follows, this time in the form of a three-part list (Jefferson 1990): '*always been very energetic...had several irons in the fire...done loads of things*' (lines 11-13). What makes Liisa's account interesting for analysis, however, is what follows. Instead of using her extreme formulations as evidence for 'being energetic and active' also today, and as a basis for reprising her initial proposition, the speaker goes on to produce a contrast between me, when I was young (line 10), and me, at the moment (line 15). The contrast marker *but* on line 14, is followed by an explicit temporally framed concession of change (line 14: *but now I can't anymore*). After this, the speaker goes on to unpack what the contrast case of 'slowing down' means in more detail. The concessory structure of proposition - concession - reprise thus remains incomplete as the speaker repeatedly establishes a change having taken place.

Two further analytic points can be raised here. First, note that conceding change is immediately followed by an evaluation. So when the speaker, on lines 28-29, sums up her account by: '*Like (1.4) that maybe in that way things have (.)*' (and we might complete her sentence by hearing it as missing 'changed' from the end), she then immediately evaluates this as '*not a bad thing*' (line 30), and produces the contrary evaluation: '*I think it's (0.2) in some ways a wonderful thing*' (lines 31-32). Conceding change is, in other words done by first orienting to some default negative interpretation, which is immediately countered by a positive evaluation.

Note also, how the acknowledgement of change is established in terms that underline the voluntary activity of the speaker, and in terms that simultaneously minimise notions of *forced change*. Change in activities is thus described as having taken place because the speaker no longer '*fancies*' (line 17), or '*is interested*' (line 18) in them, or because she has grown to '*love*' (line 24) other activities. These

formulations can immediately be heard as packaging change in positive terms, as conveying having 'moved on' to other things with age instead of having been forced to do so.

Countering notions of forced change and underlining voluntary changed action, was a more common feature in the data. Consider the following account where a complete concession structure, in the form identified by Antaki and Wetherell (1999) is again missing, as the speaker moves directly into conceding personal change. Similar to extract 10, she then immediately moves to evaluate change in emphatically positive terms.

Extract 11. PN: W9: Briitta 2 (Cas 1, B: 6.8-7-6)

C →	1.	B:	Well yes I guess it has something	Niin no kyllä se jotenkin
	2.		to do with age as well that (.)	ikäänkin varmaan liittyy että (.)
	3.		that you ↑don't feel like	että ↑ei jaksakaan ninku
	4.		°flirting too much any more°	°flirttailla hirveesti enää°
	5.	PN:	mm	mm
	6.		(0 2)	(0 2)
	7.	B:	Like if someone should come	Et jos joku nyt tulee ihan
	8.		<u>right</u> to you then [like] °sure you	<u>tähän</u> näin [niin]ku °kyllähän sitä sitten
	9.	PN:	[mm]	[mm]
	10.	B:	might like joke around a bit°	voi ninku jonkun huulen heittää°
	11.		but [like] () you	mutta [niin]ku ()
	12.	PN:	[mm]	[mm]
	13.	B:	don't necessarily have to	ei välttämättä tarvii
E →	14.		I think it's (.) a huge <u>advantage</u>	<u>minusta</u> se on (.) kyllä hirveen suuri <u>etu</u>
	15.		() that you don't ↑ <u>HAVE</u> to	(.) ettei ↑ <u>TARVIKkaan</u>
	16.	PN:	uh-mm	uh-mm
E →	17.	B:	I mean in the way that you're	ninku just silleen että on
	18.		like set FREE like from	ninkun <u>VAPAU</u> tunut niiku sitä
	19.		[from] that this is where I should	[että] mun pitäis ninku
	20.	PN:	[mm]	[joo]
	21.	B:	<u>terribly</u> like horribly	<u>kauheesti</u> tässä ninkun hirveesti
	22.	PN:	mm	mm
	23.	B:	flirt like with everyone	flirttailla ninkun kaikkien kans
	24.		or like with someone	tai niiku jonkun kanssa
	25.		and [be] terribly smart and able	ja [olla] hirmu fiksu ja patevä
	26.	PN:	[mm]	[mm]
	27.	B:	and something	ja jotakin
E →	28.		I find it's a <u>huge</u>	musta se on <u>suunnaton</u>
	29.		freedom that you don't ↑ <u>have</u> to	vapaus kun ei ↑ <u>tarvi</u>
	30.	PN:	yes	joo
E →	31.	B:	I'm actually like quite <u>amused</u>	Ihan suorastaan ninku <u>hauska</u>
	32.		when looking on It's like oh my	kattoo sivusta että
	33.		Go(h)d they're trying so hard	hi(h)rvee ku noi yrittää kovasti
	34.		((laughs))	((nauraa))

Similar to extract 11, Briitta concedes personal change but immediately moves to emphatic evaluative description, whereby change is depicted as deriving from voluntary personal choice that can, at any point, be countered at will ('*sure you might like joke around a bit*' lines 7-10). Not doing something, like flirting, is, in other words, described as dependent on what the person happens to feel like at any particular point in time (line 3). Note also how changing your actions and habits is characterised in pronouncedly positive terms: as '*a huge advantage*' (line 14), as being '*set FREE*' (line 18) and as '*freedom*' (line 28).

The initial concession in the beginning of the extract is followed by repeated evaluations. Most of these take the form of a personalised evaluation such as '*I mean, I think, I find.*' Towards the end of the extract the speaker offers yet another evaluation by positioning herself in the role of an onlooker of other people's behaviour. Here, people (still) engaging in the flirtatious behaviour, that the speaker herself has already abandoned, are depicted in a humorous light (lines 30-33). The change in one's personal behaviour is thus depicted as having '*something to do with age as well*' (lines 1-2), but in the end, the account constructs the speaker as being in charge of the actual implications and personal significance of that change.

In this section, I have focused on participants' discursive means of conceding and evaluating change. Examples of conceding to axiomatic and general notions of change were found to function as a means of undermining any potential personal stake in the actual concession of it. Second, examples of concessions that were immediately followed by evaluation were examined. In these cases the three-part concession structure in the form uncovered by Antaki and Wetherell (1999) was lacking. Instead, the speakers (in extracts 10 and 11) focused on description and subsequent, and sometimes extensive and emphatic, evaluation of the particularised and for-the-interaction mobilised age-specific activities (staying up, flirting etc.). In these cases the act of conceding and subsequently evaluating personal change functioned as a 'show' of personal rationality, reflexivity and/or maturity of character.

Continuity as a trap

The last extract I wish to discuss in this chapter is an example of a descriptive sequence where a speaker's self-description mobilises *both* acceptance of change, *and* notions of personal continuity. This time, however, the speaker's self-categorisation that builds on the continuity of his activities and preferences threatens to turn against, and trap the speaker. What I wish to focus on, are the ways in which the speaker himself can be seen to actively orient to, and seek to remedy the motivational predicates that his account affords.

Extract 12. PN: M2: Anssi (Cas 1, A: 29.7-30.1)

- | | | | |
|-------|-----|--|---|
| 1. | A. | No I mean I (.) have said | No ei kun mää () oon sanonu |
| 2. | | that I live my life and accept | että mää elän elämäni ja hyväksyn |
| 3. | | that I'm (0.2) fifty years old | sen että mää oon (0 2) viiskytvuotias |
| 4. | | and () that I'm just as old as | ja () että mää oon juuri niin vanha |
| 5. | | I () happen to be at a time and | kun mää () kulloinkin olen |
| 6. | | I don't (.) imagine being (0 4) | enkä mää (.) kuvittele olevani (0 4) |
| 7. | | younger or older | nuorempi taikka vanhempi |
| → 8. | | but like I don't () nonetheless | mutta että en mää () siitä huolimatta |
| 9. | | <u>behave</u> the way in which a fifty- | silti <u>käyttäydyn</u> siltä kuin viiskytvuotiaana |
| 10. | | year-old <u>should</u> (.) behave like | <u>pitäis</u> () käyttäytyä että en minä käy |
| → 11. | | I don't go to symphony concerts | sinfoniakonserteissa |
| 12. | PN: | heh heh | heh heh |
| 13. | | (1 0) | (1.0) |
| → 14. | A. | I rather listen to rock and roll and | mieluummin kuuntelen rokkia ja |
| 15. | | (0 4) but like that has nothing to | (0 4) mut siis ei sillo <u>↑iän</u> kanssa |
| → 16. | | do with <u>↑age</u> (0.2) rock was is | mitään tekemistä (0 2) rock oli on |
| 17. | | (0 2) way back as a kid I listened | (0 2) aikoinaan lapsena |
| 18. | | to old dance music so rock | kuuntelin radiosta vanhaa tanssimusiikkia |
| 19. | | is <u>now</u> () old dance musi(h)c | niin rock on <u>nyt</u> (.) vanhaa tanssimusi(h)ikkia |
| 20. | PN | heh heh | heh heh |
| 21. | A: | Chuck Berry recorded () the | Chuck Berry levytti () klassikot |
| → 22. | | classics in the fifties like the ones | viiskytluvulla niin joita joita pojat |
| → 23. | | my boys still listen to now that | edelleen kuuntelee kun nyt on uusia |
| 24. | | they've the new records (.) CD's | levyjä () CD-levyjä ostanu että |
| 25. | | bought so (1.0) it doesn't necces- | (1 0) ettei se nyt vältt- |
| 26. | | >should we say that< (0.2) one | >siis sanotaanko että< (0 2) ei |
| 27. | | isn't necessarily into the kinds of | valttämättä harrasta sitä mitä |
| 28. | | things that a fifty-year-old (0 4) | viiskytvuotiaan (0 4) |
| 29. | | er petty bourgeois should be into | oh poroporvarin pitäis harrastaa |
| 30. | | (1 0) but nonethe <u>less</u> one is fifty | (1.0) mut sitä <u>huolimatta</u> on viiskytvuotias |

Lines 1-7 establish the speaker first of all, as someone who is 'at peace' and satisfied with his age and as someone who does not have fantasies about being any other age. By line seven then, we are faced with a well-balanced, sensible man who does not have problems with his age or with being fifty. This 'acceptance sequence' is then followed by the speaker distancing himself from typical activities, or from

normative imperatives that he sees as attached to the age fifty. His formulation '*but like I don't (.) nonetheless behave the way in which a fifty-year-old should (.) behave*' (lines 8-10) can be heard as referring to a multitude of possible activities, each of which carry relevance to certain, or to some degree, different sense of fifty-year-old-ness. The typical activity and normative imperative that Anssi then mobilises as constituting fifty-year-oldness, is that of 'going to symphony concerts.' By '*like I don't go to symphony concerts*' (lines 10-11) he thus distances himself from a particular type of age characterisation that has something to do with gentility indexed by musical tastes.⁴

By line 13 then, we have a man who acknowledges his membership in an age category, but who establishes that the inferences, which are potentially associated with that category, do not apply in his instance. In this sense the extract resembles the example by Sacks discussed in chapter three:

A: How old are you Mr. Bergstein?

B: I'm 48, I look much younger. I look about 35, and I'm quite ambitious and quite idealistic and very inventive and conscientious and responsible.

Sacks (1992, Vol. 1: 44).

By accepting personal age-descriptors (*I have said that I...accept that I'm (0 2) fifty years old*, lines 1-3), while disregarding certain age-specific activity-descriptors, the speaker in extract twelve establishes himself as someone who is not a cultural dope, who is not locked into age, and as someone whose activities and preferences are therefore not dictated by stereotypical age-specifics.

At line 14, the speaker then introduces listening to rock and roll as the basis for the alternative type of fifty-year-old, that he personally belongs to. His delivery from there on becomes marked by some trouble, which indicates that the speaker himself treats the activity 'listening to rock and roll' as potentially problematic. Anssi starts by adding, that his activities have '*nothing to do with age*' (lines 15-16), but are rather a reflection of continuous personal preferences. The speaker is specifically orienting to the possibility that his claim: '*I rather listen to rock and roll*' (line 14)

⁴ Note that this characterisation of a specific, singled-out activity can, however, be heard as a shorthand reference to a wider culturally available variety of age-specific activities and predicates that 'a 50-year-old who goes to symphony concerts' might also engage in

be heard as an indication of conservatism. Someone listening to the same music now as 30 years ago could easily be interpreted as something of 'a dinosaur' or as 'being stuck in the past'. In fact, converse claims like 'I haven't listened to stuff like that in years, my musical taste has broadened, and I have moved along; I now go to classical concerts quite frequently', can easily be thought up, and the speaker can be heard as orienting to these kinds of hearings.

The fact that Anssi's descriptions of activities and preferences as consistent and continuous through time may have caused some potential difficulties for him, is obvious in the hesitation and false starts on lines 15-19. His self-correction '*rock was is*' (line 16) shows that the speaker struggles to depict his taste in music as contemporary, although his self-description as someone who has always been interested in 'old dance music' does work to move him to the opposite direction.

From line 21 onwards the speaker recasts his music taste as 'classic.'

21	A	Chuck Berry recorded () the
→ 22		classics in the fifties like the ones
→ 23.		my boys still listen to now that
24.		they've the new records (.) CD's
25.		bought so (1 0) it doesn't necces-
26		>should we say that< (0 2) one
27.		isn't necessarily into the kinds of
28.		things that a fifty-year-old (0 4)
29		er petty bourgeois should be into
30.		(1.0) but nonethe <u>less</u> one is fifty

Referring to the music he listens to as classic, helps the speaker to ward off notions of conservatism, and to introduce notions of agelessness and contemporariness instead. Being contemporary and up to date is further established by describing rock and roll as something that the younger generation (his sons, line 23) also listen to. The extract then closes with Anssi glossing his earlier distinction between person (or age) descriptions and activity descriptions.

In sum, extract 12 shows, how speakers can balance notions of change and continuity within a short spate of talk. Anssi's account simultaneously acknowledges his membership in a particular age category, but also indicates that common knowledge about the activities or the conventional expectations, about activities of members in that category do not necessarily apply in his case. This is done by singling out and by refuting specific typical activities that are potentially

and somehow immediately available and bound to the age category in question. The extract also shows how mobilising continuity may open potentially negative interpretations like hearing the speaker as stuck in his ways, or as showing his age. In this case Anssi solves this problem by replacing connotations of conservatism by those of contemporary agelessness.

Change, continuity and facticity

This chapter has focused on the discursive mobilisation of life course change and continuity. The analytic focus has been on how practices of self-categorisation and self-description merge with notions of change and continuity, and on the kinds of interactional business mobilisation of personal continuity or change accomplish for the speakers in the local context of talk. In the course of the analysis of the 12 extracts in this chapter, we have seen how using *extreme case formulations* (I've never, I've always) was repeatedly used to construct personal continuity and also to constitute oneself as different from more generally applicable scenarios and types of people. Depicting oneself in extreme terms thus worked to warrant claims that continuity was a natural, sometimes equation-like outcome of deeper, more long-term personal inclinations and dispositions. These findings were found to resonate with those in Widdicombe and Wooffitt's study (1995) on youth subcultures.

In the second section of this chapter, we saw how the mobilisation of extreme personal continuity was combined with self-description in terms of *type categorisations*. I pointed to how this combination functioned to bolster the discursive effect of extreme case formulations and worked as an upgrade rejection against potential accusations of descriptions being produced simply for the interactional here-and-now. The analysis also established in detail, how type categorisations were produced as practical constructions on the part of the participants, how they worked to undermine the credibility and authenticity of the contrast case mobilised in the descriptions, and how they thus also worked to highlight the speaker's personal exceptionality.

Looking at extracts where notions of change were mobilised, the analysis in this chapter focused on *conceding as a particular communicative and interactional practice*. As a general observation, it was found that concession structures, as identified by Antaki and Wetherell (1999) in English data, were also to be found in Finnish conversation. In addition to analysing complete forms of the concession structure, the discussion also focused on variants of the structure discussed by Antaki and Wetherell. The analysis outlined the discursive detail whereby speakers conceded axiomatic notions of change. In some cases, closure in the argumentative concession structure was established by means of offering an explicit evaluation of the prior concession. The analysis also established, that in the analytic examples on concessions in this data, their situated use was less about making 'a rhetorical show' and perhaps more geared towards a show of maturity, reflexivity and rationality.

As a final comment on the extracts analysed in this chapter, I could point out that both types of accounts covered here: the construction of personal continuity and the construction of change, seemed to depend on reference back to, and on acknowledgement of, some version of axiomatic or more general type of change. Reference to change did more than simply help to display the sensibility and rationality of the speaker, as someone who does not deny change as a part of life. It also functioned as an essential part of the logic of accounting. Establishing extreme personal continuity and exceptionality, thus gained its rhetorical effect from explicit reference to more general scenarios of change and to people's reactions to it. Mobilising and conceding axiomatic change, on the other hand, could be seen as an almost ritualistic reproduction of common and shared notions of change.

Acknowledging change, to a certain degree, functioned as something of a common denominator of the extracts seen in this chapter. In the chapters in part three to follow, I will move on to discuss cases, where speakers mobilise categorisations that work to deny, or jeopardise notions of lifetime change. At the same time, the analytic emphasis moves towards discussing the potential morality of age claims.

Part Three: The Morality of Age Claims

Chapter Six: Talking Against Linearity

'It is through the selection of descriptive categories which are hearable as "right" that members continuously display their competence to "look and tell", to make a socially acceptable "repair" of the indexicality of actually appearing talk and conduct. Observing and reporting are moral activities in that one has to continuously select descriptors that are hearable at-a-glance as recognisably sensible, as "right" or "appropriate".'
(Atkinson 1980: 37)

'Interviews share with any account an involvement in moral realities.'
(Silverman 1993: 114)

In the analytic chapters so far, we have seen numerous detailed examples of 'age in action'. The analysis has, in other words, established the discursive means, by which participants construct and manage their membership or non-membership in specific stage-of-life categories, and their means of making themselves and others available for specific categorical designation. I have also explored the descriptive practices through which speakers move in between conflicting self-categorisations and ward off potential category prescription by the interviewer, examined how speakers orient to the possibility of being heard as breaching factual, common sense notions about the life span, and studied the means of orienting to notions of change and/or continuity.

In the remaining two analytic chapters I adopt a somewhat different thematic and analytic angle into my data by introducing the notion '*moral discourse*' and by discussing *the potential morality of age claims*. The analytic perspective and objectives set in the chapters in part three are thus sharply delimited. The objective is, *first*, to look into the variety of ways in which 'morality' or 'moral discourse' have been conceptualised in discursive and conversation analytic research.

Looking into social interaction and morality, I also explore claims about the analysability of 'moral discourse', that is, how analysts typically substantiate their observations of instances of 'moral discourse' or 'moral accountability'. I will point to some conceptual and analytic problems with the use of the term 'morality', and to instances where it is used interchangeably with other terms like 'rationality', 'sensitivity' or 'delicateness'.

Following the discussion and review into some empirical research on morality in discourse, my *second* objective is then, to explore what kind of analytic mileage is to be gained from adopting and utilising the term 'moral discourse' when looking at the age data at hand. To do this, I present potential candidate examples of 'moral accounting' or 'moral descriptive work' from my data. Presenting my data, I wish, however, to suspend any self-evident hypothesis that talk about age - the descriptive practices revolving around age-specific categories, predicates or activities - in an interview, or in any other situation, is somehow *per se* 'moral' in nature. Instead, the analytic task set in this and the following chapter, is to explore whether the data warrants sufficient grounds for claiming that speakers themselves orient to the specific moral nature of their claims and descriptions. I wish, in other words, not to impute the relevance of a moral reading onto my data, nor to presume its centrality. Rather, I wish to set out to present defensible claims based on the detail of actual occurrences of interaction.

The extracts in focus in the present chapter are examples of talk where participants either claim an age category that explicitly goes against their visible-in-the-interaction chronological age, or engage in self-description that is incongruent with common sense notions of mature and adult behaviour. In each extract, some form of perturbation and 'extra accounting' then follows. One possible way of interpreting this perturbation, is to hear it as the speakers orienting to their descriptions as potentially breaching some normative or common sense notions of age. This being the case, the key analytic task, however, is to consider whether sufficient a ground exist to develop an analysis that builds on the terminology of discursive morality, or moral work.

In the last analytic chapter, I then move to enlarge on the arguments put forward here. I will describe and analyse parts of the data where moral notions of right and wrong behaviour, and thereby *explicit evaluation* of particular personal qualities or actions of the speaker or others, rise to the communicative and descriptive surface of the interaction. Chapter Seven thus takes up and further develops the analysis of the potentially moral nature of age claims and description started in the current one.

As a prelude to analysis, I start by reviewing the relation between interaction and morality, and the ways in which it has been conceptualised and discussed within discursive and conversation analytic research. After this, I discuss the specific nature of the age data in focus here, and provide arguments as to why an analysis in terms of notions of 'morality' may be granted. The chapter then closes with the analysis of candidate examples of 'moral accounting' from the data.

Tracking morality as a discursive and conversational phenomenon

Scientific interest in the relationship between discourse, conversation and morality is by no means a recent phenomenon. On the contrary, as Bergmann in his (1998) review on research concerning morality and interaction also shows us, scholars from a variety of disciplines – from classical rhetorics to sociology – have for centuries worked to establish the parameters of moral action and communication (see also Bergmann 1997; Jayyusi 1984, 1991; Sabini and Silver 1982). Bergmann also points out how, with the development of modern conceptualisations of science, a distinction between moral commitments and factual scientific discourse was set up, and how this evolved separation functioned as a prerequisite of all modern science.

Within discursive and (some) conversation analytic research, morality is topicalised as an analysable empirical question. Numerous theoretical and empirical analyses exist that seek to demonstrate the intertwined nature of interaction and morality and the means by which the conceptual, the moral, and the practical are irremediably bound up with each other. Looking at the writings by Garfinkel (1967) and Sacks (1992), we can see some of the grounding work that elucidated the normative basis

of social order. The ethnomethodological interest in the world of practical actions and practical reasoning – the detailed investigation of the organisation of members' conduct, actions, and conceptualisation practices in naturally occurring settings (e.g. Clayman and Maynard 1995) – simultaneously produced an understanding of moral beliefs and moral concepts as constituents of people's practical everyday reasoning. As a result, the moral nature of interaction; the moral order that society's members encounter as 'perceivedly normal courses of action' and, as such, take for granted (Garfinkel 1967: 35), become topics of analytic elucidation.

Both sequential analysis and research on membership categorisation further explore the foundational way in which human intelligibility and morality are intertwined. It has been pointed out that the analytic interest and vocabulary of conversation analysis that includes terms like 'preference structure' (e.g. Pomerantz 1984; Sacks 1987; Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974; see also discussion in Drew 1990 and Watson 1997), is in itself built on notions of (taken-for-granted) normativity. Sequential analyses show us that if a greeting does not follow a greeting or a question is not followed by an answer, a 'noticeable absence' is to be somehow accounted for. The use of pauses constitutes yet another potentially morally accountable fine-grain feature of everyday interaction. Although always interpreted in situ, the length and timing of silences in interaction *can*, in other words, be heard as disrespect or as signalling the listener ignoring the speaker (e.g. Sacks 1992, Vol. 1: 310-119; Silverman 1998). Concrete analysis of the fine-grain workings of interaction – on possible normative orientations of participants in situ – can thus in themselves be taken as practical examples of the "routine practico-moral order" of interaction (Jayyusi 1991: 242) and on the intertwined nature of morality and communicative practice (see also Heritage 1984a).

Sacks' fundamental points about membership categorisation practices (category-bound rights and obligations), and his discussion on how people attend to making appropriate and correct description (1984b; see also Jefferson 1987; Lawrence 1996; Silverman 1998) further mark the moral and normative grounding of ordinary discourse and everyday accounting practices. One of the basic observations by Sacks concerned people's ways of attending to the choice of descriptive categories even in

situations where no obvious reason to do so exists. He noted how people, even when talking to total strangers, still seek to control the impression they give about themselves and the inferences that can be drawn from the descriptive categories they use.

We have already seen (in chapter 2), how Sacks' early work on categorisation and description was taken up and expanded on particularly by representatives of the 'Manchester school'. Employing data from a radio talk show and from freely produced accounts about marriage breakdown, Cuff, for example, not only extended Sacks' notion of the machinery of categorisation, he also established moral adequacy as an 'omnipresent feature of any account' (1993: 40). According to Cuff then, members can standardly and routinely deploy their social knowledge about what constitutes, or is heard as a 'proper' description, and how descriptions also display the teller in certain ways: as 'impartial, as 'biased' as 'disinterested' etc. Producing an account or description of the world the speaker thus makes himself available to possible findings about his characterological and moral appearances (*ibid.*).¹

The grounding work by Sacks (see especially 1972b) and particularly the dynamics between everyday accounting, description and morality were extended by Watson's studies on 'moral profiles' (1978) and on categories of 'victim' and 'offender' in police interrogations (1983, see also 1997) and, perhaps most importantly, by Jayyusi's ethnomethodological re-specification of the base problematic of morality (1984, 1991, for a review of Jayyusi's work see Eglin and Hester 1992). More recent developments on Sacks' legacy and morality can be found in several of the chapters in Hester and Eglin 1997. In this collection of texts, Watson, for example, continues to underline the importance of preserving analytic attention towards categorical phenomena in talk. According to Watson these 'highlight the moral organization of talk in a way that reference solely to sequential features structurally conceived neither necessarily nor consistently does' (Watson 1997: 68). Thus the notion of

¹ The notion of possible descriptions resurfaces in some of the later work of discursive psychology, for instance, when looking into how people manage interpretations of stake and interest in their everyday descriptive practices. The word moral or morality does not feature in this work, however. Instead, analysis and empirical examples are provided on how descriptions are constructed to ward off the imputation of stake and personal interest by using 'stake inoculation' (e.g. Potter 1996b).

morality becomes a part of the ongoing and longer debate about the virtues of analysis focusing on categorisation versus those of sequential analysis (see chapter two).

Producing comprehensive listings of discursive and conversational investigations into the relationship between morality and interaction would prove a difficult task. A brief catalogue, however, would have to include examples of investigations in institutional settings where the analytic focus is on the interaction between a 'client(s)' and a 'professional(s).' Such research on the workings of morality include studies on doctor-patient and other medical interaction (e.g. Coupland and Coupland 1999; Linell and Bredmar 1996; Ruusuvuori 2000), on psychiatric consultations (e.g. Bergmann 1992), on discourses of counselling (e.g. Aronsson and Cederborg 1997; Kurri and Wahlström 2001; Silverman 1997), on emergency and help-line calls (e.g. Bergmann 1993a; Zimmerman 1992), on 'referral talk' between teachers and educational psychologists (e.g. Hester 1998), on descriptive practices in courtrooms (e.g. Lynch and Bogen 1996) and on discussions between parents and health visitors (Heritage and Sefi 1992; Heritage and Lindstrom 1998). Other research into morality and interaction ranges from work on participants' selection of categories (e.g. Baker 1997a; Edwards 1997; Jefferson 1987; Malone 1997; Wowk 1984), on descriptions in interview data (Baker 1997b; Cuff 1992; Maynard 1998; Nikander 2000a), on communication in dyadic decision making (Cicirelli 1993); on the interactional construction and telling of stories (Baruch 1981; Hall, Sarangi and Slembrouck 1997; Housley 2000; Polanyi 1985), and on sharing knowledge (Bergmann 1993b, Günthner and Luckman 1998).

One should bear in mind though, that such a listing does not represent a collection of unitary or analytically symmetrical approaches to 'morality.' Rather, investigations differ considerably in terms of how the detailed features of the specific interaction are conceptualised: whether the analysis makes direct reference to morality as an aspect of the interaction, or whether other terms like 'delicacy' or 'sensitivity' are in use, for example. The theoretical, conceptual and analytic variety within research into 'discursive morality,' as well as the ongoing discussions and debates around it

become clearer as we look more closely into the different means of conceptualising 'morality.'

Conceptualising morality: Jayyusi and Bergmann

In order to clarify where the current study stands in terms of its analysis of moral discourse some further background sketching is needed on the varied ways of conceptualising morality and on the problems that the term both historically and analytically carries with it. To start with the former, two brief soundings of work on the nature of morality in interaction are provided. First Jayyusi's (1984, 1991) seminal work on categorisation and the moral order is drawn upon to provide a wider analytical starting point and perspective. Second, Jörg Bergmann's more recent review (1998) on the dynamics between morality and interaction is considered.

The two texts differ considerably both in genre and in length. Jayyusi's texts are extensive re-workings and explorations into Sacks' legacy and into moral philosophy, whereas the text by Bergmann is an introductory article for a special issue on morality in discourse (see also Bergmann 1992, 1993a, 1993b, and 1997). Comparing and contrasting two such evidently different texts may, at first, seem ill advised. My reasons for none the less making an attempt at this are, first, that I wish to point to some differences in emphasis when conceptualising morality as a 'substructure' for interaction. Second, I wish to point to some apparent and re-occurring problems of establishing analytically grounded findings on moral discourse. These have to do with the relationship between the analyst's cultural, and as such potentially moral, understanding of the topic at hand and with the process of producing firmly grounded analysis. Looking at Jayyusi's and Bergmann's texts serves both these tasks.

In the following, I review Bergmann's text as an example of what I found a more recurrent means by which writers of empirical analysis solve the problem of approaching morality as a members' orientation versus employing or imposing morality as an analytic concept or category on the data. In a way, his text also serves

as an example of how fragments of Jayyusi's detailed and notoriously dense work (see Eglin and Hester 1992) have become distilled into analytic texts on moral discourse. In sum then, comparing and contrasting Jayyusi's and Bergmann's treatments of the issue serves to make a more general point about the differences in how 'morality' and 'moral discourse' are approached as empirical and analytic phenomena.

Both Jayyusi and Bergmann make reference to the intertwined relation between interaction and morality. The imagery and metaphors used when depicting this are astoundingly similar. When underlining that the entirety of our interactional practical reasoning is morally and normatively constituted, Jayyusi uses the analogy of morality as the 'underground railway' that crosses in-between different language regions and practices. She suggests that

.. our moral conventions underpin our understanding of talk and action throughout; we can assess all manner of actions, relevances and concerns in *moral* terms. Logic and morality are the twin guardians of our discourse and activities; they provide our fundamental source of normative criteria for conduct of our practical human life. (1984: 207)

Bergmann uses similar imagery in his treatment of moral discourse. He starts off with the notion that morality, in all its culturally and historically specific forms, is an indispensable feature of the social constitution of man. According to Bergmann, the variety of culturally specific forms of morality grows out of and develops from an elementary and culturally unspecific substructure he calls *proto-morality*.

Proto-morality is the basic stuff out of which morality is built; it is the substructure underneath the cultural specific forms and manifestations of morality. It is the proto-moral quality of social interaction that provides for the fact that virtually any kind of utterance may take on a moral meaning (1998: 283-4).

Both writers thus depict morality as something of an undercurrent of human reasoning, practice and interaction. Jayyusi makes repeated reference to the deeply intertwined relationship between description and appraisal and to the moral groundings of ordinary discourse, whereas Bergmann's term *proto-morality* conveys perhaps a more pronouncedly cultural significance. According to him, cultures differ in terms of how elementary forms of *proto-morality* are transformed into regulated forms of conduct, and in terms of what kind of reciprocal ascription of responsibility

for behaviour is specific, or typical to a culture in a particular time (1998: 280). Like Jayyusi (1991: 241-2), he also writes about the common and intrinsic quality of morality as part of our everyday social interaction that renders it an invisible and unnoticeable character. Bergmann also notes that the inter-relation between proto-morality and culturally specific discursive manifestations of morality become apparent in the close relation between communicative and moral semantics: in, for example, how the moral term *responsibility* is derived from a term denoting the elementary discourse act *response*.²

Starting with the notion that our everyday interaction and practical reasoning is irredeemably moral, and as such stems from a moral sub-structure (however conceptualised), both authors then stress the need to focus on *actual instances of moral discourse*. Jayyusi talks about analysis that focuses on 'the practices in which our moral concepts come to life' (1991: 233), whereas Bergmann argues for the centrality of analysis that he calls 'lived morality' (Bergmann 1998: 281).³ This is where interesting differences in emphasis and conceptualisation of morality between the two authors start to occur.

Whereas Jayyusi's treatment makes repeated reference to the ways in which the conceptual, the practical and the moral are "laminated together in the organisation of situated action and discourse" (1991: 242), Bergmann seems to make a distinction between *proto-morality* and morality as *an empirical notion*. As an empirical notion, morality can be seen as referring to a relatively limited number of specific communicative forms, or elementary building blocks by which moral actions are realised (1998: 283, 287). Bergmann proceeds to list some of the descriptive and expressive devices through which morality has been found to surface in interaction: morally loaded vocabulary or naughty words, choice of descriptive categories (see Jefferson 1987), use of para- and non-verbal forms in interaction, storytelling (e.g. Baruch 1981), and idioms and proverbs (see Drew and Holt 1988). He seems to be

² Bergmann notes that the same connection is visible in other languages like Swedish: svar - answer, in German: Antwort - Verantwortung; and in Russian: otvet - otvetsvennost (1998: 292) The same is true for Finnish vastaus - vastuu.

³ Despite the similarity in the descriptive vocabulary and conceptualisation of morality, Bergmann does not directly or in detail quote Jayyusi's work

arguing for a separation between morality as an everyday phenomenon and as an analytic or research topic.

In the everyday life the "givenness" and inwardness of morality are **plain facts**, but from a researcher's point of view morality **must** be stripped from its evidentiality and turned into an object of analysis by treating it as a continuous interactive achievement. (Bergmann 1998: 282, emphasis added)

It is perhaps here that Bergmann differs from Jayyusi most. First, although he discusses how social scientists have struggled to study social interaction without taking a moral stance themselves, his own treatment of the analysis of 'lived morality' is itself in jeopardy of falling prey to moral and modal description of 'is' and 'ought.' Giving guidelines for the analysis of moral discourse (see the quote above), Bergmann, in other words, ends up operating in what seems a moral universe, and his guiding principles for analysis thus, in themselves, become an example of the inescapable interrelation between language and morality.⁴ Like Jayyusi, he makes reference to the intertwined nature of morality and discourse but maybe for clarity's sake, then proceeds to treat proto-morality and morality as analytic questions separate from each other. The way Bergmann sets up this division seems something of a practical attempt at bypassing and bracketing some of the problems caused by the acknowledged all-encompassing nature of morality. Whereas for Bergmann then something of a clear-cut distinction in between everyday morality and actual analysis on it is achievable, Jayyusi adopts a different position.

Just as one cannot get out of language to talk about language (Pears 1971), so one cannot get out of the moral order to talk about the moral order. What does this mean for the analyst? It means that she/he uses her/his moral membership, her/his moral knowledge of the mundane organisation of the practico-moral order as a *resource*, even as she/he turns it into a *topic*. (Jayyusi 1991: 247)

According to Jayyusi then, *there is no simple exit from the moral order* (1991: 246, also 1984: 9-20), nor any 'pure' means of turning it into a topic of analysis. Instead, practical, everyday reasoning and academic elucidation and enquiry are both embedded in the same moral order. This, however, does not render empirical analysis of the moral order impossible. Instead, to establish and exhibit the *in situ moral characteristics of people's descriptive and accounting practices*, the

⁴ I wish to thank members of the Discourse and Rhetoric Group for the joint discussion on the issue of moral discourse. The theoretical and analytic observations presented here have in part grown out of the comments in the group.

researcher unavoidably not only uses but also needs to "lay out for view" (Jayyusi 1991: 249) the cultural (moral) resources at play in the data but also in the analysis of them.

The notions of moral order and morality in interaction do, however, carry multiple problems for the analyst and for the validity and rigour of analysis. In the following, I will briefly look into three such problem areas: fuzziness, ascription and psychologization.

Problems with morality 1: Fuzziness

From the discussion so far, it is clear that the notion of morality presents several problems that need solving before a grounded and well-established analysis of discursive morality is to be arrived at. First, as the section above also established, morality has omnipresence and invisibility (Bergmann 1998: 280; Cuff 1994) that as such often goes unnoticed in everyday social interaction.⁵ If all utterances are accountable (Garfinkel 1967) in the sense that they display the 'sense' of social organisation as it is locally accomplished, how do we go about establishing the line in between accountability and 'moral accountability'? And further, presuming that morality is omnipresent in everyday life, does it then follow, that every account, description, story, categorisation, or reporting is open for an analysis in terms of moral accountability and that, at the end of the day, all forms of interaction can be mined for the solid bedrock of (proto-) morality? Are terms like moral accounting or moral work in risk of losing their analytic force and of becoming fuzzy to the extent that no line of difference can be drawn in between accountability and moral accountability?

⁵ Several writers have pointed to the inherently moral nature of everyday interaction. Shotter (1989, 1993b), for example refers to 'relational ethics or ethics of communication' that are established in our joint activities, Taylor (1989: 27) talks about the language of self-understanding and moral action as the sources of human personhood; whereas Gergen (e.g. 1994: 103) discusses moral life as a form of communal participation

Due to the omnipresent characteristics of morality in everyday interaction the images and analytic description by which it is conceptualised in different empirical studies vary considerably. This variation is not a simple question of 'choice of words', but rather, results in different emphasis and indeed in somewhat different content being given to 'morality' or 'moral accountability.' Morality has, for instance, been characterised as something that 'lurks under the surface' of discursive interactions (Bergmann 1998: 288), conceptualised in terms of breaches of common-sense interactional recipes (Baruch 1981), anchored into specific uses of category or pronominal forms (e.g. Malone 1997; Abel and Stokoe 1999), referred to through a variety of neighbouring terms like 'delicacy' and 'sensitivity,' or talked about via carefully picked expressions like 'moral tinge' or 'moral flavour'.

Discussion on what in the end constitutes moral talk, or separates it from sensitive or delicate talk is in most cases missing from empirical analyses. Instead the reader is typically offered examples of data where speakers 'hearably' orient to the delicate/sensitive/moral features of interaction. The carefully coined term 'hearable orientation' is therefore never in more frequent use than when trying to tap into the processes through which morality is talked into being.

Perhaps one of the most re-occurring problems brought in by the fuzzy omnipresent quality of morality in interaction is the difficulty of distinguishing between *orientations to reason or rationality* on the one hand and *morality* on the other. This problem seems to surface repeatedly in analytic work and in the terminology used. In his study on practices of counselling and on the marking and management of potentially 'delicate' items, David Silverman for instance seems to equate *morality* with *reasonable* activity and *reason*. According to him: "descriptions construct a profoundly *moral* universe of 'reasonable' activities conducted and perceived by 'reasonable' people" (1997: 79).

On the other hand, in some studies the terms *rational*, *reasonable*, and *moral* are used side by side. In his study concerning 'moral tales' told by parents of seriously ill children, Baruch (1981: 267) for instance states "...the significance of our

respondents' atrocity stories lies in the way they establish the *rationality* of their actions and also their own *reasonable* and *moral* character."

Short quotes presented out of context do not necessarily do justice to the intricacies of the analyses in question. What the quotes do show, however, is that drawing hard and fast lines between moral and other normative standards like rationality, as they are oriented to in talk and interaction is not a straightforward or a simple task. Instead, standards of rationality and morality often seem intermeshed (Jayyusi 1984: 187), and this, of course, poses further problems for analysis.

Problems with morality 2: Analytic ascription

Building on the discussion in the previous section, two further analytic and theoretical problems with morality need to be raised. The first – analytic ascription – is directly linked to the discussion on the difficulties of singling out moral orientations from other normative interactional concerns. The third problem has longer theoretical roots that go back to the work by Goffman, and to the ways in which his writings, and subsequent studies in 'the Goffmanesque genre,' treat morality as an integral part of the individual and her psychology. I discuss these two in turn.

The fuzzy, omnipresent nature of morality easily renders analysis of it liable to theoretical and methodological prescription at the outset of actual analysis. The search for the significance of moral concerns and orientations in interaction, in other words, may lead the analyst away from an appreciation of the actual properties and dynamics of spoken language. As a result, empirical analysis of 'morality in discourse' is in danger of engaging in circular argumentation. Should this prove to be the case, that is, if empirical studies of morality show a tendency towards ascriptivism – towards a tendency of imputing the significance of morality onto data, numerous questions of validity and analytic rigour simultaneously arise.⁶

⁶ These concerns are similar to those raised when discussing some strands of discourse analysis which have repeatedly been found to impute the relevance of 'discourses' to data and texts without rigorous

Problems to do with the nature, and therefore also the analysis, of morality have not gone unnoticed in empirical research literature. Cuff (1994) for instance points out that despite the apparent orientation by members to the moral adequacy of their everyday description and accounting, the omnipresence of morality does not, for the most part, stop people from engaging in such descriptive activities. Instead, people go about their everyday interaction expecting what they say to be taken at face value, and as morally acceptable. In fact, challenging every story, Cuff adds, would be a source of endless interactional trouble (op.cit.: 40).

Silverman and Baruch, quoted in the previous section, also make reference to the possibility of analytic ascription when reading their material. In his work on how parents establish their moral character when telling 'atrocities stories', Baruch (1981: 278-9), for instance, discusses the importance of examining the actual ways actors themselves invoke structures rather than imposing them on the data. He then adds: "...having said this, it might be argued that treating atrocity stories as moral tales amounts to such an imposition. After all parents never make *explicit* in the interview that they are concerned with how the interviewer interprets their character and actions." In a similar vein, Silverman warns against the ease at which we may select specific instances from our data just to confirm an initial hypothesis (1997: 76).

It starts to become clear then, that some of the potential problems with studying morality in interaction revolve around questions of substantiating and anchoring analytic claims in the detail of data. Questions of analytic ascription are thus linked to more general questions of validity when working with transcribed data. Discursive and conversation analysis pride themselves on building their validity on the detailed and accessible representation of members' social action, and for the rigorous grounding of empirical findings (Peräkylä 1997, Seale 1999; Sharrock and Anderson 1986). Whereas within discourse analytic work the final validity and persuasiveness of analytic claims is, to a certain extent, left to the judgement of the reader (Wetherell and Potter 1988: 183; Potter and Edwards 2001; cf. Jayyusi 1991: 249

substantiation by the detail of the data (see for instance Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995 55-75, and Nikander 1995 for a discussion).

quoted above), conversation analytic research aims, to borrow a term from Schegloff (1991: 48), to produce the analytic 'hard currency' of defensible and grounded analysis⁷. In both, the relevance of what can be named 'moral talk' is thus grounded on the significance that *speakers themselves* attach to their claims in the course of the interaction. In the end, however, establishing morality as a genuine members' concern, and not merely as something the analyst brings into or imposes on people's practices remain issues to be discussed and solved one data set and analysis at a time⁸. This may be part of the reason why conversation analytic work centring on the analysis of morality is in the minority.

Problems with morality 3: Psychologization

The third problem with analysing morality in interaction has to do with some of the pronouncedly psychological and individualistic overtones carried over particularly from Erving Goffman's work. Goffman's entire writings (e.g. 1959, 1961, 1964, 1971) centre, in one way or another, on a preoccupation with 'morality', 'face' and 'ritual.' For him, all interaction was inherently moral and, as a consequence, his analysis moves from this general 'social fact' into the analysis of specific data and/or settings (see Drew and Wootton 1988). One could claim that traces of the Goffmanesque vocabulary are visible in empirical studies on discursive morality: in how 'moral work', when conceptualised as an all-encompassing feature of interaction, comes close to Goffman's 'face work' for example. These overtones: the somewhat unspecified intellectual alliance that the term morality carries with it, explain the reluctance of conversation analysts to take up and pursue the notion of morality in their analysis (for a discussion, see Bergmann 1998).

⁷ By the fiscal term 'hard currency' Schegloff (1991) is referring to problems that the relationship between talk and social structure poses upon analysis. According to Schegloff, every observation an analyst makes about gender, class, power, status, (or morality) etc. has to start with a firm grounding in particular features of talk-in-interaction. More recent and a considerably sharper development on the same argument is in Schegloff 1997, where he sets out to underline the superiority of 'formal CA-analysis' over some forms of critical discourse analysis. For a detailed critical assessment of Schegloff's position see Wetherell 1998, Billig 1999. For analysis on discourse and morality from a feminist position see Gill 1995 and Sieg and Henwood 1999.

⁸ For an elegant example and discussion of this, see Drew 1998.

In a fascinating dialogue between 'one type of CA', voiced by himself and Sacks, against the voice of Goffman 'in his late years', Schegloff (1988) lays out the sharp differences in between conversation analysis and Goffman's work (see also Watson 1992). According to Schegloff, the focus on 'face' and 'face work' as the centre of interaction in Goffman's writings moves his analysis in the direction of an emphasis on *individuals* and their *psychology*. The whole depiction of the organisation of interaction is driven by images of individual *raison d'être* and individual interest - namely 'face'. For Goffman, the interaction is therefore organised, but organised to secure the individual's ritual and psychological needs (ibid. 95-6). This, of course, stands in sharp contrast to the analytic starting points adopted by conversation analysts and most discursive work. In both, the analyses start not with the cognitive or the individual qualities of interactants, but rather focus on interaction itself.

The principle of starting with practical everyday reasoning and from thereon moving towards grounded and well-sustained analysis of morality in discourse is put to test as we, again, turn to data analysis. Reviewing the variety of practical analytic problems that morality poses on empirical analysis may raise more questions than solve. The discussion may, however, render the upcoming analyses on morality more transparent in terms of such potential problems. Before moving to the analysis, however, let us have a brief look at some features of 'age talk' as a case in point when studying discursive morality.

Morality and features of the data

Due to the factual, hierarchical and positioned nature of age (Atkinson 1980; Sacks 1974, 1992), the analysis of stage of life categories in talk forms an interesting and relatively untouched site for examining moral accounting. Normatively policed categories with a strong expectation for particular types of action may, in fact, more easily lend themselves to being *morally policed*. It is relatively easy to come up with examples of how potentially normative notions of age and the life span like: *When I was your age...* "Big girls/boys don't..." "For God's sake, grow up!" are brought into and evoked in interaction. Speakers, in other words, routinely use their

member's knowledge of certain things that are known about a category: about members of a particular age category for instance. Such knowledge can then be used as a routine and normative way of invoking some general rules about age-specific behaviour (cf. Sacks 1992, Vol. 1: 44).

Despite apparent possibilities for normative or moral policing, one should bear in mind though, that judgements, descriptions or claims about age are not necessarily and *in themselves* moral in nature. Instead, the organization of descriptions is subject to continuous, mutual interpretive work, and age, like any other category, is liable to moral judgement and therefore *can* be taken up and treated in ways that brings it to the moral orbit. It is these instances that the analysis in the current and the next chapter focuses on.

Empirical analysis of age in interaction often makes reference to the positioned nature of age as membership category. Some interesting discrepancy exists, however, in the ways in which the potential morality of age claims is presented. This links back to the discussion in previous sections: to questions of conceptualising morality as a from-the-outset feature of interaction versus anchoring morality in the detail of the data.

According to Cuff and Payne for example, the progression through lifetime categories and the normativity of actions bound to each of these provides members "with a machinery for making positive or negative moral judgements" (1984: 175). Note how the Sacksian term 'machinery' inadvertently works to bring in notions of age categorisation as something inherently moral. The writers immediately attend to this by stating that the uses of this machinery depend on the particular circumstances. Another example comes from Hester, who in his study on descriptions of deviance in schools also discusses positioned category devices. According to him, the stage of life membership categorisation device opens possibilities for the interactional mobilisation of praise and/or complaint *in pervasive and fundamental* ways (1998. 138). Once again, however, it must be emphasised that the extent to which praise and/or complaint feature in age talk and

whether they convey specifically *moral* judgement has to be constituted by the detail of their situated use (see Hester and Eglin 1997a).

It seems then, that research into the morality of age claims (see also Baker 1997a, 1997b) see-saws in between some given special features of age as a category on the one hand and establishing how the potential morality of age claims and descriptions 'comes to life' in interaction on the other. Such balancing is undoubtedly a characteristic of the present study as well.

Another noteworthy characteristic of the discussion and data at hand is the interview format of the material. It has been argued that the predominantly one-way interaction in interview situations encourages talk that is self-monitored to a greater degree than 'naturally occurring' talk (Potter & Wetherell 1995; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995). As a result, the interview data at hand could be claimed to have features of a public performance to it, features in themselves attend, if not to moral, then to the rational characteristics of the speaker. In the analysis to follow, however, the 'non-naturally occurring nature' of the talk is, again, turned to serve analytic purposes: having noted the special characteristics of the data and their consequences for the design and shape of what is being said, we can focus on the detailed features of the interview exchange as an interaction in its own right (see discussion in chapter two).

Candidate examples of moral accounting

The analyses of the extracts to follow have something of a tentative and searching nature to them. Following the discussion in the previous sections, I wish, in other words, to put pronouncedly strong claims about discursive morality on hold and, instead, present some 'candidate examples' of moral accounting. Given the fuzzy and analytically slippery terrain between morality and interaction, I wish to move carefully when discussing the potential morality of age claims. The tentative and searching nature of the analytic discussion is intended to underline the practical difficulty of distinguishing between what is, and what can be identified as orientations to the rational, sensitive, or the moral.

The descriptions in the extracts to follow all seem, in one way or another, to challenge or deny some preconceived notions of age. Each extract also includes some form of perturbation and 'extra' accounting. The analytic task in this section is to look into the nature of the perturbation and the practices of accounting. After this I move to consider whether sufficient ground exists to develop an analysis in terms of moral work. Let us start by having a second run on an extract we saw in chapter four. In the extract, Laura has been talking about turning fifty but simultaneously feeling like a little girl.

Extract 1. PN: W1: Laura (Cas 1, A: 6.5-)

	1.	L:	Somehow one is (1 2) I've	Etta jotenkin sitä on (1.2) mää
	2.		often () like <u>thought</u> that	oon monta kertaa () ninkun <u>aatellukin</u> sitä et
	3.		have I ever like in a way	onks ma ikinä et mulla on ninkun
→	4.		I've got this feeling that inside ()	tavallaan <u>semmoinen</u> tunne et sisällä (.)
	5.		that in a way <u>inside</u> one is this	et tavallaan <u>sisimmältäan</u> on <u>semmoinen</u>
	6.		(0.2) somehow a little girl still=	(0 2) jotenkin tyttö vielä=
	7.	PN	mm	mm
	8.	L:	=that you haven't necessarily	=ettei oo ninkun ihan kasvanu
	9.		quite grown to be a mature	välttämättä aikuiseksi
	10.		<u>woman</u> yet (1 4) like one (0.4)	<u>naisekskaan</u> et (1.4) et sitä (0.4)
	11.		wants to sometimes like ()	haluu tietyissä asiois ninkun ()
	12.		play the fool and somehow	heittäytyy silleen hullutella ja
	13.		even () act childishly	jotenkin () olla aika lapsellinenkin
→	14.		and (2.4) and	ja (2 4) ja
→	15.		then you notice that your <u>friends</u>	sit huomaa et <u>ystävät</u> tekee
	16.		are doing exactly the <u>same</u>	ihan <u>samaa</u>
	17.		Like I think it's terribly	Et just must sekin on kauheen
	18.		typical to y'know to say that	tyypillistä etta et sitä ninkun puhutaan et
	19.		we're going there and here with	mennaan tyttöjen kanssa
	20.		the girls and	sinne ja tänne
	21.		but it may well be that	mut voi olla ett niin tekee
	22.		<u>seventy-year-</u> olds do	<u>seitsemankytvuotiaatkin</u>
	23.		say the [same]=	sanoo [niin]=
	24.	PN	[mm]	[mm]
	25.	L:	=that <u>no one</u> says that I'm	=niin et ei <u>kukaan</u> sano et
	26.		going with my (.) auntie	menen nyt noitten (.) tätyrystävieni
	27.		friends some(h)whe(h)re=	kanssa jo(h)nne(h)kin=
	28.	PN	heh heh	heh heh
→	29.	L:	=so it must be that like the way	=et se varmaan siis se miten
	30.		you relate (0 4) to people's	sä suhtaudut (0 4) kanssaihminen
	31.		age like it must move upwards	ikään niin se varmaan sen oman ian
	32.		with your own age	myöta koko aika se nousee se

In this short section of talk Laura describes and reports on a discrepancy between her chronological age and the 'way she feels inside'. She also provides descriptions of actions and qualities that include 'wanting to play the fool' and 'acting childishly'. We can perhaps start with the observation that the practices of reporting and reasoning in

her talk display an orientation to suitability, appropriateness and/or correctness. The hedges and pauses combined with the tentative features of the delivery, in other words, clearly mark some difficulty in what is being conveyed. But, having said that, can we find sufficient bases for claiming that Laura's account is designed to attend to moral accountability? And if so, is it possible to pin point the moment where morality steps into the interaction?

The earlier analysis on this extract in chapter four (see also Nikander 2000a) discussed how mobilising the alternative category 'little girl' is done via descriptions based on the speaker's inner reality. The analysis also pointed out how references to privilege access knowledge like 'inner feelings' (line 4) makes Laura's description less easily challenged.⁹ There are some further details in the extract that are worth commenting on though.

First, note that the tentative features, and the repeated use of modifiers in Laura's delivery accompany, not only her explicit categorisation (in a way...somehow a little girl), but also, and particularly, the descriptions of actions (lines 11-12: *sometimes like (.) play the fool and somehow even (.) act childishly*), and predicates (lines 8-10: *you haven't necessarily quite grown to be a mature woman yet*). It would seem then, that Laura is working towards something that *she herself takes to be an incongruent description*. As analysts, we need not be interested in what possibly motivated the speaker to give an answer or to design her account in one specific way or another, nor to look for any other possible explanation or truth value 'behind' it. Instead, we focus on specific elements of descriptions: on the means through which behaving in certain ways is formulated in discreet or careful ways (c.f. Bergmann 1992), and on how age as a topic may gain specifically moral meanings in and for the interaction at hand. To do this, let us look more carefully for the source of incongruence in Laura's account.

Earlier research has shown that notions of maturity and immaturity as devices 'which can be mapped on to the stage of life' (Hester 1998: 140) are a potential source for

⁹ The detail in which 'feelings' are used will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven.

trouble in interaction. This seems, to an extent, to be the case here. The exact sense of 'mature' or 'immature' has already been shown to depend on the age of the person being categorised or described, and on the age of the person doing the categorising (see chapter three). In Laura's case, she is describing and reporting on her own immature behaviour and on her own un-adult like qualities. The discursive detail by which this is done, and what then follows is of interest here.

Having mobilised notions of her own immaturity, Laura marks her account as going against or as incongruent with some other available notions about her age and about 'being fifty'. Note how, after the 2.4 pause on line 14, Laura works to bridge the incongruence via reference to other categories of people and their practices. Her list, that grows gradually more generalised: 'friends' - '70-year-olds' - 'everybody,' brings together groups of people either engaging in similar, potentially inappropriate and immature behaviour, or people who, like Laura, defy using specific age terms. Her list ends with the indefinite form 'you' (line 30) which is an appeal to intersubjective nature of the behaviour indicated in her prior description. The non-differentiation and the plural character of 'you' marks that there is virtually no limitation on the size of the population being referred to (see Sacks 1992, Vol. 1: 165-166). Thus the potential problem or unacceptability with Laura's incongruent description and self-categorisation as 'a little girl' is played down by what, in the end, is an extreme generalisation.

Extract one exhibits in many ways the methodological problems with studying discursive morality. That is, despite some distinctive and pin-pointable elements of discretion (cf. Bergmann 1992), the practices used to manage 'morality' remain implicit and embedded. Although Laura treats her account as a transgression and works to defuse potential inferences of inappropriateness, no *direct* reference to the rightness or wrongness of Laura's behaviour is provided. Instead, the references to the common and unexceptional nature of the behaviour described, could just as easily be interpreted in terms of orientations to the *rationality* of the speaker. Thus, any moral point, if we choose to call it that, although perhaps 'hearably' present, does not become explicitly so.

Accounting for absent activities/qualities

Let us see whether something of a stronger case for age and morality can be established. In extract one we already saw how speakers orient to notions of progression and to specific actions and predicates that go together with stages of life. We saw Laura marking her actions as incongruent vis-à-vis such norms and describing herself as lacking certain qualities. She in other words, treats her lack of maturity, and 'not having grown to be a mature woman' as accountable in and for the interaction.

Sacks also discusses cases of situations where speakers take up the notion of absent activities in interaction. The examples provided in his lectures elucidate how notions of absent activities combine with particular situated expectations about stage-of-life categories. According to Sacks: "the fact that activities are category-bound also allows us to praise or complain about 'absent' activities. For instance, a baby that does not cry where it might (say, in a christening) can be properly praised, while an older child that does not say 'thank you' when passed food or given a present is properly blamed" (1992, Vol 1: 585).

Accounting for absent activities, and orienting to the potential (moral) evaluation that such accounting may give cause for, was a recurrent feature of the data at hand. In the following, two further examples of accounting for absent personal qualities and/or absent (appropriate) actions are provided. In the analysis of the extracts, I will focus first on the practices of accounting for absent qualities and/or actions. Second, I will draw attention to how, having made an absence visible for the interaction, speakers then explicitly acknowledge, or voice out that a particular norm may have been breached, and that an evaluation or a blaming may have been made relevant by that absence. What I wish to claim is that when *voicing out or rehearsing a norm or a potential evaluation for an audience, speakers simultaneously make the morality of breaching such norms and thus the incongruency of their descriptions visible in the interaction.*

Extract two starts with the interviewer asking Liisa whether she has anything to add to the discussion so far.

Extract 2. PN: W4: Liisa (Cas 1, A: 39.3.-40.7)

1.	PN:	What else comes to mind () about	Mitä sulle niinku itelles tulee (.) aikaan
2.		time or age or () themes	tai ikään tai (.) tämmösiin teemoihin
3.		like (.) this	(.) luuttyvää
4.		(1 4)	(1.4)
5.	L:	hhh can't think of ↑ <u>anything</u> like	hhh ei mul ↑ <u>muuta</u> sillai
6.		(2 2) the only thing I thought	(2 2) sitä mä vaan aattelin sillon
7.		about when I thought when you	ku mä funtsasin ku saä
8.		[(0 2)] called so (2 0)	[(0.2)] soitit niin (2 0)
9.	PN:	[mm]	[mm]
10.	L:	<u>one</u> thing that came to my mind was	<u>semmonen</u> mul tuli mieleen just
11.		that like (0.2) this middle-age	että ei tää niinku (0.2) tää keski-ikäisyys
12.		like (.) like isn't such a (0 2)	ni (.) niin ei se mikään (0.2)
13.		<u>terrible</u> thing	<u>kamala</u> asia oo
14.	PN:	mm	mm
15.	L:	I mean it's like (0.2) like it terrib-	Silleen et tota (0 2) et se on hur-
16.		it's hhh () it depends quite a bit	se on hhh (.) se on paljolti sitä kiinni
17.		on how you yourself (.) take it	miten sä ite () suhtaudut siihen
18.		what kind of an attitude you've got	mikä asenne sulla on
19.		and how you hhh (0.4) if you	ja miten sä hhh (0.4) jos sa
20.		↑ <u>think</u> that you're <u>old</u>	↑ <u>aattelet</u> et sä oot <u>vanha</u>
21.		old that you can't then you <u>become</u>	etkä voi niinku kyllähän sä <u>tuut</u>
22.		old you <u>turn</u> old	vanhaks susta <u>tulee</u> vanha
23.	PN:	mm	mm
→ 24.	L:	but like (0 8) cause I'm quite a (.)	mut tota (0 8) ku mä oon aika semmonen ()
25.		how should I put it I'm (0 4)	et miten mä sanosin et mä oon (0.4)
26.		when I said that I don't know how	ku mä sanoin et mä en osaa olla mikaan
27.		to be a dignified	arvokas
28.	PN:	mm [mm] [mm]	mm [mm] [mm]
29.	L:	middle-[aged] lady [that] I'm like	keski-ikä[inen] leidi [et] ma oon
30.		more a um (0 6) how	semmonen öm (0.6) mites
→ 31.		<u>childlike</u> or like a ()	<u>lapsenomanen</u> tai <u>tämmönen</u> ()
32.		at times I feel I'm totally <u>naive</u> but	välillä ma koen et mä oon ihan <u>naivi</u> mut
→ 33.		>like I don't know if that's such a	>et en ma tiedä onkse nyt niin paha asia<
34.		bad thing< so like (0 2) so the (0 6)	et semmonen (0.2) et toi (0 6)
35.		um that (1.2) >that in a way< like	ääh et (1.2) >et tavallaan< (0 2) niinku
36.		that you dare to be (0 2) the <u>funny</u>	et uskaltaa olla (0 2) se <u>hassu</u>
37.	PN:	mm	mm
38.	L:	you and dare to like do something	minä ja uskaltaa niinku tehdä jotakin
39.		hhh (0 2) how should I put it	hhh (0 2) miten mä sen
40.		with the kids or with ↑ <u>people</u>	lasten kanssa tai ↑ <u>ihmisten</u> kanssa
41.		things like	semmosia
42.		((tape ends))	((kasetti loppuu))

There is of course much going on in this passage. I will focus, however, on what happens from line 24 onwards. Before this point, the interviewee has described middle-ageness in general terms, and talked about age as depending on one's attitudes (lines 10-23). A shift happens on line 24 as the speaker adopts a more personal mode. It is here that she also moves to accounting for absent qualities: for

not knowing how to be a dignified middle-aged lady (lines 26-29), and for being childlike and totally naïve instead (lines 31-32).

The noteworthy feature in the passage is that notions closely linked to immaturity: naïve and childlike again work to carry perturbation into the delivery of the description. These naïve and childlike qualities define what takes the place of, and fills in, the absence of 'being dignified or middle-aged'. Note that the speaker also modifies qualities implying explicit immaturity: first, by marking out the transient nature of the naivety (line 32: *at times I feel I'm totally naïve*), and second, by offering an evaluation (lines 32-34: *but >like I don't know if that's such a bad thing<*). The speaker, in other words, clearly attends to the implications that her reported lack of maturity may elicit, and does this by rehearsing and actively voicing out a potential outside evaluation.

The voicing-out and the acknowledging of a potential outside evaluation or blaming is then followed by a section of talk that seeks to negate such an evaluation. Note how the absence of maturity and *being childlike and naïve* instead, are first reinterpreted in positive term: as *daring to do things* (line 35 and 38). After this, the speaker reformulates naïve behaviour as funny (line 36) and simultaneously describes and reinterprets it in terms that convey that *she is in control and in charge* of her activities.¹⁰ The speaker in other words engages in careful demarcation of what childlike or naïve mean in and for this interaction. 'Daring to do something' remains unspecified, as the speaker does not provide any examples of daring actions. 'Daring' also mobilises notions of *temporality* and of *intentional* activity that the speaker *chooses* to do. Liisa's description thus conveys that she does not engage in such activities (whatever they may be) all the time. Instead, the notion that there are other available options for her, is conveyed through the expression 'the funny you' (lines 36-38). This category works to convey that the speaker *may temporarily* choose this particular 'daring-to-be-funny you' from a wider selection of possible

¹⁰ Being in charge and in control of one's emotions and actions is a feature commonly linked to adulthood. According to the naturalist presumption, attainment of an adult level of maturity thus includes maturity, self-control and social sensibility (e.g. Armon-Jones 1986: 76-80 on the 'age paradigm' of emotions)

'yous'. Note also that the 'naïve-turned-funny you' is first introduced in the acceptable surroundings put together of activities to do with kids (lines 39-40), and only then to 'people' in general.

In sum, extract two seems to carry more explicit reference to potential moral judgement. The speaker not only works to keep potentially threatening interpretations of her descriptions and actions under guard, she also voices out and rehearses outside normative evaluation, and, by doing this, wards off moral and evaluative judgement. In the extract, the absence of normative, adult-like activities and qualities is accounted for by reformulating naive behaviour as funny and by characterising alternative actions and qualities as temporary and intentional. Similar features are found in the next extract, where the interviewer makes Laura accountable for claiming to feel not-fifty. The extract includes further examples of accounting for absent or lacking qualities.

Extract 3. PN: W1: Laura, Cas 1, side B (6.4.-7.8)

1.	PN:	Yeah but <u>what</u> is it then that you	Joo mut <u>mikä</u> se sitten on että et
2.		don't feel fifty [((indistinct))]	tunne itseäsi viuskymppiseksi [((epäselvää))]
3.	L	[Somehow I]	[Jotenkin mä]
4.		feel my- () maybe it's that I	tunnen it- () ehkä se on se et mä
5.		somehow however feel	tunnen itteni jotenkin kuitenkin
→ 6.		like such a <u>child</u>	nunkun niin <u>lapseks</u>
7.		>I mean like a like I'm in a way<	>siis jotenkin semmoiseksi nunkun<
8.		(1.8) still that I don't feel	(1.8) vielä et mä en tunne olevani
9.		like I'm y'know so	vielä nunkun tiatsä niin kauheen
10.		terribly <u>full-grown</u> and	<u>täysikasvune</u> ja
11.	PN:	mm	mm
12.	L:	and and like y'know <u>wise</u> (.)	ja ja semmoinen nunkun <u>viisas</u> (.)
13.		and () and <u>mature</u> and I don't	ja () ja <u>kypsä</u> enkä osaa
14.		always know how to <u>behave</u> in in	aina <u>käyttäytyä</u> niin et et
15.		ways y'know (1.4) hhh	nunkun (1.4) hhh
16.		maybe I'd also want some	ehkä haluis itelleen myös
17.		like liberties that you	sellaisia vapauksiakin et
18.		could still (0.6) could still be	sais vielä (0.6) sais vielä olla
19.		like (.) from time to time do these	nunkun () välillä tehdä just
20.		unwise things and	epäviisaita juttuja ja
21.		be a bit childish and=	olla vähän lapsellinen ja=
22.	PN:	mm	mm
23.	L	=and somehow (0.2) that people	=ja jotenkin (0.2) ettei sulta nunkun
24.		wouldn't like ↑ <u>demand</u> you to be like	↑ <u>edellyttää</u> skään mitään sellaista
25.	PN:	mm	mm
26.	L:	through and through (0.8) smart	läpeensä (0.8) fiksum ja aikuismaista
27.		and grown-up and this sort of	ja tällaista nunkun
28.		(0.2)	(0.2)
29.	PN:	matronly?	rouvamaista?
30.	L:	↑yes or something I don't know	↑Niin tai jotain en mä tiedä

	31.	if matron=	onks rouva=
	32.	PN: [heh heh]	[heh heh]
	33.	L: =[but something like y'know like]	=[mut jotain sellaista tuiätsa nunkun]
→	34.	I mean I think that everybody's	suis mä luulen et kaikkien ihmisten
	35.	aim no doubt is to grow	tavoite varmaan ois kasvaa
	36.	into this mature adulthood so	tällaiseen kypsään aikuisuuteen et se on
	37.	it must be this kind of like (2 3)	varmaan just tällaista nunkun
	38.	mental imma(h)tu(h)rity	(2.3) henkistä ke(h)skenka(h)svuisuutta
	39.	if like (0 2)	jos nunkun (0 2)
	40.	if you <u>remain</u> there cause you don't	jos sa <u>jaat</u> siihen eihän
	41.	<u>mean</u> to stay at the child stage	<u>tarkoitus</u> oo jäädä lapsen
	42.	but like up to a <u>certain</u> (1 2)	asteelle mut nunkun <u>tiettyyn</u> (1 2)
	43.	point there's like also something	pisteeseen asti niin siinä on jotain
→	44.	<u>positive</u> in being	<u>positiivistakin</u> vielä että
	45.	like a =	nunkun olla semmonen=
	46.	PN: mm	mm
	47.	L: =that you're not so (.) that you're not	=ettei oo niin () ettei oo
→	48.	like (0.4) that you <u>keep</u>	silleen (0 4) et <u>saiyyttää</u> jotain
	49.	something of that (1 2) ↓child	semmoisesta (1 2) ↓lapsesta

Extracts two and three have several fascinating features in common. First, the description of immature or childlike behaviour is, once again delivered very tentatively with hesitation and softening. Second, the transitory character of childlike behaviour and the non-pervasiveness of the self-categorisation as 'a child' are repeatedly and clearly marked. Note, for instance, that instead of claiming the impossible as in *'I'm a child'*, Laura describes herself as *'such a child'*. This allows more latitude for an elaboration on how the notion of a child is meant exactly, and works to bridge the apparent gap or incongruence between being fifty and a child at the same time.

More importantly, Laura also accounts for the absence of certain taken-for-granted and commonly known characteristics of the category 'grown-up'. Having mobilised the category 'child,' Laura first elaborates what 'feeling like a child' means. This is done through reference to the absence of full-grown-ness (line 10), to lack of wisdom (line 12), to absence of appropriate behaviour (lines 14-15) and by reference to freedom and un-grown-up liberties (line 17). Similar to extracts one and two Laura's account is very tentative as every added piece of the description is delivered with extensive hesitation, pauses and modification (somehow, in a way, maybe). Her account also makes repeated reference to the taken-for-granted nature of notions like full-grown, mature and wise by the repeated use of common knowledge tokens like

y'know (lines 9, 12, 15 and 33). Simultaneously though, her own behaviour becomes described as deviant and as lacking these qualities.

Another point in common between extracts two and three is the way in which Laura rehearses and voices out an outside norm or a common understanding to do with maturity and immaturity (lines 34-42). Like Liisa, she does some extensive work to re-interpret her earlier self-description and self-categorisation in positive and active terms (lines 42-49). Let us look, in some more detail, at how she does this.

The section of interest here starts from line 34. This is where Laura changes register and moves to describe and voice out a general and normative model for lifetime development. Simultaneously she makes clear that she is aware that a general norm exists and that she recognises the ideal and the type of maturity demanded of her.

Extract 4: PN: W1: Laura (partial repeat of extract 3)

→ 34.	I mean I think that everybody's	sus mä luulen et kaikkien ihmisten
35.	aim no doubt is to grow	tavoite varmaan ois kasvaa
36	into this mature adulthood so	tallaiseen kypsään aikuisuuteen et se on
37	it must be this kind of like (2 3)	varmaan just tällaista nunkun
38	mental imma(h)tu(h)rity	(2.3) henkistä ke(h)skenka(h)svuuisuutta
39.	if like (0.2)	jos nunkun (0.2)
40.	if you <u>remain</u> there cause you don't	jos sä <u>jaat</u> siihen eihän
41.	<u>mean</u> to stay at the child stage	<u>tarkoitus</u> oo jäädä lapsen
42.	but like up to a <u>certain</u> (1.2)	<u>asteelle</u> mut nunkun <u>tiettyyn</u> (1.2)
43.	point there's like also something	pisteeseen asti niin sinä on jotain
→ 44.	<u>positive</u> in being	<u>positiivistakin</u> vielä että
45.	like a =	nunkun olla semmonen=
46.	PN: mm	mm
47.	L: =that you're not so () that you're not	=ettei oo niin (.) ettei oo
→ 48.	like (0 4) that you <u>keep</u>	silleen (0 4) et <u>säilyttää</u> jotain
49.	something of that (1.2) ↓child	semmoisesta (1.2) ↓lapsesta

'This mature adulthood' (line 36) is clearly marked as a generally accepted goal whereas 'remaining or staying at the child stage' (lines 40-41) are marked as potential signs of 'mental immaturity' (line 38). It is here, I claim, that Laura's account gains a more pronouncedly moral quality. She clearly engages in considerable 'extra' accounting to ward off negative and deviant hearings, and does this by actively voicing out a difference in between her childish behaviour and 'mental immaturity.' Like Liisa in extract two, Laura simultaneously carefully reinterprets what 'being a child' or 'childlike' means in and for this interaction.

Note how notions of personal choice and intentional activity are once again used as a means of defusing potential moral interpretation, judgement or evaluation. The absence of maturity and wisdom, as well as the notion of 'being childish,' are reinterpreted as positive and as resulting from *active choice*, that is, from the speaker actively preserving, cherishing or keeping (line 48) parts of the child. Towards the end of the extract, childishness and immaturity are thus actively removed from the realm of the morally questionable or the pathological, and placed in the positive realm of the personal, and, in the end, adult control. Similar to extract two the speaker thus presents herself as being in charge and in control of when, where and on whose terms childishness or immaturity are *allowed* to surface.

As a final comment and summary, I would like to draw attention to more general features in common to all of the extracts discussed in this chapter. First, the extracts could be characterised as 'talk against linearity', in that in each case, some locally defined, taken for granted notions of maturity or adulthood become challenged and the speaker subsequently depicted as lacking, or as different from such normative notions. Second, in the light of the examples shown so far, it seems that when challenging or attacking linearity or notions of maturity, speakers in the data simultaneously point out, and underline that they understand and that they, at least in part, align with such normative notions. This is in line with the analytic observations made in chapter three where I established that when speakers denied personal change, they simultaneously referred to change as inevitable in the future, by using what was identified as an A – B – but A – structure. In the extracts seen in the current chapter, speakers, in something of a parallel manner, orient to and align with normative notions of maturity even when 'talking against them.' By doing this, they simultaneously challenge and preserve the normativity of maturity.

In the extracts we saw several examples where speakers unpacked their descriptions of naïve or immature behaviour and thus carefully defined what such terms meant in and for this interaction. Speakers also conveyed that naïve or immature activity is transient, under guard, and in the speaker's personal control. On the basis of the analysis of the examples on talk against age or linearity (at least as seen in the

extracts here) it seems that such talk typically includes some delicate management of notions of right and wrong, of good and appropriate behaviour.

In sum, the delivery of incongruent descriptions of age: descriptions that denote the speaker as lacking maturity or that in some way 'go against linearity,' are accompanied by the speaker displaying, voicing or marking out his or her awareness of such incongruence. Talk against linearity is thus managed by moral work by the speakers.

Summary and Discussion

This chapter has worked on two levels. First, it offered a discussion and review on the variety of ways in which morality has been conceptualised in discursive and conversation analytic research. I discussed several questions and problems with the notion of morality itself and with the practicalities of producing firmly grounded and empirically substantiated findings of 'morality' in interaction. I then further examined the problems of analysability and conceptualisation of morality by comparing the writings of Lena Jayyusi and Jörg Bergmann. These two writers were found to take somewhat different stands in how morality is conceptualised as a cultural phenomenon, on the one hand, and as a topic of analysis, on the other. I hope that the comparison of the two, the treatment on moral discourse as a fuzzy concept, and the discussion on analytic ascription and psychologization served to elucidate more recurrent problems in the wider empirical literature on discourse and morality.

Second, this chapter offered a distinctive contribution to the empirical examination of the morality of age claims in interaction. In line with the theoretical discussion on the problems with analysing morality in discourse, a deliberately tentative and searching style of analysis was chosen. This choice was made to underline the practical difficulty of distinguishing between speakers' orientations to the 'rational' or the 'moral' on the one hand and to emphasise the close relation in between sensitive, delicate and moral talk. In the analysis itself, pronouncedly strong claims

were, at first, put on hold, as I invited the reader to consider some potential candidates of moral accounting.

In all, the interview data at hand, and maybe 'age description/age claims' as a broader category, seem something of an interesting case for the analysis of morality in discourse. It was pointed out earlier that age, as a positioned and normatively policed category, might, in fact, more easily lend itself to being morally conceptualised. Compared to some of the classic research on morality, where the examples used represent situations that perhaps more clearly already reside within 'the moral' and embrace questions of right and wrong, age talk seems to be situated to a much more unclear, or grey area. Jayyusi (1984) for instance typically uses examples that come from crime cases or disputes about euthanasia for example, whereas Watson's studies on moral work (1978, 1990, 1997; cf. Sacks 1972b) are largely based on examples of blame and motive ascription in murder trials. In both these cases, as with other studies that exemplify complaint sequences in interaction (Drew 1998), or focus on descriptions of sexual behaviour (Silverman 1997; Silverman and Perakylä 1990) for example, issues of morality – in the sense of right and wrong – are more readily present and a part of the interaction in question.

With age, I would claim, the picture is perhaps more complex and unclear. Issues of right and wrong do surface, which helps to anchor the analysis of morality in clear-cut and detailed ways. At the same time, however, the talk, at least in the data corpus at hand, also includes instances of implicit morality, brought about by hesitation, hedges, softeners, justifications etc. It is here that the lines in between orientations to rationality on the one hand and morality on the other become more difficult to draw. One of the aims of the current chapter has been to underline the difficulty of such line drawing.

In the analysis, I focussed on some pin-pointable elements of the interaction that seemed to support an interpretation in terms of moral concerns and moral work by the participants. I started with an example that worked to exhibit the implicit and unstated character of morality in interaction. I then moved towards building a stronger case for morality and age talk by looking at descriptive sequences where

participants accounted for absent activities and qualities. It was here that the participants seemed more explicitly engaged in designing their accounts to represent the moral character of the speaker.

Referring back to the discussion in the beginning of the chapter, I would claim that the analysis, so far, has made a good start in pointing to some of the ways in which age functions as part of the 'routine pratico-moral order of interaction' (Jayyusi 1991: 242). The concrete analysis on the fine-grain workings of age description lays out for view the practical features of age and morality in action: the means by which speakers express an orientation to the rightness and wrongness of their behaviour, to the appropriateness of the descriptions provided, and the potential deviance of referring to an absence of maturity. It would seem then that mobilising age in interaction requires, at least potentially, moral discursive work and practical means of taking the interactional moral order of age description into account.

In chapter seven I continue the discussion on morality. Encouraged by the discussion in the current chapter, the analyses move towards exploring elements of talk in descriptive sequences where perhaps a more explicit sense of morality comes into the surface of interaction.

Chapter Seven: Producing Morally Insulated Accounts

Much of member's social theorising is organized through the production and provision for collectivities in talk as morally organized groups and the characterization and description of individuals and their actions as relative to, and accountable in terms of, their membership in such groups.

Jayyusi (1984: 52)

To be sure, one major reason one might invoke for preserving analytic attention towards categorial phenomena in talk is that these phenomena highlight the moral organization of talk in a way that reference solely to sequential features structurally conceived neither necessarily nor consistently does.

Watson (1997: 68)

In the last chapter, I introduced the notion of moral discourse and discussed some ways in which morality has been conceptualised in empirical and theoretical work. The analysis concerned the difficulty of establishing firmly grounded observations of morality in interaction, as I pointed to instances where speakers oriented towards bridging some incongruence in their descriptions, and fine-tuned their accounts to represent their moral character. Deflecting possible ascriptions of fault or reproach to do with categorisations and conduct, as well as accounts of absent activities or qualities were then established as manifestly doing moral work.

This chapter enlarges on the analysis and discussion on the morality of age claims started in the previous one. I will further investigate the intricate ways in which speakers monitor their descriptions and self-categorisations (Edwards 1991; Sacks 1992; Watson 1997), and how they use a combination of defensive design to *produce morally insulated accounts*. So while the previous chapter concentrated more on the *potential* morality of age claims, the focus here, will be on speakers' *explicit* mobilization of right and wrong, or appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

The analytic observations in this chapter will be based on a variety of communicative features and descriptive detail by which speakers display, configure and manage the morality of their accounts. What I wish to do, is to analyse this

discursive intricacy from several perspectives and thus make an attempt at building something of a hologram view on how accounts, parts of interview interaction as well as talk on other possible interactive sites, may be produced in ways that work to insulate them from moral reproach.

The discursive practices I wish to discuss in this chapter: the communicative detail that mark an explicit orientation to moral concerns in the data are 1) Self-initiated qualifications of accounts, 2) Appeals to feelings and the inner reality of the speaker and 3) Practices of monitoring the 'scenic features' of accounts.

By *self-initiated qualifications* I refer to stretches of talk where speakers provide, what can be heard as, a *corrective* to a self-categorisation or a self-description given earlier. What I wish to suggest is that self-initiated qualifications explicitly display speakers' orientations to the moral appropriateness of their descriptions. Looking at such instances of talk, I will also pay attention to the interactional circumstances of the occasion in which these elements occur. The question-answer format of the interview, as well as the actions by the interviewer are discussed as part of the interactional context that interviewees address and orient to in their talk. The one-way flow of information typical of interview situations as well as the pauses and minimal feedback by the interviewer, are, in other words, analysed as consequential for the design and shape of the qualifications and corrections offered by interviewees. The main focus in this section is on the discursive insulation work achieved by qualifications: on how such elements make visible and analysable particular instances of moral accounting as well as the category-specific expectations of right and wrong, proper and improper behaviour at play in interaction.

As the second analytic angle into the data, I will focus on speakers' *appeals to feelings and inner knowledge* as a basis upon which age descriptions and category claims are made. The mobilisation of feelings, and the production of '*experience licenced*' accounts (Coulter 1979) will be discussed as an effective means of mitigating error, abnormality or deviance in age descriptions, and as a discursive way of simultaneously assuring the inner logic and moral acceptability of the speaker's descriptive work. The discussion on the interactional currency of feelings

and appeals to inner reality in this section draws on earlier literature on the conceptual and cultural analysis of emotion vocabularies (e.g. Coulter 1979; Harre 1988a; 1988b; Harré and Parrott 1996), and on studies of emotion discourse (e.g. Edwards 1997, 1999a). In addition, the analysis draws on studies on motive-invocation as a communicative means of assuring competent and moral membership (e.g. Watson 1997). I will discuss the discursive flexibility of appealing to feelings, and show how such appeals are used to deal with potential membership failure.

Third, the analysis in this chapter focuses on the means by which speakers mould and *monitor the scenic features of their accounts* (cf. Watson and Weinberg 1982; see also Jayyusi 1993). In this context, I look at an extract where the interactants – jointly and somewhat exceptionally – depict immature behaviour and action as acceptable and even admirable. This, I will show, is constituted by the interviewee's active co-selection of category items like 'mother' when talking about potentially immature behaviour, and by her careful scene and context transformation. Both work to warrant the mobilisation of descriptions of 'infantile' action and behaviour. The analysis in this section shows the ways in which scenic monitoring functions to lend moral insulation and acceptability to accounts. 'Scenically' monitored and organised accounts and action descriptions, in other words, constitute specific moral profiles for the actors or agents in question (cf. Watson 1978). In addition to providing an exceptional case in terms of how notions of immaturity were on the average treated in the data corpus as a whole, the extract discussed in this section also provides an example of collaborative and joint moral evaluative work by the interviewee and the interviewer.

The analyses in this chapter are based on extracts of talk from two interviews. Two extracts are focussed on in detail, first, by zooming into some finer detail and shorter spates of talk within a longer argumentative whole, and then by focussing on somewhat longer stretches of talk. Working intensely with a limited number of extracts also means repeating parts of the same extracts when changing analytic angles. Some of the argumentative details in the extracts that take centre stage here are such that they, or variations of the same practices, can be found in the extracts

already presented in chapter six. Space allowing, numerous other empirical examples could have been included.

In all, the analytic angles into the data in this chapter elucidate the variety of discursive practices by which descriptions of age in situ are insulated against moral judgement. The reader should perhaps again be reminded that although discursive moral monitoring may, in part, display strategic or intentional action by the speakers in question, this does not mean, however, that the revealing of any such 'inner motivation or intentions' would be of interest to the analysis. Rather, analysing the discursive practices of producing morally insulated accounts – the evocation of psychological concepts and feelings, for instance – means focusing on the interactional and moral business such descriptive action achieves in the situation in question. At the same time the analyses presented here, may shed light and have wider implications on further studies concerning discursive morality in other settings.

Producing morally insulated accounts 1: Self-initiated qualification

In this section I wish to focus on how self-initiated qualification of accounts: corrective elements offered to counter some detail in descriptions given previously, make visible particular instances of moral accounting. Self-initiated qualification or correction in conversation (cf. Jefferson 1987) is a recurrently used discursive resource by which speakers attend to category-specific expectations of right and wrong, or proper and improper behaviour. As such, they point to moments when moral concerns as part of self-categorisation and action description surface and come to life in interaction (cf. ten Have 1999). Let us start by looking at two short sections of talk where speakers add a corrective element to an account given previously. In both cases the self-initiated qualification follows a longer descriptive turn by the speaker. The extracts will be presented in full later on, but for now, let us look at the detail of the corrective element itself.

Extract 1. PN: W1: Laura, Cas 1, side B (8.2-)

1.		but it can <u>be</u> that there's this like	vaan se voi <u>olla</u> että siellä on ninkun
2.		that on the other hand there <u>is</u> also	toisaalta sun sisällä <u>on</u> vielä semmoinen
3.		this little girl inside you as well	pikkutyttökin olemassa
→ 4.	PN:	mm	mm
→ 5.		(0.2)	(0.2)
→ 6.	L:	Like I do know naturally I'm able	Et osaanhan ilman muuta mä pystyn
7.		know how to behave say (0.2)	osaan käyttäytyä sanotaan (0.2)
8.		at work and in a(h)ll othe(h)r	töissä ja kai(h)kissa mui(h)ssakin
9.		situations exactly according to uh	tilanteissa ihan just sen öö
10.		(.) um as mature and (.) smart as=	(.) öö niin kypsästi (.) ja fiksusti kun=
→ 11.	PN:	mm	mm
12.	L:	=expected and required	=odotetaan ja edellytetään
→ 13.		But it's just that you like feel that	mut just se et sä ninkun tunnet et

Extract 2. PN: W4: Liisa, Cas 2 side A (4.3-)

1.	L:	Fiddlestics I'm as old as	Katinkontit mä oon niin vanha kun mä
2.		I want to be	haluan olla
→ 3.	PN:	yeah	joo
→ 4.	L:	And however of course there are	Ja kuitenkin tietenkin on tietty (.)
5.		certain (.) up to a certain point and	tiettyyn pisteeseen ja
6.		limit you of course behave I mean	rajaan saakka sä tietysti käyttädyt ethän
7.		you can't do just anything	sä voi olla ihan miten vaan
8.		Like your own (.) inner self tells	Et senhän sanoo jo niinku se oma (.)
9.		you as much like (0.8) that (.) one is	niinku se sisin siellä et tota (0.8) et (.) onhan
10.		in <u>that</u> sense like a (0.6) mature adult	sitä <u>sillä</u> lailla niinku (0.6) kypsä aikuinen
11.		that that (.) >certain limits are set<	että et (.) >tiettyt rajat tulee<
→ 12.		But ↑ anyway I mean (0.4) bu (2.0)	Mut ↑ kuitenkin ni ni (0.4) mut (2.0)

As a first observation on these extracts, we can note that the interactional location, in which the qualification is offered, consists of an earlier claim (longer than shown here) by the interviewee. The account is greeted by minimal feedback ('yeah' in extract two) or by minimal feedback followed by a pause ('mm' + 0.2 pause in extract 1), after which the self-initiated qualification then follows.

I will come back to the detail by which both speakers – in interestingly different ways – appeal to their inner reality and use such privilege access knowledge to produce morally insulated self-description. For the time being, however, let us focus on the detail of the qualification: that is lines 6-12 in extract one and lines 4-11 in extract two. In both, speakers make reference to shared common sense notions of correct and mature behaviour expected of them. This observation is backed up by the presence of common sense tokens like 'naturally' (line 6, in extract 1), and 'of course' (lines 4 and 6, in extract 2).

The corrective elements are in both accounts marked as somewhat separate, or as a break-off from the surrounding talk. Note, in particular, how the qualification to the speaker's earlier talk is followed by a topic disjuncture marker 'but' after which speakers move on to repeat or reformulate parts of their initial propositions. The corrective move, in other words, is produced as an added element to the surrounding talk. As such, they can also be heard as the speaker *conceding* to maturity (see Antaki & Wetherell 1999, and the discussion in chapter five). In other words lines 6-10 in extract one, and lines 4-11 in extract two function as concessions to the expectations and obligations of adulthood and maturity, before the speaker continues and repeats the proposition she presented earlier.¹

The moves in the extracts above seem oriented to the correction of a disputable and somewhat extreme claim ('*Fiddlestics I'm as old as I want to*', in extract 2) and to the inclusion of additional information (extracts 1 and 2).² In fact, the self-initiated qualification in both of the cases *marks the nature of prior accounts as something that is in need of further corrective detail or in need of balancing*. The additional information offered produces a corrective contrast to the prior account, and, I claim, *simultaneously marks an orientation to moral reproach based on expectations of age-appropriateness, membership knowledge and membership competence*³.

¹ Note, however, that the concession structure at play here is, again, something of a variation on those analysed by Antaki and Wetherell (1999). The corrective or qualifying element is not so much geared towards strengthening one argumentative position at the expense of another. Rather, in both cases the self-initiated qualification functions more to bring in a second, *equally valid* account or self-description. This gives these extracts an interesting feel that the speaker engages in something of a for-an-audience dialogue with herself

² Translating the expression 'katinkontit' into 'fiddlestics (Extract 2, line 1) required some etymological searching. I found out that this old expression in Finnish, that simply expresses doubt or that something is nonsensical, can according to its literal meaning be translated into 'cat's legs'. In the end, I chose a similarly dated expression 'fiddlestics' as the, not perfect, but closest translation. Luisa using a dated expression in this particular context is somewhat ironic as the dated 'fiddlestics' is immediately followed by her declaration of being able to choose her age.

³ Also note the laughter as part of the element in extract 1 (line 8). Resorting to humour or irony has been identified as a general feature marking delicacy or morality in interaction (e.g. Bergmann 1998, Haakana 1999) This seems to lend further support for the analysis of the self-initiated qualifications in terms of reflexive moral monitoring

Some brief analytic notes can also be made here on the interactional structure of the exchanges. Note, for instance, that the pauses and the acknowledging tokens used in the extracts above, work to locally occasion the inclusion of a self-corrective (or a conceding) element. The fact that the interviewees' accounts are followed by minimal feedback, a pause, or a combination of both (extract 1), may, in other words, have been interpreted as an invitation to proceed, or as marking the need for further explication. The '*mm*' in extract one is typically characterized as a continuer, that encourages the prior speaker to continue either on or off topic, whereas '*yeah*' functions as an acknowledgement token (Gardner 1997).

Without going into the intricacies of conversation objects like *mm* or *yeah*, or the sequential structure of the exchange in more detail, suffice it to say here, that the monologic nature of interviews (Hutchby and Woffitt 1998, see also chapter 1) and the common pressure towards good and rational answers in such situations (e.g. Silverman 1993, 2000), may, in part, explain the occurrence of speakers' qualification moves. I think specific traces of recipient design are to be found in both of the examples provided here. The focus on orientations to reciprocity can, however, be augmented and in many ways 'fleshed out' by focusing on the categorization work simultaneously taking place. We need in other words, to look into the membership work and into the categorical relevancies that the discursive moves towards qualification are produced as parts of.

In order to do this, we need to note that the speakers move immediately from either claiming the category of a little girl (extract one), or from claiming the extreme freedom of choosing one's age ('I'm as old as I want to' in extract two), into enacting category-bound knowledge and category-bound obligations typically tied to maturity and adulthood. In both cases, the added discursive element thus consists of emphatic display of category bound knowledge tied to 'adulthood'. From the perspective of category enactment then, the self-initiated qualification can be interpreted as a means of establishing and presenting the speaker as a competent member in an age category: as knowledgeable and as capable of fulfilling expected norms for mature behaviour. The detail of the accounts protects and insulates the speakers from moral reproach that interpretations of membership failure within the

category 'adult' might afford. The stretches of talk can also be seen as doing explicit moral work: they overturn 'biased', 'distorted' or 'imbalanced' accounts, by providing 'correctives' in the form of a competing account of a preferred, or privileged status.

In this section then, I have been concerned with how earlier direct or implied reference to immaturity is insulated from moral reproach by discursive elements that refer back to some commonly known and shared 'facts' and norms about stage of life categories (cf. Atkinson 1980 and chapters 3 and 6). Speakers in extracts one and two displayed and enacted their category knowledge and their commitment to notions and expectations of being a member in the category 'mature adult'. The analysis thus shows the practical communicative detail drawn upon by participants, as they structure their talk to gap any negative inferences that reference to an overlap in between stage of life categories might give cause for (Baker 1984; see also chapter 2). The extracts analysed in this section also exemplify speakers' conjoint orientations to the morality of their categorial work on the one hand, to the structure of utterances on the other, and the dynamics by which these two orientations inform each other (Watson 1997: 53).

Producing morally insulated accounts 2: Appealing to feelings and inner reality

Having discussed some examples of discursive moves towards qualification as displays of speakers' orientations to morality, I now move on to add a further analytic layer to my analysis. My main focus will be on two stretches of talk as I focus on the detail by which speakers appeal to their feelings and their inner reality.

What I wish to establish in this section, is, that speakers' invocation of feelings and inner reality is not only an intricate and useful way of working up and assembling self-descriptions, or a way of accounting for actions, but also a central discursive means of managing moral accountability. I will pay close attention to the rhetorical design of the examples and show how the lay psychological argumentation by the speakers – the repeated reference to inner knowledge and inner reality – works to

render accounts logical, acceptable and moral. In addition, the analysis focuses on how feelings are used as a basis of motive-invocation, and thereby as a communicative means of assuring competent and moral membership (e.g. Watson 1978, 1983, 1997).

Analysis of emotion in social contexts, on the practices through which emotion words, personal feelings, and the inner reality of the speaker are mobilized in text and talk, has provided some fascinating and compelling empirical analysis. As a precursor to empirical analysis, Wittgenstein, in his discussion on pain for example (1968: paras. 244-246, 448-449) implied that speakers' utterances should not be understood as direct reflections on their inner experiences. He also noted that reference to one's own private experience or sensations makes such descriptions particularly resistant to denial or challenge. Talk about inner experiences, in other words, always implies personal ownership of that knowledge (cf. Sharrock 1974; Peräkylä and Silverman 1991).

Continuing the Wittgensteinian philosophy of the mind tradition, writers such as Coulter (1979, 1990b) and Harré (1988a, 1988b, 1989; see also Harré and Gillett 1994; Harré and Parrott 1996) have provided analysis on the differential uses of 'emotion words and emotion vocabulary'. Following Wittgenstein, the focus of such work is, for example, on the uses of the emotions in various settings and 'language games'⁴, and on logico-grammatical analysis of talk. Other important contributions to research on situated emotion talk from an 'anti-psychologistic stance' (Coulter 1979: 1) come from anthropology and cultural ethnography (e.g. Lutz 1988; Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990; Harré 1988a), and from social constructionism and studies on historical psychology (Harré 1988b; Gergen 1994, see also Nikander 2001). This research has established the cultural relativity and historical change of emotion vocabularies and drawn attention to the relationship between the use of emotion words and the local moral and social order (e.g. Harré 1983, 1988b; Heelas 1988; Lutz 1990; Parrott and Harré 1996; White 1990; for a review, see Edwards 1997, and Buttny 1993). Emotions, as psychological phenomena, have thus been recast as

⁴ Some of Harré's work also discusses emotions in 'episodes', and thus reflects the terminology originating from ethogenic social psychology

social phenomena that need to be studied in practical everyday contexts of attribution and accounting.

A central methodological enrichment to the analysis of emotion categories, everyday psychological description, and everyday psychological concepts in talk and texts comes from discursive psychology (Edwards 1997, 1999; Edwards and Potter 1992; Harré and Gillett 1994; see also Potter and Hepburn *forth.*)⁵. In his studies on emotion categories in therapeutic interaction and media texts, Edwards presents perhaps the most substantial, yet concise, argument for the non-cognitive study of 'emotion discourse' (Edwards 1997, 1999; also MacMillan and Edwards 1999, for a discussion on Edwards see Valsiner 1999). Edwards gives an impressive account of the ways in which situated emotion discourse builds on the deployment of narrative and rhetoric, how narrative sequence and rhetorical contrasts are used to construct a sense of events, and on how emotions are evoked as a means of orienting to the "normative and moral orders, to responsibility and blame, intentionality and social evaluation" (Edwards 1999: 279). His work thus continues and extends upon other analyses on, for instance, how participants evoke emotions while telling 'moral tales,' and on how such telling is part of the practical interactional work of retrospectively explaining a prior failure to act appropriately (Baruch 1981; Coulter 1979: 132; see also Sarbin 1988).

With the analyses to follow in mind, a further central theme in the existing literature on emotion talk, is the basic observation that both lay and professional psychology and thinking draw a contrast between the emotions on the one hand, and cognition and rational thought on the other (Coulter 1979; Edwards 1999; see also Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995; Watson and Weinberg 1982). Emotions are routinely conceived of as natural, irrational, and as potentially beyond conscious control. Cognition and cognitive processes on the other hand, are conventionally conceived of as within conscious control, and associated with rational thought and decision-making. Spelling out a list of interactive business achieved by emotion

⁵ For discursive work on emotions using 'positioning theory' (Harré and van Langenhove 1999) as a starting point, see Stenner 1993, on linguistic aspects of the expression of affect, see e.g. Ochs and Schieffelin 1989.

discourse, Edwards (1997: 194), for example, points to the dichotomy between internal states and external behaviour; the private versus the public. Reports from the true inner life of the mind may be avowed by reference to personal experience, whereas ascriptions based on overt behaviour may be adduced to refute them.

In the data presented below, it is this discursive detailing of talk – the repeated evocation of private access knowledge based on inner feelings, and the strict separation of cognition and deliberate action by the speaker from inner feelings as ‘musts’ – that is of special interest to me. Unlike some of the research briefly outlined above, the speakers do not evoke specific emotion terms or categories like ‘jealousy’ or ‘envy’ as such. Instead, the accounts make extensive reference to lay psychological terms and the speaker’s inner knowledge. Let us start by looking at extract three, where Laura describes her inner feelings.

Extract 3. PN: W1: Laura 5, Cas 1, side B (7.8-)

1.	L.	I've thought about it often	Mä oon monta kertaa sitä aatellu
2.		that since I ↑often have this	et kun mulla on ↑usein semmoinen
→ 3.		feeling that I'd <u>want</u> to in a way	tunne et mä <u>haluisin</u> olla tavallaan
→ 4.		be a (.) or that I <u>fee-</u> (.) I wouldn't	semmoinen (.) tai et mä ko- (.) en ma
→ 5.		<u>want</u> to be but I <u>feel</u> that I'm	<u>haluis</u> olla kun mä <u>koen</u>
6.		inside like this little girl	<u>sisimmaltäni</u> olevani semmoinen pikkutyttö
7.		who'd in a way (0 6) in fact	joka niinkun tavallaan (0 6) itseasiassa
8.		maybe still <u>long</u> for a	ehkä <u>kaipais</u> vielä sellaista
9.		like for a secure <u>father</u>	niinkun turvallista <u>isää</u>
10.		or something like that=	tai jotain semmoista=
11.	PN:	mm	mm
12.	L.	=so like (0 2) if there's <u>something</u>	=et niinkun (0 2) jos <u>jotain</u>
13.		you want then (.) it's this (0 4)	haluais niin (.) just tämmöisen (0 4)
14.		like when you look for security	et kun sitä etsii turvaa
15.		>so I've often thought	>niin monta kertaa mä oon aatellu
16.		that one maybe looks for this	et sitä etsii ehkä semmosen
17.		for this like< more <u>grown</u> -up (.)	vielä niinkun< <u>aiku</u> semman (.)
18.		person's or a <u>parent</u> 's (.) protection	ihmisen tai tommoisen <u>vanhemman</u> (.) turvaa
19.		So it may be just or (.) like (.)	Niin se voi just mut (.) niinkun (.)
→ 20.		in fact I <u>presume</u> that it must be	tai itseasiassa <u>oletankin</u> et se varmaan
21.		because I've had (.) a father	johtuu siitä et mulla on ollu (.) isa
22.		who's been away from home	joka on ollu <u>hirveesti</u>
23.		quite a <u>bit</u> (0.2) and who	pois kotoa (0 2) ja eikä oo
24.		never interfered in the	koskaan puuttunu
25.		upbringing of the children	lasten kasvatukseen
26.		and then on the whole	ja sitten ylipäättänsä
27.		that both parents had this this	et molemmilla vanhemmilla oli tää tallanen
28.		that in our family	et meidän suvussa
29.		there was never much	ei oo koskaan

	30		hugging or kissing ⁶		halattu eikä pussattu eikä suukoteltu
	31.		or touching or [like]=		eikä kosketeltu eikä [silleen]=
	32	PN·	[mm]		[mm]
	33.	L·	=y'know showing much of feeling		=nünkun liiemmin osotettu tunteita
→	34.		so that may have left in a way		että sitä on voinu jäädä tavallaan
	35.		(0 6) in part (.) this ↑emotional		(0 6) osittain () semmoista ↑tunnevaajausta
	36		deficit and >↑that may well cause		ja >↑joka voi ihan tehdä sen
→	37.		that it can be quite< () logical		et se voi olla ihan< () loogistakin
	38.		that you don't like in		et ei sit nünkun
	39.		[some] areas=		[joltain] alueeltaan=
	40	PN	[mm]		[mm]
	41.	L	=ever grow like from the		=koskaan kasvakaan nünkun sitä
	42.		little girl [() into a]dulthood		pikkutyöstä [(.) a]kuseksi
	43.	PN.	[yeah]		[joo]

As a condensed descriptive gloss on the extract so far, we could say that Laura is accounting for 'having a little girl inside her' and providing the listener with potential and with offered-as-logical explanations as to why this might be the case. Several features in her extended account do practical work, that is, in the service of discursive moral insulation. The argumentative detail in Laura's account thus clearly exhibits the moral judgement grounded in, and inherent to membership categorisation.

Note how, an absent father, and a family not in the habit of showing affection, are presented as reasons for feeling like a little girl, and, following the logic of this categorisation, for 'still' needing and wanting parental security. The overlap in between the stage of life categories 'child' and 'adult' is, in other words, presented in a logical cause-effect fashion. This discursive construction becomes apparent for instance in the way Laura's summary from line 34 onwards starts with 'so'. The existence of 'emotional deficit' is presented as an understandable result and a logical upshot of her prior narrative description (see Heritage and Watson 1979).

Tentative features: hesitation and use of modifier and softeners (e.g. *in a way (0.6) in fact maybe*, lines 7-8), similar to those seen in the examples discussed in chapter six, are also in recurrent use. The distinctive characteristic in Laura's account that I wish

⁶ The English translation differs here from the original Finnish transcript. In addition to 'hugging and kissing' the original includes a second term for kissing for which I had difficulty finding an exact and suitable translation for 'Suukoteltu' on line 30 is something of a diminutive form of kissing. The closest I could come in terms of translating it was 'pecking', which I, in the end, decided to leave out as not quite suitable for the context.

to focus on however, is the way she draws on lay psychological terms (like emotional deficit, lines 35-36), and the way she provides a rationale and a moral logic for her account via reference to the inner self. Let us look at these in more detail.

Lines 3-6, where Laura backtracks to correct the verb 'want' with the emotion term 'feel' are of particular analytic interest.

Extract 4.

PN: W1: Laura 5, (partial repeat of extract 3)

	1.	L	I've thought about it often	mä oon monta kertaa sitä aatellu
	2.		that since I ↑ often have this	et kun mulla on ↑ usem semmoinen
→	3.		feeling that I'd <u>want</u> to in a way	tunne et mä <u>haluisin</u> olla tavallaan
→	4.		be a (.) or that I fee- (.) I wouldn't	semmoinen (.) tai et mä ko (.) en mä
→	5.		<u>want to be</u> but I <u>feel</u> that I'm	<u>haluis</u> olla kun mä <u>koen</u>
	6.		inside like this little girl	sisimmältäni olevani semmoinen pikkutyttö

Several questions arise as to the discursive functions of Laura's self-repair. What is the interactional business achieved by the substitution of 'I want' with 'I feel'? Does Laura's active self-repair tell us something about the moral and discursive grounds by which an overlapping stage of life category may be evoked in interaction?

We could start with the observation that claiming incumbency in the category 'little girl' via reference to one's wants clearly carries some built-in moral vulnerabilities. Needing the security of a father, or hanging onto the position of a dependent child is commonsensically something that people are expected to outgrow, in order to gain more adult and mature independence. In other words, still 'wanting' or 'longing for' such comfort or security is a potential sign of immaturity, of failure to grow up, and as such, not something one should want. In extract four, Laura clearly orients to such a shared lifetime schema (cf. Atkinson 1980) by discrediting her prior formulation and by replacing *wanting* with *feeling*. By doing this she provides a preferred, less vulnerable and a more acceptable basis for her description, and simultaneously deflects possible moral ascriptions of failure in terms of membership in the category 'grown-up.'

The evocation of feelings and inner reality works to insulate Laura's account from moral judgment in two ways. First, whereas *wanting* resides within the cognitive, in

that people (at least 'adults') can think and decide what they want, and for what reason (they can prioritize, postpone etc); claiming to *feel* something formulates the grounds and reasons behind a particular description differently: it places them within the inner reality of the speaker. Appealing to feeling implies that Laura herself is not in any way motivated to choose or to act in any particular way. Rather, the feeling of having a little girl inside is removed from the realm of active choice and depicted as something of a 'must' that she has no choice over (see Edwards 1999: 281-283).

Second, the evocation of feelings and the way in which Laura's account is constructed, simultaneously implies that the inner reality of the speaker, and the feelings therein, are under conscious control. Note for instance, how Laura's repeated claim of 'having thought about' the issues at hand (lines 1 and 15), and about the possible reasons behind her feelings, work to imply that such feelings and her inner reality are, in fact, under very mature and reflexive scrutiny. The fact that she now 'presumes' (line 20) to have found a possible explanation also refers to some long-term reflection. She offers rational and logical reasons to do with her family background in a thought-through fashion, while simultaneously discursively demarcating that the '*emotional deficit*', as a logical result of her childhood (line 35-36, in extract 3), only affects 'some areas' (line 39 in extract 3) of her adulthood.

In sum, Laura's account (extracts 3 and 4) is aimed at giving a morally appropriate, logical and justified description. She constructs her account to mitigate any moral interpretation in terms of membership failure by actively formulating *grounds and logical reasons and motivations* that make the description acceptable (cf. Watson 1978, 1983). Any invocation of potential derogatory categorisations resulting from the speaker actively *wanting* to be a little girl are mitigated by active self-repair and via reference to the inner psychological reality of the speaker as a logical inner 'force' in itself.

In the analysis so far I have established how emotion talk functions not merely as discursive moral insulation. It also wards off particular motive ascription and thus secures the authenticity of speakers' claims (cf. Widdicombe 1993; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1990). The analysis also showed how overlap between stage of life

categories can be explained and rendered logical via reference to details from personal biography, childhood, or family upbringing⁷. Laura referred to and constructed a psychological lay theory whereby categorial overlap was not only rendered logical and acceptable, but also insulated from moral interpretations and hearings. The moral danger inherent to her description was discursively defused by the distinction she made in between accountable rationality (wanting) and the unaccountable force of feelings.

The argumentative currency of inner reality

In this section I move ahead with the analysis on appeals to feelings and inner reality, by looking at how Laura continues her account started in extract 3. I will also introduce two further empirical examples. First, let us start by listening to Laura providing further explanation for 'not having grown up' and by analysing how the inner self is evoked to deflect possible moral inferences.

Extract 5. PN: W1: Laura Cas 1, side B (8.2-)
(Continues from extract 3, with lines 37-43 repeated)

37.	L:	that it can be quite< () logical	et se voi olla ihan< (.) loogistakin
38		that you don't like in	et ei sit ninkun
39.		[some] areas=	[joltain] alueeltaan=
40	PN:	[mm]	[mm]
41	L	=ever <u>grow</u> like from the	=koskaan <u>kasvakaan</u> ninkun siitä
42.		little girl [() into a]dulthood	pikkutyöstä [() ai]kuseksi
43.	PN	[yeah]	[joo]
44.	L:	That's what I've thought that it	Sitä mä oon aatellu
45		may well be something like this also	et se voi olla ihan tällaistaikin
→ 46		that it doesn't have to be like	et ei sen tarvii olla ninkun sitä
47.		that you'd <u>deny</u> (0 8) that you	että <u>kieltäis</u> (0 8) sitä että ei
→ 48		now (0 2) deny being this age	nyt (0 2) kieltäytyy olemasta tän ikäinen
49.		but it can <u>be</u> that there's this like	vaan se voi <u>olla</u> että siellä on ninkun
50		that on the other hand there <u>is</u> also	toisaalta sun sisällä <u>on</u> vielä semmoinen
51		this little girl inside you as well	pikkutyttökin olemassa
52	PN.	mm	mm
53		(0 2)	(0.2)
→ 54.	L:	Like I do know naturally I'm able	Et osaanhan ilman muuta mä pystyn
55		know how to behave say (0 2)	osaan käyttäytyä sanotaan (0.2)
56.		at work and in a(h)ll othe(h)r	toissa ja kai(h)kissa mui(h)ssakin
57		situations exactly according to uh	tilanteissa ihan just sen oö
58		() um as mature and () smart as=	() oö niin kypsästi (.) ja fiksumi kun=
59.	PN:	mm	mm

⁷ For a discussion on overlap in between stage of life categories see also chapter 2.

	60.	L:	=expected and required	=odotetaan ja edellytetään
→	61.		but it's just that you like feel that	mut just se et sä niinkun tunnet et
	62.		<u>inside</u> you there's this some (.)	sun <u>sisällä</u> s on joku semmoinen (.)
	63.		person or () whatever that inner is	ihminen tai () mikä se sisin on
	64.		that (0 2) like ↑ <u>it</u> does not turn	joka (0 2) et ↑ <u>se</u> ei kyl nyt täytä
	65.		fi(h)fty years old now ((laughs))	viittä(h)kyt vuo(h)tta ((nauraa))
	66.	PN.	ye.-s ((laughs))	ja:-a ((nauraa))
	67.	L	like even if this	et vaikka tämä
	68		<u>fra(h)me</u> here around it wou(h)d	<u>raa(h)mi</u> tässä ympärillä täyttäi(h)ski(h)n

As mentioned earlier, claiming incumbency in the category 'little girl' and mobilising descriptions like 'not having grown into adulthood' is morally risky. Both claims work against a culturally given, and a commonly shared lifetime schema and contradict with the nature of stage of life categories as positioned and factual.

The interactional relevance of moral judgement as an inseparable part of everyday description becomes explicit in the detail by which Laura fine-tunes her account. Three such features of moral monitoring and moral insulation in this passage are worth pointing to. First, the extract opens with Laura warding off the interpretation that her claim '*not having grown from the little girl into adulthood*' is an example of *active denial*; denial that is possibly occasioned by the interview situation (lines 46-50). Similar to her prior self-repair from wanting to feeling, *denying* one's age might afford interpretations in terms of motivated and conscious action. It is these kinds of inferences that Laura wards off by, again, referring to her inner reality, her 'true' self that without any active participation from Laura's part – somehow in itself - explains the overlap between the child and the adult. Laura's mobilisation of her inner self thus sets a contrast between accountable actions and rationality (*denying*), and unaccountable inner feelings. This rhetorical opposition (cf. Edwards 1997, 1999) between agentive and active control and actions by the speaker on the one hand, and involuntary and independent inner forces, on the other, again insulates Laura's claims from moral reproach.

A second noteworthy feature in extract five is the distinct persuasive work done by appeals to feeling and inner reality (cf. Edwards 1999: 273-278). The inner, true self is depicted as somewhat mystical, as something that the speaker herself has some difficulty describing (lines 62-63). At the same time, however, the inner reality: having '*on the other hand...this little girl inside you as well*' (lines 50-51) leaves

latitude for the existence of other potential enduring dispositions or characters such as possibly 'the wise old woman' or 'the mature and adult Laura' (lines 54-60) enacted in the self-initiated qualification move analysed earlier.

Reference to inner reality, in other words, *provides an enduring and personal basis for partial overlap in between stage of life categories while, at the same time, preserving the 'mature adulthood' of the speaker.* The rhetorical currency, resulting from the fact that we understand feelings as private experience, which belongs to individuals, also works to insulate such claims from moral outside reproach. This means that Laura is able to construct two separate 'ages' for herself: her chronological age, visible as the ageing body (*the fr(h)ame here around*, line 68) and her inner 'true' age. Note that the real and authentic nature of the inner self is underlined by the contrast to 'frame', which invokes notions of shallow shell-likeness.⁸

Finally, the argumentative currency inherent to references to one's inner reality also builds on a distinction invoked between 'doing' and 'being'. Evocation of this discursive opposition has been identified as a 'general and generic distinction in our culture' and as a rhetorical device employed by lay society members to ward off inferences of deviance (e.g. Watson and Weinberg 1982, see also Garfinkel 1956 on motivational and behavioural types). What I wish to claim then, is that the evocation of such oppositions in talk also functions as *moral* insulation and as a means of warding off inferences of moral deviance.

In the example above, for instance, Laura works to carefully separate her inner reality and the 'little girl' ('being') from her actual everyday behaviour and actions ('doing'). The move towards self-correction (lines 54-60), analysed earlier in this chapter, indicates, that her behaviour is something quite separate from her inner

⁸ These observations may also explain the popularity of mottos like 'You're only as old as you feel' or the recurrent use of sayings like 'young at heart.' The interactional currency of such 'age mantras' may result from 'inner ownership', that is, from the fact that such sayings reserve the final definition of one's age, and interpretation thereof for the individual

reality, and as such, under mature and adult control. Note, that no reference is made to actions or 'doings' by 'the little girl.' The mobilisation and naming of such behaviour would in fact afford – more so than mere reference to feelings – interpretations in terms of deviance and social moral judgement.

The analytic observation based on the doing-being distinction is also in line with, and echos the observations about, the rhetorical opposition between *natural versus moral* made by Edwards (1997: 194; 1999: 283). Edwards points out, that emotions, as an explanatory category, gain their argumentative currency from the fact they are 'inside' and as such unconscious, automatic, and beyond deliberation. Internal states may be expressed or displayed in external behaviour, which, in turn, can then be used to refute the honesty of this display. Displays of, or reference to, actual behaviour may thus more easily be used as evidence in social moral judgement. Therefore it is interesting to note that in Laura's case, the existence and relevance of the child is firmly and deftly restricted to the inner *being*, and no reference is made to any public displays or *actions* which, we now see, could in turn open her account to moral judgement.

Let us have a look at a final example on the evocation of feelings. The account in the extract below, also builds on the 'doing versus being' distinction. Especially towards the end of the extract, the speaker uses this particular discursive distinction as a means of insulating herself from deviant and moral category incumbency. We join the extract at a point where the interviewee has been describing her relationship to her much younger work colleagues. This account is then followed by a question by the interviewer. The longer extract is set out below in two parts.

Extract 6.

PN:W4:2: Liisa, Cas 2 side A, (3.2-5.4)

1.	PN:	So you haven't had si-situations	Eiks sulla oo ollu semmosia tilan-tilanterta
2.		where like in a way () or (.) what do	nunku sillä tavalla (.) tai (.) miten sä naat
3.		you think that how do people like	sen että mitenkä nunku ympäristö
4.		more <u>generally</u> how do people	noin laajemmin, mitenkä nunku
5.		view a middle-aged woman	keski-ikäiseen naiseen suhtaudutaan
6.	L:	Ye s (0 2) I have thought about it	↑Joo o (0.2) oon ma sitä miettiny
7.		and I've sometimes (1.0) imagined	ja mä oon joskus (1.0) kuvitellu
8.		(0 6) or imagine (0 2) that (.)	(0 6) tai kuvittelen (0.2) että tota (.)
→ 9.		some may ↑ <u>well</u> disapprove	jotkut voivat katsoo ↑hyvinkin paheksuvasti
10		if that one there doesn't know how to	jos toi ei osaa käyttäytyä
11		behave like () a middle-aged woman	nun kuin (.) joku keski-ikäinen nainen

12.	() mature-like and all	(.) kypsästi ja näin
13.	And like (1 0) I've <u>sometimes</u> like	Ja tota (1 0) oon mä <u>joskus</u> sillai
14.	felt it (0.2) felt it on me	tuntuu sen (0.2) tuntuu sillai nahassa
15.	but then I've thought that	mut sit mä oon aatellu että ei se ei oo
16.	it isn't it still isn't my problem	edelleenkaan mun ongelma
→ 17.	Like I ↑ <u>am</u> what I ↑ <u>am</u>	että mä ↑ <u>oon</u> mikä mä ↑ <u>oon</u>
18.	like (.) no matter	että () ei sitä väliä
19.	it doesn't matter one bit like	mitään välii oo et ehän se ikä
20.	it has nothing to do [with age]	ninku sitä [kato ja]
21.	PN: [mm]	[mm]
→ 22.	L: >And besides I don't ↑ <u>want</u> to be<	>Ja sitä paitsi mä en ↑ <u>halua</u> olla<
23.	(.) I don't ↑ <u>want</u> to be a boring,	(.) mä en ↑ <u>halua</u> olla sellanen (.) tylsä,
24.	stiff mi(h)ddle-a(h)ged	jäykkä ke(h)ski-ikä(h)nen
25.	who doesn't dare to do anything	joka ei uskalla tehdä mitään
26.	and doesn't dare to like (.)break out of	eikä uskalla ninku () vähän repästä tai
27.	the ordinary or you know	jotakin tammöstä ninku
28.	like can't be like (0 6) hhh	et ei voi olla ninku (0 6) hhh
29.	>how should I put it what do I imagine	>mites ma sanosin mitä kuvittelisin et ne
30.	them (.) others to be<	on ne (.) toiset on<
→ 31.	well (2.0) like being on their best	no (2.0) käyttäytyään kaunisti ja
32.	behaviour (0 4) and mature and (1.2)	siivosti ja (0.4) kypsästi ja (1 2)
→ 33.	we had these (.) types in the office	meillä virastossa oli justin tallasii () tyyppjejä
34.	I've often thought that they are like	Ma mont kertaa miettiny et ne on
35.	a couple of years older than me	pari vuotta mua vanhempia
36.	and I'm like (0 6) oh	ja mä et (0 6) oh
37.	((nonverbal sign of disgust))	((nonverbaali ele = vastenmielisyyys))
38.	PN. heh heh	heh heh
39.	(0.8)	(0.8)

The extract starts with strong elicitation by the interviewer that works to make the interviewee accountable for some lack in her prior talk. The interviewer is trying to elicit some specific personal views or stories but then, midway to her question, moves from the personal mode to a more general formulation to do with 'people's ways of viewing middle-aged women' (lines 3-5) Liisa picks up and echos the presupposed personal mode and produces an account which is rich in discursive detail. Following the analytic angle adopted in the analysis so far, I will focus on the ways in which her argumentation evokes notions of feelings ('being'), on the one hand, and notions of active choice and actions ('doing') on the other. Special attention is paid on how private access knowledge based on inner feelings is evoked.

Liisa's argumentation builds very strongly on her own active choice: on her wishes, choices and wants (e.g. line 17: *I am what I am*). The extract is thus in sharp contrast to Laura's account analysed above, where notions of active personal choice and wants were actively removed from the description early on. This points, in interesting ways, to the fact that the rhetorical contrast of inner *being* (or emotions) and agentive *doing*, can be used and drawn upon by speakers in flexible and multiple

ways when explaining human conduct or when attributing dispositions, actions, and motives (cf. Jayyusi 1993).

The extract above includes several instances of explicitly moral talk. Liisa, first of all, draws a contrast between herself and a particular type of middle-aged she refers to as "*them others*" (line 30) and "*these types in the office*" (line 33). Negative attributes like boring, stiff, as well as category bound activities of 'not daring to do anything out of the ordinary' (line 25), and 'being on their best behaviour' (lines 31-32) are evoked, and Liisa is positioned to a category that consist of the opposite of such typical actions or attributes. Whereas others seem not to dare break rules or overstep boundaries of conventional behaviour, Liisa depicts herself as both wanting and daring, and thus as something of an exception to a more general rule.

Moral evaluation of characters and their behaviour is evoked in several ways in the account. There is anonymous 'disapproval' on Liisa's behaviour by 'some' (line 9) on the one hand, and Liisa's both verbal (line 33) and nonverbal (line 37) ascriptive evaluation of 'these types in the office', on the other. She imputes pejorative predicates on others ('*a boring stiff mi(h)ddle-a(h)ged who doesn't dare to do anything,*' lines 23-25) and depicts on-the-average stereotypical images of middle-age as laughable. Her talk has explicit condemnatory features often mentioned as typical to moral discourse (e.g. Drew 1998; Drew and Holt 1988). In addition to laughter, a non-verbal (cf. Bergmann 1998) is used to underline the strength of Liisa's condemnatory opinion on the types described and the interviewer also collaborates in, and enforces the moral evaluation and the depicting of "*these types in the office*" in a humorous light.⁹ The 'moral spectre', in extract 6, is thus considerably more complex than in the extracts seen so far.

One interesting detail in Liisa's rather extreme depiction of her unconventionality is, however, that, once again, the specifics of the 'doings', or the detail of what

⁹ According to Jayyusi type-categorisations are always ascriptive in nature, in that they encapsulate particular sets of predicates and particular sets of expectable activities into the type, after which 'the names, skills, activities or interests of people falling into this type are not brought in as relevant, they are not consulted, but rather left out of the picture' (1984: 24-5, see also Hester 1992 and chapter 5).

'breaking out of the ordinary' means in practice, never gets mentioned. Mobilising such detailed descriptions of *actions* would again be marked by strong accountability and might open Liisa's account to explicit interpretations in terms of deviance and thereby morality.

Another feature that makes Liisa's account fruitful for an analysis of discursive morality is the fact that maturity (defined by Liisa as being on their best behaviour, lines 31-32)¹⁰ is depicted as an undesirable attribute. What I want to claim, is, that as Liisa's descriptions and claims become more extreme, problems of moral accountability and other interactional trouble arise. In the extract below, Liisa herself marks her mobilisation of the category 'total kid' as problematic. She ends up solving the 'troubledness' of her account by setting certain limits to the kinds of immature behaviour she might engage in. This setting of limits is again done via reference to one's inner, 'true' reality and inner self.

Extract 7. PN:W4:2: Liisa, Cas 2 side A, (4.5-5.4)
(cont. from Extract 6)

→	40.	L.	I feel like a tota(h)l ki(h)d compared to the(h)m	Mä tunnen itteni iha(h)n kaka(h)raks nu(h)tten rinnalla
	41.		But I don't <u>want</u> to be like them	Mut mä en <u>halua</u> olla sellanen
	42.		I simply don't want to be someone	Mä en <u>kertakaikkiaan</u> ma en halua olla
	43.		(0 8) someone who thinks that	sellanen (0 8) semmonen joka aattelee
	44.		I <u>can't</u> do that because of this age	et <u>ei voi</u> tehdä kun on tän ikänen
	45.	PN:	mm	mm
→	46.	L:	Fiddlestics I'm as old as	Katinkontit mä oon niin vanha kun mä
	47.		I want to be	haluan olla
	48.	PN:	yeah	joo
→	49.	L:	And however of course there are	Ja kuitenkin tietenkin on tietty (.)
	50.		certain () up to a certain point and	tiettyyn pisteeseen ja
	51.		limit you of course behave I mean	rajaan saakka sä tietysti käyttädyt ethan sä
	52.		you can't do just anything	voi olla ihan miten vaan
	53.		Like your own () inner self tells	Et senhän sanoo jo niinku se oma (.)
	54.		you as much like (0 8) that () one is	niinku se sisin siellä et tota (0 8) et (.) onhan
	55.		in <u>that</u> sense like a (0 6) mature adult	sita <u>sillä</u> lailla niinku (0 6) kypsä aikuinen
	56.		that that () >certain limits are set<	etta et (.) >tiettyt rajat tulee<
→	57.		But <u>anyway</u> I mean (0 4) bu (2 0)	Mut <u>kuitenkin</u> ni ni (0 4) mut (2 0)
	58.		hhh but <u>who</u> tells you how you	hhh mutta <u>kuka</u> sitä maarittelee et miten
	59.		should behave what	pitää käyttäytyä minkä
	60.		what age to be	minka ikänen pitää olla
	61.	PN:	yeah	joo
	62.			

¹⁰ Although here the translation again causes some problems. The Finnish "käyttäytyään kaunisti ja siivosti" (lines 31-32) now translated into "being in their best behaviour" would, word-for-word, translate into "behaving nicely and neatly". This is one of the occasions where a more fluent formulation in English is chosen over a direct translation.

63.		2.0	2 0
64	L.	°like how you should behave°	°et millä tavalla pitää olla°

What I want to indicate in this analysis is, that the ways in which Liisa downplays the personal importance of maturity becomes gradually marked as a morally accountable issue for the interaction. The moral nature of Liisa's discursive positioning vis-à-vis the contrast category 'them' becomes more pronounced as she first claims to "*feel like a tota(h)l ki(h)d compared to the(h)m*" (lines 40-41). Claiming the extreme category 'total kid' is immediately open to negative moral judgements and it is therefore interesting to see that instead of claiming to *be* a total kid Liisa, like Laura before, bases her category entitlement on her privileged access knowledge via evocation of *feeling*. This, in addition to the laughter tokens in her delivery, works to make the claim less easily contested.

Line 47 marks a shift in Liisa's accounting. After claiming "*Fiddlestics I'm as old as I want to be*" (lines 47-48) she qualifies this account in the manner analysed in detail earlier in this chapter. The defiance and revolt, as well as the claim to more or less choose one's age, and (thereby) actions, in Liisa's comment, is something not generally linked to adult, rational, or mature behaviour. It can more readily be linked with categories like 'adolescent' and with notions of immaturity, unpredictability or irresponsibility. It is these moral implications of overlap – the potential moral disapproval her descriptions might give cause for – that Liisa treats as accountable as she moves on to correct and counter her prior account.

Note that the extremity of her claims and 'doings' is mitigated by providing the hearer with reservations and with an alternative formulation of 'inner' maturity and inner control (lines 54-56). I suggest then, that the potential moral implication of refusing the category "mature" is solved by introducing two different types of "maturity": 1) *maturity as an 'outside code'* for behaviour, and 2) *maturity 'from within'*. The notion of an outside code for age-appropriate behaviour was invoked in the beginning of the extract as Liisa referred to the vague category of "some" (line 9, extract 6) passing disapproving judgement on her as well as via repeated reference to "daring".

From line 50 onwards Liisa establishes a second type of maturity that has its source within the person *“like your own inner self tells you as much like (0.8) that (.) one is in that sense like a (0.6) mature adult”* (lines 54-57). Liisa, in other words, modifies the notion of maturity (line 51) to do the kind of moral work for her that she wants. Her formulation “in that sense” works to establish the idea of different types of maturity and places her into the ‘from within’ –type. Insulating herself from moral reproach, she simultaneously constructs herself as a genuine person, untouched by pressure from the outside: as someone who follows a more sincere and authentic code for maturity based on her ‘inner feeling’. In summary then, distinguishing two separate types of maturity allows Liisa to depict herself as a mature adult while simultaneously remaining outside the contrastive category of stiff, boring, middle-aged maturity.

To reiterate briefly, the discursive distinctions based on the notions ‘being’ (passive, unaccountable, inner) and ‘doing’ (agentive, accountable) function in interesting and contrastive ways in the two extracts analysed. In Laura’s case (extracts 3, 4, and 5), the inner self is evoked as a means of claiming the incumbency in the category ‘little girl,’ which is then juxtaposed with, and kept separate from, outside mature behaviour. In Liisa’s case (extracts 6 and 7), the evocation of ‘being’ and ‘doing’ functions somewhat differently, in that her behaviour is described as unconventional, spontaneous and even immature to begin with. As her descriptions gradually move towards the more extreme, the inner self is then evoked as a means of setting her behaviour within acceptable limits. Despite such differences, both speakers make use of and evoke the distinction between inner ‘being’ and outside ‘doing’ in ways that work to secure the moral acceptability of the descriptions put forward.

Producing morally insulated accounts 3: Monitoring the ‘scenic features’ of actions

As the final analytic angle into the data, I wish to discuss the discursive practices by which speakers’ monitor the scenic features of their descriptions to insulate them from moral evaluation. I introduce one further conversational extract where the

interviewer and the interviewee jointly, and somewhat exceptionally, depict immature or child-like behaviour as acceptable and even admirable. In the data examples seen so far, inferences to immaturity were routinely avoided or, when mobilised, carefully marked as transient, under guard, and under speaker's agentic control. Reference to immaturity was also repeatedly accompanied by the speakers enacting moral knowledge of expected proper behaviour tied to the category 'adult,' or by providing correctives whereby the incongruence of references to immaturity and to partial overlap in between stage of life categories was rendered acceptable. The ways in which immature behaviour is brought in, in the short extract analysed in this section, is thus somewhat exceptional.

The term 'scenic features' and their discursive monitoring is a loan from Watson and Weinberg (1982). In their study on the interactional construction of accounts of homosexual identity, they discuss more general notions of discursive descriptive activity and the reflexive monitoring of accounts (see also Watson 1997). By 'scenic features' they refer to the *identities, motives, spatio-temporal locations etc. that compose the background for the interaction being described* (Watson and Weinberg 1982: 59). Building on this broader analytic theme discussed in detail in other work on identities in interaction (e.g. Antaki and Widdicombe 1998), as well as in many of my own analyses so far, I wish to look very briefly at one short extract and to describe how the mobilisation of child-like action and behaviour is rendered morally acceptable by the active monitoring and selection of background scenic features. My wish is to revive the notion of scenic monitoring by using it to underline the interactive construction of morally insulated accounts.

In the analysis of the brief extract below, I focus on how a delicate personal performance description, when 'scenically' embedded in appropriate temporal and categorical context, gains a morally insulated nature. In addition to providing an exception to how sometimes delicate and morally loaded notions of immaturity were more commonly treated in the data corpus as a whole, the extract also provides an example of joint evaluative work between the participants.

Extract 8. PN:W4:1: Liisa, Cas 1 side A, (11.6-12.2)

1.	L:	Terribly often	Hirveen usein
2.		I do forget how old I am	ma kyl unohtan minka ikänen ma oon
3.		at times when I'm fooling around	Mä välillä kun mä lasten kans pelleilen
→ 4.		with the kids doing all sorts of	nun kaikkee teen nun sit
5.		things and when I'm on all fours	mä konttailen pitkän
6.		on the floor and things	lattiaita kaikkii
7.		And I'm like <u>te rrible</u> if	mä ka uheeta
8.		someone saw me ((laughs))	joku näkis mut ((nauraa))
9.	PN.	Not dignified at all ((laughs))	Ei ollenkaan arvokasta ((nauraa))
10.	L:	No no not at all	Niin niin ei ollenkaan

This short passage includes descriptions of types of activities such as 'forgetting how old one is,' 'fooling around' and 'being on all fours on the floor' as well as explicit evaluation of such activities by both participants. Despite some positive commonsense notions and the variety of narrative trajectories made possible by 'forgetting one's age', all of the activities described also afford interpretations in terms of immaturity and the possibility for negative outside evaluation. Grantedly, 'forgetting one's age' (as in sayings like: 'act your shoe size, not your age!') and 'fooling around' carry some commonsense admirable and desirable connotations. The actual and situational meaning and interpretation: e.g. negative moral judgement or admiration and acceptance, of such notions or actions depend, however, on the interactional context in which they are evoked.

In the extract in focus here, explicit evaluation of such actions is enacted, first by the interviewee (like te:rrible if someone saw me, lines 7-8) and subsequently by the interviewer (line 9). We get the sense, however, that the evaluations that follow the depiction on the interviewee's behaviour are delivered and offered as non-serious and as playful. Why is this the case?

First of all, the particular features of 'the scene' for, and thereby also the sense of 'forgetting one's age' and of 'being on all fours' is constituted by the context which includes the simultaneous presence of 'the children.' This specific affiliation contributes to the intelligibility of the context, and moves it towards the acceptable, even admirable. The co-selection of some other discursive elements, for example the category 'bartender' with the activity 'being on all fours on the floor' would have afforded completely different narrative trajectories and possible interpretations for

this passage. In other words, although there are several culturally available senses for the phrase 'being on all fours' and 'forgetting your age', the co-selection of the category 'the children' immediately denotes that the speaker is, in fact, the mother of the children in question. It is in this context, set by the co-selection of 'mother' with 'the children', that the description gains its morally insulating nature. The co-selection of categories renders the account and the description of 'being on all fours on the floor' both understandable and acceptable. Liisa is not someone who simply fools around or starts to play with *any* children she might happen to meet. Instead, 'being on all fours' is offered as a recognizable category predicate of 'the mother' of 'the children' mentioned.

The scenic features built into Liisa's description of actions - the co-selection of certain categories and activities - work to give the account *an occasioned and settinged 'rightness'*. Activating the standard relational pair mother-child simultaneously removes the interpretation of 'being on all fours' from the realm of reproach and, instead, places Liisa into the highly moral category 'good mother'¹¹. She is depicted as capable of 'forgetting her age' and of temporarily engaging in a variety of spontaneous activities with her children. Note however, that despite such emphasis on the admirable nature of her actions, child-like and spontaneous behaviour is still carefully marked as transient and fleeting (implied by 'forgetting', line 2, and by 'at times', line 3).

Due to the features of settinged rightness established by the careful co-selection of categories and activities, the joint evaluation that follows the description of the scene, can be heard as non-serious, or as playful. Liisa's self-evaluation 'it's like te:rrible if someone saw me' is followed by laughter, which in itself marks it as non-serious in nature. The interviewer then joins in with an evaluation '*not dignified at all*' (line 9), which is also delivered with laughter. The sharing of laughter marks that both interactants have interpreted the situation in similar ways, and placed it in a non-serious and playful frame.

¹¹ On the usage of standard relational pairs (of institutional categories) as a means of removing descriptions from the realm of moral consequences, see Sacks' analysis on military man - military man (Sacks 1992, Vol 1. 205-222). For a discussion see Edwards 1995 and Silverman 1988).

Some further analytic observation can be made on the structure of the interviewer's evaluation. First, it is delivered in the rhetorical form of *litotes* (Bergmann 1992: 150; see also Maynard 1998). Instead of offering a direct evaluation, the interviewer, in other words, offers her commentary as a negation of the positive (*not dignified at all* instead of *that's totally undignified*, for instance). In Bergmann's work on psychiatric intake interviews, the rhetorical form of *litotes* was used as a device for hinting or alluding to "delicate, touchy, or embarrassing matters".¹² What I wish to claim is that the rhetorical form of *litotes* in extract eight, is interactionally marked as a playful way of indicating that the interviewer 'buys into' the display of self-reproach in the interviewee's prior turn. At the same time, however, both interactants recognise that the description in question does not require, or call for, reproach.

The interviewer's 'not dignified at all', aided by its rhetorical structure, joins in the collaborate and jocular production of reproach in a non-seriousness way. The prior discursive scene setting has already establishes the topic as being about 'fooling around with the kinds'. Any description in terms of 'dignified behaviour' would, in fact, be incongruent and undesirable within a scene that consists of activities such as 'fooling around' and of categories such as 'the mother' and 'the children'. The evaluative statement, in the form of *litotes*, by the interviewer is deftly removed from the potential interpretational sphere of 'serious evaluation or moral reproach' and placed instead within the jocular. Her turn on line 9, especially when delivered with laughter, can thus be heard as 'mock moral evaluation' that in fact functions to deliver playful or 'veiled praise'.

In this section, I have been concerned with the subtle discursive means by which speakers monitor and mould the scenic features of performance and action description in interaction. Scenic monitoring was established as an additional and flexible means by which descriptions are insulated from moral reproach. In the case

¹² One of the examples Bergmann (1992: 148-9) provides on his analysis on veiled morality is that of a psychiatrist's information-eliciting telling '*you were running across the street not so completely dressed*'. 'Not so completely dressed' is here chosen over the more direct and literal description 'naked'.

above, scenic monitoring was also used to signal that the particular action descriptions were beyond moral reproach, and subsequently, and in collaboration, removed from the literal to the jocular. Extract 9, with its jocular and non-literal playfulness thus works, I find, to elucidate how moral concerns and shared moral knowledge function as an inseparable part of the commonsense interactive and descriptive apparatus by which members make sense in, and of, interaction. In extract 9, it was precisely this moral knowledge, shared by both interactants, which afforded joint playfulness and the joint evocation of the jocular and the non-serious.

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I have been concerned with discussing further empirical examples on the ways in which morality comes to life in my interview data. Whereas chapter six focussed more on the implicit nature of moral accountability, the examples here showed instances of speakers' more explicit, and sometimes condemnatory moral talk. Throughout the extracts, we have seen a variety of discursive practices by which speakers fashioned the morality of their accounts and how a combination of self-reflexive monitoring and defensive design was used to construct morally insulated accounts.

The chapter was structured around the analysis of empirical examples from three analytic angles:

- 1) Self-initiated qualification of prior accounts.
- 2) Appeals to feelings and the inner reality of the speaker.
- 3) Monitoring the scenic features of accounts.

All three analytic themes aimed at showing the variety of practices, whereby speakers attend to the moral implications of their descriptions. The key analytic task was to elucidate the discursive detail, by which accounts are arranged, corrected and managed in ways that insulate them from moral evaluation.

The analysis in this chapter is not meant as an all-inclusive account on the practices of discursive moral monitoring. Nor do I wish to claim that the three analytic angles or communicative practices discussed here could, for any other reason than technical ones, be strictly separated from each other. In fact, we saw that, as parts of ongoing interaction, the practices by which speakers qualified their prior accounts and appealed to feelings and inner reality, for instance, overlapped, and were thus often inseparable parts of the same account. Finally, the reader should perhaps again be reminded that the analyses in the current, and the previous, chapter are not meant as evidence for some inevitable or inherent moral nature of 'age talk'. Instead, the analysis was geared towards delineating and empirically grounding the interactional production of moral concerns within the interview setting, and towards explicating the moral judgement grounded in membership talk and discursive categorisation more generally.

The specific ways in which orientations to the morality of descriptions operate as analysable parts of the ongoing interaction in this study, partly reiterate aspects of morality and of emotion talk suggested in previous work. The current data, for instance, offer support to the more general idea put forward by studies on emotion talk that reference to inner reality and feelings works as a rhetoric device that allows certain category entitlements and insulates them from challenge. Similarly, the analyses on the co-selection of categories (extract 8), on the monitoring of the deliberate or intentional nature of actions and the potential personal motivations 'behind' them ('doing' vs. 'being' in extracts 3-7), corroborate observations made in the literature on categorisation and social/moral entitlements (e.g. Sacks 1992; Hester and Eglin 1997b; Watson 1978).

In addition to aspects raised in previous analytic work, the analysis presented here also outlined some relatively untouched aspects of discursive morality. One of the potential contributions of the discussion presented here is the analysis of the relationship between emotion talk and moral accountability. The central importance of emotions as a cultural resource for doing social accountability is already well established (e.g. Buttny 1993: chapter 6). The analytic emphasis in this chapter,

however, has been more decidedly on *moral* accountability: on the discursive production of morally insulated accounts.

Listing sets of rhetorical contrasts to explicate the range of things that emotion discourse can do, Edwards (1997, 1999) raises the dichotomy in between the natural (the unconscious, automatic, inner) and the moral. Building on the discursive psychological take on the distinct uses of 'folk' psychological concepts, my analysis, has provided several further examples of the complexity, and of the contrastive and flexible deployment of emotions, as a participants' discursive moral recourse. My wish is that the analysis presented here may contribute to the research on emotion talk by pointing out the dynamic relationship between morality and the discursive evocation of the inner psychology of participants. More specifically, my analysis shows how such reference functions and serves discursive moral insulation.

The analysis also points to some distinct interactive and moral work that emotion discourse achieves. Reference to the inner self, or inner feelings were, first of all, shown to afford simultaneous description in terms of an outer force, or a must, and as something that was under the speaker's strict adult control. This kind of two-foldedness was visible in the use of self-initiated qualification whereby speakers established a dichotomy in between what they felt like, and what they did or how actually acted. The evocation of feelings or emotion verbs was thus combined with the basic distinction made in between doing and being. This dichotomy in between how you 'accountably feel' and what you 'accountably do' – the mature and agentive control that speakers emphatically displayed to be in possession of – was repeatedly established as the basis for moral interactive work done in the extracts (c.f. Edwards 1999. 282).

In the past two analytic chapters on the morality of age descriptions and categorisations, and on moral work more generally, I have tried to sketch some features of the work of description, and the active monitoring integral to the moral order achieved in situated talk. My wish is that the analyses provided here contribute to the study of participants' situated and interactional sense-making processes and

add to our understanding on the intricate dynamics in between cultural and moral logics that both inform and are an integral part of those processes.

The analysis in this chapter hopefully also helps to elucidate the extraordinary flexibility and variety of local moral accounting and shows the benefits of close discursive investigation and delineations of discursive morality. It is this practical moral logic of age description and age categorisation that I have attempted to begin exploring here. The more general relevance and importance of the analyses in this, and the other chapters of this work, are to be assessed in more detail in the concluding chapter that we now move onto.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Contributions

My primary aims in this thesis were twofold. First, the main objective was to produce empirically grounded and well-substantiated observations on the communicative practices whereby members make sense of, accomplish and manage their membership and non-membership in stage of life categories. The focus throughout the analyses has been on the action orientation of participants' language use: on the tacit ways in which descriptions and categorisations are constructed and mobilised to accomplish specific interactional work.

A second, but equally important aim in this work was to make theoretical and analytic contributions to ethnomethodologically oriented discursive work on categorisation, on the one hand, and to qualitative life course and ageing research, on the other. This project of cross-fertilisation and dialogue in between the two fields aimed at extending the methodological and thematic scope of ageing research by following through a detailed discursive analysis of age categorisation in action. I do not see the relationship between life course and discursive research in terms of a one-way street, however. Rather, I feel that the current work contributes to, and genuinely brings forward themes that are of immediate interest to social psychology, and to social sciences more generally. I feel, that the analysis of people's orientations to the facticity of age as well as the theoretical and analytic discussions on discursive morality in this work are examples of such contributions.

The task in this chapter then is to revisit the analytic threads and promises outlined in the beginning chapters and to evaluate the degree to which promises of analytic and theoretical contributions were fulfilled. The chapter falls into three parts.

I begin by briefly outlining the argumentative terrain that this work builds upon and by summarising the main analytic conclusions. After this, I situate the key arguments and findings in the broader discussions and interests in both of the fields that this work intersects with. Third, I will briefly discuss the wider relevance and the directions for further analysis that this work as a whole offers and points to. In this context I bring fore the postmodern thesis, according to which, age as a means of

self-description is losing its relevance, and, instead, a multiplicity of narratives and fluid practices of a 'uni-age society' increasingly mark people's identities. The aim here is that of dialogue in between the largely theoretical claims put forward in postmodern conceptualisations of age, and the detailed view on age in action provided by the empirical analysis in this work. In all, I aim to offer a conclusion and an assessment that also provides possible starting points for future research.

The argumentative terrain re-visited

The scope of this thesis clearly intersects with and combines two areas of research: discursively oriented research on categorisation, and qualitative life course research. Drawing upon, and criticising the research traditions and evolving interests in both these fields, I proceeded to try out an analysis of 'age in action': an analysis that starts with participants' situated communicative action and from there moves towards a more dynamic image of the practical ways in which people make sense of, mobilise and use stage of life categories in talk.

Rather than recapping the range of arguments and perspectives already outlined in detail in earlier chapters, I wish to summarise the argumentative terrain of this work with a simple set of oppositions. The following is meant as a at-a-glance, birds-eye-view on some of the arguments and analytic starting points in this thesis.

A sketch of the argumentative terrain

'Traditional' ageing research	Perspective in this work
<i>Age as a background variable</i>	<i>Age in Action</i>
<i>Analytic à priorism</i>	<i>Analysis of interaction 'in situ'</i>
<i>Analyst's categories</i>	<i>Members' orientations and active use of categories</i>
<i>Measurement of age identity</i>	<i>Analysis of participants' situated and dynamic categorisation work</i>

The list of oppositions above is inescapably crude, as it does not do justice to the detail and nuances in the discussion throughout the chapters. To an extent, the dichotomies also override the wealth and variety of ageing research and replace complexity with a simplified before – after image and rhetoric. Despite the thumbnail nature of the oppositional representation, it nonetheless helps to elucidate the theoretical and analytic stance pursued, and the basic starting points adopted when looking at people's stage of life categories from a discursive perspective. As such it not only sketches the current work, but also captures the wider emerging research tradition in qualitative and language centred ageing research that I see my own work contributing to.

Facticity, resistance and moral orientations

The empirical analysis in this work sought to investigate the practices whereby people 'do age' in concrete interactional situations. The tacit communicative practices charted – although originating from an analysis of exchanges in between interviewer and interviewee – may also be of relevance to and resonate with people's discursive practices in other settings. In fact, in the analysis, I repeatedly pointed to similarities in between the devices discovered here and those in earlier studies on interactional categorisation (e.g. Antaki and Widdicombe 1998a; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995).

In the first analytic chapter, I addressed participants' accounts that clearly brought forward their orientations to the facticity of stage of life descriptions and categorisation. I discussed the Sacksian notion of positioned categories and the stage of life device as an example of this. Moreover, I showed how both parties in the interview situation oriented to, mobilised and re-enforced factual or 'natural' notions of the human lifespan and how speakers referred to lifetime change as self-evident and inevitable.

The analyses established, however, that the natural facticity (cf. Atkinson 1980) of age did not exert an all-encompassing power over the individuals, but rather, that

participants employed a range of devices and practices that enabled them to simultaneously both acknowledge and by-pass factual notions of change. As a consequence, change with age can, for instance, be described as impending, i.e. as inevitable in the long run, while the speaker skilfully removes him or herself outside its immediate scope in the here-and-now. In other words, speakers were shown to orient to the culturally available inferential resources that people might draw upon, while discursively bypassing their personal relevance and applicability. I also showed how a distinctive '*provisional continuity device*' was used, not only as a practical means of managing the facticity of age, but as a more generic feature of talk, potentially not restricted to talk about age and ageing. The wider applicability of the A – B – but A device identified in the chapter, is, of course, in need of some further elaboration and research operating on data from other interactional settings.

In chapters four and five, I identified a range of descriptive practices that underlined the flexible usage of age labels as a means of warranting, resisting, generalising and sometimes ironising the personal grounds for membership in a specific age category. The analysis in chapter four made extensive use of the notion contrast structures, whereas in chapter five, the concepts of extreme case formulation, type categorisation and concession and evaluative elaboration structures were in focus. I observed, for example, how the combined mobilisation of extreme personal continuity and self-description in terms of *type categorisations* (Jayyusi 1984) worked as an upgrade rejection against potential accusations of descriptions being produced simply for the interactional here-and-now. I also argued that type categorisations were produced as practical constructions to underline the credibility and authenticity of the speaker and how they, via contrast to others, thus also worked to highlight the speaker's personal exceptionality and authenticity.

In the chapters in part three, I focussed more sharply on speakers' orientations to the potential morality of their age categorisation and description. Chapter six worked on two levels. It included both a conceptual, theoretical and critical re-assessment of discursive work on morality and some tentative analysis on 'moral accounting'. I discussed several problems with the notion of morality itself as well as the difficulties of producing firmly grounded and empirically substantiated findings of

'morality' in interaction. In addition to reviewing, assessing and comparing the writings of Lena Jayyusi and Jörg Bergmann, the chapter thus also addressed the key problem areas in the conceptualisation and analysis of discursive morality.

The analysis in chapter seven worked to further establish age description and age categorisation as an interesting case for the analysis of morality in discourse. Here, centre stage was given to some explicit practices employed by speakers in the production of morally insulated accounts. Several practical means were identified, whereby morality surfaced and came to life in the interactions. I showed how speakers sought to qualify their prior accounts, how appeals to feelings and the inner reality of the speaker were used, and finally, how speakers monitored the scenic features of their accounts as a means of insulating them from moral reproach.

In all then, the scope of analytic themes covered in this work is considerable. I do not claim, however, that my analysis conveys a crystallised image or a generalised account of age categorisation or even of 'turning fifty'. Rather, what I have been concerned with here is to explicate some communicative practices and tacit discursive devices employed by participants when discussing their age, and describing themselves in age terms.

I also acknowledge the limitations of the conversational materials used in this work. In the analysis, repeated attention was given to instances where the interview nature of the interaction made itself visible in the orientations and actions of the participants. I have also been careful not to self-evidently extrapolate the relevance of the discursive practices identified in the talk under focus here, to discursive activities in other settings. Instead, I see that such considerations need to be taken up by future research.

The interviewness of the material used, in other words, clearly sets certain limitations to what can be claimed now that the task of analysis comes to a halt. At the same time, however, I feel that the analyses of age categorisation in this work tease out some interactional and discursive practices through which categorisation *per se* is done in talk. After all, our daily practices in a multitude of interactional

sites: in school and in the office, on the street and around the dinner table, when writing books or shopping lists, when chatting to a friend or answering a street survey, all happen, and make use of, the same language competence. Therefore I trust that, despite the obvious confines and limitations of the data, the variety of accounting practices, discursive features and descriptive practices outlined in the analyses, are also features of everyday communication.

Contributions 1:

Discursive social psychology and the 'identities in action' tradition

As an examination of the on-the-ground, in-situ features of people's active age-categorisation, this work functions as a case in point, which has wider relevance to ethnomethodologically oriented work on interactional categorisation processes more generally. In addition to participating in the discussions on seminal areas of interest in the field of discursive social psychology, this work also contributes to studies on emotion talk in social contexts, on the use of contrast structures and on concession devices in talk. In each case, several points of resonance were established to earlier research, while discussions were also both enriched and moved forward.

In chapter one, I pointed out that discursive research focusing on the everyday use and deployment of social categories has been quick to include categories like gender (e.g. Skevington and Baker 1989; Stokoe 1998; Wetherell 1986), or race and national background (Rapley 1998; Ullah 1990; Wetherell and Potter 1992) to the research agenda. Therefore, although a growing wealth of literature into identities and categories in (inter)action exists, the area of age categorisation has remained a largely uncharted territory within discursive social psychological research.

Introducing age categorisation as an additional field for discursive social psychological research is thus a distinctive contribution in itself. By going back to the original analytic starting points; to the hierarchical nature of age categories in talk introduced by Sacks (1972b; 1974; 1992), and to the relatively few extensions and re-workings on his seminal work (Atkinson 1980; Baker 1981, 1984, 1997a,

1997b; Hester 1998; Paoletti 1998a) this thesis hopefully works to re-establish and revitalise age categorisation as a seminal area of study.

While adding to the agenda of discursive social psychological studies, the current work also draws upon and contributes to several of the key areas and analytic topics examined in detail in its literature. The analyses, for instance, combined the detailed examination of participants' tacit categorisation practices with the analysis of factualisation and quantification. Moreover, these considerations were then combined with a thorough analysis of the speakers' orientations to the morality of their descriptions. The investigation of membership work and age categorisation in this work functioned then, as a crossroads, as a site where several phenomena central to discursive social psychology: the construction of factual descriptions, quantification, and the moral nature of descriptions, met to form an analytic whole.

Another central observation we can make, is that the analysis on moral accounting was carried out here without imputing and ascribing interpretations of 'morality' on participants' talk. In chapter six, I discussed several problems that the notion of morality in interaction carries for the analyst, and for the validity and rigour of analysis. The fuzziness of the term morality itself, ascription of moral interpretations and psychologization were in this context established as key concerns that also explain the reluctance of approaching and conceptualising peoples' meaning making practices in terms of 'discursive morality'.

In the analysis in this work however, I suspended any psychologized explanations and overtones, as well as any self-evident hypotheses that talk about age – the descriptive practices revolving around age-specific categories, predicates or activities – in an interview, or in any other situation, is somehow *per se* 'moral' in nature. Rather, I set out to present defensible claims based on the detail of actual occurrences of interaction and on participants' orientations.

Contributions 2: Life course research

While contributing to discursive research traditions of categorisation and descriptions in talk, this work simultaneously applied its analytic tools and starting points to the analysis of age and ageing. Doing this also meant extending the criticism and concerns typical to discursive social psychology into the field of life course research. It became apparent that, similar to some areas of social psychology, research on ageing seems, at times, to confuse the 'the descriptive with the ontological' when treating age categories as unproblematic givens (Wetherell and Potter 1992: 146). The variable-based thinking in ageing research was shown to have resulted in research that leaves the central importance of everyday situated language use in half-light.

Apart from criticism, the treatment of stage-of-life categories in this work also paid due homage to earlier research, particularly to the more recent range of studies on age and language within sociolinguistics. Continuing this line, one way of assessing the distinct and markedly social psychological contributions from my work is to look into what have been identified as key areas for future work in the field of sociolinguistics. The edited volume titled '*Discourse and Lifespan Identity*' is of help here (Coupland and Nussbaum 1993).

In the epilogue of the book, Coupland, Coupland and Nussbaum outline some future prospects in lifespan sociolinguistics (1993). Eight years later, the analysis and treatment of age in the current work, can perhaps also be placed against this measure. The writers list central future areas with a set of subheadings and keywords. The headings they produce as a characterisation of fruitful fields of future enquiry are the following:

Age categories in text and discourse

Discourse and lifespan moments and boundaries

Age-appropriate behaviour

The rhetorical functioning of time

Discourse and ageism

Many of these questions have, of course, been dealt with in some considerable detail in sociolinguistic work after their listing in 1993. Despite the differences in disciplinary background and in analytic emphasis, the themes listed also resonate with the specific concerns in this thesis.

Age categories in text and discourse

First, looking at age categories in interaction revealed the analytic force of looking at categories in context. This means that by analysing participants' situated face-to-face actions, we simultaneously tap into cultural commonsense in the making, and into and wider 'structural' phenomena as they are lived through in members' particular interactional practices (cf. Hester and Eglin 1997c; Zimmerman and Boden 1991). Following Atkinson (1980: 37), we can say that age categories – 'children', 'an adolescent', 'the middle-aged' etc. – are *cultural events* that members make happen in concrete situations via their categorisation practices.

This situated accounting and categorisation practice: the ways in which 'right' categories and descriptions are chosen amongst a range of culturally available ones, has formed the core of analysis in this thesis. To put it in other words, the task here has been to describe 'how people do the transparently obvious' (Sacks 1974). Simultaneously the analysis looked at moments where the transparently obvious is threatened by unlikely categorisations: by choices of descriptions that are hearable as not right or as inappropriate.

(Situated) Discourse and lifespan moments and boundaries

The material analysed in this thesis provided ample examples of the active language practices whereby participants made sense of and conceptualised specific milestones like turning fifty and their ageing process in general. The above-mentioned practices of quantification and factualisation of change are central in this respect. Speakers also mobilised complicated contrasts between themselves and other people or category types. Age boundaries were thus drawn both within a specific age, by

means of admitting age labels like 'fifty' or 'middle-aged, but not 'that type of fifty-year old', for instance, and in between specific stage of life categories.

Another central point about discursive boundary drawing was the general observation, that managing overlap, dealing with residue from 'earlier' stages of life, with in-between-ness, and transitionality was a substantial feature of participants' talk. Thus participants' discursive practices of coming to a decision over the criteria for what constitutes membership or non-membership in a particular age category, for where and how boundaries or age transition points should be drawn, and on what basis, was a major concern for the analysis.

Age-appropriate behaviour

Age-appropriateness surfaced on several occasions in the analysis. The analysis on participants' orientations to the morality of their self-descriptions and categorisations provided several examples of this. Speakers corrected their prior accounts, thus making moral considerations immediately relevant; some activities were described with hesitation, hedges, softeners, justifications etc.; activities were generalised to lessen the potential moral reproach and age specific inferences; and scenic features and detail, like the co-presence of children was used to morally insulate description of activities. Notions and orientations to age-appropriateness were also immediately relevant whenever notions of maturity or immaturity were mobilised in the descriptions.

The rhetorical functioning of time

The conception of a finite lifespan and particularly the factual presence of change marked most of the accounts analysed here. The results from this thesis could thus also be observed from a more distinct 'social psychology of time' perspective.

The analysis established how quantified and mathematised descriptions of time and different stages of one's personal life were used as a means of generalising the importance of age and of downplaying its personal significance. The factual

chronology of numbers: talking in terms of numbers of years in between the events for instance, worked to turn age into matter-of-fact question of quantity, of what is more and what is less, to what came first and what followed. At the same time, the finite lifespan became an ordered set of life course events in a factual and quantifiable continuum that all people travel through. Simultaneously speakers' personal investment in notions of age or time was rhetorically played down.

Discourse and ageism

This final and central point raised by Coupland, Coupland and Nussbaum (1993), is perhaps the most difficult one to combine to the analytic concerns and observations in this study. By stretching the meaning of 'ageism' (e.g. Bytheway 1995), one rather general observation can be made however. That is, looking at the data as a whole, it seems surprising that given the floor and the opportunity to describe and administer age categories in what sometimes were lengthy accounts, speakers repeatedly chose to resort to prevalent, often normative and factual descriptions in their talk. This again resonates with findings in other work that even when confronted with almost an infinite range of interpretive possibilities for constructing the meaning of age or of life change, the institutionally prevalent linear imagery is still widely reproduced. (Gubrium, Holstein & Buckholdt 1994: 203).

Without wanting to dramatise, we could perhaps toy with the notion that at times the age categorisation that repeatedly referred to the facticity and to the unavoidable nature of decrement and change with time, worked as a *situated and discursively researchable form of self-inflicted ageism* (cf. Coupland and Coupland 1999). Another potential, at least a partial explanation would be to write this tendency off as a phenomenon to do with the especially recipient designed features of interview interaction.

Towards postmodern conceptualisations of age?

The above discussion on the discursive latitude of age description and age identities, and the fluidity of category administration, takes us to the final point to be raised in this chapter: to the discussion of postmodern notions of age. In the wide-ranging social scientific discussion over postmodernity (cf. Billig 1995 for an overview), identity has been harnessed as the central concept via which the impact and processes of postmodernity make themselves visible in society.

As part of this discussion, some theorists also suggest that postmodernist trends are loosening the normative control over age boundaries and age identities (Giddens 1991; Featherstone and Hepworth 1989, see also Bauman 1996). As a consequence – so the argument goes – there is an increasing similarity among age groups, the modes of self-presentation, fashion, leisure-time activities and life style (Featherstone and Hepworth 1991a). According to postmodern conceptualisations then, age is a blurred-genre, blended in and by the uni-age, or ageless styles of postmodern culture. The centrality of age as a means of self-description as well as the predestined narrative of a single core-identity travelling through pre-set structures of human life cycle, have thus been substituted by images of *durée* (Giddens 1991: 14), by the notion of new and expanding genres for sense making (Shotter 1993a; Gergen 1991), and by until-further-notice lifespan identities (Raz 1995). The postmodern flexibility thus seems to open the doors not only for gender blending (Devor 1989), but also to *age blending*.

Age blending and the uni-age society as emergent cultural tendencies are supported by technological advancement (Featherstone and Hepworth 1989; Meyrowitz 1984). The multitude of mass-mediated images 'saturate' our minds with a plethora of possible images (Gergen 1991). Moreover, in the age of techno-personal systems we may construct endless ageless virtual identities and ageless 'post-bodies' for ourselves (Featherstone 1995). So this new postmodern age of technology allows for variation and even an incoherence of multiple identities, while at the same time, makes it possible to endlessly construct and reconstruct coherent representations or narratives of one's life.

How does the discussion over postmodern conceptualisations of age link back to the analysis and observations made in this work? Is there possible space for a dialogue here? As a first answer to these questions we could note – like many critics and commentators have also done – that much of the postmodern thesis about (age) identity seems to thrive on a theoretical level, whereas fitting its claims to the everyday lived ‘reality’ of people is rarely attempted (cf. Andrews 1999; Biggs 1997; Katz 1995; Nikander 1999a, 2001; Raz 1995; Widdicombe 1998b). Instead, empirical analysis presented in support of postmodern age, often resorts to cultural products, like images or popular strips as their illustrative material (e.g. Featherstone and Hepworth 1991b).

One clear contribution from investigations that elucidate the interrelation of language, action and social structure, via focus on situated interaction, is that theoretical notions and claims about wider structural and societal change can be studied and put to a test. It may well be, for instance, that when talking about actual culturally and historically situated lives of people, the postmodern vocabulary of uni-age remains largely theoretical and thus ‘far from becoming an everyday reality’ (Featherstone and Hepworth 1989: 145)

The current study showed that when investigating people in interaction, the discursive latitude: the limits and possibilities of administrating lifetime categories, can be researched in action. The analysis of speakers repeated reference to the facticity of lifetime change, their orientations to the morality and to the age-appropriateness of their descriptions, also brings fore some results that may unsettle the theoretical conceptualisations put forward by the postmodern thesis.

At the same time, however, the analysis also showed the fluid nature of situated age categorisation. The obvious flexibility in people’s descriptive practices, for instance, allowed them to move in between categories; to resist conventional positions offered by the interviewer; to ward off potential inferences of the descriptions given; to theorise about the limits and traditional criteria of membership and non-membership; and to push the discursive boundaries of overlap between stage of life categories.

In this respect then, the current study already touched upon some of the wider social scientific concerns put across in postmodern theories, but did it via looking at age in action. One potential task for future research on age categorisation therefore is to examine further whether the largely theoretical claims of uni-age culture actually come to life in people's categorisation practices. In analysis like this the practical applicability and the limits of postmodern theories of age can thus be put through concrete and detailed empirical testing.

For, although the analyses in this thesis seemed to underline the moral nature and thereby also the limits of postmodern latitude and fluidity, it is quite thinkable, that something resembling the notion of 'uni-age' functions as an emerging ideological commonsense of our times, and, at least, of our Western thinking. Therefore, by studying age categorisation in a wide range of argumentative contexts, we may also begin to see how postmodern notions and ideologies of uni-age, of personal choice, and tailored and blended ages, surface in interaction but also, what the limits of such ideologies are (cf. Billig 1997).

It seems then, that age categories and age identities in action is a field of inquiry, which is potent in empirical extensions. My hope is that this work has managed to convey the complexity, richness, and potential of the field in ways that also attracts and generates future research. For in the end, analysing age in action, and the variety of ways stage of life categories are put to use in talk, texts and in different interactional arenas, tells us about participants' sense-making processes, and about the cultural knowledge and logic that informs those processes.

Appendix 1.

Transcription Symbols and Notes about the Art of Translation

The transcription system adopted in this study makes use of the conventions developed and commonly recommended in conversation analytic and, increasingly, in discursive work (Edwards 1997; Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998, chapter 3; Atkinson and Heritage 1984: ix-xvi; Jefferson 1985)

The following transcription symbols are in use in the text.

(0.2)	The number in brackets indicates a time gap in tenths of a second.
(.)	A dot enclosed in brackets indicates a pause in the talk less than two tenths of a second.
[]	Square brackets between adjacent lines indicate the onset and the end of space of overlapping talk.
:	Colons indicate that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound.
()	Empty parenthesis indicate the presence of an unclear fragment on the tape.
(())	Double empty parenthesis indicate additional information by the author, e.g. non-verbal activity.
<u>Under</u>	Underlined fragments indicate speaker emphasis.
CAPITALS	Capital letters indicate the use of noticeable louder speech than that surrounding it.
°quiet°	Degree signs are used to indicate noticeable quieter than surrounding talk.
Funn(h)y	H in parenthesis marks laughter within speech.
-	A dash indicates the sharp cut-off of the prior word or sound.
=	The equal signs indicate contiguous utterances.
↑↓	Pointed arrows indicate a marked falling or rising intonational shift.
>quick<	More than and less than signs indicate that the talk they encompass was produced noticeably more quickly than the surrounding talk.
→	Arrows in the margin mark points of special analytic interest in the extract in question.

In addition to transcription symbols, each extract comes with a heading of the form:

Extract 13. PN: M2: Anssi (Cas 1, A: 29.7-30.1)

This style of marking starts with the number of the extract in the series presented in the chapter in question. The rest of the identification consists of interviewer's initials followed by a letter indicating whether the interviewee was a man (M), or a woman (W), and the number and pseudonym of the interviewee (in this extract PN:M2:

Anssi. For detail on the interviewees, see appendix 2). The rest of the identification refers to where the extract can be found on the tape.

Notes on transcription and translation

Paul ten Have points out (1999: 93) that the methodological literature of CA (and, we could add, DA) hardly ever discusses problems of translation. As a result, discussion on the practical choices made, or on the difficulties that almost inevitably follow presenting translated data, is a rarity in the literature. Analysts presenting translated data to an English speaking audience often discuss the matter in brief, in the following way for example:

Translation

'The number of overlaps, pauses, hesitation, hedges, self-editings, and so forth are kept constant, as is their location in relation to turn junctures. The translation from Swedish has been kept as literal as possible, except where minor modifications have been necessary in order to preserve conversational style.'

(Aronsson & Cederborg 1997: 85)

Although it is not possible to delve into the complex art and science of translation in much more detail than Aronsson and Cederborg, some notes on the choices made about translation and transcription style are in order. This is all the more central, given that empirical research based on working with transcripts, particularly conversation analytic work, sees transcripts as a central means of guaranteeing the publicly verifiable, and cumulative nature of its claims and findings (e.g. Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998; Perakylä 1997).

The literature on the production and use of transcripts varies from thorough methodological, ideological and practical discussions (e.g. Jefferson 1996; Ochs 1999; O'Connell and Kowal 1995; Sandelowski 1994; Silverman 1993; Ten Have 1999) to discussion about established, good practice (e.g. Atkinson and Heritage 1999; Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998; Kitzinger 1998) and to critical overviews (Ashmore and Reed 2000). The predominant, written-in-between-the-lines, notion in most texts on transcription is, however, that of an English speaking academic,

working on data from conversations between native speakers of English, and consequently presenting his or her analysis to other English speakers.

A growing body of conversation analytic literature now exists on working on interactional data in languages other than English. The special issue in *Journal of Pragmatics* titled: *Conversation analysis of foreign language data* is an example of this. According to the editor of the special issue in question:

'Conversation analysis of foreign language data refers to two fields. First, studies where the analyst is not a native speaker of the language spoken in the data – as for example – in ethnography and related fields. Second, the title refers to studies where the participants use a language foreign to at least one of them. Naturally, then, either the language used or the native language of the participants will be a foreign language for the analyst' (Wagner 1996:145).

It seems then, that the perspective adopted is again that of a native English speaker, this time working on non-native, or even 'exotic' (Bilmes 1996) data.

In the current study the notions of 'foreign' 'native' and 'non-native' take up a different meaning. Here, the analyst is a native speaker of the language used by the participants, and can therefore also adopt a cultural native's perspective. She is, however, presenting her data and analysis in a language other than her own. This means that her immediate audience is not necessarily familiar with the language used by participants: it is foreign to them. Several practical and analytic decisions must, for this reason, be made when translating and presenting the data and the analysis upon it. In this, earlier discussions on translation come to assistance (e.g. Bilmes 1996; Duranti 1997; Moerman 1988; 1996; Sorjonen 1996; Ten Have 1999).

Ten Have (1999: 93) points out that, when working with translated data, several options exist in terms of the ways in which translations are presented. The writer may wish only to present the translation from the original (e.g. Aronsson and Cederborg 1997), or to present the translation and give the original only in an appendix (e.g. Bergmann 1992). Alternatively the author may choose to present the original transcript immediately below, or as a separate block of text (e.g. Houtkoop-Steenstra 1991; Paoletti 1998b) or alternate in between the original and the translation in a subsequent line-by-line manner (e.g. Ten Have 1999). Another possibility is to offer extensive information on the structure, semantics and syntax of

the language in question. In these cases, the original, transcribed spate of talk is often followed by a detailed morpheme-by-morpheme gloss-line that explicates the grammatical structure of the language in question after which a free translation follows. One example of this three-line format comes from Sorjonen's data where the original language is Finnish (1996:295; see also Arminen 1998; Ruusuvuori 2000).

(5)[Chapel:4-5]

1. R: *No n^h-da-an.: oö .mthh >ovövovö<*
 PRT see-Pas-4 er
 Well let's mee't er .mthh >uvuvuvu<
2. (1.0)
3. *↑N^h-da-an to-ssa: p^aa-rakennukse-n siina (.)*
 see PAS-4 that INE main-building-GEN there+IN
 let's meet there: in the main building's there (.)
4. *k^hvila-n ^opuole-lla^o.=^o*
 cafe-GEN side-ADE
 in the cafe ^osection.^o=

Note how the second line provides the reader with detailed information on the grammatical workings, on the conjugation of words and on other structural detail of speech practices of the language in question (e.g. *kahvila+n* as the genitive, indicating possession form, on the use of passive forms etc. For detail see Sorjonen 1996: 326-7).

Practical concerns linked to working with translated data thus include questions of the level of *detail* chosen in the transcription, and of the way in which the translations are *physically* presented in print. In practice, these concerns are often decided for us, as journals and editors often have their own established conventions for data presentation. In the case of thesis writing, such decisions need, however to be made and justified.

Given that the analysis in the current study was less based on the analysis of specific linguistic phenomena of the Finnish language, I chose not to follow the three-line transcription style. Instead, I chose to present the original transcript side-by-side

with the English translation. The transcription format and layout chosen, thus looks as follows.

Extract 13. PN: M2: Anssi (Cas 1, A: 29.7-30.1)

1.	A:	No I mean I (.) have said	No ei kun mää (.) oon sanonu
2.		that I live my life and accept	että mää elän elämäni ja hyväksyn
3.		that I'm (0 2) <u>fifty</u> years old	sen että mää oon (0.2) <u>viiskytvuotias</u>
4.		and (.) that I'm just as old	ja (.) ett ma oon juuri niin vanha
5.		as I () happen to be at a time and	kun mää (.) kulloinkin olen
6.		I don't (.) imagine being (0 4)	enkä mää (.) kuvittele olevani (0 4)
7.		younger or older	nuorempi taikka vanhempi
→ 8.		but like I don't (.) nonetheless	mutta että en mää () sitä huolimatta
9.		<u>behave</u> the way in which a fifty-	silti <u>käyttäyty</u> sillai niin kun viiskytvuotiaana
10		year-old <u>should</u> (.) behave like	<u>pitais</u> (.) käyttäytyä että
→ 11		I don't go to symphony concerts	en mina käy sinfoniakonserteissa
12	PN:	heh heh	heh heh
13.		(1 0)	(1.0)

In the transcript, the verbal content in English on a single line seeks to follow that of the original. The differences in syntax, length of expression and word order in between English and Finnish, as well as the technical limitations of this mode of layout, made it impossible to always match the verbal contents from one line to the next. Attentive readers, with or without knowledge of Finnish, should, however, be able to look for equivalent contents in the Finnish for the English, should they wish to do so.

According to Ochs (1999: 169, originally 1979), the spatial organisation of the transcript also carries across notions of bias. The layout, in other words, guides the reader to notice some items of talk before others, and thus steers how the units that make up the whole are perceived. Ochs also points out how our European culture of literacy socialises us to encode ideas not only from top to bottom, but also from left to right on a page. Leftness is thus linked with priority and associated with prominence in written expression (1999: 170-1). In the case of this study, for instance, I seem to have chosen to present the English translation of the data in the left hand column, and only then to provide the original. Leftness should, in this context, however, not be linked with priority, or as conveying first-hand importance. Instead, the layout of the transcript was chosen according to matters of practical convenience. The order, in other words, makes it easier for an English speaking

reader to follow the line numbers etc. when going through the data while, at the same time, making the data accessible to Finnish speaking readers. It should also be added that the transcript layout does not reflect analytic practice either, as the actual analysis on the data was always done on the original Finnish transcript.

Notes on the level of detail in transcription are also due. Some methodological guidelines suggest that one should always seek to produce as detailed a transcription as possible (e.g. Wooffitt 1993: 290). Other texts (e.g. Ochs 1999: 168; O'Connell and Kowal 1995), stress the usefulness and clarity of transcripts. Following Ochs (see also Psathas and Anderson 1990), the level of transcription symbols and detail chosen in the current study reflects the particular analytic interests of the researcher. Some symbols, such as in-breaths, out-breaths, and detailed indications of intonation or creaky voice for example, do not figure in the transcript. Other detail, such as speaker emphasis indicated by underlining, is done in less detail than is sometimes recommended. Instead of indicating the exact syllable-specific location of speaker emphasis, and then seeking to indicate the equivalent piece of talk in the English, for instance, whole words are often marked as emphasised in both (e.g. line 10 above).

The art of translation

The translation into English in this work is not a word for word, literal translation from Finnish. Given the difference in between the two language systems, literal word-for-word translations would not have been possible, but would, instead already have involved extensive interpretative decision-making (cf. Bilmes 1996). Some modification was necessary to preserve the flow of conversational style and the readability of the translated data. Instances of such liberties-takings, and other notices about translation are sometimes indicated in separate 'cultural footnotes,' or in the main text of the analytic chapters.

One should perhaps also point out that several levels of translation were included in the production of the transcripts. First, the sounds and silences on tape were transformed into a written format. Following a thorough reading of these texts, parts of them were then translated and transformed into an English version. The result is,

as always, a non-mechanically produced and determined product, which can hardly be straightforwardly judged correct or incorrect. Translation is instead, as Richards (1932: 7, ref. Moerman 1988: 6) points out, an 'indirectly controlled guess' and consequently something that the reader ends up taking and accepting with a certain degree of faith. The general problem of interpretive authority (Bilmes 1996: 172), in other words means that those not familiar with Finnish, as a language and speech community must, at least to some extent, take the author's word and hold her accountable for the translation. At the same time, the acceptability of the translation constructed in this work remains open to challenge, and to suggestions of alternative expressions from native Finnish speakers.

In all, the transcript provided does not seek, or claim perfection, but rather acknowledges and embraces the dilemmas of translation and transcription. The whole process of producing transcripts was informed by the wish to produce accessible yet acceptably accurate data that enable both English and Finnish speaking readers to make their own judgements, interpretations and assessments. The level and detail in transcription also reflects what seemed to suit the analytic stance and the analytic interests towards category work in talk. I hope that the choices made about transcription and translation work in favour of both these aims.

Appendix 2.

Description of the data: Interviewees and procedure

The total number of 22 interviewees (10 men and 12 women) was obtained through

- Approaching the readership of a women's magazine ('Anna').
- Approaching members of an all-male class of high-school graduates (year 1966).
- Approaching workers in a major power plant in the Helsinki area.

Most of the women I interviewed contacted me themselves. They were triggered to do so by a feature published in a Finnish women's magazine Anna, on 'Women & Age.' The cover of the issue promises special 'thematic pages' on the issue with the caption: '*Age: Feelings, experiences, let-downs, and comforting realisations*'. The pages themselves consisted of women of various ages giving their personal accounts, and of a separate box with the typical 'researcher's point of view'. As the researcher providing the points of view, I asked for my contact information to be added. Thus, I was able use the site as a means of contacting potential interviewees.

The women's sample has a certain 'bias' towards middle-class professions like teacher, on the one hand and towards free-lance professions like artist, on the other. This may reflect the readership of the women's magazine in question and/or possibly the type of person who wishes to volunteer for research interviews. The special feature can in itself be interpreted as partly setting the tone in which the interviews later unfolded. In their letters and phone calls to me, some women commented on the views presented in the issue, and stated that the extremity of some of the descriptions and opinions on age had prompted them to contact me, and to participate in research on the issue.

The age-range, from 42 to 51, in this group is bigger than that in the men's group (49-52). This is due to the fact that, although I was mainly wishing to target people who were close to 50 years old, I nonetheless did not wish to reject any of the women who contacted me and expressed an interest to be interviewed. In addition to the women who contacted me themselves, interviewees sometimes made suggestions for other potential interviewees. Their suggestions were used to extend the number of interviewees, and in the end two additional interviews were conducted via using this alternative contact procedure.

The men's group consists mainly of men who had graduated some thirty years earlier from the same high school. These men were contacted using a list of names and addresses compiled prior to a class reunion. I obtained this list from one 'graduate of the 'year -66' and then approached the men on it, citing the list and their former classmate as my source. Out of 28 names on the list 8 men contacted me, and out of this group 6 interviews were arranged. A second group of male interviewees (4) was obtained though approaching the employees of a major power plant in the Helsinki area. The decision to interview workers in this particular site was a result of my personal connections with the shop steward of the plant. Via him, I was able to get in contact with men who volunteered to be interviewed.

Each interviewee has been given a pseudonym, which is used consistently throughout the text and analysis. Names of places and other obvious detail that may have enabled identification have also been erased from the interview transcripts.

<i>Code</i>	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
MEN			
M1	Arto	50	Unemployed
M2	Anssi	51	Civil servant
M3	Pauli	50	Accountant/Manager
M4	Kimmo	51	Sheet-iron worker/Welder
M5	Juha	50	Engineer
M6	Klaus	49	Team foreman
M7	Tapani	51	Production manager
M8	Esa	52	Metal worker
M9	Reijo	52	Manager (of a paper factory)
M10	Vesa	50	Sales manager
WOMEN			
W1	Laura	49	Copywriter
W2	Anita	42	Receptionist
W3	Eeva	50	Professor
W4	Liisa	48	Nursery school teacher
W5	Maria	50	Pre-school teacher
W6	Irma	50	Artist/Free-lance journalist
W7	Helena	51	Teacher
W8	Anna	44	Textile artist
W9	Briitta	49	Teacher
W10	Anu	51	Nurse
W11	Saara	50	Lecturer
W12	Leena	51	Head of Marketing

All interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. The surroundings, where the interviews took place, varied according to the wishes of the interviewees: some were conducted in the interviewees' homes or work places, some in cafes, or alternatively in university facilities. Conducting the interviews included travelling, as the interviewees came from different parts of Finland, mainly from the larger cities, but also from rural areas.

Using interviews as the means for data production (Hester and Francis 1994) allowed immediate access to people's practical accounting and practical reasoning. Summing up the pros and cons of different data, Potter (forth; see also Potter 1996a; Wetherell and Potter 1992: 98-100) comes up with a list of virtues for using interviews as material for discursive analysis. These include 1) *Focus*: concentration on certain predetermined themes, 2) *Standardisation*: the possibility for all participants to address the same set of themes, and 3) *Control* over sampling. Of these three, the control over sampling – in the sense of having the possibility of delimiting the speakers to a specific age range, not so much in the sense of representativeness – was a consideration in this study. Focusing on themes was also central; in fact, having no themes on which to proceed would make an interview situation impossible. The standardisation of themes covered was of less centrality in my interviews, however. That is, I was not pressing to cover exactly the same themes in all situations (cf. Wetherell and Potter 1992). The same list of topics provided a general basis, upon which the interaction could unfold. The list was not used religiously, however, but rather as a basic check-list. In many cases the interviewees covered, or took up issues themselves, in a manner that both coincided and enriched any thought-up themes of the interviewer. Consequently, the interviewness and conversational nature of the interviews varied greatly as did the level of activity by the interviewer.

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