Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian Studies
University of Helsinki

# SELF-PROMOTION AS SEMIOTIC BEHAVIOR

## THE MEDIATION OF PERSONHOOD IN LIGHT OF FINNISH ONLINE DATING ADVERTISEMENTS

**Tomi Visakko**

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
To be presented, with the permission of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Helsinki, for public examination in Auditorium XII, University main building, on 11 September 2015, at high noon.

Helsinki 2015

Supervisors:

Professor Jyrki Kalliokoski (University of Helsinki)
Professor Anne Mäntynen (University of Jyväskylä)

Pre-examiners:

Professor Paul Kockelman (Yale University)
Docent Urho Määttä (University of Tampere)

Opponent:

Docent Urho Määttä (University of Tampere)

Cover: Olli Romppanen
Photo: Henri Manuel (before 1905)

ISBN 978-951-51-1398-6 (paperback)
ISBN 978-951-51-1399-3 (PDF)
Unigrafia
Helsinki 2015

# ABSTRACT

This study examines the mediation and evaluation of personhood in light of Finnish online dating advertisements. The specific focus is on the performance and interpretation of what has been called "self-promotion," or the idealization of the self in relation to others. The theoretical aim of the study is to piece together an approach that locates online dating advertisements within the field of human semiotic behavior and social life. The study operates with concepts originating from linguistics, discourse studies, and anthropology. They are connected by the overarching frameworks of semiotic anthropology (e.g. Agha 2007; Silverstein 2003; Urban 2001) and Kockelman's (2013) pragmatism-based semiotic theory of interaction, infrastructure, and ontology. These frameworks are presented in chapters 1 and 2.

Chapter 3 elaborates the research design. The online dating advertisement genre is approached as a cultural instrument of personhood and intersubjective interaction that sifts social reality into "desirable" or "ideal" and "undesirable" or "non-ideal" in multiple ways. In order to instigate social relations with "desirable" and "ideal" others, writers inhabit a "promotional" persona. That is, they exert both practical and theoretical agency in controlled performances of their identity, for which they will be held accountable later in subsequent encounters, insofar as such encounters are ever actualized.

Three sets of data are examined in the study: 1) The primary data consists of 111 Finnish-language online dating advertisements that were collected from two different online dating services in 2007 (*Deitti.net*, *Match.com*). 2) A questionnaire was held for a group of 27 university students in order to elicit actual examples of interpretations based on three different kinds of advertisement texts. 3) The third set of data consists of cultural metadiscourses that are *about* online dating advertisements as a type of interaction. It includes (i) three online dating guidebooks, (ii) a variety of Internet discussions, newspaper articles, and other writings, and (iii) a segment of a television program. Such metadiscourses illuminate the kinds of "backstage" interpretive practices that usually do not become public in actual advertisement performances.

The mediation of personhood is examined from four empirical perspectives. Chapter 4 focuses on the kinds of "characteristics" that different kinds of sign patterns project on interactants. The chapter discusses the general difference between "describable," "performable," and "proposable" characteristics and their different interactional dynamics. It then takes a look at the more specific textual patterns that advertisement texts consist of: theoretical and reflective representations, lists and taxonomies, narratives, fictive personae, and patterns of discourse habitually

linked to individuals (e.g., pseudonyms and mottos). Moreover, three entire texts will be analyzed in light of the questionnaire responses in order to examine differences in reported interpretations of such textual patterns. Chapter 5 takes on the question of evaluative stancetaking and its role in self-promotion by looking at common types of stances and such metapragmatic cues that indicate the writers' understandings of their stancetaking. The chapter focuses on matters of polarity ("positive" versus "negative") and on the naturalization and poeticization of evaluative stances. Chapter 6 deals with addressivity. It examines how the patterns discussed in chapters 4 and 5 are mapped onto frames of participation, i.e., how writers select for addressees and attempt to control the ensuing interaction. Chapter 7 looks at the metadiscourse data from the standpoint of explicit opinions, ideological positions, and normative models concerning the production and interpretation of online dating advertisements. Finally, chapter 8 concludes the study by discussing the findings and their implications.

By comparing the actual discursive practices in the advertisement data and the metadiscourses about online dating advertisements as a type of discourse the study shows, first of all, that in stereotypic models of "self-promotion" specific kinds of evaluative stances are often the most salient feature, whereas many actually occurring phenomena are entirely overlooked. Such biased stereotypes may in part be a reason for the fact that evaluative stancetaking seems to be a somewhat marked or even problematic act in online dating advertisements. The study also illuminates the non-narrative organization of personhood, selfhood, and biography, since taxonomic and hierarchical structures of theoretical representations are one of the most salient textual patterns in the data. Moreover, the study draws attention to the importance of the indexical patterning of text-artifacts and their performative dimensions. Textual patterning at all layers, from "macrostructures" to orthography, becomes interpreted as signs of personhood contributing, for instance, to particular "views of subjectivity," a level of meaning often overlooked in studies of online communication. Although such interpretations may be indeterminate and fragmented, sometimes even in opposite and contradictory ways, they can be fruitfully analyzed in terms of orientations to different signs or different semiotic ontologies (or interpretive models). More generally, the study stresses the importance of reflexive models and ideologies of interaction. For instance, the nature of online dating advertisements as an intersubjective encounter can be understood in almost entirely opposite ways (e.g., as "distant" versus "intimate," "authentic" versus "inauthentic," or "reliable" versus "unreliable") in light of different ontologies.

**Keywords**: semiotic mediation, personhood, selfhood, identity, practical and theoretical agency, self-promotion, online dating advertisements, evaluation, stance, biography, genre.

# ABSTRAKTI

Tämä tutkimus käsittelee sitä, miten henkilöyttä (*personhood*) välitetään ja arvotetaan suomenkielisissä verkon kontakti-ilmoituksissa. Tarkempi fokus on ”itsepromootioksi” (*self-promotion*) kutsutussa ilmiössä eli siinä, miten itseä idealisoidaan suhteessa toisiin ja miten tällaisia performansseja tulkitaan. Tutkimuksen teoreettisena tavoitteena on koostaa semioottiseen antropologiaan nojaava lähestymistapa, joka sijoittaa kontakti-ilmoitukset kokonaisvaltaisesti osaksi ihmisten semioottisen käyttäytymisen kenttää (esim. Agha 2007; Kockelman 2013; Silverstein 2003; Urban 2001). Tutkimuksen teoreettiset lähtökohdat esitellään luvuissa 1 ja 2.

Luvussa 3 esitellään yksityiskohtaisemmin työn tutkimusasetelma ja näkökulma tutkimuskohteeseen. Kontakti-ilmoitusgenreä lähestytään henkilönä olemisen ja intersubjektiivisen vuorovaikutuksen kulttuurisena instrumenttina, joka monin eri tavoin siivilöi sosiaalista todellisuutta ”toivottuun” tai ”ihanteelliseen” ja ”ei-toivottuun” tai ”epäihanteelliseen”. Tutkimuksessa käytetään kolmea eri aineistoa: 1) Pääaineisto koostuu 111 suomenkielisestä kontakti-ilmoituksesta, jotka on kerätty kahdesta eri verkkopalvelusta vuonna 2007 (*Deitti.net*, *Match.com*). 2) Lisäksi hyödynnetään kyselytutkimusta, jonka vastaajina toimi 27 yliopisto-opiskelijaa. Kyselyn tarkoituksena on tarjota esimerkkejä kolmen erilaisen ilmoituksen todellisista tulkinnoista. 3) Kolmas aineisto koostuu sellaisesta kulttuurisesta metadiskurssista, jossa käsitellään kontakti-ilmoituksia vuorovaikutuksen tyyppinä. Aineisto sisältää i) kolme kontakti-ilmoituksia käsittelevää opaskirjaa, ii) joukon Internet-keskusteluja, lehtiartikkeleita ja muita kirjoituksia sekä iii) otteen televisio-ohjelmasta. Tällaiset ”kulissien takaiset” metadiskurssit valaisevat sellaisia tulkinnallisia käytänteitä, jotka eivät useinkaan tule ilmi varsinaisten performanssien aikana.

Tutkimuskohdetta lähestytään neljästä empiirisestä näkökulmasta. Luku 4 keskittyy sellaisiin ”ominaisuuksiin”, joita ilmoitusten erilaiset merkkirakenteet voivat projisoida osallistujille. Luvussa pohditaan yleistä eroa ”kuvailtavien”, ”esitettävien” ja ”ehdotettavien” ominaisuuksien välillä ja erityisesti niiden erilaista vuorovaikutuksellista dynamiikkaa. Tämän jälkeen analysoidaan tarkemmin näiden konkreettisia tekstuaalisia ilmentymiä aineistossa: mm. teoreettisia ja reflektiivisiä representaatioita, listoja ja taksonomioita, narratiiveja, fiktiivisiä persoonia sekä sellaisia kielenaineksia, jotka ovat vakiintuneet yksilön ominaisuuksiksi (esim. pseudonyymeja ja mottoja). Lisäksi kolmea kokonaista tekstiä analysoidaan kyselyvastausten valossa. Tarkoituksena on selvittää, millaisia eroja em. tekstuaalisten rakenteiden tulkinnassa esiintyy. Luku 5 ottaa tarkasteluun evaluoivan asennoitumisen (*evaluative stancetaking*) ja sen roolin ”itsepromootiossa”. Luvussa vertaillaan muutamia erilaisia aineistossa yleisiä asennoitumisen tyyppejä sekä pohditaan sellaisia metapragmaattisia vihjeitä,

jotka ilmentävät kirjoittajien käsityksiä omasta kielellisestä asennoitumisestaan. Luku 6 tarkastelee sitä, miten luvuissa 4 ja 5 käsiteltyjä rakenteita kytketään osallistumisrakenteisiin eli miten kirjoittajat valikoiden kohdistavat puheensa tietynlaisille osallistujille ja pyrkivät kontrolloimaan vuorovaikutusta. Luku 7 paneutuu metadiskurssiaineistoon ja esittelee ilmoitusten tulkintaa koskevia eksplisiittisiä mielipiteitä, ideologisia kannanottoja ja normatiivisia malleja. Lopuksi luvussa 8 pohditaan tutkimuksen tuloksia ja niiden merkitystä.

Kontakti-ilmoitusten diskursiivisten käytänteiden ja niitä koskevan metadiskurssin vertailun avulla tutkimus osoittaa ensinnäkin, että ”itsepromootiota” käsittelevissä stereotyyppisissä malleissa huomio usein keskittyy tietynlaisiin evaluoivan asennoitumisen ilmauksiin ja monet todellisuudessa keskeiset piirteet puuttuvat tyystin. Tällaiset stereotyypit voivat osaltaan vaikuttaa siihen, että evaluoiva asennoituminen on ilmoituksissa usein tunnusmerkkinen, jopa ongelmallinen toiminto. Tutkimus valottaa myös ei-narratiivisia tapoja jäsentää minuutta ja biografisia representaatioita, sillä aineistolle tunnusomaisimpia ovat hierarkkiset ja taksonomiset tekstuaaliset rakenteet. Tutkimuksessa painotetaan tekstiartefaktien indeksikaalisen jäsentymisen ja performatiivisten ulottuvuuksien merkitystä. Tekstin semioottinen rakenne kaikilla tasoilla, ”makrorakenteista” ortografiaan, tulee tulkituksi merkkeinä siitä, kuka ja millainen kirjoittaja henkilönä on. Näin ne vaikuttavat mm. tekstien välittämiin kuviin kirjoittajien mielen toiminnasta tai ”subjektiviteetista” (*views of subjectivity*). Vaikka tällaiset tulkinnat usein hajaantuvat jopa täysin vastakkaisiin ja ristiriitaisiin suuntiin, niitä voidaan selittää eri tulkitsijoiden orientoitumisella erilaisiin merkkeihin tai erilaisiin semioottisiin ontologioihin (tulkintaa ohjaaviin malleihin ja olettamuksiin). Ylipäänsä tutkimuksessa painotetaan vuorovaikutusta koskevien ideologioiden ja refleksiivisten mallien merkitystä. Eri tulkitsijat voivat esimerkiksi ymmärtää kontakti-ilmoitusten luonteen intersubjektiivisena kohtaamisena lähes täysin vastakkaisin tavoin (esim. ”etäisenä” vs. ”läheisenä”, ”autenttisena” vs. ”epäautenttisena” tai ”luotettavana” vs. ”epäluotettavana”).

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ~ KIITOKSET

It’s both wonderful and surreal that I’m now writing the final piece of this dissertation! Acknowledging those numerous beings who have contributed to the process along the way is also one of the most pleasant pieces to write.

Ei ole vaikea valita, kenestä aloittaa. Ilman ohjaajaani Jyrki Kalliokoskea tätä tutkimusta ei olisi syntynyt. Parin ensimmäisen vuoden ajan Jyrki oli luultavasti ainoa, joka usko(ttel)i, että työ saattaisi joskus valmistuakin. Pragmaattisilla neuvoillaan, vilpittömältä tuntuvalla kiinnostuksellaan, hillityllä painostuksellaan ja anteliailla tarjouksillaan Jyrki sai pidettyä työn käynnissä siihen asti, että se alkoi edetä omalla painollaan. Toinen ohjaajani Anne Mäntynen tuli mukaan kuvioihin pari vuotta myöhemmin – juuri siinä vaiheessa, kun tekijän oma visio tutkimuksesta oli alkanut orastaa. Anne on aina empaattisesti kannustanut minua seuraamaan omaa polkuani mutta myös olemaan vaatimatta itseltäni liikaa. Annelta olen saanut lisäksi monta arvokasta opetusta siitä, mitä on kirjoittamisen ja opettamisen ammattitaito.

I thank Paul Kockelman for taking the time and the trouble to serve as a pre-examiner – and for his brilliant work that has been an inexhaustible source of wisdom and inspiration for me over the past few years. Urho Määttää – jonka artikkelit aikoinaan rohkaisivat hakemaan uudenlaista suuntaa työlleni ja ajattelulleni – kiitän paneutuneiden ja kannustavien esitarkastuskommenttien lisäksi vastaväittäjän tehtävään suostumisesta.

I wish to thank Asif Agha for his enlightening writings and for his mind-blowing graduate seminar at Penn (and for his patience with a Finnish wannabe anthropologist) that have illuminated new paths for me. And I thank Greg Urban for the inspiration his work has given me and for a wonderfully supportive and stimulating discussion once on a rainy day in Philadelphia. I also wish to thank the notorious streets of Philadelphia for a lesson and a half on life.

Työn taloudellisesta infrastruktuurista kiitän kronologisessa järjestyksessä Suomen Akatemian rahoittamaa Alistus ja konteksti -hanketta, tutkijakoulu Langnetia, Suomen kielen, suomalais-ugrilaisten ja pohjoismaisten kielten ja kirjallisuuksien laitosta (aka Norsua), Wihurin säätiötä, Helsingin yliopiston humanistista tiedekuntaa yhden kuukauden viimeistelyapurahasta sekä Koneen Säätiön rahoittamaa Taide työnä ja työvälineenä -hanketta. Nämä tahot ovat eri vaiheissa pitäneet tutkijan milloin paksumman, milloin laihemman leivän syrjässä kiinni. Erityismaininta ihQlle Norsulle, joka on laitoksena aina ollut poikkeuksellisen antelias ja avulias.

Tämän työn parhaita puolia on ollut se, että eroa ystävien ja kollegoiden välille ei ole useinkaan tarvinnut tehdä. Monilla tässä mainituilla henkilöillä onkin huomattavia ansioita molemmilla saroilla. Eero Voutilainen on ystävänä, yhteistyökumppanina, kriitikkona ja kanssamaailmanparantajana

vaikuttanut kaikkeen tieteelliseen ja epätieteelliseen ajatteluuni jo yli vuosikymmenen ajan. Kiitos Eerolle myös käsikirjoituksen huolellisesta kommentoinnista! Katariina Harjunpää on sanojen tavoittamattomissa. Katan kanssa tiede, taide ja muu elämä ovat kietoutuneet yhteen tavoilla, jotka ovat kasvattaneet niin tutkijana kuin ihmisenä ylipäänsä. Kiitos!

Elina Pallasvirran ilmaantuminen Vuorikadulle vuosia sitten väitöskirjatyön alkuvaiheissa nosti elämänlaatuani merkittävästi, kun yksinäisen puurtamisen rinnalle alkoi syntyä uudenlaista kollegiaalisuutta sekä jännittäviä seikkailuja niin kotimaassa kuin ulkomailla. Kiitos siitä! Vuorikadun Kirka-faniklubin toista perustajajäsentä Heini Lehtosta kiitän räiskyvistä vuorovaikutustapahtumista, hautausmaatupakoinneista, kukkulakiipeilyistä ja sen sellaisista. Myös metodologis-metateoreettisessa mielessä Heini on pitkään ollut tärkeä hengenheimolainen. Sitten päärakennuksen suunnalle: Kiitos armoitetulle roadtrip-kuskilleni ja Gracelandin pyhiinvaellusseuralaiselleni Nailon ”Hanna-Ilona” Härmävaaralle. Kiitos laitoksen raavaille, briljanteille karpaaseille Mikko Virtaselle ja Tapani Möttöselle monenmoisista seikkailuista. It has been an honor serving with you! Ja iso positiivisen evaluoinnin ilmaus myös Jutta Salmiselle, Pilvi Heinoselle ja Sakke Vaelmalle.

Irina Piippoa kiitän kiinnostavista keskusteluista sekä kannustuksesta, joka on parissakin alhossa tullut akuuttiin tarpeeseen. Irina on myös vaivojaan säästelemättä lukenut ja kommentoinut käsikirjoituksen ensimmäisen (ei-niin-hiotun) version, mistä iso kiitos. Haluan kiittää myös Intersubjektiivisuus vuorovaikutuksessa -huippuyksikköä, jonka vilkkaasta toiminnasta on roiskunut kaikenlaisia sytykkeitä tähänkin työhön. Korkeimman luokan kunniamaininta aikaansaavalle Marja-Leena Sorjoselle niin yleisestä kannustuksesta vuosien varrella kuin Philadelphian-visiittini primus motorina toimimisesta. Marja-Leenan ansiosta sain myös osallistua Helsingin suomea -hankkeen Agha-lukupiiriin keväällä 2012, mikä toi tutkijanelooni kipeästi kaivattua yhteisöllisyyttä. Kiitos siitä kaikille hankkeen tyypeille. Erityiskiitos Liisa Raevaaralle, joka vielä mainitun lukupiirikokemuksen jälkeenkin uskalsi palkata kaltaiseni taivaanrannanmaalarin Taide työnä ja työvälineenä -hankkeeseen. Kiitos myös kaikille kyseisen hankkeen huipuille tieteentekijöille ja taiteentekijöille!

Kiitos Laura Visapäälle ja Ilona Herlinille yhteistyöstä, joka on kantanut legendaarisesta Alistushankkeesta aina Onnellisuusprojektiin saakka. Kiitos myös Anna Vatanen, Anni Jääskeläinen, Lari Kotilainen, Helena Sorva, Maria Vilkuna, Suvi Honkanen, Lauri Haapanen, Aino Koivisto, Marja Etelämäki, Jarkko Niemi, Saija Merke, Heidi Vepsäläinen, Camilla Lindholm, Riitta Juvonen, Anu Rouhikoski, Mai Frick, Martina Huhtamäki, Toini Rahtu, Sonja Koski, Markus Hamunen, Saija Pyhäniemi, Katariina Voutilainen, Maria Mäenpää, Outi Toijanniemi, Kati Karvinen, Anna Solin, Vesa Heikkinen, Jenni Viinikka, Kaarina Mononen, Piia Mikkola, Päivi Pekanheimo, Maria Eronen ja muu Langnet-väki sekä kaikki muut matkan varrella vastaan tulleet ystävälliset sielut, joiden kanssa on ollut mahdollista

keskustella tutkimuksesta tai sen liepeiltä! Olli Romppaselle kiitos hienosta kannesta.

Tutkimusta kannatelleesta inhimillisestä infrastruktuurista kiitän kaikkia ihmis- ja kissaystäviä sekä perheenjäseniä ja sukulaisia! Uintiseura Liukkaiden Saukkojen (*The Slippery Otters*) Tare ”Tarmo” Ristosta, Jukka ”V.” Mattilaa, Eero ”Börje” Voutilaista ja ”Jukka” Hintikkaa kiitän perjantai-iltain lutraamisesta, joka on pohjattomassa epätieteellisyydessään toiminut elintärkeänä vastapainona tutkimustyön rankimmissa vaiheissa.

# CONTENTS

Abstract ... 3

Abstrakti ... 5

Acknowledgements ~ kiitokset ... 7

Contents ... 11

Preface ... 15

1 Introduction ... 17

1.1 Language and semiotic behavior ... 21

1.2 Intersubjectivity in interaction ... 23

2 A semiotic view on language and personhood ... 27

2.1 The semiotic constitution of reality ... 27

2.1.1 Interpreting object-sign relations ... 29

2.1.2 Meaning as the effects of sign-activity ... 32

2.1.3 Agents and kinding ... 34

2.1.4 Residence in the world ... 38

2.1.5 Distributed semiosis and division of labor ... 39

2.2 Reflexive models of semiotic behavior ... 42

2.2.1 Genre, form, and context ... 43

2.2.2 Registers and social personae ... 46

2.2.3 Semiotic ontologies and ultimate interpretants ... 48

2.3 Personhood, selfhood, and identity ... 49

2.3.1 Persons as precipitates of interactional processes ... 50

2.3.2 Selfhood as caring for and coherence ... 53

2.3.3 Cultural ontologies and metadiscourses of personhood ... 55

2.3.4 Semiotic technologies of the self ... 57

3 Research design and data ..........59
3.1 Research questions and structure of the study ..........62
3.2 Data .......... 64
4 Entextualizing selves and others ..........70
4.1 “Characteristics” as kinds projected on human individuals .......... 71
4.1.1 “Describable,” “performable,” and “proposable” characteristics ..........72
4.1.2 Truth and representativeness ..........76
4.2 Views of subjectivity ..........79
4.2.1 “Poetic” or “demanding”? .......... 82
4.2.2 “Reflective” and “analytical” ..........87
4.2.3 Stream of consciousness: “Laid-back” versus “childish” .......... 90
4.2.4 Experiencing and reporting views of subjectivity .......... 96
4.3 Chronotopic formulations .......... 98
4.4 Textual patterning of online dating advertisements ..........106
4.4.1 Theoretical and reflective representations ..........106
4.4.2 Lists and taxonomies .......... 118
4.4.3 Narratives and stories ..........122
4.4.4 Fictive personae ..........130
4.4.5 Pseudonyms and replicated patterns of discourse ..........134
5 Evaluative stancetaking ..........144
5.1 Evaluative stancetaking as signs of mental states ..........149
5.1.1 Complement-taking predicates and the expression of desire ..........152
5.1.2 Indicatives versus conditionals ..........155
5.2 The naturalization of evaluative perspectives ..........159
5.2.1 Redundant and relational polarities ..........162
5.2.2 Performances of “human(e)ness”: metapragmatics of evaluative polarity ..........170

5.3 The poeticization of evaluative stances and the relativization of commitment ... 178

5.4 Anticipating others' interpretations ... 180

5.5 Defending one's act of participation against negative stereotypes ... 190

5.6 Stance, emblematicity, and polarity in online dating advertisements ... 194

6 Addressing others ... 200

6.1 Of "I's" and "you's" ... 200

6.2 The interactional structure of online dating services ... 203

6.3 Patterns of addressivity ... 204

6.3.1 "You" regardless of what kind you are ... 207

6.3.2 "You" insofar as you are of a certain kind ... 210

6.3.3 A fictive "You" as the addressee ... 216

6.3.4 "You" as non-ideal ... 219

6.3.5 What about "we" and "I"? ... 220

6.4 *Jos* ("if") clauses and ontologies of compatibility ... 224

6.5 Modeling interactions beyond the ongoing speech event ... 231

7 Online dating advertisements as an object of cultural metadiscourses ... 236

7.1 Stereotypes of online daters and their language use ... 238

7.1.1 The stigmatization of an interactional practice ... 238

7.1.2 Metasemiotic models of language and personhood ... 244

7.2 Promotional discourse, evaluative stancetaking, and "truth" ... 252

7.2.1 Translating promotional discourse into non-promotional discourse ... 255

7.2.2 Positivity and selectivity ... 261

7.3 Online dating advertisements as an intersubjective contact ... 268

8 Conclusion ... 278

8.1 Discussion of findings ........................................................ 278

8.2 Further implications ........................................................ 289

8.2.1 Biographic contents, modes, and coherences ........................................ 291

8.2.2 Identities, stances, and evaluative processes ........................................ 295

Data sources ........................................................ 301

References ........................................................ 303

Appendix 1: Glossing abbreviations and transcription symbols ........................................ 316

Appendix 2: The questionnaire ........................................................ 318

# PREFACE

I feel I should warn my prospective readers that this work might not be so much about online dating advertisements or their linguistic analysis as it is about my attempts to tackle American pragmatism as a metatheory of human behavior and experience. The lion's share of the time devoted to this project has been devoured by an obsession to understand Charles Peirce and, in particular, his semiotic theory – as well as its more recent anthropological and linguistic operationalizations. A second caveat is that my main personal interest has always lain in questions of personhood and selfhood: What are persons and how do their habits and values emerge sociohistorically, biographically, and interactionally? What is the role of language in all this? Why do linguistic symbols have such a curious power over us? And can individuals change the habits of thought, action, and emotion that they have acquired?

An important part of the long process that leads to this dissertation and the form it now takes has been my desire to shift towards a semiotic and an anthropological perspective on language – to learn to look at linguistic practices and their effects from a more holistic perspective. This desire was fueled by a long-standing dissatisfaction with what I felt were restrictively language-centered and grammar-centered approaches in linguistics. Still, in my view, true understanding of "language" and its human import derives from conceptualizing it clearly and analytically within a bigger picture of human behavior and experience, or in relation to whatever is left outside as "non-language." Like Agha (2007c: 232), I advocate an "integrationist-expansionist-and-collaborative" mode of research. It is my belief that critical dialogues both within and between different research traditions could be helped immensely by the advancement of a common (or compatible) metatheory and conceptual basis.

My quest has been for, to quote Kockelman (2005: 2), "an empirically tractable" and "metaphysically satisfying" framework for studying language as part of larger semiotic processes and particularly in relation to cultural understandings of personhood and identity. Initially, it was Urban (1991) that, many years ago, offered a first glimpse of a different and enticing approach to the study of language and discourse. That book started an ongoing trajectory towards the kind of theoretical and methodological approach that, finally, seemed to address the kinds of questions that had been preoccupying my mind for a long time. I have thoroughly enjoyed the process of trying to understand Peirce and other, slightly less mind-bending pragmatists, such as George Herbert Mead, William James, and John Dewey. This process has been greatly aided and complemented by brilliant scholars in the Northern American tradition of semiotic anthropology (Asif Agha, Paul Kockelman, Greg Urban, Michael Silverstein, and Richard Parmentier) with

their interpretations, extensions, and applications of pragmatist ideas in the fields of anthropology and linguistics. Professor Agha's graduate seminar was particularly influential in putting different pieces together during my visit to Penn in the spring of 2013.

(Also, as far as I understand, pragmatism-based naturalistic and holistic approaches illuminate interestingly, and critically, certain currents of modern neuroscience (cf. also Damasio 1999; Thompson & Varela 2001) as well as another long-standing fascination of mine, Buddhist psychology, with which Western neuroscience itself has in recent years fruitfully engaged (see e.g. Hanson & Mendius 2009). Traces of such links may, therefore, be perceivable along the way.)

In this study, I have tried to adopt a view of personhood as a distributed, interactionally accumulating, and complexly sign-mediated process – as a "species of semiosis" – in order to gain a grasp of the kinds of discursive processes in which personhood becomes evaluated (e.g., idealized, denigrated; appreciated, assailed; idolized, belittled; sanctified, demonized), with a specific focus on relatively self-controlled semiotic behaviors (such as "self-promotion") in which people deal with the various *should*'s, or the normative models of personhood, that they orient to. Such questions are important both for science and for the Art of Being Human – to which, I believe, human sciences should ultimately contribute. Although this study started out years ago as empirical discourse analysis, it soon started becoming more theoretically and metatheoretically driven. Ultimately, it has revolved around finding the kinds of conceptual approaches that are needed for a satisfying account of the relationship between language, personhood, and value. During the project I have wanted to (and had to) expand my scientific self into new domains. Whether that counts as a vice or a virtue and to what degree I have succeeded in the task I leave to others to assess.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

If *you* had to convey an image of who you are in a relatively short text-artifact of, say, 150 words, where would you begin? The raw materials available to a writer are diverse: perceivable attributes, typical behaviors, past experiences, recurring moods or mental states, the people you prefer to interact with, your possessions, your ideas and opinions and, so on. All of these could be denoted by a wide range of lexico-grammatical structures, voiced from different perspectives (e.g., your own, your best friend's, your mother's, your archenemy's) and composed into a myriad of metrical patterns of text, many of which could be recognized by readers as tokens of particular sociocultural types of action or status (such as "telling a story" versus "analyzing" or being "humorous" versus "profound"). In fact, from the standpoint of some fictive omniscient narrator, for any individual there is a practically infinite number of self-presentational forms that might be considered, in some sense, equally "truthful." This, however, is far from the empirical reality.

You do not find anyone describing, for instance, one's bodily features in a dating advertisement like one would at a doctor's office. In any type of event, one finds regularities of what is considered relevant information and how that information is to be formulated and addressed to others. In other words, there is a constant orientation to cultural ontologies that specify what are the appropriate and effective ways of being a particular kind of person in a particular kind of event. Furthermore, most of those "practically infinite" options would never even occur to an individual in *any* situation. Self-presentation is socially and interactionally preconditioned by the habits we have developed and the norms we have been socialized into. Whatever knowledge we have of ourselves has been accumulated in and shaped by interactions with our social, cultural, and physical environments. That is, one's understanding of what is a "truthful" or "possible" interpretation of oneself is the precipitate of long chains of semiotic processes on biographic and sociohistorical time scales. Those processes include the various ideals we have adopted as well as our stances towards them. To the degree that we have self-awareness and self-control, we can actively try to be what we think we *should* be, or to reconcile our personal habits and interests with cultural ontologies. These processes, in turn, serve as the roots of our future habits. Self-presentation, then, is not merely self-*re*presentation. Our semiotic behaviors, the ways in which we signify and interpret, do not "reflect" something we "are" independent of them. Our very existence in the world is mediated by the multitudes of semiotic processes we are entangled in – some of them linguistic, most of them not.

This study looks at one particular and, in many ways, peculiar type of semiotic encounter: online dating advertisements. The following kinds of questions will be addressed: How to be a person to some anonymous other

via a written text-artifact? How do aspects of persons and their lives translate into artifactually mediated textual patterns? How to anticipate others' interpretations and the ontologies they rely on? How to promote one's existence and characteristics so as to appear ideal and desirable to others? Ultimately these are specific instances of a ubiquitous phenomenon: the artifactual mediation of personhood, selfhood, and social relations in different semiotic modes or infrastructures, each with their particular possibilities and constraints. Before going into the details of this study, let us consider, as a sort of "exotic" contrastive analogy, a different kind of practice in which artifacts are shaped in the image of persons and used as instruments of social life.

In March 2013, when I visited the Voodoo Museum in New Orleans, the establishment had accompanied their collection of voodoo dolls (see figure 1) with an interesting description of how these dolls are produced. First of all, a doll has to bear a resemblance to the person who is the object of the spell. This can be achieved by pinning on the doll a picture of the person or simply a piece of paper containing his or her name, in which case the appearance can be imagined. In other words, there has to be a sufficient degree of iconicity, or perceivable likeness, between the doll and the person for the magic to work. This, however, is not enough. The second step is to make the doll *part* of someone by rubbing the doll against the person or by attaching pieces of clothing or hair or fingernail clippings onto or inside the doll. This indexical, material contact establishes a link between the doll and the essence, spirit, or soul of the person so that he or she can be controlled through the doll. (See also e.g. Frazer 1998 [1890]: 28–44; Gell 1998: 96–104.) In many ways, online dating advertisements are much like voodoo dolls. In fact, contrary to the popular image, the most common use for voodoo dolls was not – or is not – black magic but the pursuit of power or *love*. Voodoo dolls and dating advertisements are both semiotic artifacts that are formulated as an extension of a person. Subsequently, the artifact can stand for that person and mediate social relations between him or her and other people – displaced from the person and, as in the case of voodoo dolls, even unbeknownst to them. But how to capture both the likeness and the essence of a person in a text-artifact? As will be seen later, this is an actual concern in online dating advertisements as well.

In terms of agency, voodoo dolls and online dating advertisements differ considerably. In the online dating advertisement genre, it is the writers themselves who are in charge of producing artifactual extensions of themselves (or their selves). The writers need to entextualize some pattern of writing that captures their likeness and essence in an effective manner. As the writers translate and arrange aspects of their lives into patterns of writing, they interpret other signs in other semiotic modes (e.g., perceptions, memories, habits, values) in particular ways. That is, an online dating advertisement is simultaneously already an interpretation of a person and a sign for others to interpret. Or, to put it differently, writing an online dating

advertisement is simultaneously a dialogue with self and a dialogue with others. Writers can also sketch normative figures of ideal or non-ideal respondents or social relations. Such textual performances are then aligned to by various readers who have the power to decide whether or not the writer is worthy of a reply. In other words, interpersonal compatibility is anticipated and modeled by the writer, but it is first actually experienced and responded to by the reader. So, in the case of online dating advertisements, the source of power for the mediation of social relations is not voodoo spirits but the desirability of the imagery conveyed by the advertisement. In both cases, however, it is believed that giving one's intentions and desires a specific kind of public and aesthetic artifactual form will contribute to their realization in some relevant way. Also, in both cases, such effects are ontology-specific and community-specific. Therefore, voodoo dolls would probably not prove effective for the readers of this text, whereas online dating advertisements might.

**Figure 1** Voodoo dolls in New Orleans

The rest of this first chapter situates language and discursive artifacts within a larger frame of semiotic behavior and intersubjective interaction. Language will be seen as a complex form of human behavior that consists of several dimensions and layers of signifying and interpreting. Semiotic behavior and its artifactual residues will be seen as the basis for all social interaction or sign-mediated encounters between persons. The second chapter elaborates the pragmatist[1] framework of the study. Section 2.1 will

[1] *Pragmatism* is a somewhat vague umbrella term with many possible interpretations concerning *what* it covers (in terms of ideas and principles) and *whom* it covers (in terms of scholars). In this study, it will mainly be used to refer to a relatively strictly Peircean view (which itself is, of course, subject to many possible interpretations). Peirce, in fact, tried renaming his original brand of pragmatism *pragmaticism* ("a word ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers") in 1905. As will be seen later, Peirce's approach has an intimate tie to his semiotic theory that he also called *semeiotic*. Therefore, *semeiotic pragmaticism* might be the aptest label to describe the approach that serves as a

approach the constitution of social reality from a semiotic and interactional standpoint. Semiotic encounters between persons, such as the ones mediated by online dating advertisements, usually become interpreted as instances or tokens of cultural types with specific norms and characteristics. The notions of *genre* and *register*, among others, have been used to refer to such types, or reflexive models, that guide and regiment semiotic behavior. These concepts will be discussed in 2.2. Finally, they will be generalized towards the more fundamental notions of *semiotic ontology* and *ultimate interpretants*.

The second chapter will also discuss the relation of language to personhood, selfhood, and identity (2.3). *Personhood* will be used as a general term encompassing the various sociocultural entitlements, commitments, and characteristics related to personifiable entities (of which human individuals are a prime example). The main focus will be on such interactional processes in which *personae*, or empirically recognizable modes of personhood, are attributed to or undertaken by persons and in which social relations become negotiated. *Selfhood* refers to the reflexive capacity of persons to grasp and to guide the semiotic processes they are involved in. Individual persons and selves will be seen as long-term precipitates of semiotic and interactional processes. That is, they consist of gradually accumulated, internalized, habitualized, and embodied products of social interaction. *Identity*, finally, refers to the ways in which selves evaluate patterns of life arranging them in hierarchies of relative desirability and positioning them on various maps of the social world. That is, identity is a complex metasemiotic process that organizes the personae, social relations, and habits of individuals and communities into more or less coherent wholes.

The theoretical discussion leads up to a more detailed description of the research design and the research questions. Chapter 3 will specify the approach that this study takes towards online dating advertisements as a type of semiotic encounter and as an instrument of personhood. In section 3.1, four more specific questions, concerning the performance of "promotional personae" and the entitlements and commitments associated with them, will be derived from this general approach. The subsequent chapters (4–7) will, then, elaborate and examine these questions in light of the empirical data that will be presented in 3.2. Finally, chapter 8 discusses the findings and concludes the study.

---

metatheoretical background for this study. This approach will be occasionally complemented with other classical pragmatists (such as George Herbert Mead) and neo-pragmatists (such as Hilary Putnam), whose ideas sometimes differ from Peirce's. Mainly, however, this study operates with concepts originating from linguistics, discourse studies, semiotic anthropology, and Kockelman's (2013a) pragmatism-based theory of ontology, interaction, and infrastructure, as will be seen in chapters 1 and 2.

## 1.1 LANGUAGE AND SEMIOTIC BEHAVIOR

"Language" is a concept that delineates certain aspects of human behavior and experience from others (i.e., from "non-language"). Whatever is included in or excluded from any particular scientific or non-scientific definition of language is the result of complex sociohistorical and ideological processes (see e.g. Bauman & Briggs 2003; Agha 2007c). As an object of study, then, language is not a natural entity with unitary boundaries that exists in the world independent of how a certain community of people understands it (see also Määttä 2000). The same applies for ethnotheoretical understandings. Different folk views refer to partly different objects in different contexts with the same concept and project different qualities on those objects. Such contextual, cultural, and ideological understandings of the nature, limits, and possibilities of language should, however, be part of its empirical study, as they guide the use and interpretation of language. Although language users' awareness and understandings of their language use is only ever partial (in both senses of the word), to a certain extent language tends to become what its users believe it to be, both diachronically and synchronically (see e.g. Silverstein 1976). In other words, various ideological (or metapragmatic, metasemiotic) models of language and interaction add additional, reflexive layers of meaning on linguistic practices (see also Urban 2001). Those metalinguistic practices that reason about language, then, selectively assemble and reify in specific ways parts of an inherently diverse web of semiotic processes.

The aim of this study is to approach language holistically from the standpoint of human behavior and experience (see e.g. Kockelman 2013a: 135; also Bruner 1986), not as abstracted from actual events or artificially delineated from other meaningful processes. Online dating advertisements are seen as an instrument that mediates social relations and experiences of social reality. Language is itself a form of behavior and experience as well as a means of interpreting other forms of behavior or experience. The reflexive, metasemiotic capacity of language to represent other, actual or imagined, forms of behavior and experience is essential for human life and for the understanding of phenomena such as identity, selfhood, and personhood. That is, language will be approached both from the standpoint of residence in the world and representations of the world (see Kockelman 2013a; and 2.1.4). As a form of residence in the world, language breaks down into and interacts with other types of embodied behaviors embedded in various environments (such as heeding affordances, using instruments, undertaking actions, fulfilling roles and identities). As a form of representation of the world, language relates to other modes of representation (such as perceptions, beliefs, and intentions).

This means, first of all, that *referentialist* language ideologies (see Rosaldo 1982; Hill 2006; Wilce 2009a), according to which the main function of language is to represent reality by referring to entities existing

outside and independent of language and by predicating things about them, are insufficient for the purposes of this study. Such approaches usually pay little attention to the performative dimension of language. That is, they tend to ignore the ways in which language shapes experiences of reality and creates social facts.[2] Furthermore, language cannot be reduced to grammar (or morpho-syntactic constructions), lexemes, registers, genres, conversational practices, or any other type of *general* sign. While such norm-bound patterns of regularity are of utmost importance to any analysis of language, they form merely part of the meaning of actual discursive patterns. The meaning of any entextualized stretch of language in an actual interactional event, spoken or written, is highly emergent. That is, it emanates from the ways in which different semiotic components (linguistic and non-linguistic) stand in relation to one another, partially cancelling, strengthening or changing each other's effects, and yield composite effects that are not reducible to the components alone. This will be called *text-level indexicality* (see e.g. Silverstein 1993; Agha 2007a: 24—27; also Kockelman 2013b: 47, footnote 12).[3]

In this study, language is seen as one constituent of human *semiosis* (or sign-activity), inseparable from other constituents. Semiosis – understood here strictly in the Peircean sense – refers to a web of temporally unfolding processes in which signs become interpreted as standing for objects of various kinds (producing "meaning," "knowledge," or "experience" and ultimately "minds," "selves," and "persons"). Meaning, then, is anchored in the practical effects of sign-activities. All experiences, perceptions, and knowledge of reality, including knowledge of our "inner" selves, are sign-mediated, based on interpretable signs. A *semiotic object* refers to anything that is knowable, of whatever kind and of whatever degree of concreteness or abstractness (and should not be confused with "objects" as things in the everyday sense). The objects that will be of particular interest for this study include persons and the various constituents they consist of, such as mental states or social statuses. In the Peircean view, humans think and experience the world in signs. Signs begin with *qualisigns* that are mere phenomenological qualities or qualitative possibilities – the classic example being a "feeling of red" – that become embodied in more complex signs (when, for example, one recognizes a red figure against a white ground as an

[2] In terms that will be introduced in section 2.1, these approaches focus excessively on object-sign relations at the expense of sign-interpretant relations.

[3] And it is in these kinds of actual events and textual relations that norm-bound regularities change or persist. While such patterns of regularity rely on various underlying principles of invariance (or legisign principles), such as genetics, event-memory, or habit (see Agha 1997b: 196), ultimately linguistic norms are based on interdiscursive achievements in actual events on a sociohistorical time scale that keep regularities alive by connecting present events with past ones. "Synchrony," then, is merely an abstract conceptual framing of a temporally unfolding continuation of events; it is "semiotically frozen time" implied by intertextuality (Silverstein 2005: 9).

instance of the letter “a,” and so on). In other words, Peircean semiotic breaks “meaning” down to its elementary semiotic partials.[4] The empirical object of research from the standpoint of the study of language is *semiotic behavior*, i.e, the various human activities and their artifactual residues (such as patterns of sound waves, ink on paper, or pixels on a screen) that are either interpreted as signs or that serve as interpretations of other signs (see e.g. Agha 2007a). Chapter 2 will further elaborate this view. (For general overviews of Peircean semiotics in anthropology and linguistics, see e.g. Singer 1984; Daniel 1984, 1989; Mertz 1985, 2007; Parmentier 1985a, 1994; Hanks 1996; Agha 1997b; Deacon 1997; Lee 1997; Kockelman 2005, 2006a, 2010, 2013a; Nieminen 2010.)

## 1.2 INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN INTERACTION

Interpersonal interaction is approached in this study from the standpoint of *semiotic encounters*, or events in which signs connect persons to one another (Agha 2007a: 10). When signs that are relatively publicly perceivable are mutually oriented to and interpreted by interactants, they serve as connecting links that calibrate individual subjectivities in relation to one another into various degrees of intersubjectivity. The more private the signs are, the more mediating links they require. For instance, a sign such as pain is perceived relatively directly by a self, but to others it is accessible only via more mediate signs such as distorted facial expressions or woeful moaning. Such signs can, however, be highly effective and may even produce similar sensations of pain in empathic intersubjects. The culturally and interactionally co-constructed relation between the self’s behaviors (a distorted face, moaning, etc.) and the other’s responses (empathy, consolation, etc.) shapes the experience of both interactants.

It should, however, be noted at the outset that interpersonal interaction is merely one form of human interaction. As will be seen more clearly in chapter 2, we must also account for interactions between persons and their environments as well as intrapersonal interactions (such as interactions between past and future selves). For instance, how one expresses one’s own

---

[4] From a phenomenological point of view, language comprises many layers of experience, starting from the basic sensory and perceptual level. Some of these layers have traditionally been excluded from accounts of linguistic meaning (or sometimes, as in the case of singularities and idiosyncrasies, from the scope of science altogether). Semiotic processes tend to enter the field of linguistics only once arrays of qualisigns have been analyzed as sinsign tokens of cultural types (lexico-grammar in particular) and their symbolic-indexical meaning is being negotiated. Under these traditional layers run streams of “subjective” meaning that include experiences such as the pleasure of hearing a soft, gentle speaking voice or the inspiring feeling of holding the thin, coarse paper of an old book between one’s fingers. Regardless of where the margins of “language” are drawn, such phenomena are certainly part of semiosis. (See also Daniel 1984: 46, 54; or Dewey 2005 [1934]: 36–59.)

pain is an interaction between different constituents of the same person. If one has enough self-control, one may even entirely conceal one's pain. Still, either option is opted for in anticipation of the responses of others, whether these others are co-present, imagined, or internalized (e.g., in the form of cultural norms of behavior). Intersubjectivity and interaction, then, are fundamental phenomenona that extend far beyond interpersonal communication (see also section 2.3).

In the case of online dating advertisements, the signs that mediate intersubjective interactions are carried by patterns of writing embodied in digital text-artifacts. They are a particular kind of *artifactual residue* of semiotic behavior. In the form that they are displayed to the interactants (i.e., as writing on a screen), they are figures shaped out of light (and, in that particular sense, differ considerably from traditional ink on paper). Artifactual residues, then, come in varying degrees of relative tangibility and physical durability. The degrees of tangibility and durability of the sign vehicles determine the range of text-artifacts they can be shaped into. In contrast to speech or bodily gestures, prototypical writing-based artifacts enable the flexible displacement of the artifact from the interactants and, therefore, the mediation of intersubjective interactions across spatial and temporal distances.

The distinction between *texts*, as patterns of interpretable signs, and written, spoken, or other *text-artifacts*, as artifactual carriers of those signs, is an important one. A text can be defined as any array of co-occuring signs that can be framed as a whole in which each constituent sign can be interpreted in relation to one another.[5] The sufficient correspondence of text as it is "laid down" by animators and as it is read out of the artifactual residues by respondents is precisely the kind of intersubjective achievement discussed above. *Entextualization* refers to the process of laying down texts as interactional and denotational entities distinguishable from their surrounds. (See Silverstein 1993; Silverstein & Urban 1996; Agha 2007a; also Bauman & Briggs 1990; Pressman 1994.) *Contextualization* focuses on the ways in which texts are indexically anchored to their surrounds. That is, the meaning of contextualized processes is in some way dependent on the contextualizing processes (see e.g. Kockelman 2013a: 98).[6] We see, then, that stereotypic labels such as "writing" or "conversation" cover a variety of different types of text-artifacts as well as patterns of entextualization and contextualization. Both "writing" and "conversation" can, for example,

---

[5] Text, then, is a sort of temporary "synoptic" enclosure (i.e., whatever is viewed together as a delimited and detachable entity), in which the constituents are subject to indexical iconicity (i.e., their co-occurrence allows each constituent of whatever size to be given meanings based on its relations, such as similarities and contrasts, with other constituents and the entire whole).

[6] Context, ultimately, resides in the participants' shared interpretations and their sanctioning of each other's interpretations – or "attitudes already in place." Any text-context distinction, therefore, is relative, dynamic, and frame-specific. (See Kockelman 2005: 286–287.)

involve widely varying degrees of "directness, immediacy, mutual awareness, and possible reciprocation" (Agha 2007a: 10).

Trying to understand online dating advertisements as interaction seems less fruitful if they are disconnected from the wider processes they are embedded in. Part of the purpose of these encounters is precisely to lead to subsequent encounters in different semiotic modes and channels (such as dyadic face-to-face conversations). Such writing-based interactions can, therefore, only be properly understood in relation to the characteristics of those subsequent encounters that they aim at. That is, if one is interested in persons and their residence in the world, the division of labor between different channels, instruments, and affordances that interconnect persons in various kinds of encounters (some of them written, some spoken, some of them not even linguistic) is essential. Just like linguistic signs can be selected (paradigmatically) among alternatives and combined (syntagmatically) into more complex forms, the channels a person can access simultaneously or sequentially give rise to diverse configurations of intersubjective interaction. (See Kockelman 2013a: 40–41, 201.)

We will return to the notion of intersubjectivity from a pragmatist and semiotic standpoint in section 2.3. As a point of comparison, we might end this section by considering Duranti's (2010) anthropological interpretation of Husserl's and Schutz's phenomenological thinking – which in a number of ways seems relatively compatible with the pragmatist stance adopted in this study. It is important to note that intersubjectivity refers to the human capacity that enables a person to recognize an artifact such as an online dating advertisement (i.e., a constellation of pixels on a screen) as signs of and as a channel to another human being in the first place. That is, intersubjectivity is a set of basic dimensions of human experience that constitute the precondition for increasingly complex social interaction. Unlike, say, an agreement between participants in conversation, intersubjectivity is not a product of communication but a condition for its possibility. Grounded in sociality and empathy, intersubjectivity is the capacity of seeing the world from the point of view of others (cf. also Mead 1934: 144–173). There is intersubjectivity even when others are not physically present.[7] It is in the nature of intersubjectivity that "[a person] finds himself surrounded by objects which tell him plainly that they were produced by other people, [––] artifacts in the broadest sense" (Schutz 1967: 109). According to Duranti (2010: 13), the most specific dimension of

[7] This is, however, a slightly misleading formulation. Deciding a priori where co-presence begins or ends is tricky. Where does one draw the line? In what sense, for instance, is the whole of humanity *not* physically co-present on the planet? It is, rather, a question of objects being *framable* as being co-present (i.e., indexically and inferentially linked) in a number of ways (see Kockelman 2013a: 202, note 6; also Hanks 1996: 45–48, 120). Intersubjectivity, then, involves the ability to perceive or to infer the presence of others in the same natural and cultural world based on a variety of signs, including the artifactual residues they have left behind.

intersubjectivity is "the complex, varied and yet highly specific type of being-with that is made possible by the language faculty and its actualization in particular human languages, dialects, styles, genres and registers." Discursive behaviors and their artifactual residues, such as online dating advertisements, then, are forms of intersubjective being-with on many levels, starting from language use as a sign of an embodied presence (or residence) in the world "even before it can be decoded according to grammatical or lexical information" (ibid.). In other words, "language use is always simultaneously practical and theoretical activity" (ibid.). More specific cultural dimensions of intersubjectivity are involved when such discursive artifacts are interpreted either as an enactment of particular goals and social roles or as symbolic representations of some state of affairs in the world – for example, when online daters carefully present themselves as specific kinds of persons in order to receive replies from desirable kinds of participants.

# 2 A SEMIOTIC VIEW ON LANGUAGE AND PERSONHOOD

This chapter takes a closer and slightly more technical look at the pragmatism-based approach to the semiotic constitution of reality. Section 2.1 first presents some of the basic properties of semiotic processes. Section 2.2 then, building on those basic principles, considers various reflexive models of semiotic behavior (e.g., genres, registers, and social personae). Finally, section 2.3 takes a look at questions of personhood and selfhood.

Classical pragmatism was based on the philosophical thinking of Charles Peirce (1839–1914) and his colleagues and followers, most notably William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead. Peirce's pragmatism was characterized, among other things, by a commitment to reform some of the dualistic, mentalistic, individualistic, and nominalistic understandings of reality, reason, and selfhood in the Cartesian tradition. Another major goal was to link fundamental philosophical concepts, such as "meaning," "truth," or "reality," to human practices and human experience. (See e.g. Misak 2004; Anderson 2009.) The latter goal is what has made Peirce's pragmatism a fruitful metatheoretical framework for empirical human sciences. It has been noted that one of the keys to understanding Peirce's thinking is to keep in view its systematic and holistic nature (see e.g. de Waal 2013: 2). That is, Peirce's classification of the sciences and his thinking in the fields of mathematics, positive sciences, and philosophy all illuminate his semiotics. However, since Peirce founded his thinking systematically on the same basic principles (most notably the universal categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness), his semiotic theory in many ways crystallizes the other aspects of his thinking.[8] The aim of this section is not to extensively discuss Peirce's ideas *per se* but, rather, to lead the way to the anthropological and linguistic applications and operationalizations of Peircean semiotics that will be employed in the empirical analyses (e.g. Silverstein 1979, 1993; Agha 2007a; Kockelman 2005, 2006a, 2010, 2013a).

## 2.1 THE SEMIOTIC CONSTITUTION OF REALITY

Since many of the phenomena that will be discussed in the following sections follow from the basic properties of semiotic processes, a summary discussion of the elementary particles of meaning – the interactional and processual

[8] As Peirce himself remarked [1977: 85–86] (quoted in Atkin 2010): "[I]t has never been in my power to study anything,—mathematics, ethics, metaphysics, gravitation, thermodynamics, optics, chemistry, comparative anatomy, astronomy, psychology, phonetics, economics, the history of science, whist, men and women, wine, metrology, except as a study of semiotic."

triad of sign, object, and interpretant – is in order. As was already mentioned in passing, in the pragmatist view *all* knowledge of reality is considered sign-mediated (see e.g. Parmentier 1994; Misak 2004: 21; Kockelman 2013a: e.g. 102, 110, 166).[9] That is, all *objects* (whether they are material substances, perceptions, foci of joint attention, beliefs, intentions, feelings, social statuses or relations, identities, or instruments, etc.) are projections from semiotic processes in which signs give rise to interpretants. Objects may or may not be bounded and tangible. To put it more accurately, they may be more or less *enclosed* (e.g., more or less precisely delimited, continuously perceivable, detachable from semiotic processes, portable across contexts, intersubjectively recognized, or subject to high degrees of agency) (Kockelman 2013a: 56). In short, an object is whatever is knowable by the signs it exhibits. To quote Peirce:

> I shall endeavor consistently to employ the word 'object', namely, to mean that which a sign, so far as it fulfills the function of a sign, enables one who knows that sign, and knows it as a sign, to know. (MS 599: 31–32; see also Parmentier 1994: 4.)

A sign, then, is something which "stands for" an object in some capacity (Peirce 1986: 99; see also Kockelman 2005). In a sense, signs can be regarded as mediate realizations of the object (Parmentier 1994: 4). We can only experience something based on the interpretable signs that that something exhibits, and we can only know that something to the extent we can interpret those signs. That is, over time our knowledge of an object may increase as our ability to interpret it grows.[10] This applies to physical objects as much as it does to the kind of object that is most relevant to this study, persons.

Peirce split the object into the *dynamic object* and the *immediate object* (see e.g. Parmentier 1994; Atkin 2010). The dynamic object is the object as that which gives rise to signs and constrains the potential for interpretation. The immediate object, in contrast, is the object as mediated by interpreted signs. To take up a simple example: In the case of a relatively physical object, such as a human face, the dynamic object would be the face as mere

[9] Reality may be perceived relatively *directly* (consider, for example, qualisigns) but not *immediately* (at least not in the sense of "non-mediated"; cf. e.g. with phenomenological notions of immediacy). No sphere of "pre-semiotic" knowledge, then, exists in the pragmatist view. The pragmatist view seems to resonate well with Bakhtin's and Vygotsky's notions of mediation. These parallels, however, cannot be dealt with within the confines of this study, but see e.g. Wertsch (1985) and Paavola & Hakkarainen (2008: 169).

[10] Since all objects are mediated by the kinds of signs a particular kind of organism can perceive and by the ways in which it can interpret them, all experience and knowledge is perspectival. No object *per se* (unmediated by semiotic processes) is accessible, even if such an object may exist independently of any particular interpreter (e.g., some physical object).

embodied form, which exists independently of any particular interpreter, and the infrastructural access that interpreting agents have to the face. The immediate object would be the face as it actually appears to some interpreter from his or her relative perspective as mediated by, for example, gaze behaviors (regimented by cultural norms so that, for example, only particular parts of the face may be appropriately available for one's gaze), touch (particularly if the interpreter is blind), cultural concepts, analytical or poeticized linguistic descriptions of the face, and so on. That is, the object of a sign both organizes and is organized by the interpretants of the sign. Reality as dynamic objects works its way into semiotic processes but is only accessible to interpreters as immediate objects. The dynamic object can also be seen as the cause (such as a personal habit or a physiological source of pain) for the fact that a person has expressed a sign. The immediate object, then, is that which exists because the sign brought an interpreter's attention to it (such as a particular experience of pain, shaped by one's own and others' responses to it). (See Kockelman 2013a: 23, 54–60; also Colapietro 1989: 17–21.) To further illustrate the point, in the context of online dating advertisements and specifically from the reader's perspective, we might think of the writer-person as the dynamic object and the gradually sharpening interpretations that the reader makes based on the writer's entextualized signs at different stages of the interactional process as the immediate objects.[11]

### 2.1.1 INTERPRETING OBJECT-SIGN RELATIONS

Any semiotic process relates three components: a sign, an object, and an interpretant. The last of these components that we have not yet discussed explicitly is the interpretant. The interpretant is whatever a sign creates or determines insofar as it stands for an object (see Kockelman 2013a: 46). It is in these "proper significate effects" of signs that meaning is anchored in the Peircean model (CP 5.475; see also 2.1.2). Interpretants can be classified in many different ways. Let us take up a classification that pertains particularly to human interpreters and their responses.[12] An *affective interpretant* is a

---

[11] Persons, of course, are interpretable objects to themselves too. As will be seen more precisely in section 2.3, we also know ourselves as immediate objects based on the signs we can perceive and interpret.

[12] It is important to emphasize that the interpret*ant* is not an interpret*er* (i.e., a person) (see also Dewey 1946: 87). The core of Peirce's model of semiotic processes is not tied to humans or any other particular kind of agent (although Peirce himself at times hesitated on this matter, see e.g. Deely 1990 or Daniel 1989: 84 on Peirce's famous "sop to Cerberus," EP 2: 478–481). In Peirce's monist thinking, all phenomena are described according to the same general principles. All actually existent processes (Secondness) embody chance or possibility (Firstness) and are bound by habit or law (Thirdness) to various degrees. "Matter" (which Peirce also called "effete mind") is more heavily bound by law than "mind" (but not entirely; Peirce was one of the first to advocate the view that Newton's laws are merely

feeling caused by a sign, i.e., a change in the interpreter's bodily state (which is itself a further sign for the interpreter). An *energetic interpretant* is a behavioral response, i.e., a physical or mental effort. A *representational interpretant* is a speech act or a mental state that represents the object-sign relation with propositional or conceptual content. (See Kockelman 2005.) Any interpretant can itself be a further sign to be interpreted — and so on in a web-like manner. A sign will usually give rise to several different kinds of interpretants simultaneously or in succession. Ultimately, a sign may produce a "habit-change" or a "modification of a person's tendencies toward action" (Peirce 1955: 277). An *ultimate interpretant*, whether affective, energetic, or representational, is itself no longer a sign but a disposition to behave in certain ways (e.g., a habit, belief, or a propensity projected on others). (See e.g. Kockelman 2005: 274–278; 2013a: 65–66; Cf. Peirce 1955: 276–279; de Waal 2013: 83–84.) It is an interpretation (e.g., "that person is angry," "this text is ironic") within which an interpreter acts until other signs give sufficient reasons to change that interpretation. We will return to ultimate interpretants in section 2.2.3.

We can now put together the previous discussion in the form of the following diagram (1) of the semiotic triad. As illustrated by the two levels of arrows pointing in opposite directions in the diagram, there is, at a lower logical level, a vector of *determination* flowing from the dynamic object through the sign to the interpretants and, at a higher logical level, a vector of "representation" from the interpretants to the immediate object (Parmentier 1994). In order to avoid terminological confusion, the vector of "representation" might be more appropriately called the vector of *mediation* (or standing in relation to) (Colapietro 1989: 17–20). When these vectors are brought into proper relation in semiosis, knowledge of objects through signs is possible. To simplify, one might say that the vector of determination is the reality working its way into the semiotic process. That is, any sign is grounded in prior processes and constrained by them. The vector of mediation is the way in which interpretation of signs makes them effective in particular ways (i.e., makes the reality experienceable and knowable in particular ways) and shapes the future direction of the unfolding process. (See also Kockelman 2013a: 174 on protentive and retentive framings of semiotic processes; and see the discussion of sieving, ontological assumptions, and ontological transformativity in 2.1.3.)

---

a statistical average, see de Waal 2013: 151). For Peirce, the very possibility of humans having minds presupposes the "mind-like" nature of the universe. Only something that is interpret*able* can be interpreted. That is, the human mind has, in a sense, grown out of the universe and is not a distinct substance as per some dualist views (see also e.g. Damasio 1999). A person is a particular manifestation of mind in the universe (among other things), and the mind is merely a "species of semiosis" (Colapietro 1989: xx). As Deely (1990: 86) puts it, the "action proper to signs" is seen "as already at work in physical nature itself beyond the bounds of organic matter or prior to its advent." That is, anthroposemiosis presupposes physiosemiosis (and zoosemiosis).

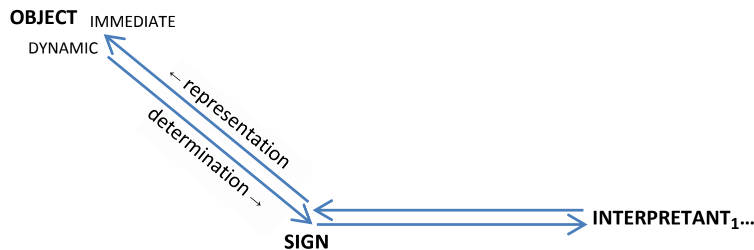


**Diagram 1** The vectors of “determination” and “representation.”

Semiosis, in other words, is a relation between object-sign and sign-interpretant relations. In Kockelman’s (2005: 234; 2006a: 6; see also Peirce CP 8.332; Colapietro 1989: 6) formal definition, a sign stands for its object on the one hand, and its interpretant on the other, in such a way as to make the interpretant stand in relation to the object corresponding to the sign’s own relation to the object. A sign, therefore, is that which “has the ability to redirect the flow of energies” and which “puts things in touch with each other” thereby enabling the exchange of information (Esposito 1979: 23). Signs give us an awareness of how we are in the middle of things: a sign is “anything that has roots and bears fruits; it is anything that is grounded and growing” (Colapietro 1989: 22). The semiotic process, then, is a series of interactions, or relations between activities, that creates a “pathway through time” (Deely 1990: 90).

The importance of the temporally unfolding chain of interpretants for the Peircean model cannot be overemphasized. Meanings do not inhere in signs (as the “other side of the coin”). They are mediated by dynamic and interactive relations between objects, the signs they give rise to, and the interpretants that are calibrated to the signs in actual semiotic events. This kind of model opens to empirical inquiry the question how habits and regularities (i.e., socially shared, culturally transmitted, or temporally relatively stable kinds of meaning), which structuralist views tend to abstract into systems purified from time, space, and variation, come about and persist or change over time. Moreover, it should be noted that the set of signs that an interpreter can perceive in any discursive artifact (such as an online dating advertisement) and the range of interpretants an interpreter can produce are not predetermined or limited to those traditional units and categories defined within linguistics (see also Nieminen 2010: 37–48). Rather, the interpretation of texts is a layered and creative interactive process that involves many dimensions of “meaning” (including, say, ethnopsychological interpretation of what someone’s linguistic structures say about their

personality, grounded in the interpreter's cultural and personal backgrounds).

### 2.1.2 MEANING AS THE EFFECTS OF SIGN-ACTIVITY

Semiosis is an open-ended, web-like process. Any component in the basic triad (object, sign, or interpretant) may simultaneously be a component (object, sign, or interpretant) in other semiotic processes. Moreover, the interpretants of a sign come in temporally unfolding and mutually interacting chains, each new interpretant clarifying the object further.[13] This is where "meaning" is anchored in the Peircean model. That is, the meaning of a sign is in its conceivable effects or "upshot." The so-called pragmatic maxim states this principle as follows:

> Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then the whole of our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object. (Peirce in W3: 266.)

The web-like unfolding of the effects of a sign – its actual, possible, and necessary consequences as well as all the processes that branch from them – means that objects, the signs they give rise to, and their interpretants tend to be spread out in spacetime and between persons. This is what is meant by the *distributed* nature of semiotic processes (see 2.1.5).[14]

Before moving on to questions of agency in semiosis, a few more specific classifications of signs should be introduced, as they illustrate the discussion above and will be used later in empirical analyses. *Qualisigns*, as already mentioned in 1.1, are perceptual qualities or qualitative possibilities. They are embodied in or organized into *sinsigns*, which are actual existents, or qualities actually paired with an object (see e.g. Lee 1997a: 118; Kockelman 2013a: 51). *Legisigns* are general signs (or *types*) that exist as regularities,

[13] In Peirce's teleological and normative model, these chains tend towards *final* interpretants in semiotic communities. Final interpretants are idealized end points of interpretation, when unanimity (or "truth," "goodness," or "beauty") has been achieved. (Final interpretants should not be confused with *ultimate* interpretants, see 2.2.3.) In a sense, final interpretants relate to the semiotic division of labor (which will be discussed in 2.1.5), to various "ritual centers" (Silverstein 2003: 222), and to other expert, prestige, or communal processes in which authoritative interpretations are worked out, ruled on, and disseminated. "Idiosyncratic" interpretants only tend to be possible in a relative sense, locally and temporarily. (Cf. Daniel 1989: 85.)

[14] To rephrase this in a Bakhtinian idiom, an inescapable implication is that all semiotic processes are inherently dialogical. A sign only has meaning insofar as it is recognized, made sense of, and regimented by the self's or the others' subsequent interpretants. That is, there is a dialogical process of give and take between signs and interpretants. (See also Daniel 1984: 21–23; Parmentier 1985b: 376; Piippo 2012: 147.)

habits, and norms. They are only manifested through sinsigns that conform to them. That is, they are never encountered directly, only through their sinsign replicas (or *tokens*). For instance, the alphabet (as a collection of legisigns) allows one to recognize a pattern of colored pixels on the computer screen (as qualisigns) as a token of the letter "a" (as a sinsign). The *ground* refers to the principle that links an object and a sign. Grounds can be relatively *iconic*, *indexical*, or *symbolic*.[15] In iconic semiosis, the sign is linked to the object by virtue of the sign's own qualities. That is, the sign may be seen as resembling the object or, in the case of qualisigns, the sign is embodied in the object. This means that, for instance, a red object embodies redness rather than "resembles" it. (See Ransdell 1986: 63, 67.) In indexical semiosis, the sign is linked to the object by spatiotemporal contiguity, i.e., co-occurrence within some frame (see Silverstein 2005). In iconic and indexical semiosis the ground *per se*, in a relative sense, exists independent of any particular interpreter. Symbolic semiosis, by contrast, is "conventional." That is, the link between the object and the sign is created by the interpretant and grounded in cultural norms.[16] It should, however, be kept in mind that icons, indexes (or indices), and symbols are not really types of signs but, rather, types of grounds, which merely describes a part of any semiotic process. Icons, indices, and symbols refer to particular kinds of interpretations of object-sign relations and are not mutually exclusive: the same sign can be given iconic, indexical, and symbolic interpretations, by different interpreters or by one interpreter simultaneously or subsequently.

Iconic, indexical, and symbolic layers of semiosis interact in many ways. For instance, the frame of co-occurrence in indexicality or the criteria and focus of perceived likeness in iconicity may themselves be symbolically

[15] Both classifications presented here are based on Peirce's universal categories, which are families of more specific categories: Firstness (manifested as, e.g., chance, possibility, sense, embodiedness; qualisigns, icons), Secondness (manifested as e.g. actuality, existence, brute force, embeddedness; sinsigns, indexes), and Thirdness (manifested as, e.g., generality, law, habit, understanding, enmindedness; legisigns, symbols). In this processual and interactional metaphysics, firsts, seconds, and thirds follow one another, and the latter ones build on and presuppose the former ones. (See e.g. Misak 2004; Kockelman 2013a: 67; De Waal 2013.)

[16] Symbols are grounded in *norms*. Normativity refers to the ways in which types of circumstances and types of human behavior become habitually linked by complex sets of *entitlements* (what one can or is allowed to do) and *commitments* (what one must or must not do). Norms originate in the imitation of others' behaviors and are regimented by the sanctioning practices of a community, such as reward or punishment. Norms (as Thirdness) organize the range of socially appropriate and effective types of behaviors in types of circumstances (or, more generally, the range of appropriate and effective interpretants of signs). Norms interact with and are only in a relative sense separable from *causes* (as Secondness) that organize the range of causally feasible and efficacious behaviors. *Practice*, in this study, refers to any particular norm and *performance* to the behaviors that instantiate a practice (cf. with the other meanings of "performance" discussed in section 5.2.2). (Kockelman 2005: 255–259 and the references therein; 2013a: 54–62; see also Sapir 1985 [1931]; Piippo 2012.)

determined (see e.g. Hanks 1996: 45–48, 120; also footnote 7 in section 1.2). Symbolic semiosis, then, organizes the interpretation of iconic and indexical signs (or relations between qualities, to put it differently). Symbols are by nature legisigns and are only encountered as their sinsigns *replicas* (or tokens). Moreover, as general signs, symbols need icons to convey information and indices to link that information to particular ongoing events. (See e.g. Parmentier 1994: 10.) Linguistic symbols encompass both iconic information (e.g., stereotypic conceptual content or imagery) and indexical information (e.g., stereotypic sense relations or appropriate contexts of use), which vary according to the competence and experience of the user. That is, symbolic knowledge grows in breadth and in depth with a person. Both on biographical and sociohistorical scales symbols grow out of indexical and iconic relations. In addition to being relatively "arbitrary," symbols, then, are relatively "motivated" too. They are complex signs that, in human practices, both organize iconic and indexical relations and are organized by them. (See Deacon 1997.)

### 2.1.3 AGENTS AND KINDING

How does a particular sign come to stand for an object instead of some other sign and why does it give rise to a particular interpretant and not some other interpretant? What directs the unfolding of semiotic processes? To supplement the general model of meaning introduced above and to bring it closer to the object of this study, let us now discuss *agency* and introduce the notions of *selection* and *sieving* (see Kockelman 2013a: 17–19, 41–42, 81–85; on the relation of Peircean semiotics to agency, see also e.g. Ransdell 1986: 54; Colapietro 1989: xix, 95–97).

An agent is whatever is capable of affecting which interpretant a sign gives rise to. It may be a *selecting* agent that is capable of sensing a sign and instigating an interpretant. In the case of humans, the agent may be more encompassing than an individual person (e.g., a group) or less encompassing (e.g., a mental state). Kockelman (2013a: 20–21) gives an example of a stereotypic enchaining of cognitive processes: an object first causes a sensation; the sensation, then, indexically (or causally) gives rise to a perception, the perception inferentially (or logically) to a belief, the belief to an intention, the intention to an instigation of, say, a speech act (see also Rosenthal 2004). Each state in the chain can be framed as an agent, which can itself be entangled in many other semiotic processes. That is, agents are semiotic processes too and, therefore, fundamentally distributed by nature (see 2.1.5) and only under particular framings coincide with entities such as persons.

The agent may also be a *sieving* agent that "gives rise to consequences for no other reason than *serendipity*" (Kockelman 2013a: 29, original italics). For instance, the features of a particular environment, instrument, or infrastructure may limit the the unfolding of semiotic processes in particular

ways. Any semiotic process involves both selection and sieving. In fact, a major source of sieving are those processes that are already in place or under way (e.g., previous interpretations or presumed cultural norms, learned codes, habitual channels or infrastructures) (see Kockelman 2013a: 44). Agents operate on different *time scales*. Any single framing tends to overly reify agency. What, for instance, on an interactional time scale appears to be a relatively intentional selection by a person, may appear as non-intentionally sieved or selected for on evolutionary, sociohistorical, or biographical time scales (e.g., a genetic predisposition caused by natural selection or a relatively arbitrary habitual behavior one has been socialized into).

Let us now have a look at the following diagram (2). The top half of the tetragon (S-O-I) corresponds to the sign-object-interpretant relations familiar from diagram 1. The bottom half represents the sign-agent-interpretant relations. The agent (A) takes the sign as "input" and yields as the "output" an interpretant. In other words, the agent interprets the sign-object relation according to its interests or characteristics.

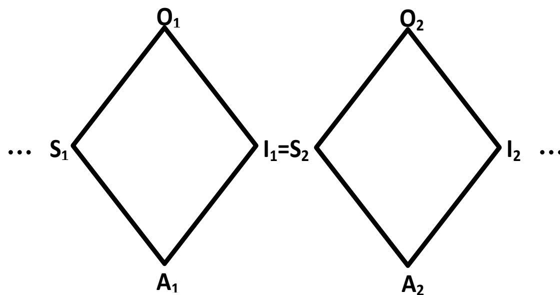


**Diagram 2** Relations between relations based on Kockelman (2013a).

As was mentioned earlier, any component in a semiotic process can simultaneously be a component in other semiotic processes. Choosing among different possibilities (i.e., seeing a particular component as a sign, object, or interpretant in a particular process) is referred to as *semiotic framing* (see Kockelman 2005: 236, 269–271; 2013a: 50). For instance, in the previous diagram, the interpretant ($I_1$) of the first process is a new sign ($S_2$) in the subsequent process.

We can illustrate framing in light of the object of this study. Any segment of an entextualized online dating advertisement can be framed both as a sign and as an interpretant. When a writer describes some aspect of himself – think of it as $O_1$ in the diagram – such as a behavioral routine, a physical attribute, or an emotional pattern, which he knows through some sign(s) ($S_1$) (e.g., feelings, memory images, perceived reflections in the mirror), the act of giving such non-linguistic signs an explicit linguistic description functions as

a representational interpretant ($I_1$). It formulates the object as a particular kind of semiotic object by projecting propositional and discursive structure onto it. That is, the interpretant interprets the sign in a particular way in light of particular cultural symbols (and with particular consequences in terms of possible inferences, accountability, etc.). At the same time such linguistic descriptions function as addressed signs ($S_2$) to be interpreted by (anticipated) readers ($A_2$). They eventually prompt new interpretants ($I_2$) from those interactants that actually end up reading the advertisement (e.g., mental representations of the writer as a person; feelings of suspicion, indifference, trust, interest, desire; the decision to reply or not; the reply text).[17] Self-presentation in dating advertisements, then, is a dialogue both between writers and readers and between past and future versions of the writer. As an interpretant, the text interprets both for self and for others those signs that serve as ingredients for the text.

From the standpoint of agency, it is noteworthy that the writer, as agent $A_1$ that instigates the representational interpretant ($I_1$), will be able to anticipate the readers' ($A_2$) interpretations ($I_2$) and can try to signify in a particular way in order to bring about a particular kind of interpretation. *Addressed* signs are the kinds of signs that have been expressed for the sake of particular interpretants to which the signer is committed (Kockelman 2005: 252; see also e.g. section 5.4). That is, writers interpret themselves ($I_1$) in ways that are addressed to actual or imagined others and are meant to prompt desirable kinds of interpretations ($I_2$). In terms of interactional turn-taking, one may speak of the *mobilizing* of particular kinds of responses from others (see e.g. Stivers & Rossano 2010). The capacity of agents (1) to control the expression of signs, (2) to compose particular kinds of object-sign relations, and (3) to commit to particular kinds of interpretants is called *practical agency*. Their capacity to representationally (1) thematize and (2) characterize semiotic processes and (3) to reason about them is called *theoretical agency*. (See Kockelman 2013a: 81–82.) Agents, then, have various degrees of *flexibility* (practical and theoretical agency), for which they are made *accountable* by others' recognizing and regimenting interpretants (e.g., in the form of evaluation, entitlement, and obligation, see Enfield 2013). (Specifically from the standpoint of this study, see also chapter 3.)

[17] The interpretants produced by the readers are additional interpretants in the first process, since they relate to the same object (i.e., $I_2$ mediately interprets $O_1$). One might say that they point to the same dynamic object that becomes represented as two different immediate objects for two different persons. To what extent the writer's knowledge of the object ($O_1$) and the reader's knowledge of the same object ($O_2$) come to correspond to one another is a matter of the intersubjective calibration of the semiotic processes. Such questions are, of course, at the heart of all social interaction but, as will be seen later, they can find particularly acute forms in settings like online dating advertisements in which the interactants are physically displaced from one another and may sometimes hold very different interests.

To return to the question of selection and sieving in online dating advertisements, it should be noted that the conscious choices made by writers of online dating advertisements in terms of what to reveal and how is merely one of the most apparent manifestations of agency. A wide range of semiotic processes can occupy the position of a sieving or selecting agent. For instance, various cultural norms and ontologies, including genre models and models of personhood, both enable and constrain particular forms of signifying and interpreting. Similarly, habitual and less conscious patterns of self-presentation that individual writers have developed shape the composition of their texts. Furthermore, the characteristics of the channel and the instrument that serve as infrastructure for the linguistic self-presentation considerably sieve the range of possible object-sign and sign-interpretant relations. As will be seen in more detail later, the fact that a digital text-artifact can only carry certain kinds of signs that can only be interpreted in certain ways will be of utmost importance to the social interaction they mediate.

Finally, let us introduce a few more essential concepts that will be central later on. A reader who stumbles across an online dating advertisement on a dating forum text becomes, first of all, aware of the fact that some actual human individual exists out there, based on some very basic indices (such as the fact that someone has written and posted the text). Moreover, the reader can instantly project upon that individual some basic cultural default understandings of what persons generally speaking are like. Then, by interpreting whatever signs are perceivable for the reader in the text-artifact, he or she can project more specific *kinds*, such as social statuses, mental states, or physical characteristics, on that individual, gradually building a more specific interpretation of the person as a semiotic object. From a more general perspective, individuals, however, need not be human individuals and kinds need not be human kinds. A kind is any projected propensity to exhibit particular signs, or to “behave” in particular ways (and is, therefore, one type of ultimate interpretant). An *individual* is any relatively stable background (or, in some sense, a relatively enclosed object) on which more specific (and sometimes less stable and less enclosed) kinds can be projected as semiosis unfolds. As will be seen in 2.2, the text(-artifact) itself is an individual on which various kinds (such as the ascription of a particular genre) can be projected based on various indices. Those assumptions about indices, kinds, and individuals that enable the interpreting agent to perceive indices and to project kinds on individuals are called a *semiotic ontology*. (See Kockelman 2013a: 4–6, 54–56; 2013b.) The same signs can be read as indices of different kinds in light of different ontologies. For instance, the characteristics that are projected on writers based on the signs they exhibit in their texts depend considerably on the readers’ ontologies and can result in widely different interpretations, as will be seen in 4.2.

### 2.1.4 RESIDENCE IN THE WORLD

As was mentioned previously, the notion of the semiotic constitution of reality covers both representations of the world and residence in the world. The term *residence in the world* refers to the relatively non-propositional processes by which humans interact with and make sense of the environments they are embedded in. More specifically, the aim of this section is to underline that residence in the world, too, is understood in terms of semiotic processes. Kockelman (2013a: 96–106) organizes residential processes into five constituents: *affordance*, *instrument*, *action*, *role*, and *identity*. They all have the triadic, web-like, processual, and distributed nature described above. Any knowledge of even basic natural kinds or material substances is based on the signs they exhibit and the interpretants we are able to produce through our interactions with them (including everyday perception as well as such complex cultural behaviors as physical or chemical analyses of them). Similarly, the affordances that such natural features provide and the instruments that such affordances can be incorporated into are semiotic processes. For instance, an instrument such as a hammer is a sign that can be appropriately interpreted by using it to hit a nail (and troped upon, or interpreted "incorrectly," "illegally," or "creatively" by throwing it at an unsympathetic opponent in an outburst of rage). The more interpretations there are for "hammers," the more complex instruments they are. In a different framing, a hammer is an interpretant of its component signs, such as the affordance provided by steel and wood. Finally, we may note that the linguistic representations that denote objects such as hammers are symbolic instruments that can be used to coordinate and reflect on more practical manipulations of such objects.

Online dating advertisements, too, are actor-wielded, affordance-heeding instruments that are used to undertake actions, to inhabit roles, and to fulfill identities – and not merely collections of linguistic representations. As an instrument they, for instance, make use of the affordance provided by space or distance to provide the function of "displaced" and "anonymous" communication. (Various other instruments and infrastructures, such as computers and network technology, are, of course, needed as well.) As will be seen later in the analyses, those residential processes that online dating advertisements are embedded in essentially affect the interpretation of the representations of the self and others that online dating advertisements carry. Representations of the world, then, are one particular, albeit often a particularly important, group of semiotic processes that already presupposes residential processes, such as actions and instruments. Meaning, in short, is not to be understood merely as "inner" representations of an "external" world. We objectify, signify, and interpret with all our behaviors and anticipate the effects of not just our representations but all our interactions with the physical and social world. That is, humans reside and comport *within an interpretation* of the world (Kockelman 2013a: 135).

### 2.1.5 DISTRIBUTED SEMIOSIS AND DIVISION OF LABOR

> *A psychologist cuts out a lobe of my brain (nihil animale a me alienum puto) and then, when I find I cannot express myself, he says, 'You see, your faculty of language was localized in that lobe.' No doubt it was; and so, if he had filched my inkstand, I should not have been able to continue my discussion until I had got another. Yea, the very thoughts would not come to me. So my faculty of discussion is equally localized in my inkstand.*
>
> (Peirce in CP 7.366 [1905].)

This section explores the distributed nature of semiosis and, as its special case, the semiotic division of labor in and between communities, a notion particularly relevant for this study. The implications for questions of personhood will be further elaborated in section 2.3. Part of the anti-Cartesian commitment of Peirce's pragmatism was to go beyond dualist, mentalist, and individualist notions of "meaning" and "mind."[18] These notions were re-envisioned as distributed semiotic phenomena that emerge out of interactional processes.

The problem with individualist and mentalist views that reduce "meaning" and "mind" (or intentionality) to states of individual brains or mental substances is, first of all, that they tend to neglect those mediating infrastructures and actual semiotic behaviors that give rise to experiences and knowledge of the world (including embodied infrastructures such as hands that provide perceptual information, perform cultural techniques, and wield various instruments). In the pragmatist view, all knowledge of either "inner" or "outer" realities is based on interactions with physical, cultural, and social environments.[19] That is, humans experience, think, and exist

---

[18] "Anti-Cartesian" should be understood as a shorthand for a critical revision and reformulation of certain ideas in the Cartesian tradition and not as a rejection thereof. According to Peirce, "Descartes marks the period when Philosophy put off childish things and began to be a conceited young man" (CP 4.71; quoted in Anderson 2009: 154). Similarly, the fact that Peirce's work in some regards was a critique of Kant, should not overcloud the fact that it was also based on and owed enormously to the Kantian tradition. In fact, Peirce regarded Kant's *The Critique of Pure Reason* as "perhaps, the greatest work of the human intellect" (quoted in Leaf 1989: 187).

[19] We could contrast this view with, for instance, Verhagen's (2010: 1) crystallization of the principles of cognitive semantics: "A fundamental principle in cognitive linguistics is that semantics is, indeed, primarily cognitive and not a matter of relationships between language and the world (or truth conditions with respect to a model). [N]otions such as 'perspective,' 'subjectivity,' or 'point of view' – – capture aspects of conceptualization that cannot be sufficiently analyzed in terms of properties of the object of conceptualization." In the pragmatist view, cognition itself is precisely an interactional relation between organisms and their environments. No object of conceptualization can have any properties (in Verhagen's sense) independently of the interpreting agent. That is, no "objects" are simply out there. In that sense, agreeably, all meaning does indeed involve "subject[s] of conceptualization," or agents of interpretation more generally. The "subject" itself, however, is a

mediated by other persons, environments, and instruments (see Skagestad 1999; 2004; Wilce 2009a: 60; Kockelman 2013b: 48; cf. with Popper's [1972] notion of "exosomatic organs"). Interactions with others and the use of artificed instruments (including "prosthetic" extensions of personhood, such as voodoo dolls or online dating advertisements) enable interactants, for instance, to make their signs last longer or travel further or to create more accurate, complex, or imaginative interpretations of them. Moreover, even relatively private representations or intentional states must cohere with others' attitudes and cultural norms in order to be effective in social life. "Meaning" and "mind," then, are embodied and embedded in environments, artifacts, and interactions as much as they are embrained (see Kockelman 2006a: 3).

Secondly, approaches that equate minds with those individual biological organisms in which minds are embodied and embrained during actual moments of cognitive or affective operation easily overlook the dimension of habit and continuity (see Colapietro 1989: 105). Minds exist to other minds and give rise to real effects in many ways independently of the biological epicenter (e.g., via the artifactual residues they have left behind; via others' memories, anticipations, and imaginings of them; via the habits and attitudes they have given rise to in others). Persons as semiotic objects include dimensions other than whatever is going on in the biological organism at any particular moment. In a number of ways, persons can really be in many places at the same time (and even after the biological epicenter has ceased to exist). That is, minds and persons also reside in continuities of interactions, or in distributed webs of habit, on different time scales.[20]

Minds and persons, then, are "species of semiosis" (Colapietro 1989: xx). Any semiotic process is distributed in interactions between objects, signs, and interpretants, which may be displaced to various degrees from one another in different points of spacetime and between different agents. Moreover, such processes rely on ontological assumptions and regimenting metaprocesses that are more or less culture-specific and community-specific. Consequently, all semiotic processes, intentionality and personhood included, can be theorized as *infrastructurally and interactionally distributed* (Kockelman 2013a; also 2006b: 112–117).

---

complex and layered ensemble of interactional processes and agents. From a pragmatist standpoint, then, neither strict "language"-"world" (or cognition-world) nor "subject"-"object" dichotomies make sense.

[20] In Peircean metaphysical terms, one might say that individual persons and minds exist as much in the dimension of Thirdness (in continuities, generalities, and distributed habits) as they do in the dimension of Secondness (in particular events and actual embodied processes). Or, like Peirce himself, one might compare persons to words. Lexemes are only ever actually encountered through particular word-forms (or sinsign tokens), but their meaning essentially resides in the types (or legisigns) that gradually emerge out of complex chains of particular usages and interactions. (See Colapietro 1989: 103; cf. also Gell 1998: 221–223.)

Meaning can be unevenly and unequally distributed in communities. Objects can be known at different grades of clearness by different agents, persons, communities, or generations (see Peirce 1955). The term *linguistic division of labor* (Putnam 1975) points to the fact that reference to objects by linguistic signs has a social patterning. That is, denotational stereotypes and prototypes reside in the practices of different semiotic communities. There are, for instance, institutional practices of ratified experts with specialized skills and tools who have authority over and the last word on the truth (or correctness of reference) concerning a particular kind of object or a particular denoting expression (see Agha 2007a: 127; Carr 2010). This can be generalized to all kinds of semiotic processes and applies to "material" as well as "social" or "mental" kinds (see Kockelman 2013a: e.g. 72–73). In other words, experts can be goldsmiths or chemists as well as psychologists or judges.

Divisions of labor also exist (1) between different genres of discourse (or any other practices) that make the same objects knowable in different but complementary ways and (2) between expert and lay users of any particular genre. Online dating, too, has its own experts. In addition to normative metadiscourses embodied in, for instance, online dating guidebooks (see 3.2 and chapter 7), there are professional experts who offer commercial advice and ghostwriting services for online daters. The production of promotional personae and the mediation of social relations in online dating, then, are also linked to an economic division of labor. That is, they have become *mediatized* (see Agha 2012; also Irvine 1989). One such professional expert, whose services include "writing unique profiles to get you noticed" and "writing one-of-a-kind emails to get someone's attention," emphasizes in an article the importance of being the "real you" and "just being yourself," because "that way, you know when someone shows interest, it's because he or she likes the actual things you said" (Erika Ettin in *Philly.com*, January 29, 2013). There is an interesting tension between the emphasis on being "real" and the suggestion that someone else should write your profile for you. According to the logic of such mediatized practices, professional experts know better what the "real" someone should look like, when shaped into a specific kind of text-artifact, than that someone herself. In light of such ontological assumptions, "realness" of a text-artifact (or the persona mediated by the text-artifact) does not require the person's direct involvement with it (cf. with the requirement of indexical contact discussed at the beginning of chapter 1). The online dater merely serves as an authorizer (or a principle in Goffman's terms), but the practical agency of composing the signs according to cultural models is relegated to experienced experts.[21] (Where the "true self" is anchored and how the relation between a

[21] It is also noteworthy that in these cases there is no explicit distinction between principals, authors (or ghostors), and animators in the text. They differ from expressions like "my friends call me X," "I've been described as Y," in which the source of represented speech is explicilty denoted. As will

person and a text is understood in different contexts are questions that will be returned to in chapter 7.)

Much of meaning, then, ultimately relates to public and socially structured semiotic processes and is, therefore, inherently linked to questions of power and control. Since interpretants of even very private signs are often publicly perceivable, interpretable signs themselves, they can be regimented, even forcefully, by authorities (such as states, churches, or group pressures). Insofar as agents are capable of anticipating others' interpretations and controlling their own semiotic behaviors, they can try to mask the kinds of signs and interpretants that would be considered non-desirable or inappropriate and to feign ones that would be considered desirable or appropriate. One example particularly relevant to this study is *biographic control*, or individuals' attempts to avoid and – if too late – to repress the publicity and circulation of information about themselves that might be considered stigmatizing by others (see Goffman 1990 [1963]). The other need not be an actual person or community. In Mead's (1934) terms it can also be a generalized other that one has internalized in the form of, say, social norms or ego ideals (see also Piers & Singer 1971 [1953]). The distribution of meaning-making often involves a dialectic between processes that attempt to hide object-sign relations from interpreters (whether it is the workings of the superego or underground resistance movements, or a person trying to "save face" or "keep up appearances" in social interaction) and processes that attempt to uncover them (whether it is psychoanalysis or the Inquisition, or someone interpreting the "true self" behind an "embellished" dating advertisement) (see also Kockelman 2013a: 180).

## 2.2 REFLEXIVE MODELS OF SEMIOTIC BEHAVIOR

This section takes a closer look at reflexive models that guide the performance and interpretation of semiotic behavior. The main focus here will be on the notion of *genre*, which in many fields of study refers to the fact that people have the ability to interpret particular artifacts and events such as films, books, art performances, meetings, conversations, or digital text-artifacts as tokens of general cultural types. Such models, then, bring regularity, predictability, and "sameness" or "similarity" to unique semiotic unfoldings in the social world. For instance, the fact that a number of diverse texts can all be recognized as instances of the type "online dating advertisement" or a number of individual persons as "online daters" relies on reflexive models of semiotic behavior. Such interpretive models provide stereotypic guidelines of human intentionality. They partake in event construal, in which interpersonal happening becomes interpreted as specific

be seen later, such expressions are frequently used in online dating advertisements to give one's descriptions an air of objectivity, disinterestedness, or reliability.

kinds of intersubjective events (see Silverstein 2003: 201; cf. Hymes 1972). This section first discusses the notions of genre and register and then generalizes the discussion towards ultimate interpretants and semiotic ontologies.

### 2.2.1 GENRE, FORM, AND CONTEXT

In discourse studies, a customary way to begin theoretical reflections upon the notion of *genre* is by referring to a bipartite history of studies that stems from a difference in the focus of analysis. Some traditions have had as their main point of interest the generic "form" of discourse (i.e., regularities in entextualized arrays of linguistic signs), some the "context" (i.e., regularities in indexical links between language use and types of speech events). Some have defined genres primarily as conventionalized and recurring forms and structures, some as context-specific language-mediated social actions. (Cf. e.g. Hasan 1985; Miller 1984; Swales 1990; Bhatia 2004.)[22] Regardless of whether such commonly repeated divisions accurately reflect any actual tradition of genre studies, one of the genuine effects of such a dichotomy is that the *relation* between "form" and "context" and the theorization thereof may easily fall out of sight. As for the formal structure of text-artifacts, it is evident that many genres are highly conventionalized – but certainly not all, online dating advertisements being one example (see also Nieminen 2010). But what exactly is the place of "form" in the ontology of genre?

Bauman (2004: 3; 2000: 84) starts off his discussion of genre by characterizing it as a "constellation of systematically related, co-occurent formal features and structures that serves as a conventionalized orienting framework for the production and reception of discourse." He later continues (2004: 4):

> The invocation of generic framing devices ... carry with them sets of expectations concerning the further unfolding of the discourse, indexing other texts ... These expectations constitute a framework for entextualization ...

Formal features and structures *per se*, then, are of secondary interest to Bauman compared to what they "carry with them." That is, genre is understood as an inherently indexical phenomenon. The "framing devices" that the respondent recognizes as "generic" point to other texts and signal that the text in question is to be interpreted in a more or less similar way as those other texts. A generic construal, then, can be characterized as "indexical functional interdiscursivity" (Nieminen 2010: 201), as it allows for

[22] Such reflexive models have also been called, for instance, activity types (e.g., Levinson 1992 [1979]). Moreover, types of events are often further divided into more fine-grained episodic structures described in terms of units such as moves and steps (e.g. Swales 1990), sequences (e.g. Hasan 1985), or adjacency pairs (e.g. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974).

a particular text to be interpreted as having a functional similarity with a tradition or type of previous texts. In other words, the interactants of semiotic communities interpret individual texts in light of various indexical stereotypes that link individual texts with general circumstances (e.g., typical environments, actions, roles, and intended consequences on different time scales). The ascription of genre to an interactional event yields interpretations and projects expectations that are far more specific and robust than without any genre ascription (if such a scenario is even conceivable in actuality).[23] Therefore, such generic models contribute to the intersubjective co-ordination of events to the extent they are shared by participants.

Linguistic genres, such as online dating advertisements, model relations between linguistic activities and surrounding environments. They involve (1) a stereotype of some discursive pattern or artifact to be performed or interpreted and (2) a stereotype of associated social relations and practical consequences. That is, linguistic genres model appropriate and effective links between residential and representational processes (or interactional and denotational texts; see Silverstein 2003). Interactants can adopt such models either by abstracting them from particular instances they have encountered over the course of their interactional histories or by learning them directly as normative general models (e.g., during their educational curriculum). The models, then, consist of decontextualized, or stereotypic, knowledge about a variety of interactional and semiotic dimensions of the type of event in question (see e.g. Nieminen 2010 for an analysis of such dimensions). From the standpoint of discourse performance, the decontextualized genre model becomes recontextualized in a particular actual interactional event. From the standpoint of discourse interpretation, a particular interactional event becomes contextualized as an instance of the decontextualized general model. (See Bauman & Briggs 1990.) The explicit linguistic "framing devices" mentioned by Bauman are merely one example of the kinds of indices that can point to particular genre models. Any aspects of the ongoing event, whether in the text or in the context (e.g., social roles, physical location, interdiscursive positioning, or preceding interactional history), may serve as such indices for the interactants. For instance, even formally or denotationally highly unprototypical online dating advertisements are easily

[23] A text such as a film review or a dating advertisement is perfectly understandable on many levels for someone who has never encountered or heard of one before and is therefore incapable of interpreting the text as a "film review" or a "dating advertisement" but otherwise has a sufficient linguistic and cultural competence. Those who are familiar with the genre have, however, a better grasp of, for instance, who the writers and readers most likely are in terms of social statuses and intentions, what the necesseray prerequisites and possible consequences of such texts are, how such texts are typically structured, whether the particular token is appropriate or typical, how such texts are related to other texts and events. That is, genre knowledge provides a much more detailed understanding of the interactional structure of the event and of its relation to different social and semiotic processes.

recognizable as instances of the genre based on their semiotic context (including, for instance, the obvious fact that one has intentionally entered a dating service and performed a search for dating profiles).

Furthermore, particular texts are always more than instances of general types, and particular texts should not be reduced to their genre "membership" alone. According to Bauman (2000: 85):

> [T]he fit between a particular text and the generic model – or other tokens of the generic type – is never perfect. Emergent elements of here-and-now contextualization inevitably enter into the discursive process.

That is, there will inevitably be intertextual gaps between general models (or decontextualized stereotypes) and particular instances. The indexed genre model is merely an interpretative resource in light of which the particular text can be interpreted in the here-and-now. Any actual interpretation of a text is the result of an interplay between different reflexive models and the emergent elements of the particular event. If genres are understood as reflexive models, then no text inherently "belongs to" a genre. The indexical link between genre models and particular texts is an interpretive and interactional achievement.[24] Accordingly, interactants may not agree at all on generic interpretations or may gradually or suddenly switch from one interpretation to another (e.g. when reading April Fools; see the discussion of ontological transformativity in 2.2.3). Interactants may also differ in terms of how fine-grained supra-genres or sub-genres they are able distinguish. Moreover, the same text can index two or more generic models or may not seem like a very typical instance of any model, thereby yielding various hybrid, mixed, or gradient interpretations (see e.g. Bhatia 2004; Solin 2006; Mäntynen & Shore 2014; cf. Agha 1997a; 2007a: 245–265). In fact, it has been suggested that different genres differ in terms of their tendencies towards creativity versus fidelity to tradition and in terms of the explicitness or implicitness of their anchoring to a specific genre (see Briggs & Bauman 1992; Urban 2001). For instance, commercial advertisements, the prototypical promotional genre, sometimes aim at being "unique" or "innovative" and at masking their persuasive nature by exhibiting a minimal resemblance (or a maximal intertextual gap) with other advertisements (see e.g. Halmari & Virtanen 2005; Östman 2005.)

[24] One example is the process of data collection, which is usually based on a combination of explicit scientific criteria and the intuitions of the researchers as speakers of a language and members of a culture. Such settings easily lead to reified notions of genre(s), as it is easy to overlook the inherent reflexivity of generic interpretations.

### 2.2.2 REGISTERS AND SOCIAL PERSONAE

A close kin to *genre* is *register*. The mutual division of labor between these two concepts has been settled quite differently in different traditions. (For an entirely different kind of approach, see e.g. Hasan 1985 or Halliday & Matthiessen 2004.) In Agha's account (2007a: e.g. 55, 80–81), registers are reflexive models of conduct that link repertoires of performable linguistic and non-linguistic signs to stereotypic images of personhood and social relations for some community of interpreters that recognizes the link. Registers, then, are stereotypes of social indexicality. They emerge in sociohistorical processes of *enregisterment* that regroup sets of behavioral signs under stereotypes of personhood. A register comprises a set of enregistered emblems, i.e., signs that convey stereotypic images of persons (e.g., "educated," "female," or "leftist"). Three elements are involved: 1) a perceivable sign, or diacritic, 2) a *social persona*, or an icon of personhood, that the sign is connected to, and 3) a social domain, or the community for whom the sign has an emblematic function. (Ibid., p. 235–236.)

The linguistic diacritics that give rise to register interpretations and persona ascriptions need not necessarily be visible or audible linguistic forms, such as word forms, morpho-syntactic constructions, or phonetic patterns, *per se*. The representational contents denoted by tokens of symbols may equally serve as diacritics. Agha (2007a: 235, original italics) notes as follows:

> Important though they are, objects of sense perception are not the only kinds of perceivable things that have emblematic functions; things *denoted by* objects of sense perception can also have such functions. … [U]tterances make the things they denote present or palpable as objects of cognition.

To evoke stereotypic social personae, the writers of online dating advertisements can, then, resort to particular linguistic forms as diacritics in their performances (e.g., dialectal or colloquial forms) or use various *role designators* to denote diacritics. Role designators include (1) nouns that denote types of social entities, (2) verbal or adjectival descriptions of attributes and behaviors of persons (e.g., appearance, habitual actions, or emotional patterns), and (3) a variety of discursive patterns that organize such descriptions (see Agha 2007a: 249; also chapters 4–6). Such designators are linked to each other through stereotypes of personhood, and one usually enables inferences about the others. That is, role names are revealing of stereotypic characteristics and descriptions of characteristics index nameable stereotypic roles. (See Agha 2007a: 246–249; Agha 2011a: 29; also section 5.4.) In the context of online dating advertisements, it is particularly important to note the fact that denotational patterns can become enregistered. We can, for instance, recognize social types such as those "(egoistic) people who love to talk about and praise themselves" or those "(annoying) parents who only ever talk about their children" regardless of the

specific linguistic and discursive patterns they compose. In other words, diacritics can be linguistic signs or interpretants of linguistic signs, whether affective, energetic, or representational, and a person can be interpreted based on the signs she animates or based on the signs she is the object or interpreter of. Moreover, a speaker can impose persona readings on co-present or absent others by denoting them as figures in her own speech.

In Agha (2007a), with its main emphasis on social relations, the term "genre" is only used in a non-technical sense to refer to the formal patterning of denotational text. However, many kinds of register phenomena, such as the enregisterment of denotational patterns mentioned above, come close to our previous discussion of genre. When we recognize a text-artifact as a "film review," we recognize segments of text as instances of "film reviewing" (an enregistered denotational pattern) and we recognize the one doing the reviewing as a "film reviewer" (an enregistered social type). There seems to be a general tendency to use the term "register" when approaching social indexicality from the standpoint of types of actors, whereas "genre" focuses on types of activity *per se*. Since action and actors can only be separated conceptually, there is an obvious overlap between the two concepts. Any stereotype of action includes some default values for the actors as well. Genres might, therefore, be viewed as more complex models that incorporate an interactional frame of participation and the tasks of producing and receiving some artifactual end product, which, in the case of linguistic genres, usually embodies a specific kind of denotational text.[25] Different instances of the same genre may, then, be performed with different register values or personae (see also Goffman 1990 [1959]: 37). That is, we may recognize, say, "intellectual and objective-analytical film critics" as opposed to more "egocentric and subjective-evaluative film reviewers" performing the same task. Also, a genre perspective with its focus on the organization of the activity itself draws attention to the wider practices and intertextual relations in which genres are embedded (e.g., how discourse is recontextualized from different sources, rhetorically designed in view of particular audiences and linguistically structured and formulated in light of particular ideologies as part of professional practices that produce, for example, a "film review"; and how, subsequently, the "film review" becomes circulated in society, embedded in other practices, and replicated in other texts, such as film advertisements). The distinction between register and genre, then, is practically useful in many settings. For the purposes of this study, it is, however, equally useful to see the underlying similarities between such reflexive models.

[25] An instance of register-based interpretation, in contrast, may be as "simple" as seeing a passer-by in the street wearing a particular kind of clothing and inferring that the person is a "foreigner" or a "Hasidic Jew." No mutual reflexive awareness of this encounter or any coordinated pattern of linguistic behaviour needs to take place.

### 2.2.3 SEMIOTIC ONTOLOGIES AND ULTIMATE INTERPRETANTS

As we concluded in the previous discussion, *genre* and *register* can be understood as two specific kinds of conceptualizations of reflexive models. A reflexive model allows interactants to recognize some particular sign (e.g., an attribute or behavior of a person; a speech act or a linguistic artifact) that is present in an event as a token of a general type. Such recognition allows the interactants to interpret the event in light of general stereotypes (e.g., a type of activity or a type of person) and to expect it to further unfold in particular ways. Calling a particular reflexive model *enregistered* refers to that fact that it has become recognized by, or the habit of, a larger community (regardless of how consciously aware interpreters happen to be of such interpretive processes) (Agha 2007a: 185–188; see also Daniel 1984: 25; Sapir 1985 [1927]).[26] From the standpoint of the recognizability of genres and registers, such reflexive models are stereotypes of indexicality (or indexical legisigns) (see Agha 2007a; Nieminen 2010). That is, they tell us that when a particular set of signs is perceived, some general icon (e.g., an image of personhood or a diagrammatic structure of denotational text) pertains to the ongoing event. From a wider cultural standpoint, genres and registers have the nature of symbols. They are general signs that create links between objects and signs (or kinds and indices; behaviors and their consequences) that would not exist independently of the community of interpreters and are not based solely on inherent qualities or relations of co-occurence. Rather, the precise logic that links particular kinds of linguistic behaviors with, for instance, particular intentions or social statuses grows out of symbolically motivated and regimented sociohistorical processes. Such symbolic processes organize and regroup iconic qualities and indexical relations (or embodied and embedded behaviors) in ways that cohere with other cultural practices, beliefs, and values. Consequently, genres and registers can be detached from their actual usages in events in which they have a "particularizing-indexical" function (Agha 2011c: 173) and discussed and reasoned about as general cultural types (e.g., in everyday conversations, in educational contexts, in the media, in guidebooks and manuals for writers; see chapter 7).

In the general semiotic terms introduced in section 2.1, reflexive models involve particular kinds of semiotic ontologies, or sets of assumptions, that enable an agent to perceive indices and to project kinds on individuals. That is, interactants scan environments, persons, and activities for cumulating indices that lead to interpretations such as "this is a film review," "that person is angry at me," or "this is not to be taken literally" and coordinate their behaviors accordingly. Individuals, then, can be animate persons or inanimate artifacts. Indices may be any kinds of perceivable and interpretable signs evinced by persons or their artifacts. Kinds are ultimate

[26] A process of interpretation can, for example, be relatively intuitive, in which case an interpreter only experiences the results of a semiotic process without being particularly aware of the signs interpreted.

interpretants, or projected propensities to behave semiotically in particular ways, that are used to make sense of events and to anticipate their future unfolding. Ultimate interpretants will stand until there are sufficient grounds for change. The notion of *ontological transformativity* refers to such changes in relations between individuals, kinds, indices, and agents' assumptions (Kockelman 2013b). As an illustration, let us consider the parasitic genre of April Fools (see e.g. Visakko & Voutilainen 2012). April Fools are text-artifacts that can be kinded in two quite different ways with very different kinds of consequences and expectations. Most readers would begin interpreting such a text as, say, a news article. Eventually, some of the readers would pick up the cues intentionally left by the writer and come to the realization that the text is, in fact, not a news article but supposed to be interpreted in light of an entirely different kind of model. The gradual accumulation of indices would lead to a new interpretation of both the nature of the text-artifact and the social statuses of the participants. In other words, the agent's ontological assumptions about the kinds that constitute the individuals in question would be transformed. Similar general principles apply for all the kinds examined in this study, such as chronotopes (see 4.3) and the emotions, moods, intentions, beliefs, or other mental states of interactants (see e.g. 4.2, 5.4, 6.4).[27] As will be seen in chapters 4 and 7, different agents often orient to different indices and project different kinds on the text-artifact and its writer. The coherence of semiotic objects, including persons and selves, then, is socially fragmented and often requires active efforts of maintenance (such as anticipating non-desirable interpretations; see chapters 5 and 6).

## 2.3 PERSONHOOD, SELFHOOD, AND IDENTITY

As we noted in our previous discussion of agency (2.1.3), individuals are often not very precise or useful analytical units. This section further clarifies the constituent processes of human individuals, insofar as they relate to the concerns of this study. This section is also meant to elaborate and flesh out our initial discussion of personhood as an interactionally and

[27] In more specific semiotic (and less psychologizing) terms, a "mental state" (e.g., a belief, a perception, or an intention) may be seen as an *intentional status* (as a specific kind of ultimate interpretant or embodied sign) that is projected by *intentional roles* (signs indicative of someone's intentional status) and *intentional attitudes* (responses that attribute or ascribe an intentional status to someone). Having a mental state in the psychological sense means a self-attributed epistemic commitment (belief), empirical commitment (perception), or practical commitment (intention). Such commitments are self-controlled propensities to signify and interpret in ways that conform or cohere with a specific intentional status (or kind). (See Kockelman 2006b.) We may see from the above discussion (and from later discussions and analyses) that genres and registers, as relatively complex kinds of cultural ontologies, combine and coordinate both social and intentional statuses.

infrastructurally distributed semiotic process (2.1.5). In particular, the aim is to understand subjectivity, selfhood, and identity in relation to language and personhood. An additional aim of this discussion is to point out that a contrast between individuality and sociality is essentially misconceived (see also Mead 1934: 201–203) and that individuals emerge out of sociohistorical and interactional processes.

### 2.3.1 PERSONS AS PRECIPITATES OF INTERACTIONAL PROCESSES

The premise in this section is that individuals only exist as ontology-specific framings that reify and enclose what, in different framings, would appear as sets of relatively coherent but radically distributed processes.[28] In this relative sense, various forms of "individuality" and "identity" already exist at the biochemical level of the human organism. Each organism has, for instance, a DNA pattern that reflects a particular lineage and, for most organisms, is unique to a certain degree. It has also been noted that the human immune system functions as a semiotic sieve that is to some extent capable of distinguishing the "self" (as a particular organism) from "others" (as organisms, objects, or environments distinct from the self). (See e.g. Sebeok 1988, 1989: vii; Wilce 2003.) From a developmental perspective, it has been suggested that humans only gradually begin to understand themselves as individual personified wholes. This realization is inherently linked with a progressively increasing capacity to interact with one's physical environments (e.g., by using one's extensions, such as limbs, organs of perception, and tools, to discover one's boundaries in brute indexical contacts with the resistance of the world) and a gradually increasing capacity to interact with others, to take into account the perspective of the other, and to understand others in terms of intentionality (see also 4.2). In such interactions one discovers that others' testimonies and knowledge will often correspond better with one's experience than one's own and that one's desires and intentions will often be denied by others. (See e.g. Colapietro 1989: 69–75; Kockelman 2006b: 83–86; also Dewey 2005 [1934]: 62.) The individual, then, emerges as the locus of frustration, ignorance, and error as much as that of knowledge and intention ("I err, therefore I am"). This (mis)representational capacity of a person (or, more generally, the capacity to fail to cohere) will be referred to as *subjectivity* (see Kockelman 2006a; 2006b: 108–109; 2013a: 142). The development of subjectivity means that one learns to distinguish between more private and more public semiotic realms. What is noteworthy is that such distinctions are the result of

---

[28] Since most of the constituent processes that make up an individual involve the environment as much as they involve the organism, separating the two is only a particular framing or ontologization. When it is useful or necessary to emphasize the inseparability of (the constituents of) the organism from (the constituents of) the environment, one may use, for instance, the term *envorganism* (coined by contraction and concatenation from *env-ironment* and *organism*) (Kockelman 2013a: 19).

interactional processes in which others function as interpretants of the self. That is, the roots (or conditions) and the fruits (or consequences) of individuality are outside individuals and selves are socially organized (see also Mead 1934: 164–168 and section 2.3.2).

Subjectivity and intersubjectivity can be seen as inverse framings. One gradually realizes oneself both as a subject (as partially different, with a differing perspective) and as an intersubject (as partially similar, with an overlapping perspective). If the mind is understood as a distributed semiotic process (see 2.1.5) not localizable in individuals alone, then one may say that in those processes in which selves and others are mutually entangled as co-interpreters, there is a fusing of minds into *commind* (EP 2: 477–478; cf. also Duranti 2010). That is, intersubjectivity can be seen as partially corresponding experiential worlds based on joint semiotic processes and shared ontologies (including genres, registers, and other cultural stereotypes; see 2.2). Kockelman (2005: 253) distinguishes three degrees of intersubjectivity. In the first degree, a self stands in relation to an object in a way that corresponds to how an *alter* (or an other that is intersubjectively linked with a self) stands in relation to it. There is a mere correspondence of interpretation (e.g., as the result of cultural, biographic, or biological similarities), of which the interactants may not be consciously aware. On the second level, a self stands in relation to an object on the one hand, and to an *alter* on the other, in a way that makes the *alter* stand in relation to the object in a way that corresponds to how the self stands in relation to it. The *alter*'s relation to the object is caused by the self's relation to it (e.g., through joint attention), whether the self is aware of the fact or not. That is, there is causality in addition to correspondence. Finally, on the third level, a self is committed to making an *alter* stand in relation to an object in a way that corresponds with and is caused by the self's relation to it. In other words, there is correspondence, cause, and commitment. In the third degree of intersubjectivity, the interactants have a reflexive awareness of an achieved or attempted correspondence of interpretation, often mediated by linguistic symbols and cultural knowledge. Intersubjectivity, then, is closely interlocked with selfhood as the capacity to care for others' interpretations (see also 2.3.2) and with the adoption of cultural instruments, roles, and traditions (see Kockelman 2006b: 86; also 2.2 and 2.3.3;).

We can conclude from the above that persons are both shaped by others and shape others in more or less conscious and committed ways in interactional encounters on different time scales. They learn to step into the role of the other and to act in ways that relate to others' attitudes. In Mead's classic formulation, selfhood is conceptualized from two perspectives, as the *I-self* and the *Me-self*. The I-self is the creative and more or less conscious epicenter of the individual that acts socially and reacts to others' attitudes. In semiotic terms, the I-self is the self as expressing signs (or indices) to others. The Me-self is the self as having taken into account, or having internalized, others' organized attitudes, or others' regimenting interpretants of one's

signs (or kinds). (Mead 1934: 174–175; Kockelman 2013a: 89–90; see also 5.4.) This model, in some sense, conceptualizes persons both as "subjects" of semiosis (the I-self) and as objects of semiosis (the Me-self) (see Singer 1984: 59–61). Persons gradually acquire habits of thought, behavior, and emotion in relation to generalized others and their anticipated interpretations.[29] They learn to inhabit a range of personae, each of which is committed to giving rise to or avoiding specific kinds of interpretations from specific kinds of others. Such modes of personhood have been classified in a variety of ways in different traditions. Distinctions have been made between, for instance, ought, actual, and ideal selves (Higgins 1987); feared, real, and ideal selves (Wallace & Fogelson 1965: 380–383); true (qua psychologically existing), actual (qua socially expressed), and ideal or possible selves (Rogers 1951; see also Bargh et. al. 2002); real and possible selves (Markus & Nurius 1986). It is to this kind of field that "self-promotion" and the "promotional persona," too, relate.

In the social lives of individuals, wide ranges of interactional events give rise to wide ranges of interpretations of personhood and selfhood. Some turn out to be ephemeral and scatter in spacetime and vanish from memories, but others live on and become internalized, habitualized, and embodied by interactants in different ways. This is what is meant by the fact that persons and selves as semiotic objects are precipitates, or accumulating and transforming end products, of distributed semiotic processes. Such processes are subject to all the forms of organization, regimentation, and division of labor that human interactions in general are subject to. On the sociohistorical scale, some conventional types of events aim at perpetuating accumulated interpretations of personhood (e.g., rituals of solidarity or professional performances that maintain expert statuses), whereas others aim at ontological transformativity (e.g., performative or "baptismal" events of various types, whether official, such as weddings or sentencings, or mundane, such as first dates or break-ups). On individual biographic scales, some "landmark" events will turn out to be more central than others and some persons will prove more consequential as interpreters of the self than others. Emergent and unforeseen successions of events can push persons onto unexpected new biographic trajectories, and some such trajectories may be entirely out of the individual's control (e.g., being labeled as an "enemy"

---

[29] The term *generalized other* refers to an individual's assumptions about the organized responses of others (see Mead 1934: 154–164). Such assumptions are based on direct experiences and particular responses of particular others that have been further analyzed, organized, and generalized over time (id., p. 158). The generalized other is the "attitude of the whole community" (id., p. 154) or a "reflection of the general systematic pattern of social or group behaviour" (id., p. 158) that "enters as a determining factor into the individual's thinking" (id., p. 155). It is an individual's capacity to take the attitudes of others toward himself or herself, toward one another, and toward common social activities. Such a capacity enables individuals to coordinate their behaviors in light of all the different roles and goals at play, or the presumed rules of the entire social "game."

by some hostile other or a "disruptive" or "disabled" problem child by professional experts). (See e.g. Mehan 1996; Silverstein 2003; Haviland 2005; Wortham 2005.). Online dating advertisements represent one fraction of such complex processes. The task of the online dater is both (1) to organize and to communicate an understanding of herself or himself as a person to others and (2) to negotiate social relations and compatibility with anticipated and imagined others. Such tasks may transform, reorganize, or perpetuate the person as a semiotic object. Each semiotic encounter between online daters both presupposes a set of pre-existing interpretations accumulated on biographic time scales and entails new interpretations on the interactional time scale. The encounter itself is regimented by a variety of norms and ontologies formed over sociohistorical time scales (see section 2.3.3). However, what is specific about online dating advertisements as compared to many other types of encounters is the high degree of control writers have. It explicitly brings forward the attempts of selves to care for the signs they compose and the interpretations they give rise to in others.

### 2.3.2 SELFHOOD AS CARING FOR AND COHERENCE

Selfhood refers to the reflexive capacity of persons as interpreting agents to care for the semiotic processes that they are involved in and that they become accountable for (Kockelman 2006a; 2013a: 171–199). The notion of *caring for* involves both agency and affect.[30] Selves, first of all, react affectively to

[30] The terms *affect*, *emotion*, *feeling* (as well as *attitude*, *desire*, *mood* etc.) have been used in widely differing ways in existing literature. A common – and commonly criticized – dividing line is often drawn between what is considered "natural" (or "universal," "biological") and what is considered "cultural." Such distinctions are often difficult to maintain and sometimes beside the point. It has become somewhat clear that culture, for instance, shapes neurological and physiological patterns (or the causes of affect) (see e.g. Wilce 2003). Moreover, affects are never experienced in isolation but the ways in which they are responded to shape their manifestation. That is, affects are always caught up in reflexive semiosis and cultural epistemic formations. They cannot be reduced to their biological causes but can hardly be understood without reference to them either. Keeping these caveats in mind, there seems to be a relatively cross-cultural (or species-specific) basic set of bodily signs, such as excitement, joy, anger, grief, or shame. In this study, these are called *affects* (cf. affective interpretants, see section 2.1.1 and Kockelman 2005; 2013a: 64–65). In semiotic terms, *affective unfoldings* (Kockelman 2013a: 177–182) are any semiotic processes that incorporate affective interpretants in some way relevant for some specific framing (since, arguably, all human processes involve some degree of affect). *Emotion* can be used to refer more specifically to the culturally theorized, complexly performed, and intersubjectively shared types of responses to affect (e.g., expressing or repressing; dealing with, reveling in, masking, feigning, invoking; attributing to others; evaluating and linking with morality and causality). (See Kockelman 2006a: 114–117; Wilce 2009a: 8–9, 28–30.) There can, then, be expression of emotion without a corresponding affect, as in the case of faking joy over others' success (although eventually simulation may lead to affect). Finally, any affective unfolding can itself become the object of another affective unfolding ("emotions about emotions," e.g., shame about experiencing desire).

the unfolding of the semiotic processes they are entangled in. One may desire a particular outcome and, therefore, be pleased with an unfolding that is coherent with one's desire or enraged by a contrary one (cf. also Wilce 2009a: 10, 110, 116–117, 122–123). Secondly, depending on the type of semiotic process, selves may have more or less flexibility (or practical and theoretical agency) in relation to such processes. Selves may, then, strive to signify and interpret in ways that maintain the coherence of such processes. One may care for one's kinds (e.g., social statuses, personae, and relations; mental states and moods; bodily attributes), one's possessions (e.g., instruments or artifacts; achieved prestige statuses or acquired knowledge), and significant others (e.g., friends and family; opponents and enemies). Selves, in all, consist of those objects that are reflexively cared for. As clarified in previous sections, such objects are projections from the semiotic and interactional processes that one is involved in and held accountable for. Ultimately, then, one cares for others' recognizing and regimenting interpretants (see Kockelman 2013a: 193). If others' interpretants of one's signs do not correspond with the interpretation one has committed to (e.g., when trying to be an "intellectual" one gets interpreted as a "wannabe"; or when one falls short of the biographic ideals set by generalized others by lacking a "successful career" or a "wild youth"), selves may respond with emotions (e.g., shame, sadness, and ultimately a raging desire to try harder) and agentive repairs (e.g., studying harder, refining one's performances, seeking new experiences or better employers; or simply justifying to oneself why others are wrong). Selfhood, then, is understood as ensembles of semiotic processes the reflexive coherence of which is being cared for (Kockelman 2013a: 176).

Selfhood is closely related to the notion of *identity*. It follows from the previous discussions that identity cannot be understood in terms of static, reified labels and that strict dichotomies between personal and social identities are untenable. In Agha's (2007a: 233–277; also 1996) discussion, for instance, identity points to the entire relational field of social-indexical processes in which images of personhood become claimed by, attached to, and detached from persons. Kockelman (2013a), in turn, theorizes identity as a complex type of residence in the world. Identity refers to a metaprocess that reflexively organizes other residential processes (such as actions and roles) and their coherences. Identity involves some self as an ensemble of constituents (kinds, residential and representational processes, or patterns of life) that is being reflexively cared for and that is identifiable as the same across contexts and may be enclosed as an individual and contrasted with other individuals (see Kockelman 2013a: 130; cf. also section 2.1.5). When the constituents, or patterns of life, of a self (as signs) become interpreted in light of, for example, affects, traditions, cultural norms, stereotypes, prototypes, others' patterns of life, or any other evaluative techniques (as interpretants), *value* (as an object) results. Value organizes social worlds and patterns of life from the standpoint of a self in terms of relative desirability

(e.g., whether what just happened was good or bad; whether it is more important to be "happy" or "successful"; whether there is even a difference between the two; whether one is content with remaining a "linguist" or anxious to become an "anthropologist"; whether one hates or likes being regarded as "serious"; whether one's dear friend should take it or leave it; whether their lifestyle is an insult to ours; whether one prefers city life or the countryside, solitariness or sociality, jazz or blues, etc.). That is, value serves to reflexively organize persons into relatively coherent wholes (see Kockelman 2013a: 129–131, 172).

Identity, then, is a process of existential rationality that consists of the evaluation of complex patterns of life in terms of desirability and coherence. Identity allows persons to head towards or away from particular positions in social and semiotic worlds based on value (for Kockelman's elaborate metaphor of travelers, terrains, places, maps, contours, and paths, see 2013a: 183–199). Values may be expressed by a wide variety of signs, such as the combinations of roles one performs, the plans one plots, the intentions one holds, the courses of action one chooses. Online dating advertisements only capture a tiny fragment of identity, but they illustrate interestingly a particular set of conditions under which persons in an explicit discursive manner express their values (or those social and intentional statuses that cohere with their values) and care for their constituents.

### 2.3.3 CULTURAL ONTOLOGIES AND METADISCOURSES OF PERSONHOOD

This section further discusses the role of cultural understandings in the formation of persons, subjects, and selves. In 2.3.1 we noted that subjectivity develops in embodied contacts with the social and physical environments one is embedded in. Such indexical self-awareness is, however, guided by and "infused with a specific cultural understanding" (Urban & Lee 1989: 6). In fact, even the most elementary kinds of physical techniques and social contacts are regimented by cultural ideologies (see e.g. Sapir 1985 [1927]; Mauss 1973 [1935]). For instance, the German "Black pedagogy," which was introduced in the 1930s and spread to many countries, including Finland, advised parents to refrain from all unnecessary physical contact with or attention to their children in order to raise good, independent citizens (Kinnunen 2013: 60–61), effectively erasing an entire perceptual channel from the toolbox of intersubjective contacts and limiting knowledge of persons to visual and auditory signs. Furthermore, it is well documented how the notion of psychological individualism gradually developed and took over in Europe with massive consequences (see Dumont 1986; Danziger 2012: 67–68; also Wilce 2009a: 140–143, 159–161). Whereas many cultures recognize negative forms of interpersonal isolation, such as "aloneness" or "loneliness," it has been suggested that it may be peculiarly characteristic of the Western world to place high value on positively evaluated variants, such

as “solitude” or “privacy” (e.g. Daniel 1989: 75–76). Ideas and experiences of intersubjective separateness and distance (cf. section 7.3), then, in part stem from cultural understandings. On sociohistorical time scales, both folk and scientific theories and ideologies as well as their political and practical implications enable and constrain particular practices of human sociality, models of personhood, and ranges of conceivable identities.

Such symbolic ontologies become embodied and disseminated in cultural metadiscourses (see Urban & Lee 1989; Agha 2007a: 151; Wilce 2009a: 168–169; 182–183). Mauss (1985 [1938]) in his classic article charts the emergence of the Western individualistic conception of the self in a narrative that runs through, for example, traditional totemic clans, Etruscan and Roman mask (Lat. *persona*) societies, Roman legal discourse, Stoic ethics, Christian metaphysics, and finally Western philosophy and psychology. *En route*, Mauss gives vivid illustrations of the fragmentary nature of the process. Different constituents of persons were differentially and hierarchically given meanings and regimented culturally in terms of agency, ownership, and accountability. For instance, in the case of slavery, having a soul did not immediately entail ownership of one’s own body: “[I]f the serfs did not possess their body, they already had a soul, which Christianity had given them” (Mauss 1985 [1938]: 17). Having a soul, though, did not yet mean a unique individuality in the modern Western sense (see Danziger 2012: 67–68). Even though Mauss’s narrative has been considered somewhat straightforward and lacking in conceptual clarity (see e.g. Carrithers 1985), it clearly shows the importance of sociohistorically developing and spatiotemporally circulating cultural metadiscourses for the evolution of forms of personhood.

Urban and Lee (1989) distinguish two archetypes of cultural metadiscourse according to whether the focus is on the self or on relations with others. “Therapeutic” (or self-to-self) discourses have as their goal the interpretation of the experience of selfhood. “Legal” (or self-to-other) discourses, in contrast, deal with problems related to others. That is, different genres of discourse interpret and regiment personhood, selfhood, and subjectivity in different ways (Urban & Lee 1989: 7; Lee 1997b: 10; also Wilce 2009a: 168–171). The main data of this study, online dating advertisements, is itself a form of metadiscourse of personhood with both “therapeutic” and “legal” aspects. It interprets and organizes experiences of personhood and selfhood in terms of “self-promotion” (see chapters 4–5) and sieves others into “ideal” and “non-ideal” respondents (see chapter 6). Moreover, such a metadiscourse of personhood is itself “legally” regimented by further metadiscourses, such as online dating guidebooks or Internet discussions (see chapter 7).

Online dating advertisements, as a genre that incorporates a particular set of ontologies and practices, then, are both a regimenting metadiscourse of personhood and regimented by other metadiscourses of personhood. From the standpoint of an individual, online dating advertisements are also a form

of *biography*, and autobiography in particular. If we understand biography very broadly as any kind of mediation or “recording” of a person’s life and if we understand “life” as the total cumulative trace of a person, then most biographies are highly fragmentary. The better and the more comprehensive a set of biographies is, the more it asymptotically converges with “life.” In this kind of framing biography is sociohistory calibrated to particular individuals. The ways in which social life can be organized into individual biography is itself a complex semiotic process that is subject to many forms of regimentation. In fact, autobiography itself as self-produced and individual-centered narrative may be a relatively modern practice.[31] As a model of autobiography online dating advertisements offer a considerable degree of biographic control. In the confines of an online dating advertisement, one can creatively select biographic contents and project the kind of coherence on the totality of one’s life that might otherwise meet with opposition or counterclaims from others. However, that may not be an easy task for all. As we have seen, it is our habits, which usually require no active efforts of planning or executing, that keep us together and make up the foundation of our identity by ensuring our recognizability and coherence over time to ourselves and others. In online dating advertisements one’s embodied habits of residence in the world are not of much use. Nothing ends up in your advertisement unless you write it there. Online dating advertisements, then, force writers into an autobiographic reflection, particularly if they have not yet developed strong habits of autobiographic self-representation.

#### 2.3.4 SEMIOTIC TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF

Many cultural practices, religious or therapeutic ones, for instance, function as *technologies of the self* (Foucault 2001: 1623–1632; Wilce 2009a: 154–157) that are used to transform selves and identities. Many of such symbolic technologies are discursive in nature, whether specialized ones such as

---

[31] It has been suggested that (auto)biography, as we now know it, is a relatively modern phenomenon, taking root from the 1700s onwards. Earlier works centering upon particular individuals would present those persons as examplars of moral virtues or as contributors to a collective history. The modern autobiography, however, is based on the idea that an individual life is unique and the defining characteristic of a person. It is usually implied that the coherence of a life is specifically of a *narrative* kind, i.e., a story in which the individual self is the main character. (See Danziger 2012: 71–72 and the references therein; also Giddens 1991: 76 and the references therein.) The emergence of the new autobiographical genre seems to coincide with similar individualist changes in other cultural practices, such as marketing and design. It has been proposed that collective ideals of design were first abandoned around the 1760s, when potters began to design products for specific market segments. Promotional practices linked such products with images of personhood (wealth and class in particular) and formulated them into social indexicals that could be used as means of persona performance and social differentiation. (See Wernick 1991; Agha 2011a; cf. also Dewey 2005 [1934]: 8.)

"talking cures" or "confessions" of various kinds (or silent retreats for that matter) or everyday ones such as particular conversational genres of narrative (see e.g. Wortham & Gadsden 2006). In section 2.3.1, we already noted how discursive practices can change individual selves and biographic trajectories for better or for worse (see e.g. Mehan 1996; Wortham 2005; also Wilce 2009a: e.g. 87–105). That is, habitual discursive practices are important means of evaluating and interpreting behaviors and experiences and serve as sources of "positive" or "negative" value. From the standpoint of individuals – who are caught in a riptide of sociohistorical and cultural forces, personal habits acquired on biographic time scales, and conscious agency – such tehnologies can even be used as instruments to purposefully transform one's habits, to adapt to new environments, or to create coherence in one's life, as part of a "project of the self" (Giddens 1991: 75).

The effects can extend as far as the biological infrastructure of the person. For instance, the term *experience-dependent neuroplasticity* has been used to refer to the ways in which neuronal patterns are redirected and reshaped according to the experiences of the organism (LeDoux 2003; also Kandel 1998; Thompson & Varela 2001; James 1950 [1890]: 104–127). Although many experiences are largely constituted by factors outside of individuals' control, there is a window for what has been called "self-directed neuroplasticity," in which language may play an important part (Schwartz 2003; Hanson 2013: 14–15), That is, by systematically shaping one's experience and its affective tones in the here-and-now through self-control of one's semiotic behaviors, one may gradually guide the habitual basis of one's experience into new directions. Whereas individuals usually have relatively little control over the occurrence of affect on interactional time scales, by minding one's responses to affect it is possible to some extent reshape the habitual basis of affect on biographical time scales (see also the discussion of ontological inertia in 8.2.2). A lot of attention has been given to the human "negativity bias," or the tendency to attend to and rely on negative rather than positive information (e.g. Vaish, Grossman & Woodward 2008), and its implications for human well-being (e.g. Hanson & Mendius 2009). Evaluative models of personhood and habits of evaluation and stancetaking, then, are particularly important from the standpoint of such social and psychological realities. Online dating advertisements, as a biographic instrument with a marked focus on evaluative stancetaking, offer one kind of viewpoint on such processes. Our modelings and theorizings of persons and lives constantly serve as maps for future paths. Therefore, it is important to understand such cultural practices that produce representations, evaluations, and reinterpretations of selves and others (including the kinds of "norms" and "self-knowledge" that self-help guides of various sorts peddle). Such practices, however virtual, fictional, or innocent at first, can easily prove self-actualizing in the autopoiesis of selfhood. That is, life grows from biography.

# 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA

Chapter 3 first applies the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapters to the object of research. That is, it elaborates the perspective from which online dating advertisements are examined in this study. It then presents a set of more specific empirical research questions (3.1) and the data (3.2) of the study. This study approaches the online dating advertisement genre as an instrument of personhood that mediates specific kinds of identity performances in intersubjective interaction. Online dating advertisements take part in the patterning of social reality on multiple levels. They function as a *sieve* that sifts social reality into categories such as "desirable" or "ideal" and "undesirable" or "non-ideal" in multiple ways. Writers and readers as agents use them to *select* for "desirable" and "ideal" forms of personhood and social relations. (See also Kockelman 2013b.) Such effects of sieving and selection are based on (1) the features of the infrastructure (i.e., a digital writing-based artifact linking two "anonymous" and spatiotemporally displaced participants, only enabling the performance of particular kinds of signs), (2) the semiotic ontologies that guide the processes of interpretation (e.g., various reflexive models, stereotypes, and ideologies of discourse and personhood), and (3) the more personal interests and values of the particular agents involved. The aim of this study is to examine the semiotic organization of such processes in online dating advertisements.

First of all, the writers' own constituents of personhood become sorted out in the process. That is, of all the biographic potential and of all the signs that could be used to mediate them, the infrastructure of the interaction merely enables a particular subset. Furthermore, as conscious yet habit-driven creatures the writers are usually willing and able to make public only a particular subset of their "signs of the self" (e.g., what they, in light of their interests and ontologies, think others would consider "desirable" in light of their respective interests and ontologies). To the extent that writers are self-aware and self-presentationally competent, they can exert agency over what becomes mediated within the confines of the infrastructure. In fact, they must have a minimal level of self-awareness and self-presentational capacity in order to exist at all to the reader. In the absence of bodily signs, whatever the writers wish to communicate about themselves has to be translated into linguistic utterances, textual patterns, and symbolic propositions – besides relatively simple visual signs, such as outward appearance, that can be communicated via pictures. In that sense, then, online dating advertisements are a highly theoretical form of self-presentation. They rely on the writers' theoretical agency, or capacity to describe and reason about their lives.

Secondly, online dating advertisements sieve respondents into different types (as figures in the text) and groups (as actual respondents). The reader will both interpret the writer as a person (e.g., whether he seems "desirable"

or not) and herself as a person from the writer's standpoint (e.g., whether she fits his criteria of "desirable" persons). Finally, it is up to the reader to select an appropriate course of action. That is, if she experiences "compatibility" she may instigate a further semiotic encounter, whereas in the absence of "compatibility" she may refrain from doing so.

The semiotic ontologies that this study is particularly interested in include both reflexive models of discourse and reflexive models of personhood. More specifically, the focus is on their mutual relation, the ways in which writing-based textual artifacts mediate forms of personhood. The fact that "online dating advertisements" are a recognizable genre means that there are stereotypes that pertain to different aspects of such events and encounters. Particular texts are, to varying degrees, produced and interpreted in light of such stereotypic models. It is not, however, assumed that genre models are unitary or that any actual text would straightforwardly or unproblematically "belong to" a certain genre. In fact, it is one of the goals of this study to examine (a) to what extent generic models seem to converge between semiotic communities and to what extent they are fragmented and (b) to what extent they are complied with and to what extent "disobeyed" by actual writers of actual texts.

The notion of "self-promotion" is itself a relatively vague designation that is understood differently by different interactants both as a concept and in relation to the online dating advertisement genre (e.g., it may be regarded as more or less constitutive of the type of discourse). There is, however, a strong stereotypic link between dating advertisements and "self-promotion" both in research and culturally (see e.g., Coupland 1996; Bhatia 2004; Muikku-Werner 2009; also chapter 7). Other terms, such as the "marketing of the self," are also used to refer to more or less similar phenomena. The assumption this study builds on is that such designations point to stereotypes of selection and sieving – which are not unitary or shared by all semiotic communities or interactants. That is, "self-promotion" is understood in terms of reflexive models that some participants orient to. The goal of this study is to examine the more specific nature of such models and how they manifest themselves in social interaction.

"Self-promotion" as a notion implies a particular kind of relation between processes of selfhood and forms of discourse. In this study, the notion will be approached broadly and loosely as an orientation towards a distinction between relatively more "ideal" semiotic personae (e.g., controlled, imagined, wished-for, virtually modeled, or tentative versions of the self) and relatively more "real" ones (e.g., actual, confirmed, or intersubjectively recognized ones) in specific interactional settings. The terms "ideal" and "real" are not meant as a reifying dichotomy but as umbrella terms for the various kinds of layered, relative, and processual distinctions that emerge in social interaction. That is, the empirical analyses in this study aim to illuminate the kinds of actual discursive phenomena in online dating practices that the notion of "self-promotion" can be calibrated to. Moreover, the relationship of

"self-promotion" to (other) ideological, or even religious concepts, such as the "commodification of the self," "(in)authenticity," or "uniqueness" (see e.g. Coupland 1996; Keane 2002; Shoaps 2002; Dutton 2009; Agha 2011a), is seen as an empirical question in this study.

"Self-promotion" as idealization,[32] then, involves practical agency. The writers as selves can control the expression of signs in their text-artifacts and compose sign-object relations in light of their ontologies and interests. That is, they can shape their discursive artifacts so as to give rise to "ideal" interpretants and to avoid "non-ideal" ones. "Self-promotion" in the online dating advertisements in the data of this study also essentially involves theoretical agency, since the central means of the presentation of self and others are linguistic representations that thematize and characterize other semiotic processes in other semiotic modes and reason about them. In sum, within the confines of the infrastructural limitations, writers have a relatively considerable degree of *flexibility* (practical and theoretical agency) in the advertisement event ($n^{th}$). They are at liberty to inhabit a "promotional persona."[33] They will, however, be held *accountable* for that persona in subsequent events ($n+1^{th}$ and so forth), insofar as such events are ever actualized. The anticipation of subsequent events, then, is an essential part of self-presentation in online dating advertisements, and the interplay of flexibility and accountability will be at the heart of the perspective adopted in this study.[34]

---

[32] For Goffman (1990 [1959]: 72), idealization is one of the general features of all self-presentational performances: "An idealized impression is offered by accentuating some facts and concealing others." The task undertaken in the online dating advertisement genre could, then, be seen as an exceptionally marked and salient form of a more or less ubiquitous process, namely, the idealization of one's identity (or the control and selectivity exercised in all semiotic performances).

[33] In other words, according to the hypothesis of this study, the "promotional persona" is a larger-scale model of personhood (see Agha 2011c) that smaller-scale models can be fitted into. That is, any number of more specific kinds of sociocultural and personal identities can be idealized according to similar principles. Models of personhood on different scales interact and may become embedded in many ways. In fact, the kind of "fractionated" selfhood (ibid.) that the "promotional persona" presupposes is itself an even larger-scale model. The very fact that one may possess and inhabit a variety of more or less self-fashioned or self-selected personae – instead of one's social life being determined by, say, profession, caste, gender, or kinship status – and that some of those personae may be idealized in particular ways is in itself a sociohistorically specific form of personhood.

[34] One traditional dividing line that has been drawn strictly and persistently in some traditions of discourse studies is that between the "real" writer of the text and the writer as a textual "construct," an inscription or a figure within the text or a projection from the structure of the text. Tellingly, in the study of spoken language, in which the focus is on artifacts shaped out of light or air that do not run very far from the interactants that produced them, no such dualist distinction seems to prevail. In the approach adopted in this study, persons as interpreted based on their written artifacts and persons as interpreted based on their bodily signals or phonetic signs, or any other signs for that matter, are equally "real." How different interpretations interact and (in)cohere in social life is a matter of

## 3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Online dating advertisements were chosen as the empirical object of this study because of the prominence of the presentation of self in them. They were also considered a particularly interesting type of discourse from the standpoint of idealized selfhood and personhood (cf. Wallace & Fogelson 1965; Markus & Nurius 1985). Both traditional printed dating advertisements (see e.g. Muikku-Werner 2009; also Östman 1999) and online dating advertisements have been studied in many fields of studies and in many languages (see e.g. Lawson & Leck 2006; Whitty 2008; Holappa 2011, 2014). Studies that have paid attention to actual language use will be of particular relevance for this study. Moreover, online dating and online communication in general as practices have been studied extensively in communication studies, psychology, and social studies (e.g., Kerr & Hiltz 1982; Turkle 1995; Coupland 1996; Gerlander & Takala 1997; Hardey 2002; Bargh et. al 2002; Whitty 2008). However, their focus tends to be on macrostructures, channels, media practices, or relationship formation in general – not so much on questions of intersubjective interaction or personhood *per se*. There also seems to be a tendency towards quantitative or questionnaire-based research. Analysis of the range of actual semiotic behaviors and the cultural ontologies they are based on is the main concern of this study. For instance, Lea & Spears (1995: 208) note that the relative absence or suspension of embodied emblems of, for example, gender, age, or physical disabilities in online communication can have an empowering effect on persons. To fully understand such effects of the "disembodied" (see Hardey 2002) nature of online communication in any particular phase, they need to be considered in light of actual interactions and cultural models and in relation to antecedent and subsequent interactions, or chains of semiotic encounters.

Printed dating advertisements and online dating advertisements share many features and might be regrouped in the same "colony" of genres (see Bhatia 2004). Printed dating advertisements might also be regarded as an

---

empirical investigation. Furthermore, the interpretation of fictive characters and live human beings is essentially similar in many ways. For instance, reading "fictional" and "real" minds are essentially based on similar semiotic principles. That is, they are particular instances of the general principle of kinding (or the "theory of mind" or "ethnopsychology"). (See Kockelman 2013a: e.g. 72–74, 137; cf. e.g. Leech & Short 1981: 188; Semino 2007.) Seeing the underlying similarities between fictive and living characters, rather than the obvious differences, is particularly relevant for the kind of data used in this study. Firstly, the writers often aestheticize their self-presentational performances by recontextualizing elements of literary fiction or popular culture in their own texts in order to produce particular modes of subjectivity (see e.g. 4.2 and 6.3.3). Secondly, until a face-to-face encounter has taken place, the interactants only exist to one another as personae mediated by textual-semiotic performances. In fact, in the online dating phase it usually has not even been confirmed with certainty that the other persona actually corresponds to some biographic individual and is not a fake or a fiction.

"antecedent genre" for online dating advertisements either in the sociohistorical sense (Jamieson 1975) or in the biographic sense (Devitt 2004) of the concept. The differences, however, are equally notable. The fact that printed advertisements are very limited in terms of length, and may also be charged based on character count, makes them an entirely different kind of object from the standpoint of the questions this study is interested in. Printed advertisements may also be more easily subject to normative regimentation by the editorial staff of newspapers. In sum, the degree of flexibility of an online dater is considerably higher than that of a traditional dater.

This study examines from four different perspectives how "ideal" personae and social relations are mediated semiotically and interactionally in online dating advertisements and how such processes are reflexively interpreted and evaluated by interactants. **Chapter 4** focuses on the kinds of "characteristics" that are mediated by online dating advertisements on different levels of semiosis. Or, to put it another way, chapter 4 approaches textual patterns as indices that project kinds on individuals (see 2.1.3). A specific emphasis will be on how different patterns differ in terms of interpretability and idealization. The chapter will discuss the micro-level mediation of spacetime and "views of consciousness" or "mind styles." The "views of consciousness" are examined in light of both textual analysis and questionnaire data (see 3.2). The latter part of the chapter (4.4) starts off by examining the linguistic presentation of self and others as a form of theoretical agency in relation to other semiotic modes and charts the kinds of recurring textual patterns (such as taxonomies and narratives) that online dating advertisements in the data consist of.

**Chapter 5** takes on the question of evaluative stancetaking and its role in online dating advertisements and in the idealization of personhood. The chapter contrasts a few salient but maximally differing patterns of stancetaking and examines the kinds of metapragmatic cues that are indicative of the writers' own understandings and ontologies concerning their evaluative stancetaking behaviors. A particular focus is on matters of polarity ("positive" versus "negative"), which will be linked to the notions of metastance relations and discursive agency (i.e., animators, authors, and principals). The chapter takes a critical and empirical stance towards the relationship between "promotional" discourses and "saying positive things," which has sometimes been taken for granted (cf. e.g. Bhatia 2004).

**Chapter 6** delves into patterns of addressivity. It examines how the patterns discussed in chapters 4 and 5 are mapped onto frames of participation. Since usually only particular subsets of readers will be recognized as ideal interactants, the aim of the chapter is to analyze how writers select for addressees and attempt to control ensuing interactions.

**Chapter 7** looks at cultural metadiscourses that consist of explicitated opinions, experiences, ideological positions, or normative models concerning online dating advertisements. The focus is on the kinds of semiotic ontologies

or assumptions about the relation between personhood and language use that such metadiscourses embody. That is, the point is to see how the persona performances in online dating advertisements are supposed to be interpreted and evaluated according to publicly disseminated cultural discourses, such as online dating guidebooks or Internet discussions. In earlier research on interpersonal communication on the Internet, Gerlander & Takala (1997), for instance, drew attention to contradictory assessments about the nature of the interpersonal contact mediated by e-mail. Some informants found it “faceless,” “formal,” and “distant,” but others found it “intimate” and “informal” (see also Whitty 2008). Also, it was pointed out long ago that simplistic stereotypic views according to which online communication is harmful to “real,” “genuine,” or “authentic” interaction only occur in particular contexts and particular communities (see Kerr & Hiltz 1982). Similar contrasts appear in the context of online dating. Chapter 7 examines, in semiotic, interactional, and context-sensitive terms, what precisely it is that, for some communities, makes a particular kind of intersubjective contact, for example, “distant” or “intimate,” “authentic” or “inauthentic,” or “reliable” or “unreliable” and how it might affect the interpretation of such encounters. Although the metadiscourse data examined in chapter 7 is not directly (i.e., causally or sequentially) linked to the advertisements in the data or the questionnaire, it is nevertheless a relevant viewpoint on the production and interpretation of personhood and the patterns discussed in chapters 4, 5, and 6. As there are ontologies and processes that do not become public in the actual online dating contexts but tend to remain private or repressed, it is necessary to look at more detached and decontextualized rationalizations and normative generalizations of those primary processes (see 3.2 for a more detailed discussion). That is, the external metadiscourses can be seen both as sources of normative interpretation and as “backstages,” in which things that have to be held back during the performances can be expressed (see Goffman 1990 [1959]: 114, 129).

In a sense, then, the perspectives of the chapters move from the writer and the event of writing towards the direction of the readers (both as figures and respondents) and response events and further towards subsequent events of general cultural theorization and reflection. Finally, **chapter 8** discusses the findings of the analyses, reflects on their theoretical implications, and concludes the study.

## 3.2 DATA

Although the goal of this study is not an ethnographic analysis of self-presentation or courtship behavior in any specific ethnographic or demographic segment or group – but rather the analysis of a more general social and cultural process of idealization of personhood – the ideal is to

locate such interactional processes, linguistic structures, and their circulation socioculturally as accurately as possible (cf. Agha 2007a: 12–13). Differences between different semiotic communities will be taken into account at least in general conceptual terms. The analyses of the entextualized sign patterns in the text-artifacts are contrasted and complemented with meanings given by actual people of various statuses and standings. Their accounts come both in solicited (questionnaire data) and in spontaneous forms (the writers' own metapragmatic commentaries; external metadiscourses on the Internet, online dating guidebooks, television programs).[35] That is, apart from the questionnaire, the "informants" observed in this study are not individuable persons but, rather, personae on the Internet – or highly mediatized personae of actual, individuable persons, such as authors or celebrities. In a sense, the informants are much like the object of study itself.

The empirical part of this study is based on three main sets of data. This section describes the different sets of data and justifies their use and mutual division of labor.

1. Advertisement text data

The primary data consists of 111 Finnish-language online dating advertisements that were collected from two different online dating services in 2007.[36] The data sources were:

1) *Deitti.net*, an Internet service maintained by *City* magazine, and
2) *Match.com*, the Finnish version of a multinational dating service.

The first service was directed at young urban adults, whereas the second one had a wider geographical and age range. The advertisements in the data were collected from four different categories: 1) men seeking women, 2) women seeking men, 3) women seeking women and 3) men seeking men. The majority of the data belongs to the first two categories, since these were the most voluminous on the sites as well. The exact ethnographic segmentation of the writers is not a priority in this study. The age range, sex, and sexual orientation of the writer is mentioned explicitly only when it is particularly relevant for the analysis and is not obvious from the quoted text-segment itself.

---

[35] Perhaps this study could have even taken up Swales's (1998: 1) term *textography*, by which he meant "something more than a disembodied textual or discoursal analysis, but something less than a full ethnographic account," in the context of the study of situated academic writing.

[36] This set of data was originally collected (by the author of this study as a research assistant) for the project "Contexts of Subordination" (2007–2010) as part of a larger multi-genre corpus. The same data has, therefore, been used in other studies too, although for quite different kinds of purposes (see Visapää, Kalliokoski & Sorva 2014).

Only the free text sections of the profiles were systematically analyzed in this study. That is, the other parts of the profiles, pictures and standard questions, were excluded from the data.[37] The advertisement text data set contains about 2,010 sentences and 22,260 words. Contrary to traditional printed newspaper dating advertisements, there is virtually no limit on the length of the texts. The longest ones consist of about 70 sentences. In terms of length and structure, they seem in some ways more reminiscent of recorded oral dating messages (see Coupland 1996) than of newspaper dating advertisements (see e.g. Muikku-Werner 2009).

As for ethics and privacy, three kinds of questions have been considered in relation to these personal yet semi-publicly circulated and anonymous texts (cf. Bex 1996: 154): How to protect the privacy of the writers? Who holds the authors' rights to these texts, morally and juridically (i.e., the writers versus the owners of the dating forums)? How to honor the authors' rights, while preserving the right to academic study? First of all, the texts are only quoted in this study to the degree necessary. With the exception of the three texts used in the questionnaire (see below and chapter 4), entire texts have not been reproduced. As an additional precaution, the pseudonyms of the writers are always dealt with separately from the texts. Moreover, by the time this study is published, the texts will be about eight years old and the possibility of recognizing individual writers is low to begin with.

2. Questionnaire data

To compare the researcher's analyses to others' interpretations, a questionnaire was held in 2014 for a group of respondents that consisted of 27 university students (of which 23 identified as female, 3 as male, and 1 did not answer the question) aged 19–49 taking a course in Finnish discourse studies. The questionnaire (see Appendix 2), based on an earlier pilot study and focus group experimentation, was mainly meant to elicit actual examples of more "subjective" layers of interpretation that might be described as "mind styles" or "views of subjectivity" (see 4.2).

The respondents were presented with three different texts and were asked to describe up to three different "impressions" (*vaikutelma*) that each text gave rise to and to justify them with language-related or contextual reasons.

[37] At the time when the data was collected, pictures were already frequent in dating profiles. The exclusion of the pictures from this study is not meant to downplay their importance in matching and courtship – or in the semiotic process of interpreting persons. However, the analysis of pictures alone, and particularly in conjunction with the writing, would require a project of its own. Pictures were taken into account whenever they proved relevant for the analysis of patterns of writing. Similarly, the division of labor between the optional standard questions and the free texts as well as any explicit references to or overlap with the standard questions in the free texts were taken into account in the analyses when necessary. The specific focus of interest of this study, then, is only on self-initiated linguistic performances in the free text section.

They were also encouraged to underline or otherwise mark relevant segments in the text. The form of the answers was not further specified (although the instruction "name the impression," for example, perhaps projects an NP more strongly than a clause). In the instructions, the respondents were further advised to focus on impressions of the "frames of mind" of the writers, for example, by describing what the "atmosphere in the text is like" or how features of the text express the "train of thought or emotional states" of the writer. The point of these instructions was to lightly steer the responses towards "mind styles" and to avoid, for instance, biographic speculations and other advanced inferences.

The suggested time to be used on one text was about five minutes. In total, the group had about 20 minutes. As predicted, some finished even earlier, and a few had to rush through the last answers. The point of the time limit was not to give too much time in order to avoid "overinterpretation" (i.e., highly inferential interpetations based on minute details), to keep the focus on the most intuitively salient impressions, and to elicit interpretations based more on the unfolding of the textual structure rather than the denotational contents of the text.[38]

As will be seen in section 4.2, the questionnaire showed interesting patterns of convergence and fractionation in the interpretations. The advantages of the particular group of respondents include the fact that it was relatively coherent in terms of age as well as educational and socioeconomic background. Furthermore, language students might be somewhat more competent than the average in reflecting on and reporting their interpretations. At the same time it seems that they might tend towards more normative and evaluative approaches, although this probably is a very general feature of contexts in which people have the opportunity to anonymously assess anonymous others – which, incidentally (but not co-incidentally), is also a marked characteristic of online dating.

3. External metadiscourse data

The third set of data consists of (1) two online dating guidebooks and one more general lifestyle guide with sections on online dating, (2) a variety of Internet discussions, newspaper articles, and other writings, including dating site rules, regulations, and advertisements, and (3) a segment of a popular television program (see also Data sources). The guidebooks and the television program were chosen on the basis of both their topicality and estimated popularity and circulation at the time of their publication and their relevance

[38] In retrospect, the time could have been slightly longer. Moreover, in spite of the instructions, some of the answers were relatively far-fetched speculations about the writers' personal histories or intentions – perhaps an inevitable part of these types of interpretative processes.

for the research questions.[39] Data gathering on the Internet, however, can rarely be very systematic. The aim was to find writings that seemed to draw attention and rouse active discussion and that more or less explicitly dealt with actual semiotic behavior, language use, or interpersonal interaction. The Internet-based part of the external metadiscourse data, then, is an opportunistic sample that is meant to explore the breadth of ideas about and conflicts over online dating advertisements. Only those parts of the external metadiscourse that deal with the relation between language and personhood have been analyzed in the study.

The external metadiscourse data tends to talk about online dating advertisements *as a type*. These metadiscourses typically draw from past experiences of many people as well as popular conceptions concerning the object-discourse. Online dating guidebooks and dating service rules, and sometimes feature articles, offer generalized, more or less normative, and more rationally justified instructions and models that are supposed to guide interactants in the task. Some of the guidebooks do include genuine examples of advertisements or elicited accounts of actual online dating experiences. Likewise, some of the Internet discussions deal with actual, particular experiences, even including actual replies from actual respondents. Still, these particular instances tend to be treated as examples of general tendencies.

In a sense, this sort of data might be seen as the more or less far removed roots and fruits of actual online dating advertisements along various lines of semiotic chains (see Agha 2007a: 67–69, 205). That is, they may be framed both as late-stage generalizations, rationalizations, narrativizations, and normatizations of past experiences and as general models, norms, and examples that orient to future experiences in early stages of the process. They may serve as pathways in or as pathways out of the actual encounter mediated by the advertisement and may transform the ontologies that shape the actual encounter. The discursive events that immediately precede an online dating advertisement (e.g., drafts, discussions with others, using others' advertisements as actual models) or follow it (e.g., e-mails or messages exchanged through the online dating site between writers and respondents) would certainly be interesting as data. They, however, tend to be highly personal and less readily available as data. Furthermore, their circulation is usually limited to a small number of people. The actual

---

[39] Specific details were, however, difficult to obtain. One of the guidebooks (SK), for instance, drew considerable attention in the media, as it was written by a female semi-celebrity TV reporter. Media attention, of course, is no guarantee of high sales figures or numbers of readers. As for the television program (*Parittomat*, "The Pairless"), no accurate details on the particular episode were available, but the opening episode of the series, which was broadcast a few weeks earlier (40/2012), was among the top 20 most popular television programs of that week on that channel (YLE TV1), with an estimate of 297,000 viewers and a wider reach of 451,000 persons.
(Finnpanel, www.finnpanel.fi/tulokset/tv/vko/top/2012/40/yle1.html [Nov 1, 2012]).

published advertisements, on the other hand, are accessible to anyone who registers at the website and whose path of selectivity (e.g., choice of dating site, search criteria) happens to cross them. Dating guidebooks and television programs as mass media commodities are available to an even larger audience but require a particular pattern of consumption (e.g., the purchase of a book or watching television at a particular time). Various Internet discussions are easily accessible and relatively permanently available. The composition of the data might, then, be further justified by the fact that it comprises such public phases of the process (others' advertisements, guidebooks, rules and regulations, Internet discussions, mass mediated artifacts) that serve, for many, as normative reference points or as the starting point of their genre competence.[40]

[40] Supplementary sources of information that were taken advantage of at various stages of the study include: a number of newer profiles on a variety of other dating sites, comparing online dating advertisements with similar profile-based sites used to instigate different kinds of social relations (e.g., Couchsurfing) and experimenting personally with advertisement writing and profile composition.

# 4 ENTEXTUALIZING SELVES AND OTHERS

> *Erinomainen keino tutustua naisiin... hieman, kun näkee vaivaa on helppo erottua tavanomaisen tasapaksuista profiileista ja tehdä itsestään mielenkiintoisen (tai no eipä tarvii tehdä, jos on ;) )...*
>
> *An excellent way to get to know women... by taking a little trouble it is easy to stand out from the usual monotonous profiles and make yourself interesting (well no need to do this, if you already are ;) )...*
>
> Kake (IS Oct 17, 2012)

The focus of the next three chapters will be on the different ways in which personhood is metasemiotically interpreted, communicated, and controlled via online dating advertisement text-artifacts. This chapter first explores how the characteristics of selves and others are entextualized (see section 1.2) in online dating advertisements and what "promotionality" might mean in that process. The analyses examine how persons become knowable as semiotic objects to selves and others mediated by different kinds of textual sign patterns. In other words, this chapter focuses on the textual patterning and organization of biographic contents in genre-specific ways in the advertisements. Chapter 5 will take a more specific look at evaluative stancetaking, and chapter 6 will examine how such textual patterns are addressed to others.

Sections 1 and 2 of this chapter are more conceptually driven. They sketch the range and dimensions of the textual mediation of personhood via online dating advertisements from different standpoints. These perspectives are motivated by the general theoretical approach of this study. Section 1 takes on the notion of distributed personhood and clarifies how persons, in a sense, split up into different semiotic processes, such as "performed" and "described" characteristics, that mediate different kinds of encounters and require different kinds of interpretations from others. Sections 2 and 3 take a closer look at one part of such processes: the mediation of first-person "views of subjectivity" or "mind styles" and the mediation of spacetime in the advertisement texts. Section 4 then delves deeper into the data and presents some of the recurring textual patterns of self-presentation. That is, section 4 classifies such patterns of usage that embody in different combinations the possibilities charted in the preceding sections. Sections 1 and 2, in contrast, are more concerned with online dating advertisements as general infrastructure for the mediation of personhood, or as an instrument that enables and constrains certain forms of self-presentation by virtue of its characteristics.

Urciuoli (2008) refers to the type of promotional activity one has to learn to master in job applications and job interviews as "skill talk." It is a set of

sociohistorically evolving discursive patterns that regroup the biographic constituents of a person in a particular way that is considered appropriate and effective for the presentation of one's "skills" in a professional context. Similarly, the data of this chapter exhibits patterns of idealizing and relationship-oriented "characteristic talk" that regroups the constituents of a person in a way that is considered appropriate and effective by the writer so as to appeal to ideal others (and to sieve off non-ideal ones). Before getting to these processes, let us take a look at some of the general preconditions of entextualizing a person's "characteristics" in this context.

## 4.1 "CHARACTERISTICS" AS KINDS PROJECTED ON HUMAN INDIVIDUALS

"Characteristics" here refer to kinds projected onto persons based on indices perceived in their written text-artifacts by interpreting agents (see 2.1.3 and 2.3.3). "Characteristic," then, is an auxiliary term that approaches kinding from the perspective of the writers and readers of online dating advertisements. One of the basic ways of communicating characteristics is using various *role designating devices* (Agha 2007a: 249), i.e., words, constructions and other sense-bearing linguistic expressions that explicitly denote aspects of personhood, to describe selected habits, experiences, and life events. However, persona readings do not rely merely on denotational contents. The ways in which such linguistic signs are co-textually organized and patterned in terms of text-level indexicality is itself an indice of personhood. The organization of a text about self and others relates to an understanding of what persons, subjectivities, social relations or lives consists of and how they are structured. That is, the emergent textuality and indexical interplay of different semiotic partials is itself another "sign of the self" (Singer 1984).

Moreover, this chapter takes into account the infrastructures or modes of mediation of the examined discourse (see Kockelman 2013a: 201). Different channels (e.g., Internet-based online dating services) and instruments (e.g., particular kinds of genred digital text-artifacts) select for particular kinds of signs and sieve off others. [41] Similarly, different kinds of signs differ in terms of the interpretations they require or allow in particular infrastructural circumstances. That is, particular kinds of infrastructures enable and constrain the mediation and the interpretation of linguistic signs and self-

[41] An instrument is an artificially designed entity that incorporates certain affordances for the purchase they provide (and excludes others that may be incorporated in other instruments; cf. e.g. the lack of voice in online dating advertisements as compared to video or phone dating services) and that actors can wield for the function they serve. A channel is that which connects signers and interpreters with one another. It can be an instrument or a mere affordance (e.g., air that carries sound waves). (See Kockelman 2013a: 31, 97.)

presentational forms in different ways. This section serves as a lead-in to further empirical analyses by suggesting three general types of characteristics in online dating advertisements ("describable," "performable," and "proposable"). These types of characteristics differ both in terms of their relation to the infrastructure and in terms of their relations to subsequent (n+1th and beyond) and antecedent events (n-1th and beyond).

### 4.1.1 "DESCRIBABLE," "PERFORMABLE," AND "PROPOSABLE" CHARACTERISTICS

The fundamental question that this chapter is interested in is what kinds of personal characteristics can anonymous digital text-artifacts mediate and for whom. Or, phrased differently: How do different signs of personhood travel from their epicenters via particular modes of mediation and what are the conditions for the interpretation of such signs? Let us begin by considering a rough but essential distinction between what might be termed "describable" and "performable" characteristics. A *describable characteristic* refers to the use of linguistic symbols to metasemiotically denote aspects of personhood, such as embodied attributes or habitual behavioral patterns. Let us consider an example (4.1). (Two dashes have been used in the examples to indicate omitted parts.)[42]

(4.1) ¶Olen nuorekas ja innostun helposti uusista asioista. – – Nautin hämyisästä tunnelmasta kynttilän valossa ja takkatulen lämmössä. Olen=<u>kin</u> melkoinen romantikko, <u>mutta silti</u> jalat maassa oleva, järkevä karjalaissyntyinen nainen.
(4.1) ¶I'm youthful and I easily get excited about new things. – – I enjoy a dim atmosphere by candlelight and in the warmth of a fireplace. [<u>So</u>] I am quite the romantic <u>but still</u> a reasonable, down-to-earth Karelian-born woman.

Here, the initial stretch of text projects a characteristic onto the writer using a role designating device (the adjective *nuorekas*, "youthful") in combination with appropriate deictics (1SG PRES). Later on in the text the writer describes a tendency to enjoy a particular kind of setting ("a dim candlelit atmosphere in the warmth of a fireplace"). This description is further used as grounds or evidence, as marked by the clitic *-kin* (see Vilkuna 1984: 404; VISK § 842), to support another self-initiated typification, "romantic" (*romantikko*). Description with linguistic symbols, in other words, allows or even calls for cultural reasoning, inferences, and logical operations (see 4.4.1). With the following clause (*mutta silti*, "but still"), the writer coordinates "romantic" with other typifications ("down-to-earth," "reasonable") and contrasts the entire set of typifications with an implicit assumption ("typically [those who

[42] The translations aim at preserving the style and orthography of the original texts whenever possible (including errors, misspellings, etc.). Elements that seem necessary in the translation but do not really have an explicit equivalent in the original have been placed in brackets.

are referred to as] 'romantics' are not expected to be [what is referred to by] 'down-to-earth' and 'reasonable'"). That is, the writer anticipates and pre-emptively renounces possible inferences (see 5.4). Even an excerpt as short as this shows how symbolic description – drawing from an organized web of cultural symbols and stereotypes – enables the explicit sketching and implicit presuming of complex relations between human attributes and behaviors (or social, mental, and material kinds). It allows the writer to invoke a micro-ontology of personhood and use that to mediate self-to-other relations in the here-and-now (see also chapter 6).

However, because of the infrastructural circumstances of the interactional event (i.e., two anonymous unknowns not physically co-present to one another), described characteristics require a specific set of attitudinal interpretants from the reader. Since, for the reader, such described characteristics are present only as generalized imagery evoked by the linguistic symbols, their desirability, plausibility, and trustability have to be interpreted in very general terms. The reader can, for instance, evaluate the coherence of denotational stereotypes (e.g., "Do I agree with the writer that 'enjoying a cozy candlelit ambience in the warmth of a fireplace' is an instance of being 'romantic'?") or the mutual coherence of different characteristics in light of stereotypes of personhood (e.g., "'In my experience, can people of Carelian origin in fact be 'romantic'?").[43] In other words, the validity and accuracy of such descriptions (i.e., how the actual behavior of the person corresponds with the images conveyed by the symbols) only becomes negotiable at subsequent events, when either the typified object-signs are independently accessible (e.g., visible in a face-to-face encounter) or the descriptions become contrastable with other typifications of the same objects (e.g., other peoples' narratives that contradict the person's self-initiated account).

As will be seen in detail in chapter 7, a wide range of cultural metadiscourses fosters a distrust of anonymous unknowns and their language use in online dating. According to such views, online self-presentation should not be trusted since "anyone can say anything." Such views seem target "describable" characteristics in particular. Writers indeed do have a high degree of control and choice over the tokens of symbols used to compose the advertisement text. However, any characteristic only has social relevance insofar as it is recognized and ratified by others. Therefore, the writer needs to conjure up an image that is attractive enough to be conducive to a subsequent interactional event but also sustainable at that subsequent event in a different semiotic mode. In order to achieve both goals, described characteristics need to relate coherently to one another, to

[43] As for physical traits, a photograph considerably adds to the informational content of a profile. Still, photographs are merely still images of living, moving objects and are often staged, posed for, carefully selected among alternatives, and even retouched. In fact, one of the online dating guidebooks (ND: 44) warns that "a picture tells [a lot], but lies" (*Kuva kertoo mutta valehtelee*).

other interpretations of the same person, and to various cultural ontologies of personhood. That is, writers ultimately do become accountable for described characteristics in subsequent events along semiotic chains.

In many other respects, the “anyone can say anything” mentality is essentially flawed. Not everyone can, for instance, write a “sensitive” poem or a piece of “profound” philosophical musing or tell a “hilarious” joke in one’s advertisement. Such forms of discursive agency are limited by what one is able to author in light of one’s ontologies and accumulated competencies. We might call *performable* those characteristics that mainly consist of discursive behaviors. Such characteristics, in other words, are inseparable from language use and have no existence outside or independent of language-use but are always performed verbally. For instance, someone who is “profound” is someone who speaks or writes “profoundly,” whatever that means in terms of concrete discursive patterns according to some specific ontology (cf. e.g. 4.2.2 and 4.23). Performable characteristics, then, are genuinely actualizable via a text-artifact. (They can, of course, be simultaneously described as well, like in the following example.) That is, digital text-artifacts can mediate an actual instantiation of such kinds of personhood, instead of merely describing or representing them. Performable characteristics can be directly experienced by the reader and evaluated in terms of, say, desirability or compatibility already in the event of reading the advertisement. The reader may, for instance, reject the writer as non-desirable right away (without the writer ever knowing about it) and without having to wait for another event of physical co-presence to see if “words” and “reality” match. Moreover, the cultural metasemiotic models on which the recognition of attempted “funniness” rely may be much more fractionated and less shared among respondents than the denotational stereotypes of lexical and morphosyntactic elements. What kind of discursive performance actually counts as “funny” is also based on the readers’ tastes, which as sociohistorically and biographically conditioned personal habits are subject to considerable variation. Described and performed characteristics, then, are based on different kinds of indices, presuppose different kinds of discursive agency and rely on different kinds of recognizing and regimenting interpretants.

Let us consider the following example (which will be dealt with more extensively in 4.2.3). In this excerpt, the writer mentions having once lived in Greece for a short time, but humorously clarifies that the reason was work-related and not a romance. Based on several indices, the text is easily recognizable as an attempt at a humorous style. In addition to the discursive patterning (e.g., the staged dialogue “no,,,not” anticipating the kind of inference some type of respondent might make) and explicit orthographic indices in the form of smileys, the writer playfully evokes stereotypes of Scandinavian women and Greek men (here represented by an imagined individual named *Jorgos,* which from a Finnish perspective is perhaps a funny-but-authentic-sounding name). In addition, the writer shortly after

explicitly describes her habits of laughing and characterizes her taste in humor:

> (4.2) Murteesta huomaa että itä-suomen kasvatteja oon, vaikka oon ollu sieltä pois 10 vuotta, asustellu Tampesterissä, Kreikassakin käyny pyörähtämässä (ei,,,ei Jorgoksen perässä, töitten:) ja nyt sitten 4 vuotta täälä Helsingissä. Mie tykkään nauramisesta,,,saatan heittää aika hurttiakin huumoria – –
> (4.2) From the dialect [you] will notice that I'm a daughter of eastern finland, [*sic*] although I've been away from there for 10 years, [been] living in Tampester [= a nickname for the city of Tampere], also popped into Greece (no,,,not after Jorgos, [but] work:) and now then 4 years here in Helsinki. I like laughing,,,I may even make some quite risky jokes – –

The above segment of text can, then, be interpreted and evaluated as an actual instance of the sense of humor of the writer. The reader can directly respond to the writer's humorous performance either as a success or a failure. Such interpretations also interact with a variety of other indices and evaluations of the writer's personality, social background, and mental propensities. As will be seen later (4.2.3), in the questionnaire data, the writer was simultaneously typified as both "funny" or "laid-back" and "bimbo" or "uneducated." In other words, the stretch of text also mediates characteristics that were hardly intended by the writer. A further point to notice is the interplay and overlap of the described and performed characteristics. The performance of humor reparticularizes the symbolic description of "being humorous" and having a "risky" sense of humor. That is, the described characteristic can now be interpreted in the light of an actual example, the performed characteristic, instead of mere general cultural knowledge about such characteristics.

Finally, a third, composite kind of characteristics might be named "relational" or *proposable characteristics*. Proposable characteristics explicitly formulate the need of a complementing or incorporating interpretant from some other before they become fully effective. That is, they invite a contribution or collaboration from another person. In example (4.3a), the addressee is explicitly included as an essential factor in the described scenario (cooking). In example (4.3b), the reader is asked to fill in the story as a co-author (see also 4.4.3):

> (4.3a) Tykkään ruuan laitosta (varsinkin yhdessä), ulkoilusta erilaisssa tapahtumissa käymisestä varsinkin mukavassa seurassa (lue kenties sinun kanssasi) – –
> (4.3a) I enjoy cooking food (especially together), going outdoors attending various events especially in nice company (read perhaps with you) – –

> (4.3b)¶Ja vihdoin eräänä loppukesän kauniina iltana hän tapasi Jonkun.." ¶Kuka ja millainen oli tuo Joku, mitä hän halusi elämältä, mitä hän halusi nuoren parin arjelta..?

> ¶Kerro se minulle, jos ajatuksesi kuulostavat lupaavilta, saatat saada myös kuvan paluupostissa ja pääset tutustumaan tähän neitoon tarkemmin..
> (4.3b)¶And finally one beautiful late summer evening she met Someone..” ¶Who and what kind was that Someone, what did he want from life, what did he want from the young couple’s everyday life..? ¶Tell that to me, if your thoughts sound promising, you may also get a picture in return mail and get to know this maiden more closely..

As can be seen in the latter example, actual textual patterns (of the kinds examined in 4.4) that mediate complex figures of personhood often incorporate all three types of characteristics. For instance, a narrative, firstly, is a particular way of organizing the description of actions and attributes. Secondly, particular narrative styles give rise to performed images of particular kinds of subjectivities or personalities. Thirdly, as seen in the previous example, narratives may also be used to mobilize co-constructive efforts from respondents and to assess mutual compatibility and commitment to shared patterns of life (see also example 4.29 in 4.4.3 and section 6.3).

### 4.1.2 TRUTH AND REPRESENTATIVENESS

The differences between described and performed characteristics have important consequences for the temporal, interactional, and distributional dynamics of the mediation of personhood. In a sense, described characteristics are future-oriented promises and commitments that the writer will be held accountable for at subsequent encounters, insofar as such encounters are ever actualized.[44] When interpreting describable characteristics, a reader has to decide whether or not to instigate a further semiotic encounter (e.g., by sending a reply) based on some degree of trust on the fact that the description is at least a more or less sincere attempt to reliably capture some embodied reality. That is, replying to someone (as an energetic interpretant) requires particular kinds of feelings or intuitions (as affective interpretants) of both the desirability of that person as a potential partner and of the reliability of that person as a moral actor and communicator (see also 6.4 and chapter 7). When, at some later event (such as a face-to-face encounter), a description becomes empirically investigatable in terms of validity and accuracy, the result may be either congruent (the description was relatively “true”) or non-congruent (the description was “false”). Such degrees of congruence or non-congruence between different semiotic modes become evaluable as further signs of personhood (e.g., whether some non-congruence was intentional or merely contingent on the

[44] Sometimes such promises are made linguistically explicit with performatives like “promise” or “guarantee” (e.g., “I guarantee that if you want to get to know me I won’t leave you cold”; *Takaan että jos löytyy halua tutustua ni en jätä kylmäks*). Usually, however, such promises are based on presumed norms of human conduct (cf. also chapter 7).

different backgrounds of the interactants). Such evaluations differ based on the type and mode of semiotic process (e.g., “fact” versus “wish”) as well as the ontologies and epistemic formations in question (see e.g. 4.4.1, 5.1–5.2 and 7.2). Descriptions such as “hoping to be good-humored” (i.e., an ideal mood or trait of personality expressed in a non-technical register) and “being 175 cm tall” (i.e., a physical attribute expressed as a fact and in institutionally standardized units) are susceptible to quite different techniques and practices of evaluation. Since described characteristics are based on explicit and salient symbol-tokens, they are relatively easy to decontextualize and hold against their animators even on longer time scales.

Described characteristics can also be evaluated in terms of their representativeness. Since “characteristics” are typically understood as more or less habitual in nature, even such descriptions that cannot be shown to be strictly speaking false (if they are, for example, appropriately hedged either temporally or modally) can be judged by others to be true only under unreasonably specific or rare conditions. Therefore, such descriptions can be judged as not sufficiently typical of the person or relevant for the type of self-presentation in question, and may even be considered intentionally misleading. A “lie by omission” (i.e., intentionally failing to mention some experientially salient attribute) would be an inverse case.[45] Performable characteristics, in contrast, are directly experienceable and evaluable in terms of skillfulness, finesse, or desirability already at the event of reading the text. The one thing the reader needs to trust in is that the performance actually emanated from the purported person and was not ghosted by someone else (i.e., that the author and the principal coincide). Performable characteristics too, however, become assessed in terms of representativeness and transportability. The question then is how the impression experienced at the one writing-based encounter corresponds to what is experienced in other, perhaps more prototypic and habitual everyday encounters, such as face-to-face conversations. That is, both performable and describable characteristics have a “promissory” nature (see Goffman 1990 [1959]: 14), but of different kinds. For performed characteristics cross-modal iconicity is a point of concern: how to signify and interpret the same characteristic in different semiotic modes with, for example, different time windows of signifying and interpreting (see also Scollon 1997). Being, for instance, “intelligent” under realtime pressures versus in writing, when one often has more possibilities for planning and honing, are somewhat different tasks (cf. 4.2.2 and 4.2.3).

If writers are understood to have more conscious awareness and flexibility in relation to representational descriptions, then they are also easier to hold accountable for described characteristics. Would, for instance, an accusation

[45] In addition to mental and social kinds, evalutions of representativeness can also apply to more directly perceived material kinds such as appearance (e.g., whether the picture in the online dating profile corresponds sufficiently with what the person will look like most of the time in most kinds of encounters).

of the type "you were funny in the advertisement but not on our first date, therefore you misled me" be plausible? In such cases, the non-congruence of impressions is more readily explained in terms of unintentional factors (e.g., difference in circumstances combined with interpersonal factors such as a "lack of spark" or "chemistry," see also 7.3). This is, of course, not to say that performable characteristics cannot become evaluated as intentionally unrepresentative or misleading (and examples will be seen in the questionnaire responses in the next section). The "fakeability" of performed characteristics is, however, complexly linked to ontology-specific understandings of the characteristic (e.g., what kinds of signs index the characteristic; what kind of intersubjective access there is to such signs; how well such indices can be controlled; how much accumulated training or socialization they require; see also Goffman 1990 [1959]: 17–19). From the standpoint of feigning, indices that require technical competence, such as behaving "intelligently" or "eloquently," differ from more generally human ones, such as appearing "empathetic" or "worried." Similarly, such characteristics differ in terms of the kind of intrasubjective and intersubjective coherence they presume: for instance, the concern that someone is being "insincerely" or "merely ostensibly" empathetic is different from (and probably substantially more common than) the concern that someone is being "insincerely" or "merely ostensibly" intelligent.

The general point being made here is that language use and the linguistic mediation of personhood in online dating advertisements can be more accurately understood when the interplay of mediational infrastructures and presumed ontologies of personhood are taken into account.[46] Finally, it should be noted that the distinction between "describable" and "performable" crosscuts the distinction between symbolic and indexical semiosis (as well as residence in the world and representations of the world). (For a related distinction between "claimed" and "demonstrated" knowledge, see Vatanen 2014.) "Describable" characteristics require general symbols that represent other, more or less displaced signs (e.g., embodied habits or attributes). It is precisely the "description" (qua symbolic representation) of other semiotic modes of personhood that enables the communication of such signs to others via digital text-artifacts. Symbols, however, as legisigns (or types) are always realized as sinsign replicas (or tokens) in actual discursive events as part of arrays of co-occurring signs. In other words, any symbol in actual usage is indexically linked to many other signs that co-interpret one

[46] Metaphorically speaking, online dating advertisements function like a semiotic prism that refracts personspacetime into different directions. When different kinds of signs "pass through" the text-artifact, they get refracted in slightly different directions. These different (re)fractions of persons (e.g., "described" and "performed" ones), then, carry different "wavelengths" of information, and they unfold and are encountered on different time scales and under different kinds of attitudes. For instance, in a particular sense, performable characteristics travel faster and are encountered more directly by the reader.

another. This means that any "described" characteristic is already embedded in a "performed" structure. Pure "description" does not exist. Any piece of writing, therefore, has an emergent indexical patterning, a level of meaning that can neither exist without nor be reduced to its constituents (such as clauses or morpho-syntactic elements). What was called "performable characteristics" here merely refers to such indexical effects that are easily recognizable and reportable (i.e., relatively enregistered or based on highly emblematic indices), understood as relatively intentional and therefore evaluable in terms of skillfulness of the performance (see also Bauman & Briggs 1990). However, the two levels are always present to various degrees in any actual interpretation of text. The following section will take a more empirical look at such indexical effects in light of the questionnaire data.

## 4.2 VIEWS OF SUBJECTIVITY

Text-level indexicality is an essential ingredient in conveying what has been called, for instance, "views of subjectivity" or "visions of consciousness" (Lee 1997a: 366) or "mind styles" (e.g. Semino 2007). These terms point to the interpretation of sign patterns as an indication of how the mind of the person to whom they are attributed (e.g., an animator or a figure) is operating (and that they, in fact, not only have a mind but an understanding of others' minds). In a sense, such effects are communicable first-person experiences of the world. Traditionally, the ability of humans to infer others' mental processes and to predict further behaviors based on them has been referred to as the "theory of mind." Here it will be treated as a subspecies of kinding (see section 2.1.3): the capacity of agents to project propensities on individuals in order to explain and predict the unfolding of their semiotic processes. (See also Kockelman 2010; 2013a: e.g. 161–164.) The aim of sections 4.2.1–4.2.3 is to examine the interpretation of views of subjectivity in the light of the questionnaire data (see section 3.2). That is, the focus in the following analyses is on how mental states (consisting of modes, such as belief or intention, and contents, such as what is believed or intended) and ensuing interpretations (such as social statuses or traits of personality) are projected on individuals based on the indices they exhibit in their text-artifacts. Three texts were chosen for the questionnaire. They were considered to differ maximally in terms of their textual structure. The following analyses compare such structural differences with differences in the interpretations of the respondents of the questionnaire.

One of the methodological challenges is the fact that interactants intuitively experience the effects of a considerably larger array of signs – often relatively subtle and volatile and only sometimes public and unambiguous – than they are acutely aware of or can pinpoint exactly or explicitly. The typifications and rationalizations interactants offer for their own or others' mental patterns are, then, already a reflexive step or two

removed from more immediate impressions. It is, however, precisely such chains of reflexive reasoning and intersubjective negotiation that make mental states emblematic (or public and unambiguous) and individuals accountable for them. Such unfoldings construe and enclose the functioning of the mind as object-like and event-like in particular ways (see Kockelman 2010: 80–84). That is, relatively private semiotic processes (e.g., mental states) and relatively public semiotic processes (e.g., speech acts) are inextricably linked. Therefore, instead of regarding linguistic representations as inaccurate reflections of private processes, we conclude that the proper locus of subjectivity, in fact, *is* in such reflexive, distributed and interactional semiotic chains, of which linguistic representational interpretants constitute one layer (see also the discussion of metastance relations in chapter 5).

Subjectivity, then, is semiotically mediated and not merely “represented” in such processes. (Remember the previous discussion of mind as a species of semiosis in chapter 2.) Cultural norms, such as reflexive models of discourse, which regiment semiotic behavior, both enable and constrain patterns of subjectivity. For instance, scientific discourses or narrative styles in literary fiction (such as “free” forms of speech and thought representation) are different kinds of artificed instruments that enable specific ways of interacting with and interpreting the world. (See e.g. Lee 1997a: 10; 1997b: 365.) In various cultural ontologies, models of subjectivity are closely linked to social statuses. Particular roles require particular mindsets. Western notions of scientific rationality, for instance, have long shaped norms and ideologies that specify what the language use of the rational mind of a scientist should be like (see e.g. Bauman & Briggs 2003). The relation between private and public processes is itself an ideologically regimented notion. There is considerable genre-specific variation in how and to what extent private processes (e.g., intentions, beliefs, perceptions, affects) can or must be entextualized into public representations (e.g., how “personal” or “emotional,” “concise” or “voluble,” “spontaneous” or “planned,” “crystallized” or “branching” it is appropriate to be) (see also Hymes 1972). Subjectivities are, in other words, interpreted, evaluated and regimented in light of cultural norms and stereotypes. The same text can mediate a different view of subjectivity for different readers or in different types of events (e.g., being “rambling” vs. “spontaneous and voluble”). In some contexts and for some social statuses, there seems to be a particular concern for discrepancies between mental states and speech acts (e.g., a fear that someone may be “saying something, but not really meaning it”). In such cases, patterns of discursive behavior often become interpreted in light of ideological notions of, for instance, “(in)authenticity” or “(in)sincerity” (see e.g. Keane 2002; Shoaps 2002; Hill 2008; Wilce 2009b: 133–136) (see also chapter 7).

A written text-artifact, such as an online dating advertisement, then, is an instrument that mediates mind-functioning in intersubjective contacts in light of various cultural models. The aim of this section is to explore how the patterning and formulation of the text-artifact mediates particular kinds of

experiences of (the writer's) subjectivity in the event of interpretation. The three texts that were chosen for the questionnaire were considered to differ maximally in terms of their temporal-perspectival unfolding based on their linguistic structure. The actual patterns that differentiate the three texts are diverse. Any text navigates the reader on a specific path through semiotic worlds by directing attention to various objects, knowledge structures, and stances in particular orders and combinations. On a denotational level, these objects may cover different modes and contents (e.g., desires, emotions, perceptions, or knowledge about different domains of the social or natural world) and may be related to time, space, and personhood in different ways (e.g., from various points of reference; with various levels of abstractedness or concreteness; in various degrees of factuality, possibility, or necessity). That is, texts mediate series of perspectives on the worlds in question. Each online dating advertisement consists of an indexical patterning of entextualized events ($E^t$). These entextualized sign patterns, in turn, are embedded in speech events ($E^s$) of text production or interpretation.[47] Moreover, the temporal location of entextualized events is calculated in relation to reference events ($E^r$), which may be the speech event or other entextualized events (see Lee 1997a: 285; Kockelman 2010: 90–92; also Kockelman & Bernstein 2012: 326). Different combinations of such relations can produce a variety of temporal and aspectual effects. On non-denotational levels, the formulation and the organization of the sign patterns (e.g., in parallels, repetitions, or rhymes) mediate various metrical effects. Texts, therefore, have particular rhythms and structures of temporal unfolding. We see, then, that temporality in its many forms is an important factor in subjectivity (see Benveniste 1971: 226–227; Lee 1997a: 284–292; Kockelman & Bernstein 2012).[48] One might say that speech events have their own patterns of temporal unfolding, or textual "microtimes" (see Urban 2001: 101), based on not only the denotational but also the phenomenological and compositional qualities of the sign patterns. Such phenomenological and compositional qualities, like the sonority of linguistic signs (or the qualisigns they embody) or the composition of the imagery conveyed by linguistic symbols, also yield various aesthetic effects. Furthermore, the texts mediate

[47] In Jakobson's (1990 [1957]) original notation the linguistic description of an event was called a "narrated event" ($E^n$). To avoid confusions with narrativity and narratives proper (see 4.4.3), the term "[en]textualized event" ($E^t$) is used here (as in, for example, Lee 1997a). "Speech event" ($E^s$), when used here, can refer to any kind of discursive event (oral, written, or other).

[48] Kockelman & Bernstein (2012), for instance, distinguish four different ways of framing temporality: temporality as *metricality* (focus on the repetition of tokens of an event type), temporality as *performativity* (focus on the causes and consequences of an event), temporality as *reckoning* (focus on the temporal location and length of an event), and temporality as *worldview* (focus on cultural understandings of time). Some of these interlocking aspects of temporality will be examined throughout the study (e.g., temporality as performativity), some in specific sections (see 4.3 and 4.4.3 in particular).

different kinds of interactional texts based on how their sign patterns become interpreted as indices and icons of social relations and interactional positions and recognized as instances of enregistered cultural types, such as rhetorical patterns, styles, or genres linked to particular social personae. Finally, various means of metapragmatic commentary of one's textual-semiotic processes may be employed by writers to introduce an explicit layer of reflexive subjectivity in the text.

### 4.2.1 "POETIC" OR "DEMANDING"?

The aim of the following three sections is to show that you cannot *not* give off an indexical view of subjectivity. Such views, however, depend on the ontologies of the respondents and on their practices of reporting, which gives rise to a diverse and fragmented set of interpretations. To see how textual patterning shapes the temporal-perspectival unfolding of speech events and correlates with interpretations of the writer as a person, let us first concentrate on the beginning of the first example (4.4), a list of seven parallel sentences, each one typographically placed on a separate line.[49]

(4.4)
Haluan miehen joka on tyytyväinen itseensä
Haluan miehen joka tietää mitä halua
Haluan miehen joka haluaa rakastaa
Haluan miehen joka osaa näyttää tunteensa
Haluan miehen joka osaa keskustella
Haluan miehen joka on itsenäinen, mutta kaipaa kumppania
Haluan miehen joka tyytyväinen siihen mitä näkee peilistä olematta kuitenkaan liian itserakas
Onko tällaisia? Täällä rehevä, kaunis (kauneus on katsojan silmissä), tumma, itsenäinen – –
En väitä olevani täydellinen (sellaista ei ole), mutta olen mukava, pidetty – –
Jos kiinnostaa kuulla lisää vastaa ihmeessä. Kuva kuvasta.
(4.4)
I want a man who is satisfied with himself
I want a man who knows what he wants
I want a man who wants to love
I want a man who can show his feelings
I want a man who can have a conversation
I want a man who is independent, but longs for a companion
I want a man who is satisfied with what he sees in the mirror but without being too vain
Are there men like this? Here is a luscious, beautiful (beauty is in the eye of the beholder), dark, independent – –

[49] As the texts are quite lengthy, segments that are of secondary importance for the analyses here have been left out. Some of them will be used later as examples for other purposes.

I don't claim to be perfect (that does not exist), but I'm nice, liked – –
If [you're] interested in hearing more please do reply. A picture for a picture.[50]

Each of the seven sentences has a similar syntactic structure. The verb in the matrix clause denotes a mental process of "wanting" and has the NP *miehen* ("man" ACC) as its object. Each instance of the noun is qualified with a relative clause headed by the relative pronoun *joka* ("who"). That is, the only varying part in the parallel structure is the VP part of the relative clause that describes the object-person from seven different angles. The repetition binds the seven sentences together into a metrical pattern that has a particular dynamic of unfolding as the signs are perceived and interpreted by respondents. Even an "inner" reading of the structure, a combination of the visual form and the (simulated) sonority of the linguistic signs, evokes a rhythmic pattern so that "the reality of the discourse object is felt as well as cognized" (Urban 2001: 100; see also Wilce 2009a: 91). That is, the textual pattern simultaneously mediates iconic-indexical and indexical-symbolic effects.

The respondents of the questionnaire were asked to describe up to three different impressions that each text gave rise to and to justify them with concrete linguistic or contextual features. Only three out of twenty-seven answer sheets clearly contain no verbal reference to or drawn marking of the parallel structure. All other respondents orient more or less explicitly to the structure as a salient sign of personhood. The interpretations of the first text seem to divide into two groups. Table 1 lists some examples from the first group of interpretations that focused on what was perceived as the "poetic" and "dramatic" quality of text. In the first group, not a single typification occurred more than once:

| **typification** | **n** | **reasons** |
|---|---|---|
| literary (*kaunokirjallinen*) | 1 | "the boring clichés of online dating expressed linguistically in a less boring manner" [T1/3] |
| poem (*runo*) | 1 | "the arrangement of the whole text" [T1/10] |
| sweet (*herttainen*) | 1 | "the poetic style in the beginning" [T1/16] |
| tries to be artistic and original (*yrittää olla taiteellinen ja omaperäinen*) | 1 | "the poetic form of the beginning, the rhetorical question and the negative adjectives about self" [T1/20] |
| dramatic (*dramaattinen*) | 1 | "repetition, omission of punctuation, rhythm" [T1/25] |

Table 1. *Interpretations of the writer being "poetic."*

There is, then, considerable variation in the symbols selected for the typifications, but the different typifications and their accompanying

[50] See also example 4.17 in 4.2.2 and example 4.21f in 4.4.

rationalizations are bound together with a sort of family resemblance ("artistic" ~ "poem" ~ "literary" ~ "poetic" ~ "original" ~ "dramatic" ~ "less boring"). There is also variation as to whether the object of the typification is the text itself ("poem") or its animator in terms of persona ("sweet," *herttainen*) or in terms of intentions ("**tries** to be artistic and original," ***yrittää*** *olla taiteellinen ja omaperäinen*). As can be seen from both the typifications and the reasons given for them, descriptions of effects are constantly mixed with evaluations of the desirability of the person ("sweet") or the success or respectability of their intentions ("tries to be"). This illustrates the point made in the previous section that performable indexical effects are directly experienced by readers and instantly submitted to their evaluation.

In the second group of interpretations (Table 2), in contrast, there is a clear recurrence of the same or similar typifications. These interpretations focus on the intensity of the mental state or the commitment of the writer. All respondents in the two groups are different. That is, not one respondent simultaneously reported the writer as both "poetic" and "demanding."

| **typification** | **n** | **reasons** |
|---|---|---|
| knows what she wants/seeks (*tietää mitä haluaa/tahtoo/ etsii*); "I know what I want" (1SG voicing) ("*tiedän, mitä haluan*") | 7 | "the verb 'haluan' recurs many times as a list" [T1/5]; "tells specifically what kind of man she is looking for" [T1/9]; "uses the word HALUAN [I want], which is stronger than e.g. HALUAISIN [I would want/like]" [refers to the contrast between the indicative and the conditional mood, see 5.1.2] [T1/12] |
| vaativa (*demanding*) | 4 | "the repetition of the word 'haluan' speaks of being demanding" [T1/2]; "the 'haluan miehen' beginning" [T1/18] |
| determined (*määrätietoinen*) | 2 | "the structure of the text [is] strong, daring" [T1/23]; "ample descriptions; knows who she is and what she is looking for" [T1/26] |
| mature (*kypsä*) | 1 | "knows what she wants" [T1/17] |

Table 2. *Interpretations of the writer being "demanding."*

At least two things are instantly noteworthy here. First, the idiom-like typification "knows what she wants" with slight variations in the form occurs numerous times, and so does "demanding." One respondent uses a technique of 1SG voicing, which can be interpreted as a representation of either the writer's speech or thought. Second, the same representational interpretant occurs both as a typification ("knows what she wants") and as part of the reasons given for another typification ("mature" because "she knows what she wants"). That is, what for some is a representation of the impression given off by the writer is by others framed as a reason leading to a further typification.

The typification "knows what she wants" is an explicit metarepresentation of the writer's reflexive subjectivity (i.e., her knowing of her wanting). The complement clause that represents the content of knowing ("what she wants") employs the same linguistic symbol used by the writer (*haluta*, "to want") in a free, nominal relative clause, in which the verb "to want" has no specific complements. It is, then, construable as a sort of generalization of the seven more specific instances of wanting. The recurrence of particular instances is what becomes interpreted as the "knowing" of what one wants, a more general or overarching mental propensity that motivates each instance and their total number. That is, saying "I want" seven times is interpreted as a sign of the writer's awareness of her wanting and the intensity of her wanting. The 1SG voicing "I know what I want," then, represents the writer's mental habits and epistemic convictions. "Knows what she wants" can also be taken as a more immediate interpretation of the writer's speech behaviors. That is, saying "I want" seven times can also be interpreted as a sign of a propensity to behave in ways that express one's desires to others. In this case, the 1SG voicing "I know what I want" would represent the writer's speech behaviors. Moreover, one respondent paraphrases "wants" with "seeks" ("knows what she seeks"), which further links the represented mental propensities (knowing, wanting) and the perceivable speech behaviors (expressing one's desires) with social activities (seeking the object of one's desire): that is, really wanting something and being aware of one's wanting leads to the expression of such desires and the intention of realizing them. Such interpretations are no longer so much about the intensity of the writer's mental states *per se* but about the intensity of her commitment to the fruition of those states. Some respondents take other kinds of inferential steps and interpret such propensities as traits of personality. That is, a person who generally knows what she wants is seen as "demanding" (with a neutral or possibly slightly negative connotation) or "mature" (with a positive connotation). All these typifications, then, are an inferential step or two removed from one another. Such inferences are perhaps fueled by the fact that "knows what she wants" is to some degree enregistered as an idiomatic way of talking about people with determination or life experience.

Another relevant observation here is the somewhat salient overlap between the writer's performance and the respondents' interpretations and reports of it in terms of the use of the symbol "to want" (*haluta*). The respondents' choice of the idiom "knows what she wants" might have been catalyzed by the writer's salient use of the symbol in the first place, since the idiom was by far the most recurrent typification. Both the convergence of typifications on the idiom and the chaining of inferences around it might, then, be in part explained by the perceptually salient and systematically recurring symbol-tokens used by the writer. That is, the second group of respondents relied more on denotationally explicit symbol-tokens and the kinds of inferences and deductions that they easily enable, whereas the first group reported interpretations based on less emblematic signs.

Furthermore, two subgroups of interpretations can be distinguished within the latter group. Some respondents seem to focus more on the wanting agent (e.g., as being "determined"), others on the object of wanting ("tells specifically what kind of man she is looking for," "ample descriptions [of the desired other]"). We might call these *agent-centered* and *patient-centered* (see Urban 1991: 31–33) readings of the denotational patterning. The difference can be understood in terms of two possible figure-ground construals. One type of interpretation focuses more on the constant representational mode (matrix clause + REL), the other on the variable representational contents (VP). This difference, too, correlates with the emblematicity of the signs. The repetition of *haluan miehen joka* ("I want a man who") replicates the signs verbatim from one instance to another. The signs, and the repetition itself, then, are phenomenologically emblematic (e.g., directly and continuously visible throughout; see also chapter 5). They are also relationally emblematic, since each instance shares the same qualities (which also contrasts them with the rest of the text). (See Kockelman 2013a: 77.) The repetition of the VP part of the complement clause, in contrast, enumerates denotationally and phenomenologically varying instances of a relatively covert and inferential type (i.e., the processes that the ideal man is involved in). The different instances of the covert type, then, only exhibit relational emblematicity and what they have in common is a relatively abstact layer of meaning.

From the standpoint of personhood, the most important thing to notice, however, is the difference between the first group of respondents and the second one. Whereas in the second group the parallel structure was interpreted as *quantitatively* intensifying the denoted mental process and the writer's commitment to its consequences, in the first group the structure was taken as *qualitatively* contextualizing the event as a different mode of subjectivity altogether – a dramatic one detached to a degree from ordinary everyday experience. Apparently, for some, the poetic effect was so strong that the return to more mundane affairs right at the end felt downright "rude" (*tyly*), as the curt instructions clashed with the "poetic and aesthetic" quality of the beginning (*ristiriitainen alun poeettisuuteen ja esteettisyyteen nähden*) [T1/16].

This fractionation of respondents into two camps also seems to correlate with the interpretation of other features of the text, such as the kind of double-voicing strategy used by the writer towards the end of the text. She uses a set of independent clauses embedded in parenthesis in the middle of other clauses to comment on elements of the matrix clauses in a sort of *sotto voce* (see also 4.2.2). This secondary voice, carrying a secondary perspective, was interpreted by some respondents as "funny" [T1/7] or "humorous" (implying "sarcastic" or "ironic") [T1/24], which are relatively coherent with the qualitative interpretation of the "poetic" style of the writer, and by others as a sign of "insecurity" [T1/5; T1/21] or "contradiction" [T1/9], which point

to a felt incoherence with the quantitative interpretation of the writer as "knowing what she wants."

### 4.2.2 "REFLECTIVE" AND "ANALYTICAL"

If the views of subjectivity mediated by the previous text were based on the microtemporal and phenomenological structuring of the text as well as the denotational patterning of mental processes, similar dimensions are involved in the following example, but in a quite different manner and with opposite effects. The following text is marked by its compact structure and "finished" quality compared with the other two texts examined here (and 4.6 in particular). It contains no saliently "poetic" rhythmic patterning or repetitions, alternative formulations, or commenting double voices.

> (4.5)
> Tuntuuko sinustakin, että nykymaailmasta olisi rakkaus vähentynyt / vähentymässä? Minusta ainakin tuntuu ja se ilmenee monessa seikassa. Toivon löytäväni naisen, jonka kanssa rakkautta voisi ainakin paikallisesti lisätä ;)
> Olen valmis kohtaamaan naisen koko sydämelläni, mutta enemmän sopivan hitaasti edeten kuin syöksymällä päätäpahkaa. Olen ollut sinkku aivan riittävästi. Havaintoni mukaan naisen löytyminen on silti ollut ongelmallista, vaikka en pidä isoa vaatimuslistaa. Ymmärrettävää se on siinä mielessä, kun nykyinen kulttuuri suosii ihmissuhteiden etsimisessä liikaa kilpailuhenkisyyttä inhimillisen vuorovaikutuksen luomisen kustannuksella. Haluan itse suosia jälkimmäistä metodia!
> Elämäntilanteeni antaa aihetta haasteisiin, mutta omanarvontuntoni ja hyväsydämisyyteni luovat edellytyksiä suuren rakkauden ja elämännautinnon lähteille; elämää on vielä paljon näkemättä, mutta jo nähty on antanut suuren ymmärryksen ihmissielun vajavaisuudesta ja haavoittuvuudesta. Sen tähden olen erityisen ymmärtäväinen ja keskustelutaitoinen kumppani. En pidä rakkautta ja parisuhdetta itsestäänselvyytenä, joten olen myös luotettava ja rehellinen kumppani.
> Elämänilo on tärkeää, jonka takia henkinen ja fyysinen läheisyys on minulle iso juttu naisen kanssa; nautin monenlaisesta hellyydestä, erotiikasta, yhteisestä tekemisestä jne. Toisaalta olen sellainen pohdiskeleva ja semiboheemi taiteilijasielu, jolle oman itsensä kanssa yksin vietetty aika on ajoittain oleellista. Aikaa on löydyttävä asioiden kehittämiseen / sulatteluun, rauhoittumiseen ja pysähtymiseen.
> (4.5)
> Do you too feel that in today's world love has decreased / is decreasing? I at any rate do feel so and it can be seen in many things. I am hoping to find a woman with whom love could be increased at least locally ;)
> I am ready to encounter a woman with all my heart, but progressing slowly rather than rushing headlong. I have been single long enough. According to my observations finding a woman has nevertheless been difficult, although I don't keep a long list of demands. It is understandable in the sense that the current culture favors competition in the search for relationships at the expense of human interaction. I myself want to favor the latter method!

> My situation in life gives reasons for challenges, but my self-esteem and kind-heartedness create bases for sources of great love and pleasure in life; there is a lot of life to be seen, but what [I] have already seen has given [me] a great understanding of the insufficiency and the vulnerability of the human soul. Therefore I am a particularly understanding and conversationally skilled companion. I don't take love and relationships for granted, so I am also a reliable and honest companion.
> The joy of life is important, which is why mental and physical intimacy is a big thing for me with a woman; I enjoy many forms of tenderness, eroticism, shared activities and so on. On the other hand I'm a sort of reflective and semi-bohemian artistic soul, for whom time spent alone with oneself is at times essential. There has to be time for developing / digesting things, quieting down and pausing.

On the denotational level the text favors generalizations and abstract principles or tendencies of life (e.g., "the current culture favors competition in the search for relationships at the expense of human interaction," *nykyinen kulttuuri suosii ihmissuhteiden etsimisessä liikaa kilpailuhenkisyyttä inhimillisen vuorovaikutuksen luomisen kustannuksella*). The text denotes relational processes and mental processes that are opinions and reasoning more often than affects or desires. That is, in contrast to the previous text, there is a tendency towards abstract thought and theorizing (see 4.4.1). Correspondingly, there is explicit reflexive metadiscourse that specifies ongoing actions and intentions and links them with values and principles ("I am hoping to find a woman, with whom love could be increased at least locally ;),"[51] "I am ready to encounter a woman with all my heart, but progressing slowly rather than rushing headlong"). Moreover, the writer frames the contents with explicit metalanguage of argumentative reasoning (*sen tähden*, *joten*, "therefore") and observations and generalizations (*havaintoni mukaan*, "according to my observations"). The lexical selections of the text include abstract, specific, and specialized items (*semiboheemi*, "semi-bohemian"; *ihmissielun vajavaisuus*, "the insufficiency of the human soul"; *kulttuuri*, "culture" in a relatively technical sense; *metodi*, "method"), some of which point towards scientific discourses. The sentence structures are often heavy because of nominalizations and embedding ("My situation in life gives reasons for challenges, but my self-esteem and kind-heartedness create bases for sources of great love and pleasure in life," *Elämäntilanteeni antaa aihetta haasteisiin, mutta omanarvontuntoni ja hyväsydämisyyteni luovat edellytyksiä suuren rakkauden ja elämännautinnon lähteille*).

The clearest pattern in the answer sheets is a focus on the mental capacities of the writer ("intelligent," "academic," or "reflective") and the

[51] The winking smiley, however, was interpreted by a few respondents as a sign of a euphemism or double entendre. That is, the writer's intentions were interpreted as sexual. For instance, one respondent regarded the writer as "gross" (*törkeä*) because of his "innuendos about sex" (*vihjailu seksiin*) [T2/16].

nature of the information presented in the text ("knows how to embed information in his text," "general regularities," or "analytical"). Once again, several respondents picked words used by the writer himself (such as *pohdiskeleva,* "reflective") or used semantically related words, although the convergence is not as clear as in the previous text.

| **typification** | **n** | **reasons** |
|---|---|---|
| scientific matter-of-factness (*tieteellinen teksti*, *tieteellinen asiallisuus*) | 2 | "lots of fancy/foreign words (*sivistyssanoja*)" [T2/2]; "expressions like 'observation' and 'method'" [T2/11] |
| reflective (*pohdiskeleva*, *ajatteleva ja pohdiskeleva*) | 2 | "long commentaries about life and love and society" [T2/9] |
| smart (*fiksu,* (*fiksu/akateeminen*) | 2 | "knows how to embed information in his text" [T2/20]; "...or pretends to be, at least he himself thinks he is an intellectual" [T2/27] |
| writing that has been considered for a long time (*pitkään mietitty kirjoitus*) | 1 | "salient words: semi-bohemian, method... Still, colloquial and playful" [T2/21] |
| appeals to reason, generalizes (*järkisyihin vetoava, yleistävä*) | 1 | "puts forth general regularities [of life]" (*yleisiä lainalaisuuksia*)" [T2/13] |
| analytical (*analyyttinen*) | 1 | "analyzes himself and his potential partner" [T2/9] |
| intelligent or wants to appear that way (*älykäs tai haluaa vaikuttaa siltä*) | 1 | – [T2/19] |
| self-satisfied (*itseriittoinen*) | 1 | "underlining his own intelligence" [T2/16] |

Table 3. *Interpretations of the writer as "reflective" and "analytical."*

Interestingly, two respondents also typify the writer as an "artist" (*taiteilija*) or having an "artistic character" (*taiteilijaluonne*), which is in some sense contrary to the general emphasis on intellect and rationality in the interpretations. It is also noteworthy that the reasons these two give explicitly point to the writer's own fleeting typification of himself as an "artistic soul" (*taiteilijasielu*) ("Describes himself as such, also shows between the lines," *Kuvaileekin itseään vähän sellaiseksi, näkyy myös rivien välistä* [T2/15]; "Mentions the fact himself, but e.g. talking about the soul earlier," *itse mainitsee asian, mutta esim. sielusta puhuminen aikaisemmin* [T2/19]). Such interpretations, then, are strongly anchored in the writer's denotationally explicit and phenomenologically emblematic symbol-tokens. In fact, the only additional justification the first respondent is able to give is a vague reference to an impression "between the lines." The other one cites the fact that the writer had previously talked about the "soul" as an example of the kind of sign that justifies her interpretation.

Although the general tone of the interpretations was perhaps even more unanimously negative than in the case of the other two texts, some respondents also regarded the writer as skilled and experienced. As for more specific details, one respondent noted the directly addressed question ("Do you too feel like," *Tuntuuko sinustakin*) as a positive sign of seeking a contact (*Hakee yhteistä*; *[K]ohdistaa sanomansa suoraan lukijalle* [T2/13]) (see also chapter 5). Another one, in contrast, regarded the beginning as advertisement-like in a negative sense (*mainostyylinen*, "in the style of commercial advertisements"). Similarly, the general air of "smartness" was often interpreted as a sign of negative intentions (e.g., a will to manipulate readers) or questioned in terms of its representativeness (e.g., in the sense that the writer merely "wants to appear that way"). Some respondents considered the signs of "smartness" as the writer's self-aggrandizing attempt to underline his intelligence, particularly combined with the fact that the writer does not describe any negative characteristics. A few respondents also took notice of the curiously vague comment ("My situation in life gives reasons for challenges," *Elämäntilanteeni antaa aihetta haasteisiin*) and interpreted it as a veiled warning about some problematic biographical fact that will be fully confessed later ("refers to something that the man does not want to say right away but is not planning to conceal either," *viittaa johonkin asiaan, mitä mies ei halua heti kertoa, mutta ei aio sitä salatakaan* [T2/12]). However, one thing that most of the respondents seemed to agree on, despite other differences, relates to the composition of the text. The advertisement is, for good or bad, a "writing that has been considered for a long time" (*Pitkään mietitty kirjoitus*) [T2/21], as one respondent put it. In that sense, it contrasts clearly with the following one.

### 4.2.3 STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS: "LAID-BACK" VERSUS "CHILDISH"

The third text resembles a "stream of consciousness" style of writing, and that is, in fact, a typification that actually occurs in the questionnaire responses too. Of the three texts examined in this section, the following is also the one that most clearly contains segments that are narrative in nature (see 4.4.3).

(4.6)

Nää kerro itestäs jutut on aina vaikeita,,,ainakaan valokuvissa en tykkää olla yksin, jos ollenkaan. Tuokin kuva on muutaman vuoden takaa kun kaveri sai jotenkin puhuttua ittellensä meikkimalliks valmistuessaan maskeeraajaks, joten maskaran määrä on siks aika suuri:) Avoeron olen kokenut tuossa vuosi sitten ja nyt vaan alkaa sosiaalinen elämä kiinnostaa uudelleen,,,aattelin kokeilla sit tällastakin kun ei tule niin usein tuolla baareissa pyörittyä. Kavereitten kanssa tykkään kyllä iltaa viettää " syöpötellen ja juopotellen":). Kotisohva ei myöskään oo pöllömpi tapa viettää aikaa ja siinä kai tulee töitten jälkeen ihan mukavasti aikaa vietettyäkin, vaikka virtapiikkejäkin tulee ja pidän

kuntoilustakin kävellen, rullaluistellen jne. olen avoin kaikelle liikunnalle. Murteesta huomaa että itä-suomen kasvatteja oon, vaikka oon ollu sieltä pois 10 vuotta, asustellu Tampesterissä, Kreikassakin käyny pyörähtämässä (ei,,,ei Jorgoksen perässä, töitten:) ja nyt sitten 4 vuotta täälä Helsingissä. Mie tykkään nauramisesta,,,saatan heittää aika hurttiakin huumoria, vähän sellanen räväkänpuoleinen varmaan,,,joten ehkä se on parempi että toinenkaan osapuoli ei ainakaan hirrrvn ujo ole ( vaikka sekin voi olla söpöä) huumorintaju ja itseironismi on aina plussaa! Mie osaan kyllä ujostellakkin, varsinkin sillon kun jostakin kiinnostun, se on aika persiistä:) Jos kiinnostuit ja olet suhteelllisen normaali kaikin puolin, eli olet muuttanut kotoa pois ja työpaikallekkin on raahauduttava, otappa yhteyksiä:) Vaikeeta sanoo jotain fiksua ja kiinnostavaa tähän loppuun, joten mie sanon vaan Hellurei!

(4.6)

These tell about yourself things are always tough,,,at least in photographs I don't like to be alone, if at all. That picture is from a few years back when a friend of mine somehow talked me into modeling for [her] when she was qualifying as a make-up artist, so that's why the amount of mascara is pretty big:) I have experienced a break-up about a year ago and well now social life is beginning to interest [me] again,,,I thought I'd also try something like this since I don't tend to hang around in bars that often. With friends I do like to hang around " feasting" and "drinking":). [Your] home couch is not a bad way to spend time either and I suppose that's where I tend to spend quite a lot of time after work, although I do get surges of energy too and I like to exercise by walking, roller-skating etc. I'm open to all forms of sports. From the dialect [you] will notice that I'm a daughter of eastern finland, although I've been away from there for 10 years, [been] living in Tampester, also popped into Greece (no,,,not after Jorgos, [but] work:) and now then 4 years here in Helsinki. I like laughing,,,I may even make some quite risky jokes, [I'm] a bit kind of fervent I suppose,,,so maybe it's better that the other [person] is at least not terrribly [*sic*] shy either ( although that too may be cute) a sense of humor and self-ironism [*sic*] are always a plus! I can be shy too, especially when I get interested in someone, it sucks:) If you got interested and you're relativelly normal in every way, that is you have moved away from home and have to drag yourself to a workplace, get in contact;) Hard to say something smart and interesting here in the end, so I'll just say Bye-bye!

According to one respondent the text is a "stream of consciousness," because the different sentences in the text are "in no way related to one another" and the text is not "polished" (*lauseet eivät liity toisiinsa mitenkään, ei huoliteltua tekstiä*) [T3/9]. That is, she draws attention to loose interclausal relations and topical coherence as well as a lack of editing. The longest clause complex in the text (starting with *Mie tykkään nauramisesta,,,* "I like laughing,,,") incorporates seven clauses (of which one is elliptic) in one orthographic sequence structured with parentheses and sets of three commas and ending with an exclamation point. The commas sometimes separate main clauses from one another, sometimes subordinate clauses from main clauses (*,,,joten,* "thus"), and seem to have some sort of division of labor with full stops and ordinary, solitary commas. The text makes no use of a division

into paragraphs or similar organizing indices but, rather, just flows from beginning to end. Moreover, the text employs colloquial or regional variants of pronouns (*nää* pro *nämä*, *mie* pro *minä*), adverbs (*siks, sit*, *täälä*), verb inflection (*ei oo*, *oon ollu*), noun declination (*persiistä*), clitics (*-kkin*) and proper names (*Tampester*, "Tampere"). Other examples of the writer's graphemic creativity include, for example, the metaplasmic (or purposefully misspelt) form of *hirrrvn*, a variant of the intensifying adverb *hirveän* ("terribly"), which apparently imitates a particular kind of expressive pronunciation, the number of graphemes representing tremulants (*-rrr-*) being iconic of intensity. The humor of the writer was already discussed in 4.1.1 (the case of *Jorgos*). There is, then, a superimposition of different layers of indices (stream of consciousness, colloquiality, humor).

The following list contains five excerpts from the questionnaires, including the one already discussed. Each respondent interprets, and criticizes, the performance slightly differently in light of different norms of social behavior:

- "No censorship on what [she] dares to say" (*Ei sensuuria mitä kehtaa sanoa*)
- "The story is a bit dull and biographical. Rambling" (*Tarina vähän tylsää ja elämänkerrallista. Jaarittelevaa*)
- "May drivel on a lot about something irrelevant. A long text" (*Saattaa höpötellä jostain epäolennaisesta paljonkin. Pitkä teksti*)
- "The clauses are in no way related to one another, the text is not polished (*lauseet eivät liity toisiinsa mitenkään, ei huoliteltua tekstiä*)
- "[she] didn't think at all what you should write in a text like this so that it would work" (*ei miettinyt yhtään, mitä tällaiseen tekstiin kannattaisi kirjoittaa, jotta se toimisi*)

The first respondent approaches the textual structure from the standpoint of the writer's affects and biographic self-control. Her interpretation focuses on the fact that the text brings into public light things that one could have and others would have retained in the private realm and that others might have been ashamed of such speech acts. The second respondent, on the other hand, regards the biographic scope of the writer as too wide and the presented information as too unprocessed from the standpoint of the respondent's affects. The verb *jaaritella* ("to ramble, blather") denotes a verbal process that lacks concise, crystallized, and polished expression. The third respondent similarly concerns herself with the lack of biographic focus as well as the mere quantity of the presented information. The fourth one, as we saw earlier, is worried about the coherence of the text as well as its relation to a presumed ideal of what a "polished" text-artifact should be like. Finally, the fifth respondent assesses the composition of the text in relation to the purposes and consequences of the ongoing type of interactional event. The former comments focus more on the process of being a person and the latter ones on the process of producing a genred text-artifact. The important

point, however, is that in each interpretation stereotypes of entextualization overlap with stereotypes of personhood.

The respondents above discuss from different perspectives the relation between private "thought" and public "communication." Their comments reflect a specific kind of understanding of how written text-artifacts should relate to more private semiotic realms, or how artifactual residues should relate to the temporally unfolding semiotic processes that produced them. Ultimately, then, we are dealing with cultural norms of entextualization that regiment appropriate forms of texts and textuality, spoken and written, and their relations to human subjectivity and social behaviors (see e.g. Haviland 1996; Silverstein 2000; Wogan 2004; also Scollon 1997). The underlying idea in the comments above seems to be that since digital text-artifacts can be edited, serially redesigned, modified and structured – they should be. A sort of temporal compression and interactional economy is expected. Not everything that goes on "in" one's mind should come "out" in a speech event. That is, one is supposed to spare the reader from one's "rambling" thought processes and processual phases of textual composition. From the standpoint of such ontologies, the problem with text (4.6), then, is that it contains elements that could and should have been edited out and are, therefore, seen as "speech-like" or "thought-like." In (4.6) such indices include a loosely articulated and structured denotational text as well as expressions of planning and comments on the compositional process (e.g., "Hard to say something smart and interesting here in the end, so I'll just say Bye-bye!," *Vaikeeta sanoo jotain fiksua ja kiinnostavaa tähän loppuun, joten mie sanon vaan Hellurei!*). Later examples (see e.g. sections 5.2.2 and 5.5) will also include, for example, interjections and reactive particles, metalanguage of planning and repair, "inner turn structures" that have not been "monologized" as expected (i.e., asking a question from oneself, processing, replying to oneself).

The question is, in part, about the degree to which one's unfolding semiotic processes are expected to be evaluated, controlled and reflexively processed before making them public (e.g., in the form of linguistic signs). Conversely, we may ask what are the kinds of contexts in which signs are understood to spring "straight" from one's subjectivity without processing. The very possibility of either control or directness is differently attributed to different types of processes. Stereotypically, speech and writing are often seen as different in this regard. Even with no empirical data on the actual, particular process of entextualization (e.g., how much time was actually available for or spent by the writer of a specific text-artifact such as an online dating advertisement), the writer can be held accountable for a lack of structuring, honing or condensation, since this sort of flexibility is stereotypically presumed as a possibility. As will be seen later, precisely because of assumptions like this images of "spontaneity" or "directness" (as positively valued forms of "stream of consciousness") can be used in online dating advertisements to fight stereotypes of excessive fine-tuning and

polishing and related stereotypes of calculating or manipulative intentions (see 5.2.2). The performance and interpretation of various degrees of "spontaneity" versus "premeditatedness" can be seen as a form of stancetaking (cf. also with the discussion of privacy and confession in chapter 5). Ultimately, ideas about the "spontaneity" of speech or thought versus the "premeditatedness" of writing are based on particular cultural ideologies of entextualization and personhood.[52] It should also be noted that there are many kinds of stereotypes of digital text-artifacts. The diversification of digital and social media has brought about new types of text-artifacts, processes of entextualization, and ideological models associated with them. For some respondents, text 4.6 is not quite as problematic, perhaps not even markedly "spontaneous" or "rambling," but merely normal in this context. That is, text-artifacts and textuality are looked at through different models by different interactants (see also chapter 7).

Many respondents found the "stream of consciousness" technique effective or even appealing. The typification "laid-back" in different forms was the most recurrent one:

| **typification** | **n** | **reasons** |
|---|---|---|
| laid-back (*rento, rentoa kieltä, kirjoittaja pyrkii rentouden vaikutelmaan,* "the writer aims at an impression of laid-backness") | 6 | "dialect, choice of words, humor" [T3/19]; "salient colloquialisms" [T3/23]; "dialect, colloquialism, smiley, colorful choices of words and linguistic self-expression" [T3/26] |
| direct, unreserved (*välitön, suora*) | 2 | "no censorship on what she dares to say" [T3/7] |
| open (*avoin, avoimuus*) | 2 | "reveals freely and diversely even [personal] details about herself" [T3/26] |

Table 4. *Interpretations of the writer as "laid-back."*

As in the preceding two sections, the impression was reported by some as an actual effect and by some as an intended effect ("aims at an impression of laid-backness"). Sometimes, however, "laid-back" or a similar stereotypically positive typification combined with a negative one, such as "annoying" [T3/6] or "uneducated" [T3/19], which was one of the most frequent typifications:

[52] As an analogy: notions of "permanence" or "durability" of language are not a direct consequence of the physical attributes of the infrastructure (such as the dispersion of sound waves versus the stability of ink on paper) but mediated by cultural ideologies. (In ideological naturalization such physical attributes may, of course, be used as an argument.) In contrast to Western reliance on print and archives, other cultures may value memories embodied in humans and transmitted orally from person-to-person as the most "permanent" kind of memory practice (see Wogan 2004).

| **typification** | **n** | **reasons** |
|---|---|---|
| uneducated (*ei korkeasti koulutettu*, *kouluttautumaton*, *ei-koulutettu*) | 5 | “grammatical errors, no division into paragraphs, smileys, triple commas” [T3/25] |
| simple, not smart, bimbo, “hillbilly” (*yksinkertaisuus*, *bimbo*, *ei erityisen älykäs*, *”juntti”*) | 4 | “‘The university of life’ vibes” (*‘elämänkoululainen’-vibat*); “Careless punctuation and grammatical errors” [T3/14] |
| lazy (*laiska*, *laiskuri*) | 3 | — [53] |
| childish (*lapsellinen*) | 1 | “colloquialisms, smileys, choice of words” [T3/18] |

Table 5. *Interpretations of the writer as “uneducated” or “childish.”*

The last text divided the respondents in terms of evaluative stance perhaps even more clearly than either of the previous ones. Moreover, precisely the same reasons (e.g., colloquialisms, smileys, choice of words) were given for negative impressions (e.g., “uneducated,” “childish”) and positive ones (“laid-back,” “direct”).[54]

Finally, we may note that the respondents’ interpretations of the writer’s own “belief in the part she is playing” (see Goffman 1990 [1959]: 28) range all the way from “sincere expressions” to “faking”:

- “Sincere expressions” (*Vilpittömiä ilmauksia*)
- “A persona capable of laughing at herself” (*Itselleen nauramaan pystyvä persoona*)
- “Not entirely serious” (*ei täysin tosissaan*)
- “Self-irony – – doesn’t take anything seriously” (*Itseironiaa – – ei suhtaudu vakavasti mihinkään*)
- “Tries to crack jokes” (*Yrittää heittää vitsiä*)
- “contradictory” (*ristiriitainen*)

[53] None of the three respondents who had typified the writer as “lazy” gave any explicit reasons, but on their answer sheets two of them had underlined the parts that talk about spending time on the home sofa and eating and drinking. (The expression *“syöpötellen ja juopotellen”:)* implies lengthy sessions, large quantities, and overindulgence, even compulsion – and can therefore be also construed as “laid-back” humor or sarcasm.)

[54] As the appropriateness and effectiveness of texts is evaluated in relation to the participants and the norms of the event on numerous levels (e.g., text as the artifactual residue of a process of entextualization, as a configuration of selected and addressed linguistic signs, or as a representation of states of affairs), it becomes hard to distinguish between different layers of evaluation in the context of a relatively simple questionnaire like this. That is, the (even simultaneous) negativities or positivities of typifications and reasons may be directed at the appropriateness of the “text” (in relation to stereotypes of entextualization and text-artifacts), or the appropriateness of the “choice of words” (in relation to registers of conduct), or the appropriateness or the desirability of representations (in relation to stereotypes or prototypes of self-presentation and personhood).

- "Faking" or "phony" (*Teeskentelevä*)

The above typifications all project a different kind of reflexive relation between the writer as a self (or an ensemble of personae) and the particular persona mediated by the advertisement. The ones towards the end of the list are more clearly negative. The last one ("faking") construes the reflexive relation as involving deceptive or manipulative intentions on the writer's part. Consequently, there is a projected incoherence between the persona mediated by the advertisement and the writer's other personae. That is, the promotional persona is not seen as a representative mediation of the person. The preceding one ("contradictory"), on the other hand, focuses more on the interpreter's own problems of aligning to or finding coherence in the performance. The ones in the middle take the reflexive relation more or less unproblematically as a form of humorous self-presentation. That is, there is a projected difference between the "ironic" promotional persona and other personae, but that difference is seen as an overt and coherent one and motivated by a healthy self-esteem. The first typification, in turn, projects an iconicity between the persona expressed in the advertisement and the writer's self-conceptions. In some sense, the writer's promotional persona is seen as a particularly representative one and one that the writer is "seriously" committed to. It might be, then, that the salience of the performance makes the question of the writer's own stance towards the persona she is performing less easily avoidable and leads to more explicit and definite, even highly diverging, interpretations about the writer's intentions and commitment as well as the success of the performance (see also 5.2.2 and 7.2).

### 4.2.4 EXPERIENCING AND REPORTING VIEWS OF SUBJECTIVITY

Even if the examples chosen for the questionnaire were stylistically relatively marked and their mutual contrasts were heightened by their indexical juxtaposition in this study, it seems clear that writers necessarily give off a specific kind of "view of subjectivity" to others, at least when others are asked to report one. Indirectly, this section has examined the unfolding of intersubjective contacts between minds and social relations between persons. The direct object of observation, of course, has merely been how a particular group of respondents typifies others and justifies those typifications, when prompted to do so in a particular manner in a particular social setting.[55]

[55] That is, the same respondents might have given different typifications and reasons in a different context and other respondents would have given different typifications in a similar context. To some extent, the language-orientedness of both the respondents (students of linguistics) and the setting (a course in discourse studies) probably increased the focus on particular kinds of indices and ontologies. For instance, examples of non-lay viewpoints in the respondents' answers include specific grammatical terminology (*leksikko* "lexicon," *adjektiivit* "adjectives," *-kin partikkelin käyttö* "the use of the particle -kin") and exact professional or scientific metalanguage (*toiveiden, tahdon ja halujen* ***ilmipannut***

Social personae and relations, however, reside in such public processes as much as they do in any fleeting or private "impressions" that these reflexive representational processes may or may not represent with some degree of accuracy. It was seen in the analyses that all layers of textual performance, all the way to its basic visual aspects (such as graphemic choices and orthography) were read relatively directly as signs of personhood (see also 7.1.2). The analyses also showed that there are clear patterned differences in the foci and outcomes of interpretation. That is, different respondents (even within a relatively homogeneous group of respondents) paid attention to different signs or interpreted the same signs in light of different ontologies. As we saw, these ontologies include stereotypes of personhood as well as stereotypes of entextualization.

The questionnaire responses clarify the interplay between two different types of events: an ($n^{th}$) event centered around the online dating advertisement and a subsequent ($n+1^{th}$) event centered around the questionnaire, in which the respondent has to publicly commit to an interpretation and be able to justify it. There is a two-way dynamic between the events. The advertisement text is the basis of the respondent's typification, but once the respondent has committed to the typification, the text becomes re-readable as a source of evidence or support for the interpretation the respondent commits to. That is, the stances the interpreters take towards the writer in another interactional event are social statuses for which the interpreters themselves become accountable for. That is, each subsequent event, with their own purposes and frames of participation, reflexively re-organizes the interpretation of the text (e.g., which signs or interpretants become foregrounded or upgraded in terms of relevance and which are contrasted with one another). The questionnaire data, then, is not a mere representation of some "actual" interpretation but a further mediation of the semiotic process.

Some of the above analyses discussed the possibility that denotationally explicit symbolic formulations ("describable" characteristics) as easily perceivable, segmentable, decontextualizable, and inferentially articulated elements may guide, at the very least, the reportability and typifiability of indexical effects (see Silverstein 2001; Agha 1997a; 2007a: e.g. 286–288; cf. Sapir 1985 [1927]: 533–534). That is, a particular choice of symbol-tokens may increase or decrease the interactions between the "described" and the "performed." When the writers symbolically formulated or implied the effects they were striving at, it often showed in one way or another in the

---

***ilmaukset***, "**explicitated expressions** of wishes, will and desires"; *puhekielisyys* ***kohosteista,*** "**salient** colloquialisms"; *tekstin rakenne*, "the structure of the text"; *poeettisuuteen ja esteettisyyteen nähden*, "in regard to [its] poetic and aesthetic nature"). Similarly, the negativity and normativity of interpretations may be increased by particular kinds of settings (e.g., the evaluators are outsiders far removed from the actual writers and the actual event type of online dating; class-room setting) as well as the demographic traits of the respondents (e.g., their relatively young age).

respondents' typifications. Sometimes such symbols seemed to attract the respondents' reported interpretations. On the other hand, excessive underlining of one's intentions was not looked upon favorably by some respondents of text 4.5. In any case, the interpretations may always veer towards more than one direction, as was seen, for example, in the case of qualitative and quantitative or agent-centered and patient-centered interpretations of text 4.4. Nevertheless, in the case of contradictions between different interpretational possibilities, the respondents may more easily opt for such symbol-tokens as more reliable or at least somehow inomissible grounds for interpretation. From the standpoint of respondents who are accountable for and have to stand behind their interpretations, highly emblematic and inferentially articulated signs may feel like a safer choice. For instance, in the case of text 4.4 one respondent listed "insecure" on the answer sheet, because it was "said directly" by the writer, although the typification was not "supported by the rest of the text," i.e., it did not correspond with the respondent's other impressions (*sanoo suoraan olevansa epävarma, mutta muu teksti ei tue tätä vaikutelmaa*) [T1/22]. The "accuracy" of interpretations is, however, also dependent on the interpreters' more timebound and event-specific states and inclinations. Due to the relatively narrow time limit, these answers reflect a particular kind of preliminary or cursory reading. In actual online dating practices those advertisements that appear interesting would probably be re-read and scrutinized more carefully before proceeding to, say, writing a reply. That is, the efforts of interpretation are relative to the agent's level of interest and desire.

## 4.3 CHRONOTOPIC FORMULATIONS

As was seen in the previous section, "views of subjectivity" or "mind styles" involve a particular kind of temporal structuring as well as a particular kind of shifting of focus through different domains of experience. In short, there is a temporal unfolding of a perspective on the world. Let us now discuss matters of time and space from a complementary point of view. The emphasis in this section will be not so much on "subjectivity" but on cultural, symbolic imagery of personhood situated in time and place. This section introduces the Bakhtinian notion of *chronotopic formulations*, reworked into a semiotic frame. The concept refers to semiotic representations of time and place inhabited by social types (see Agha 2007b; 2011a; Bakhtin 1986: 25–54; also Schryer 1999). One of the views that Bakhtin and Peirce held in common was that the experience of time and space is not "natural" or "transcendental" but semiotically mediated (see e.g. Parmentier 1985b). For instance, experiences of the passing of time on interactional time scales as well as the sociohistorical eras or biographic phases we inhabit are all mediated and reorganized by the signs we interpret in light of various

ontologies. That is, humans reside and comport *within* interpretations of personhood, space, and time (see Kockelman 2013a; cf. also Duranti 2010) (see also section 4.4.3 on narrative).

The analyses in this section examine a variety of ways in which the writers locate the ongoing intersubjective encounter in time and space. The aim is to get an idea of how described figures of personhood and performed "views of consciousness" may be located in different chronotopic settings. Let us start by having a look at how the semiotic encounter mediated by the advertisement is reflexively calibrated with symbolic-indexical expressions of time and space (for reflexive calibration, see Silverstein 1993). By looking at some common deictic adverbs and pronouns in their co-texts, we can get an overview of different orientations. The examples analyzed below have been selected among segments that contain one or more of the following forms (n=136): the deictic adverbs *täällä* ("here" [broadly delimited]), *tässä* ("here" [proximal, narrowly delimited]), *tänne* ("here" LAT, "to this place"), *täältä* ("from here"), *nyt* ("now"); the related interrogative adverbs *missä* ("where"), *minne* ("where to"), *mistä* ("where from"), *milloin* ("when"); and the deictic pronominal forms *tällä* ("this" ADE), *tässä* ("[in] this" INE), *näissä* ("[in] these" INE). The focus will be on the interplay between the stereotypic denotational schemas of the deictic expressions and various superimposed cotextual effects (see e.g. Agha 1996; Schegloff 1972). What is of interest in the following examples is where the indexical origo is located, how wide its scope or range is, and whether there is a particular kind of directional orientation (e.g., away from or towards a place). In short, the following writers offer different kinds of answers to the question: "Where are we (headed) now?"

One of the choices a writer has to make is whether or not the online dating process itself will figure as an explicit chronotope in the advertisement text. Some writers explicitly locate themselves within a virtual online space:

> (4.7a) En ole onnistunut vielä löytämään Sinua vaikka olen maailmaa kiertänyt. Löytyisitkö sitten **täältä**, vain me voimme ottaa siitä selvää?
> (4.7a) I have not yet succeeded in finding You although I have been around the world. Could you be found **here** then, only we can find that out?

> (4.7b) **Täällä** päässä bittiavaruutta kirjoittelee vähintäänkin kehityskelpoinen mies, joka kaipaisi naisellista seuraa päiviensä piristykseksi.
> (4.7b) At **this** end of bit space writes a man who is developable at the very least and who longs for female company to brighten his days.

In example (4.7a), there is a contrast between "here" and the "world" that one can "travel around." It implies that "here" is the delimited virtual environment of the dating forum. The advertisement itself is a point in spacetime shared with the reader, a meeting place for "us" (see also 6.14a). In example (4.7b), in contrast, the writer and the reader exist at different

(broadly delimited) locations within the online space. In this case, the advertisement merely serves as a medium that traverses the separating space and connects the two persons.

A recurring way to formulate advertisement titles, which in many services will be the first visible part of a profile to someone who has performed a search or is browsing through advertisements, is to address targeted online daters and persuade them to open (or to enter) one's advertisement:

- [Title] Peek in here! (*Kurkista tänne!*)
- [Title] Here! (*Täällä!*)
- [Title] Zoom in here! (*Zoomaa tänne!*)
- [Title] Where are you? (*Missä sinä olet?*)
- [Title] Nice,smart and decent young men HERE (*Mukavat,fiksut ja asialliset nuoret miehet TÄNNE*)

A built-in feature of online dating web sites, and therefore a shared indexical fact for the interactants, is that one has to navigate within the structured space of the web site and make selections in order to get access to entire advertisement texts. Such directed movements of potential readers can be anticipated, represented and guided by the writers. The above examples all beckon potential readers, who at this point only have visual contact with the title, towards the space where more of the writer can be encountered and learned about.[56] The selectivity inherent in all online dating interaction should also be noted already at this point. Instead of enticing just any kind of reader, the last example explicitly addresses criteria of selectivity for ideal respondents. That is, it attempts to control the navigations and selections of others based on diacritics of personhood. Time and space, then, are intimately connected with aspects of social life and personhood.

The origo of the event can also be a point in the life of the writer. In such cases, the here-and-now becomes contextualized as belonging to some specific biographic phase:

(4.8a) Olen vastikään eronnut avopuolisostani, eikä erosta ole vielä liikoja aikaa, joten ei voi sanoa että varsinaisesti tositarkoituksella **tässä** liikuskelen, mutta eihän sitä koskaan tiedä mitä tähtiin on kirjoitettu minunkin pään menoksi....=)
(4.8a) I have recently broken up with my partner, and it hasn't been too long since the break-up, so I can't say that I'd be really seriously moving around **here**, but you never know what has been written in the stars for me....=)

[56] Similar examples without the deictic adverbs of time or space that were used to select the main set of examples are numerous in the data. Titles can also, for example, model a future event in which the other has already decided to read the text and evaluate that event positively ("nice of you to take a peek!", *kiva kun kurkkasit!*) (see also 6.3.2), or they can anticipate and appeal to the other's processes of selection ("Wouldn't you take a look after all," *Katsoisit nyt kuitenkin*).

(4.8b) Elän **nyt** elämäni parhainta aikaa, kun monet elämän myllerrykset ovat takanpäin eikä velvoittavia sidonnaisuuksia juuri enää ole. **Tässä** tilanteessa tuntuu, että hyvä ystävä olisi kullanarvoinen, mutta elämänkumppanillekin olisi tilausta.
(4.8b) I am **now** living the best time of my life, when many of the turmoils of life are behind and there are not many obligations left. **In this** situation it feels like a good friend would be worth [his weight in] gold, but I could also use a life partner.

(4.8c) Positiivinen eronnut mies jonka aikuiset lapset ovat jo muuttaneet omiin oloihinsa, koti ja haastava työ Espoossa ovat tämän ajan tärkeimpiä asioita. **Nyt** on aika ottaa elämässä askel eteenpäin.
(4.8c) A positive divorced man whose grown-up children have already moved to their own homes, a home and a challenging job in [the city of] Espoo are the most important things in this phase. **Now** is the time to take a step ahead in life.

The first example (4.8a) still points to the world of online dating, but the act of writing an online dating advertisement is contextualized on a biographic time scale (i.e., it belongs to a liminal post-break-up phase) that serves as a motivating reason for the act itself (i.e., the writer's intention is to gradually re-inhabit the role of a single looking for a partner) and its more specific kind (i.e., she is not necessarily looking for a serious relationship yet). That is, in (4.8a) the present is contextualized in terms of a recent past. The effects of the past events are still highly palpable in the ongoing event. Other examples, in contrast, are more determinedly future-oriented. The last example (4.8c) begins with a description of a more distant biographic past. In contrast to (4.8a), the described divorce is no longer a recent event but an attribute of the person. Similarly, the perfect tense ("children have already moved to their own homes") seems to denote a current attribute of the person rather than a past event (see also VISK § 1535). The description of the biographic past is followed by a description of the present phase. Together the two serve as a contrastive context for a future phase. The here-and-now of the ongoing semiotic encounter is marked as the beginning of a transition to a new biographic phase. The writer of example (4.8b) in the middle seems to be the one most content with the present. Her biographic description merely opens up a space for a new significant other to join that present phase.

For some writers, geographic locations serve as spatiotemporal anchors for the ongoing event. In example (4.9), the writer has mentioned earlier that she lives in the city of Turku on the west coast of Finland. When describing the location of the ideal other, she grounds that description in her own origo ("from here, near the west coast") implying a certain appropriate maximum radius from her location:

(4.9) Siis sinä reilu ja hyvällä itsetunnolla varustettu noin 52–56 vuotias kaveri mielellään **täältä** länsirannikon tuntumasta, postia sinulta odottelee 53v, 168cm, 64kg nainen.

(4.9) So you decent about 52–56-year-old guy equipped with a good self-esteem **here** from the vicinity of the west coast, a 53-year-old 168cm, 64kg woman is waiting for your mail.

That is, geographical proximity is used as a criterion of preference. She links the event of writing with an ideal event of reading in terms of shared geographic space. Example (4.10), in contrast, merely contextualizes the event in relation to the capital region of Finland, where the writer currently lives because of his work, but without any explicit criteria of proximity for the reader. Instead, the writer expresses a strong desire to move somewhere else in the future (perhaps towards or with the addressee):

(4.10) Pääkaupunkiseudulle olen yrittänyt kotiutua **nyt** kymmenkunta vuotta. En ole cityihminen, enkä taida koskaan tuntea kaupunkia kodikseni, mutta **tänne tässä nyt** vaan koetetaan tehdä oloa kotoisaksi. **Täällä** kun on töitä ja mahdollisuuksia edetä ja kehittyä ammatissa. Haaveena tietenkin olisi vielä joskus muuttaa vähän rauhallisempiin ympyröihin **täältä**...

(4.10) I have been trying to put down roots in the capital region for about ten years **now**. I am not a city person and I suppose the city will never feel like home to me, but **here** I'm **now** still trying to feel like home **here**. **Here** there's work and opportunities to advance and develop in [my] profession. The dream of course is to one day move to slightly more peaceful circles **from here**...

Chronotopic formulations like these, then, link geographic places with the direction of time (past–future), physical movement (towards–away), mental states (alienation–identification/desire) and social statuses (professional identity–personal identity).

Example (4.11) is a short and concise yet very explicit and representative example of the ways in which chronotopic formulations can be used to select for desirable addressees. The writer formulates a contrast between two chronotopes by linking one district of Helsinki (*Kallio*) with a particular type of cultural place and behavior (*lähiräkälöitä*, "local [rundown] bars"; roaming through them) and another one (*north Helsinki*) with the proximity of nature, implying two entirely different lifestyles and sets of values:

(4.11) ¶Jos asut Kalliossa ja koluat lähiräkälöitä, emme elä samassa maailmassa. Itse asun Pohjois-Helsingissä ja **täällä** on luonto lähellä.

(4.11) ¶If you live in Kallio and roam through local rundown bars, we don't live in the same world. I myself live in north Helsinki and **here** nature is nearby.

The writer strongly identifies with the latter one, north Helsinki and the proximity of nature. The reader is addressed with a combination of conditional clause and main clause that formulates the reader's place of residence and patterns of life as a condition for compatibility and as a criterion of whether the two participants reside in the same semiotic world or

not (cf. also section 6.4). That is, should the respondent reside in the non-desirable chronotope, then that would be an immediate sign of incompatibility and undesirability.

In the previous examples deictic expressions and their co-texts specify the zero point from which the writer addresses the reader in the ongoing event. In addition, there are plenty of imagined, simulated, or reported chronotopic scenarios (e.g., general habits or possible particular events) (cf. with reportive and nomic kinds of calibration, Silverstein 1993). They describe and reason about desirable, ideal, or normative forms of personhood in spacetime. For instance, the following example operates with two complementary dating scenarios, a sophisticated one and a down-to-earth one:

> (4.12) Joskus voin viedä sinut parempaan ravintolaan syömään kolme ruokalajia ja siellä saatan maistaa lasin tai kaksi punaviiniä seurassasi. Oikeasti en kyllä ole mikään viinin tuntija, en varmaan erottaisi vuosikertapunkkua rypälemehulla blandatusta pirtusta… Mutta miehenhän kuuluukin juoda olutta!? Sinäkin olet sen verran maanläheinen, että saan sinusta seuraa pitsalle ja oluelle, tai vaikka torikahvilan pöytään maistelemaan paistettuja muikkuja kertakäyttölautaselta.
>
> (4.12) Sometimes I can take you to a finer restaurant to eat three courses and there I may have a glass or two of red wine in your company. In reality I am no expert on wine, I probably couldn't tell apart a vintage red wine [COLL] from a moonshine blended [COLL] with grape juice… But a man is supposed to drink beer, right!? Similarly you're sufficiently down-to-earth so that I can have you as a companion for pizza and beer, or for example to a table in a market café to taste fried vendace from a disposable plate.

From the standpoint of chronotopes, we may, first of all, note that the writer paints an accurate picture of such scenarios by noting details of the environment as well as the internal unfolding of the scenario with, for example, aspectual modification (e.g., "to a table in a market café to taste [durative, atelic] fried vendace from a disposable plate"; *torikahvilan pöytään maist-**ele**-maan paistettuja muikkuja kertakäyttölautaselta*). From the standpoint of personhood, it is noteworthy that the more specific episodes in the simulated scenarios are calibrated in relation to actual biographic time in terms of frequency or probability ("sometimes **I** can," *joskus voi**n**;* "I can [habitually] have you as a companion," *saan sinusta seuraa;* "I may have a glass or two," *saatan maistaa lasin tai kaksi*). Moreover, the writer simultaneously negotiates both gender roles and such lifestyles that are stereotypically related to particular socioeconomic statuses. There is a contrast between stereotypic roles of men and women and a contrast between, say, "elitist" and "folksy" patterns of consumption. The two become interrelated in many ways. For instance, drinking beer is associated by the writer both with conservative gender stereotypes, in which gender roles and their boundaries are relatively strictly defined and regimented in terms of complementary opposites ("a man is **supposed** to drink beer"), and

with a down-to-earth, informal folk lifestyle that does not require the kind of connoisseurship wine does. The higher position of the elitist patterns in a social hierarchy is not questioned, as demonstrated, for example, by the evaluative and comparative "finer restaurant." The writer, however, clearly identifies with the folksy lifestyle; note also the use of colloquial variants *punkku* ("red wine") and *blandattu* ("blended") when talking about the elitist lifestyle. He is nevertheless willing to make occasional compromises, while expecting similar concessions from the ideal other, who is presumed to identify with the *opposite* pattern of consumption but required to share *similar* ideas about gender roles. That is, the chronotopic formulation of social life is used to illustrate the self's values and to negotiate mutual compatibility and desirability with others.

The last two examples of this section serve to illustrate how the different phenomena discussed so far combine and co-occur in texts. They also serve as a lead-in to the more specific textual patterns examined in the following section. The deictic-chronotopic calibrations of the interactional event, chronotopic scenarios of ideal worlds, different mind styles, and more specific described, performed or proposed characteristics of self or others usually correlate in many ways. In the following text, such patterns co-mediate a mode of personhood that might be typified, for instance, as "cosmic-spiritual":

> (4.13) [Title] **Sielunsisar?** ¶Olen tallustanut <u>maaplaneetalla</u> <u>tässä muodossa</u> kohta 28 vuotta. Kannan harteillani <u>menneisyyden kivirekeä</u>, mutta olen vapautumassa siitä. <u>Polkuuni</u> kuuluu niin pimeyttä kuin valoakin, koska omaan keskimääräistä laajemman tunneskaalan ja intuition, joiden läpi suodatan maailmaa. On tärkeää pysyä jalat maassa, olla tunteva ja kehollinen ihminen, joka kuitenkin on <u>sielu ikuisella matkalla</u>. Arvostan sellaisia **olentoja**, joilla on hyvä sydän, eivätkä juokse karkuun tai paina villasella toisen kärsimystä. Sinun kärsimyksesi on minun kärsimykseni.¶<u>Tällä elämänpolulla</u> etsin sielunsisarta, jonka kanssa – – Herkkyys, sydämellisyys, **lähimmäisenrakkaus**, **henkisyys joka ei ole pelkkää leijumista**, ystävyys, kasvissyönti, rakkaus eläimiin, musikaalisuus, taiteellisuus, luovuus, elämänmyönteisyys... tässä muutamia avainsanoja. – – **Ystävyydellä**, [pseudonym]
>
> (4.13) [Title] **Soul sister?** ¶I have walked <u>on the planet Earth</u> <u>in this form</u> for nearly 28 years. I bear on my shoulders <u>a burden of the past</u>, but I am liberating myself from it. <u>My path</u> includes both darkness and light, because I possess an exceptionally wide range of emotions and intuition, through which I filter the world. It is important to keep one's feet on the ground, to be a feeling and corporeal human, who nevertheless is <u>a soul on an eternal journey</u>. I appreciate **beings** who have a good heart and do not run away or ignore others' suffering. Your suffering is my suffering. ¶<u>On this path of life</u> I am looking for a soul sister, with whom – – Sensitivity, cordiality, **love for one's neighbor**, **spirituality that is not mere gloating**, friendship, vegetarianism, love of animals, musicality, artistry, creativity, optimism... here's a few keywords. – – **With friendship**, [pseudonym]

The writer, for example, locates the ongoing interactional event as a step on "this path of life," "on planet Earth," "in this form" (implying other forms). She contextualizes the present biographic phase as being marked by an ongoing process of liberation from the "burden of the past." Self and others are typified as "beings." According to the more general ideological position (see 4.4.1) she takes, the ideal in life is to be a "feeling corporeal human" who is, however, aware of being a "soul on an eternal journey." That is, she theorizes (see 4.4.1) the corporeal existence of an individual as merely one form of existence of some eternal transcendent entity. Such views evoke particular Eastern forms of religious thinking. The pseudonym that she uses similarly points to Eastern cultures (see 4.4.5). Moreover, in the list of described ideal characteristics (see 4.4.2) she includes items such as "love for one's neighbor" and a non-superficial form of "spirituality." The specific person she is looking for is described as a "soul sister." However, she closes the advertisement by bidding friendship non-selectively to anyone who happens to read the text (see patterns of addressivity in chapter 6).

We see, then, that chronotopes overlap with and contribute to views of subjectivity (cf. also the "scientific" example 4.5 above). There is also an overlap with various enregistered speech styles (see also 4.4.3 and 4.4.4).[57] The following text, for instance, clearly aspires after a recognizable religious register (employing a particular meter, rhymes, marked lexemic choices, and archaic-sounding 1PL imperatives), while it portrays a chronotope of religious life:

> (4.14) ¶Raitis, elämä on paras huume. Usko Jeesukseen on enemmän kuin kaikki maailman mielipiteet. En halua olla fanaatikko, mutta en kaikkiin entisiin maailman rientoihin enää halua palata. Puhukaamme rohkeasti, aratkin asiat suotuisasti. Toistemme kunnioittamisessa kilpailkaamme, siitä ystävyytemme ja kumppanuutemme kauniimman jaamme. Jos vahingossa toistamme loukkaamme, anteeksi pyytäkäämme, siitä riemun ja luottamuksen toisillemme saamme. – –
>
> (4.14) ¶Sober, life is the best drug. Belief in Jesus is more than all the world's opinions. I do not want to be a fanatic, but I do not wish to return to all the former worldly doings anymore. Let us speak boldly, even of the sensitive things favorably. Let us compete in respecting one another, that'll give us a most beautiful friendship and companionship. If by accident we hurt the other one, let us apologize, that'll give us joy and trust in one another.

As a result the text mediates a particular kind of first-person perspective on the world (e.g., a "peaceful" one yet "determined" to sharply distinguish

[57] One might, in fact, say that registers are enregistered (i.e., widely recognized, "conventional") chronotopes. That is, they are stereotypes that, for some community, link perceivable signs with particular social statuses, mental states, or cultural settings (with varying focus on time, place, or personhood). In a sense, then, *chronotope* is merely a broader way of parameterizing the reflexive relations between enregistered signs and the icons that they are linked to. (Cf. Agha 2007a, b.)

"worldly" vices and temptations from a "pious" form of life). This all goes to show that types of subjectivities, types of spatiotemporally situated cultural behaviors, and types of discourse about such subjectivities or behaviors tend to regroup in coherent ways. It is, however, analytically useful to distinguish the different dimensions. The next section will now examine a number of more specific textual patterns that make use of different combinations of such dimensions.

## 4.4 TEXTUAL PATTERNING OF ONLINE DATING ADVERTISEMENTS

This section takes a closer look at the ingredients of the online dating advertisements in the data. It analyzes more specifically the kinds of structural differences that may give rise to different views of subjectivity (see section 4.2) and the ways in which chronotopic imagery (see section 4.3) or describable, performable, and proposable characteristics (see section 4.1) may become organized in text-artifacts. It also introduces some new textual patterns. The order of presentation in this section is loosely based on the frequency and significance of such patterns in light of the data and the focus of this study. The aim of the rest of this chapter 4 as well as chapters 5 and 6 is to illustrate contrastively the range of different ways in which textual patterns can serve as indices of personhood in the data. Although the explicit focus in this section tends to be on the writer, it should be emphasized from the outset that most of the textual patterns presented here can be applied to both selves and ideal or non-ideal others. Furthermore and more importantly, any entextualized and addressed pattern of signs in an online dating advertisement, regardless of whom or what it is about, always indexes relations between selves and others.

### 4.4.1 THEORETICAL AND REFLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS

Linde (1993: 21–22) distinguishes what she calls "life stories" from other kinds of stories on the criterion that life stories have as their evaluative aim to "show something about the kind of person the speaker is" (id. p. 22) rather than to make some general point about the way the world is. According to Linde, the essential question is how the story is constructed, not the nature of the narrated events as such. That is, in principle, any event can be narrated so that the point becomes either about the narrator or about the events. Although this sort of difference in focus is relevant for many types of non-narrative discourse as well, in online dating advertisements the distinction between "the way the world is" and the kind of person who perceives it as such becomes much harder to maintain. In online dating advertisements, anything a writer does or does not do – even a blank screen – is interpretable as being "about" the writer a person, as an indice of personhood. Also, in

light of our previous discussions, it is obvious that the "point" of any piece of discourse is strongly a matter of co-construction and co-interpretation. For instance, for some respondents the "scientific" example (4.5) above seemed partly to miss the point of an appropriate online dating advertisement by being too general and "theoretical." For others, it was merely an instance of being "reflective" and "bright" about one's life. One might conceive of a continuum that ranges from points that are very explicitly about the writer and/or reader as persons towards points that are more explicitly about the world and only implicitly about the participants and their mutual relation. In fact, there are two interlinked variables here: (1) the overt indexical calibration of entextualized contents to the participants of the ongoing event, and (2) the level of generalization, abstraction, or naturalization of the contents (e.g., how far they have been removed from the actual events that served as their roots or the subjects whose perspectives they represent; how many indexical and inferential steps away from relatively particular persons or perceivable states of affairs they stand).

This section has two goals. It sketches the more abstract end of the continuum, whereas the following sections will deal with the less abstract end. The more fundamental goal, however, is to first show that linguistic self-presentation is a form of *theoretical agency* (see section 2.1.3). That is, this section aims to clarify the fact that writing an online dating advertisement essentially consists in theorizing one's existence and values by characterizing them and reasoning about them with cultural symbols, propositions, and textual structures. In the advertisement phase the writers also tend to have sole theoretical agency. Their representations can only ever become contested by others in subsequent phases.

Any linguistic description of self or others interprets a person's embodied and embedded residence in the world with some set of cultural concepts and those knowledge structures that such concepts are grounded in. Let us start by having a look at how the following examples thematize, characterize, and reason about the physical attributes of the writers (i.e., their material or bodily kinds). In the following examples, each sentence is a theoretical representation of things that exist as, for example, visually or tactilely perceivable objects in the world. They also exist as multiply pre-interpreted objects. That is, the writers have internalized the attitudes others have previously taken towards them and the representations they have composed about them. Now these objects are representationally re-interpreted and reasoned about in the text-artifacts:

(4.15a) Naisethan aina arvostavat pitkiä miehiä. Noh, minä en ole sellainen. Pituutta on alle 180cm. Kuitenkin yli 175cm, joten ihan kääpiö en kaiketi ole. Painoindeksin mukaan olen normaalipainoinen. Hiukset ovat tummanruskeat ja pitkähköt.
(4.15a) Women always appreciate tall men, right? Well, I'm not one of those. I'm less than 180cm tall. Yet more than 175cm, so I suppose I'm not quite a dwarf. According to the body mass index my weight is normal. My hair is dark brown and longish.

(4.15b)

| Olen | 187cm 82 kg 52v | eronnut | liikuntaa | harrastava, |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| be:IND.PRS.1SG | 187cm 82 kg 52-year-old (ABBR) | divorced | sports:PTV | do:PTCP |

| hyvällä | huumorilla | varustettu | pojankloppi | uudeltamaalta. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| good:ADE | humor:ADE | equipped | boy ("cub") | Uusimaa:ABL |

I am a 187cm 82 kg 52-year-old divorced exercising, boyish man from uusimaa [province] equipped with a good sense of humor.

The writers' attributes are thematized and characterized with concepts grounded in specific cultural practices of knowledge production or *epistemic formations* that link empirical observations, theoretical representations, and practical interventions (see Kockelman 2013b: 182; also chapters 7 and 8). Some of the concepts (e.g., "body mass index," *painoindeksi*) are clearly more technical and specialized than others. To illustrate the difference we may note, for example, that the choices for the height of a person and for the length of the hair are quite different in this regard. The length of the first writer's hair is characterized with a relative adjective (*pitkä*, "long") qualified with a moderative suffix (*-hkö*, "fairly, relatively, -ish"). What "longish" hair means in terms of practical consequences is left for the reader to infer. The description presupposes some sufficiently shared understanding of a stereotypic scalarization of male hair lengths. Height, on the other hand, is characterized in centimeters, a universally standardized and measurable unit, which allows for considerably less liberty of interpretation than typifying one's hair as "longish" and "dark brown." There may, of course, be differences in, say, the norms that guide the appropriate rounding off of measured figures in everyday practices. Still, the leeway for "embellishing" descriptions in centimeters without turning them into "lies" is supposedly relatively narrow because of the chosen theoretical frame (see also chapter 7). It is therefore noteworthy that the first writer characterizes his height merely as a range on a scale, despite the choice of a precise numeric unit of measure. Similarly, the precise BMI figure is reinterpreted in terms of normative statistical ranges (such as "normal" versus "slightly overweight"). The second writer, in contrast, gives precise figures of both his height and weight.

We see here the difference between numerical quantification and linguistic *grading* (Sapir 1985 [1944]; Kockelman & Bernstein 2012; cf. also e.g. Martin & White 2004: 135–159). Describing someone's hair as long relies on a specific understanding of when a particular member of the class "hair" is relatively longer than other members in that class on average. That is, grading predicates, such as "long," presuppose a comparison class and some normative or stereotypic basis of comparison. Consequently, the longness of "long" hair and the longness of, say, a "long" road are of entirely different magnitudes if reinterpreted in standardized quantifiable units, such as

meters. Graders, then, are shifters that are grounded in the context of use and in the perspectives of the interpreting agents. Their specific meaning also often relates to vectors of expected, hoped-for, or feared change (see Sapir 1985 [1944]: 125–144). For instance, an expression such as "enough already" (see example 5.15) presupposes the growth of some quality, but it can signify either a growing satisfaction or a growing dissatisfaction depending on how the current quantity of that quality is interpreted in relation to some presupposed normative limit (approaching/exceeding a negatively/positively valued limit). In example (4.15a), the writer positions himself in a kind of neutral space in relation to two different vectors. He describes himself as not falling too far from the affectively and socially valued stereotype of height, and at the same time he claims to reach a sufficient distance from the non-appreciated extreme. Such grading discursive patterns, then, are representational interpretants that evaluate and organize relations between perceived qualities and quantities of those qualities in light of cultural and personal assumptions.[58]

We see that the selection of appropriate epistemic formations is guided by values on both personal and cultural levels. It seems that the "length" of a person is considered more important as a criterion of desirability and selection than the length of the person's hair; hence the former requires a more precise theoretical frame than the latter. Consequently, if one anticipates a problem with one's height (as in 3.15a), it takes more rhetorical effort to give off enough relevant information about one's height for the advertisement to be appropriate and effective, but not too much in order not to reduce the number of favorable respondents at the outset (before getting a chance to let one's other characteristics shine through). The contrast between examples (4.15a) and (4.15b) shows that the thematizing and characterizing of personal characteristics in promotional discourse is guided by understandings about the social desirability of such characteristics both on a more general level (cultural hierarchies of characteristics and related epistemic formations) and on a more particular level (how to fit one's self-perceptions into such general models).

When moving towards a description of his social attributes, the writer of (4.15b), too, resorts to cultural stereotypes of personhood. He denotes relatively unambiguous social statuses ("divorced") as well as more subjective traits of personality ("good sense of humor," "boyish"). His self-presentational performance, nevertheless, is a relatively neat quantification

[58] For instance, height *per se* is a neutral quality that every person has. It becomes positively valued within some specific quantitative range. In that sense, the grading "I'm tall" (= taller than average in the presupposed comparison class) and the quantifying "I'm 175 cm tall" are quite different kinds of expressions of height. It is noteworthy that the former usage of "tall" often implies a positive evaluation. It is closer to such grading predicates as "good" (see 5.2.1) or "beautiful" that only apply to objects that have been pre-graded as having a commendable quantity of some quality ("more than average" being one example of such commendability).

and classification of self without explicitly reflective elements. The writer of (4.15a), in contrast, relates the quantified or instrumental self-presentational forms with more existential kinds of reasoning about social desirability in general. He first formulates a general rule that describes how women evaluate height ("Women, as we know, always appreciate tall men," *Naisethan aina arvostavat pitkiä miehiä*). He then interprets his own height in light of that general pattern implying that he might not be appreciated by women ("I'm not like that," *minä en ole sellainen*). To mitigate the negative value that this general pattern of evaluation projects on him, the writer explicitly disassociates himself from the non-desirable extreme that he denotes with the metaphoric-evaluative designation *kääpiö* ("dwarf"). Such reasoning, then, relates a particular individual to general type-level regularities in different ways.

To clarify the different degrees of theoretical and reflective representation, we may also note the difference between the first sentence and the last five in example (4.15a). The last five sentences theorize the writer as a particular person in terms of relatively representative and stable attributes. They employ 1SG deictics and definite nouns denoting inalienable attributes of a person ("height," *pituus*; "hair," *hiukset*) that indexically link the representations to the writer. It is formulations like the first one, "nomically" calibrated (Silverstein 1993) as general truths about some types of persons or events, and here pragmatically presumed as shared between the participants, that take theoretical representations to a further level of generalization. Such generalizations move from the depiction of the life of a particular person with attributes, habits, or experiences (or "simple" biography) towards theorizing life and existence in light of types of persons and events or general regularities and values (or "reflective" biography). More generalizing and reflective theoretical representations allow writers to show deeper self-knowledge and understanding of the world as well as to justify their "simple" biographic contents and to negotiate compatibility with respondents in terms of more general ontologies. Although no particular person necessarily appears as a figure in such representations "about the world," such representations are still interpretable from the standpoint of what they reveal about the person who is committed to them as the principal. That is, the general beliefs or opinions about the world that writers animate are grounded in their affective and cognitive processes and are therefore revealing of their intentions, values, and perspectives on the world.

Two kinds of generalization will be examined in the following examples. First, there is generalization of experiences on one's own biographic time scale. Second, there is a more normative type of generalization of sociohistorical patterns. (Cf. also with the distinction between "therapeutic" or self-to-self metadiscourses versus "legal" or self-to-other metadiscourses discussed in section 2.3.3.) Let us begin with the former. In example (4.16), instead of asserting herself as "balanced" the writer rather assumes the characteristic and concentrates on describing its biographic roots. That is,

she reasons about the process that led to the emergence of the implied characteristic and the concrete methods she uses to maintain it. She also describes problematic past characteristics (e.g., "deep loneliness," *syväyksinäisyys*) that have given way to the new one as well as other positive characteristics:

(4.16) ¶Olen$_j$ todella tehnyt vuosikausia töitä, että olen$_j$ saanut itseni$_k$ tasapainoon [PERF PFV] ja osaan$_j$ keinot millä pidän$_j$ itseni$_k$ tasapainossa [PRS PROG] ja huomannut sen, että aiemmin kokemani syväyksinäisyys ei johdukaan minusta vaan taustastani. Tämä on ollut sinällään hyvin helpottavaa ja vapauttanut elämään ja olen yleensä tyytyväinen asioihin vaikka mitään ihmeellistä ei tapahdukaan.
(4.16) ¶I have really worked for years so that I$_j$ have got myself$_k$ into balance [PERF PFV] and I know the means with which I$_j$ keep myself$_k$ in balance [PRS PROG] and noticed that the deep loneliness I experienced previously did not result from me after all but from my background.

In the two underlined subordinate clauses, the animator appears under two different figurements, both as the subject and the object of the verb. The subject is denoted by 1SG deictics and the object with the reflexive pronoun *itse* ("myself")[59]. That is, one constituent process of the person (self$_k$) figures as the object (or "patient") of another more agentive process (self$_j$). According to the first clause, set in the perfect tense and the perfective aspect, the entextualized event, the achievement of balance between self$_j$ and self$_k$, has been accomplished in the past but is still relevant in the speech event. According to the second clause, set in the present tense and the progressive aspect, it is a state that requires continuous maintenance with appropriate means. The person is divided up into (1) a relatively past, latent, and problematic constituent and (2) a relatively present, agentive, and non-problematic one. There are similar contrasts later between mode events and content events ("noticed" [MODE] "that" + CONTENT) as well as contrasted complements of cause ("not ... from me ... but from my background"). That is, the person also appears both as the one who has noticed a pattern in her life and as the one who is implicated in that pattern; as the one who experienced "deep loneliness" and as the one who now reports it; as an actor in one's life and as the one who has been acted upon by a "background" of events.[60] "Being balanced" as a characteristic, then, has an explicitly reflective organization in the text: it is the result of an ongoing process in

[59] Most instances of *itse* in the data are contrastive (self or "I" versus other) not reflexive (for the difference, see e.g. VISK § 728, 769).

[60] The complex clause "[I have] noticed that the deep loneliness I experienced previously did not result from me after all but from my background" is, then, both an instance of theoretical agency (i.e., publicly reasoning about one's residential processes) and a representation of an earlier instance of theoretical agency (i.e., privately realizing and conceptualizing a causal pattern in one's residential processes).

which the person exercises her capacity to control her own processes. The person is here animated and voiced through the non-problematic persona.

In such “reflective” biography different processes mutually justify one another and characteristics are served as still connected to their roots and fruits, whereas in “simple” biography the indices (e.g., individual nouns, adjectives) that project characteristics tend to enclose them and disentangle them from other processes. In example (4.16), the actual characteristic that the writer becomes accountable for (e.g., “being balanced”), is relatively backgrounded and embedded in ethnopsychological theorizing that operates with generalized patterns of cause and consequence on the writer’s own biographical time scale.

The following example discusses the difficulties of finding the “right one” through a complex allegory of card games. There is an intricate interplay between more generalized and more personalized elements:

> (4.17) ¶Onko Sen Oikean löytäminen kuin korttipeli? ¶Haluat jätkän, mutta eteen tuleekin toinen akka. ¶Keräätkin tikkejä vain sydämeesi ja välillä ihmettelet, miksi sinulle jaettiin kortit paskahousuun. ¶Tarpeeksi monen häviön jälkeen et uskalla enää panostaa, vaikka kädessä olikin voittajakortit ja tuntui todella hyvältä. Häviät jälleen. ¶Joskus peli tuntuu sujuvan, kunnes huomaat kumppanisi pelaavan eri peliä kuin sinä. ¶Monet pelaavat tietämättään pasianssia. ¶Mikään noista ei kuullosta hyvältä eikä tarkoitukseni ei ole pelata mitään peliä. ¶Olen onnellisessa asemassa, sillä tikkejä on tullut kerättyä, mutta sydämessä ei ole arpikudosta – – ¶Haluan kokea taas sen uskomattoman ihanan tunteen, kun jonain sunnuntaiaamuna herään vierelläni nainen.
>
> (4.17) ¶Is finding the Right One like a game of cards? ¶You want a jack [also: “a guy,” “a fellow”], but you find another queen [also: “old woman,” (pej.) “wife”] in front of you. ¶You collect tricks [also: “stitches”] in your heart and at times you wonder why you were dealt a hand of Shithead [cardgame; lit. “shitpants”]. ¶After enough losses you don’t dare to invest anymore, although [you] had winning cards in [your] hand and [∅] felt really good. You lose again. ¶Sometimes the game seems to be going well, until you notice your partner is playing a different game. ¶Many are playing solitaire without knowing it. ¶None of these sound good and it is not my intention to play any games. ¶I’m in a happy position, since I have collected tricks/stitches, but there is no scar tissue in [my] heart – – ¶I want to experience again that incredibly wonderful feeling, when some Sunday morning I wake up with a woman beside me.

The text begins with an introductory question that is not addressed to any explicitly selected kind of participant. The text then moves on to employ a generic or open 2SG reference (see Laitinen 2006). This type of address denotes an intersubjectively engaged other, but anyone can step into the role of the addressee. That is, it addresses persons in general – but particularly someone like “me” or “you” (since it is the interactants of the ongoing event that serve as the ground for such generalizations). Next, the sudden break into the preterite tense (“although [you] had winning cards in the hand and [∅] felt really good,” *vaikka kädessä olikin voittajakortit ja tuntui todella*

*hyvältä*) implies a specific but indefinite reference to a particular past incident. The next sentence returns to the present tense of habit and explicitly denotes a recurrence of particular events with the adverb “again” (*jälleen*). The text conveys the impression that the writer is describing, based on his experiences, the generalized recurring of such events in the lives of someone like “me” or “you.” After describing such patterns, generalized into a type of event, the writer dissociates the ongoing event from any of “these” (*noista*) patterns that do not “sound good.” This is where explicit 1SG reference first comes into picture. The 1SG figure, then, is inhabited by the “self of the interactional microtime” (Agha 1995: 143), who in the here-and-now is determined to break such patterns. One might think of the writer’s past selves (i.e., the ones who had such experiences) as a kind of other addressed by the present self in the ongoing event. Such past “selves of memory” or “selves of habit” (ibid.) are relatively more abstract, displaced, and alienable in the ongoing event and can therefore be figured in generalized non-1SG forms.

Next, let us have a look at forms of reflective theorizing that orient to social norms, values, and ideologies rather than biographic experiences. Example (4.18) is from the same writer as (4.16) above. She now discusses the general principle of interpreting others based on their economic status or level of wealth. In fact, the aim of the writer is to deconstruct the relevance of such criteria altogether:

(4.18) ¶Minulle on sama onko sinulla varallisuutta vai ei. En ole kiinnostunut hyötymään sinusta taloudellisesti. Minulle on sama oletko nyt Nuottaniemessä asuva johtaja vai työhakijana vuokra-asunnossa. Kuten tiedämme asemat muuttuvat ja tämän päivän johtaja voi olla huomenna työnhakija ja työnhakija johtaja. Rahatilanteet voivat myös muuttua, rahaa voi saada lisää tai sitä voi menettää.

(4.18) It’s all the same to me whether you have wealth or not. I’m not interested in profiting from you economically. It’s all the same to me if you are now an executive living in Nuottaniemi [a posh neighborhood] or a job seeker in a rental apartment. As we know positions change and today’s executive may be tomorrow’s job seeker and today’s job seeker tomorrow’s executive. Money situations may also change, one may gain more money or lose it.

The writer first states her general point explicitly as an evaluative stance in the first sentence, then clarifies the underlying intentions in the second. Next, she illustrates the point by describing two imagined extremes. The last two sentences describe general assumptions about change (or ontological transformativity) in the world, presuming that such assumptions are shared by some wider community to which the 1PL points to, perhaps including the addressee too. She argues that socioeconomic statuses are susceptible to constant change and that one may end up moving from one extreme to another. There are, then, different kinds of theoretical representations: general principles (“positions change”), such principles applied to more

specific social types ("today's executive may be tomorrow's job applicant") and such principles applied non-selectively to the respondents of the ongoing interactional event ("I'm not interested in profiting from you economically"). Such theoretical and reflective commitments themselves become characteristics that mediate relations between self and others at the level of ideologies, preferences, or values. They also lend coherence and credibility to other more specific characteristics or criteria. The deconstructive approach in (4.18) is exceptional in that it liberates respondents from criteria instead of imposing criteria on respondents. At the same time it, of course, also liberates the self from the same criteria (and perhaps even implies a lack of wealth). Moreover, such an approach can be used to justify other liberties for the self as a trade-in. (She mentions, for instance, that she does not wish to have children or commit to a mortgage.)

The next two examples employ a similar pattern of theorizing ideal relationships. They formulate a general principle, ideal, or type, to which the writer is committed as indicated by the epistemic and perspectival marker *mielestäni* ("in my opinion," "to my mind," "I think"):

> (4.19a) Hyvä mies on mielestäni sopiva sekoitus käytännöllisyyttä (pora pysyy kädessä) ja analyyttistä älykkyyttä. Alussa huomioni kiinnittää usein pitkähkö varsi ja poikamaisen rento ulkokuori.
> (4.19a) A good man is in my opinion a proper mixture of practicality (he can wield a drill) and analytical intelligence. In the beginning my attention is often captured by a tall figure and a boyishly laid-back exterior.

> (4.19b) ¶Mielestäni hyvä parisuhde on ennen muuta ystävyyttä ja kumppanuutta, se perustuu toinen toisensa kunnioittamiseen, rehellisyyteen ja avoimuuteen. Hyvässä parisuhteessa tuetaan toisiaan kasvamaan omana itsenään ja eletään henkisesti lähekkäin. Läheisyys ei kuitenkaan merkitse toisen sitomista vaan – –
> (4.19b) ¶In my opinion a good relationship is above all friendship and companionship, it is based on respect for one another, honesty and openness. In a good relationship partners support one another in personal growth and live spiritually near one another. Intimacy however does not mean tying the other down but – –

Commitment to such ideals easily implies that the writers themselves either actually embody the ideal (e.g., by being "honest" or "open") or at least have the intention of attaining the ideal and that they appreciate persons who embody or strive towards the same ideal. Such representations *per se*, however, are presented without an explicit link to particular persons or to the past experiences of the writer. Moreover, the examples do not only specify the kind of ideal respondent that the writers are looking for but represent general types that apply non-selectively to all of social reality and enable the interpretation of any particular individual in light of these general types. Example (4.19a) later turns towards biographic generalization by describing the writer's habits of perceiving and evaluating others. Example (4.19b), in

contrast, continues elaborating the notion of ideal relationship and defining what is meant by the concepts used (such as "intimacy"). It is, then, a prototypical expression of an *ideological position* or a commitment to a type-oriented evaluative theoretical representation.

Finally, there is one more form of theoretical agency, which relates more to the interactional time scale than biographic or sociohistorical ones. A frequently occurring form of theorizing consists of such explicit metapragmatic discourse that reflexively makes sense of what is going on in the interactional event. That is, in addition to self-presenting (or indexing biographic kinds), writers then attend to the ongoing event and denote the structures or intentions of their interactions or the associated participant roles. For instance, many advertisements begin with, or otherwise include, a sentence that explicitly formulates the general goal of the interactional event:

- "Could we then be just the two who are looking for one another :)?" (*Voisimmeko siis kenties olla juuri ne kaksi, jotka etsivät toisiaan :)?*)
- "A suitable counterpart is being looked for to bring a little delight into these monotonous everyday routines" (*Sopiva vastakappale olisi hakusessa tuomaan vähän piristystä tähän tasapaksuun arjen viettoon*)
- "I'm a wonderful woman and I long for the company of a wonderful man" (*Olen ihana nainen ja kaipailen ihanan miehen seuraa*).
- "I'd like to find company with someone who I'd get along well with" (*Haluaisin löytää seuraa jonka kanssa tulisi hyvin toimeen*)
- "I'm not a lifestyle dater or in need of a pen pal, but seeking a genuine real-life man" (*En ole elämäntapadeittailija enkä vailla kirjeystävää, vaan haen aitoa elävää miesystävää*)

In such sentences, some verb (in 1SG with unmarked tense and mood, imperfective aspect) and its complements denote a process that links the writer-figure to the figure of an ideal other. Clauses like this ascribe intentions to the writer and project a purpose for the ongoing interactional event and a specific role for the reader (see also e.g. sections 6.3 and 6.4). Alternatively, writers may simply rely on implicitly presumed generic models and stereotypes. That is, they may rely on the fact that the respondents sufficiently agree on the purpose of such encounters and the intentions of such participants. However, making such interpretations explicit allows writers to specify and to more precisely locate their purposes and intentions socially and experientially (cf. e.g. "seeking" versus "longing for"; "counterpart" versus "wonderful man").

The line between "this" event and others (or interactional and biographic dimensions) is, of course, relative and a matter of framing. In fact, theorizings of one's life and the ongoing event are often interlinked so that they come to mutually justify one another (see also sections 4.3 and 4.4.3). The following example, for instance, links personal characteristics and

habitual behaviors (*Olen luonteeltani – – minut on helppo saada innostumaan*) with aspects of the ongoing event (*toivonkin tutustuvani*):

(4.20) ¶Olen reipas, nuorekas, – – Olen luonteeltani positiivinen ja **sen takia** minut on helppo saada innostumaan erilaisista asioista. Jalkapalloa seuraan tv:stä ja kentän reunalta, matkailu on elämän suola ja ja sokerina pohjalla hyvät ihmissuhteet. Toivon=**kin** tutustuvani nuorekkaaseen, rehelliseen mieheen – –
(4.20) ¶I'm peppy, youthful, – – I'm positive by nature and **therefore** it is easy to get me excited about different kinds of things. I follow football on TV and from the edge of the field, traveling is the spice [lit. "salt"] of life and and last but not least [litt. "the sugar on the bottom"] are good social relationships. **Therefore** I hope to meet a youthful, honest man – –

The first link (*sen takia*, "therefore") can be interpreted either as a representation of a causal pattern in the world (i.e., "positivity" indexically causes "excitement") or as an argumentative link composed inferentially by the writer for the purposes and addressees of this event (e.g., to ensure that the writer will respond favorably to any suggestions made by the addressee-become-replier-and-suitor). In any case, it weaves different kinds of characteristics into coherent relations. The second link, marked by the clitic *kin*, is more clearly argumentative (see Vilkuna 1984: 404; VISK § 842), motivated by the ongoing interactional event. It connects the preceding description of characteristics and values with the purpose of the current encounter. It also makes explicit the representational mode of the represented purpose (i.e., the mental state of "*hoping* [to meet a youthful, honest man]"; cf. e.g. "I'm *seeking* a youthful, honest man"). That is, the writer's intentions and desires in the here-and-now are justified as plausible and reasonable by grounding them in her biography. The logical argumentation between self and other as participants of the ongoing interactional event construes a compatibility between self and other as persons with particular characteristics on a biographic time scale. Textual coherence, then, becomes an index of intentional coherence. The past, the present, and the future become coherently linked on intentional and logical levels (in contrast to, for example, narrative coherence, see 4.4.3).

The link between theoretical and practical agency in online dating advertisements is tight. The context forces the writers to exert their theoretical agency.[61] Nothing appears in the dating advertisement without the active efforts of the writer.[62] Residence in the world via writing-based

[61] This then sieves writers in terms of their pre-existing habits or skills of self-theorizing (see also chapter 7).

[62] An advertisement without any propositional content does not exist in the data, although technically such texts are a conceivable option (e.g., merely a punctuation mark, such as a question mark or an exclamation point, or an image drawn with ASCII characters).

text-artifacts requires representational contents. In many other semiotic modes residential processes do not require similar degrees of active and conscious effort but rely on many layers of habitualized embodied behavior and the perceivable physical presence of the person. (The reverse, in a sense, is that when physically co-present with others, one cannot avoid self-presentation.)

The necessity to theorize one's existence, in order to exist at all, may in part explain the following kinds of texts that quite saliently begin with non-propositional dialogue particles (*Jahha?, Elikkäs*). Such expressions would stereotypically signal, for example, a transition to, or the planning of, a new activity (see e.g. VISK § 1031). Here they draw attention to the incipient interactional process and seem to imply that it is somehow marked by nature (see also sections 4.2.3 and 5.2.2).

> (4.21a) [Text begins] Jahha? ¶Minä olen loppujen lopuksi aika monipuolinen kaveri, vaikka olen sitten kyllä toiselta puolen ihan tavallinen ja simppeli perusmieskin.
> (4.21a) [Text begins] Alright then? ¶At the end of the day I am a quite versatile guy, although on the other hand I am quite an ordinary and simple basic man.

> (4.21b) [Text begins] Elikkäs. Kerrotaanpa itsestäni hieman tähän alkuun. Olen rauhallinen ja sympaattinen ihminen.
> (4.21b) [Text begins] Now then. Let me [lit. let's] tell a bit about myself here in the beginning. I am a calm and sympathetic person.

In fact, example (4.21b) next describes the action that is about to be undertaken ("tell a bit about myself here in the beginning"). That is, the theoretical agency that the writer is wielding is brought somewhat explicitly and performatively on stage.

One may choose a more "practical" approach and simply turn one's (and ideal others') selected kinds into entextualized indices. Or, one can choose a more "reflective" approach and also entextualize reasons, motivations, intentions, and backgrounds and thereby justify such kind-indice relations. Explicit reflective formulations provide access to negotiations of desirability, compatibility, and accountability on two levels. They allow respondents to assess both (1) to what degree they subscribe to similar principles of interpretation as the writer and (2) whether or not the writer appears desirable when his or her indices have been interpreted in light of the respondent's own principles. That is, knowing the principles of interpretation (semiotic ontologies, epistemic formations) behind an indice allows respondents to assess more clearly to what extent a particular designation, such as "balanced" or "wealthy," means the same thing to the writer and the respondent. Finally, it should be remembered that theorizing about "doing something" or "being someone" is in itself simultaneously "doing something" and "being someone" on a further reflexive layer. As was seen clearly in 4.2.2, the writers' degrees of reflectivity are a contributing factor to views of

subjectivity (such as "theoretical" versus "spontaneous"). That is, the way one theorizes oneself is a further sign of who one is.

### 4.4.2 LISTS AND TAXONOMIES

One of the most pervasive features of the online dating advertisements in the data of this study are sequences that list described characteristics of either the writer or the ideal respondent. This section examines how such lists become taxonomically structured and how such structuring reflects a particular understanding of personhood.

The beginning of example (4.22) illustrates the simplest kind of case, which consists of a copula inflected in 1SG and a list of symbol-tokens (nouns or adjectives). That is, the list of characteristics is projected on the person the subject points to, who in this case is the writer:

> (4.22) ¶Olen urheilullinen opiskelun ohella työssäkäyvä nuorimies, jolle elämässä tärkeitä asioita ovat ystävät, luonto ja toivottavasti tulevaisuudessa myös perhe. **Olen** fiksu, mukava, huumorintajuinen ja kuuleman mukaan aika hyvännäköinen. **Olen** ruskeahiuksinen ja ruskeasilmäinen 182 cm pitkä ja ruumiinrakenteeltani jäntevä. Tule**n** hyvin toimeen useimpien ihmisten kanssa, osaa**n** nauraa myös **itselleni** ja **minua** on hyvin vaikea saada suuttumaan, mutta tarpeen tullen osaa**n** kuitenkin puolustaa itseä**ni** ja ystäviä**ni**.
>
> (4.22) ¶I'm a sporty young man who works alongside studies and for whom the most important things in life are friends, nature and hopefully in the future also family. **I'm** smart, nice, with a good sense of humor and they say I'm fairly good-looking. **I'm** brown-haired and brown-eyed 182 cm tall and physically fit. I get along well with most people, **I** can laugh at myself too and it's hard to make **me** mad, but when necessary **I** can however defend **myself** and **my** friends.

Later, there is a list of denoted verbal processes, similarly deictically calibrated to the writer (e.g., "[I] get along," "[I] can laugh"). We can notice at the outset that lists of verbs seem to project habitual behaviors in particular settings, whereas nouns and adjectives tend to project more stable physical, mental, and social attributes.

The elements within one list have internal hierarchical structures of various kinds. They are organized (see also the examples below) typographically with the order of elements (e.g., a descending or ascending order of importance, relevance, or inalienability; general versus particular) and punctuation (e.g., commas, parentheses, smileys) and syntactically with conjunctions (*ja* "and"; *mutta* "but"; *tai*, "or"; or asyndetic coordination) and modified with adverbs that denote, for example, source, emphasis, motivation, or frequence (*kuuleman mukaan*, "I hear," "they say"; *tarpeen tullen*, "when necessary"; *yleensä,* "usually"; *varsinkin,* "particularly"). In addition, listed elements with their own internal hierarchical structures often come organized in overarching hierarchies and groups:

(4.23) ¶**Minä olen** pieni, (yleensä tumma), nauravasilmäinen. Pirteä ja puhelias nainen, jolla on aina projekti tai pari menossa, ja vielä muutama muu homma kesken. **Minulla on** myös reilusti luonnetta :) ¶**Harrastan** puutarhaa (varsinkin pihakeinussa lueskelemista), taidetta, joogaa, bodypumppia, sulkapalloa.. **Pidän** myös luonnosta, kulttuurista, matkustelusta (kukapa ei), hyvästä ruuasta ja viinistä. Olen viihtyisän elämän ystävä! ¶Jos ole**t** pedantti, askeetti tai muu ekstremisti et ole oikea mies minulle. Hilpeä hedonisti on paljon sopivampi :).

(4.23) ¶**I am** small, (usually dark), with laughing eyes. A chirpy and chatty woman, who always has a project or two under way, and a few other things going on. **I** also **have** plenty of character. ¶My **hobbies** include [spending time in] the garden (particularly reading in the swing), art, yoga, body pump, badminton.. **I** also **like** nature, culture, traveling (who doesn't), good food and wine. I'm a friend of the comfortable life! If **you are** pedantic, ascetic or other [kind of] extremist you are not the right man for me. A cheerful hedonist is much more suitable :).

Example (4.23), for instance, begins with a list of relational processes that describe relatively publicly perceivable and verifiable characteristics. It then moves on to a structure of possession that claims a somewhat more subjective attribute of having "plenty of character" (although qualified humorously with a smiley). Next, in a new paragraph, the writer moves on to the material process of "doing something as a hobby" (*harrastaa*). Different hobbies are stacked one upon another with a list of NPs. Finally, there is a list of mental processes or preferences, which also imply that such activities are actually engaged in at least sometimes (see also 5.1). Moreover, the writer finishes the sequence with a crystallizing exclamation ("I'm a friend of the comfortable life!").

In such taxonomic structures, the hyperonymous branches (bolded in the above examples) reflect an understanding of what *types* of characteristics (and topics of self-presentation) a person can or should be divided into in a particular context. The different combinations of *tokens* of characteristics (underlined above), then, are what make up a particular biographic individual and, to a relative degree, separate such individuals from one another (e.g., different tokens of the type "hobby" such as "art" or "yoga"). (Cf. Kockelman 2010: 36–37.) When self-presentation is patterned into taxonomic lists of descriptions, personhood becomes manifested as a structured collection of distinct, segmentable attributes or habits. Such characteristics appear relatively stable, and the figure of personhood they mediate becomes relatively abstracted from unfolding spacetime and particular environments. The regrouping of tokens under taxonomic headings also presumes relatively commensurable frameworks of comparison and selectivity between individuals. Since such patterns reflect a reflexive process in which a person intentionally and evaluatively organizes one's parts in cultural taxonomies, they may also contribute to particular kinds of, say, "structured" views of subjectivity.

Patterns like this are reminiscent of the taxonomy approach in twentieth-century personality psychology. In this approach, individuals as functioning wholes are broken down into a set of traits that are defined by single words or expressions from natural language so that "the dictionary functions not only as a source of material but also as a silent metaphor for the individual person" (Danziger 2012: 79). Lists of described characteristics, therefore, seem to enable lexicogrammatical forms of selection and aesthetization particularly well. By choosing an appropriate vocabulary, one can, for example, produce different views of subjectivity and appeal to different kinds of respondents. The previous example indicates mastery of the written standard language and contains aesthetic stylization such as alliteration (***P***_irteä ja_ ***p***_uhelias nainen, jolla on aina_ ***p***_rojekti tai_ ***p***_ari_ ***m***_enossa, ja vielä_ ***m***_uutama_ ***m***_uu ho_***mm***_a kesken_) and scholarly sounding words of foreign origin ("pedantic," "ascetic," "extremist"). Such sign configurations can be used to convey, for instance, particular impressions of the education, cultural capital, or sense of humour of the writer and to select for particular kinds of ideal respondents.

Since taxonomies favor NPs and simple clauses that can be easily coordinated in hierarchical lists, they have a generalizing and enclosing effect on the kinds they project on individuals. That is, they tend to project relatively stable and inalienable attributes, preferences, and habits of behavior, detached from more complex environments or patterns of life. However, lists and taxonomies can also incorporate small-scale chronotopic formulations, which often remain closer to particular experiences. Let us consider example (4.24):

(4.24) Koiran kanssa metsässä kävely on pitkän päivän jälkeen parasta mitä tiedän. Minulla on vihreä vyö karatessa ja budolajit ovat lähellä sydäntäni. Myin viime keväänä moottoripyöräni mistä olen vieläkin harmissani. Savonlinnassa olen viihtynyt tosi hyvin. Minusta tulee ope ja olen siitä tosi ylpee...

(4.24) Walking with my dog in a forest after a long day is the best thing I know. I have a green belt in karate and budo is a cherished hobby of mine. I sold my motorbike last spring and I still regret it. I have really enjoyed living in Savonlinna [a city in eastern Finland]. I'll become a teacher and I'm real proud of it...

In another type of context, the above excerpt might be absurd: the states of affairs denoted by the writer in one sentence after another barely seem to have any connection. There is little semantic cohesion and few explicit connectives. Despite the recurring narrated figure ("I"), there is little narrative coherence either in the sense of causal-chronological connections. The coherence, then, is of a taxonomic kind. The sentences are in co-hyponomous relations to one another. That is, they are in a mutually similar relation to higher hyperonymous levels. (Cf. also Hoey 2001 on "colony texts.") In contrast to the previous example, such hyperonomous branches are not as explicitly named. Some of the elements do resemble such topic

formulations (e.g., constituents of life such as “a hobby of mine” and preferences such as “the best I know,” “enjoyed”). This particular text, then, relies on the readers’ capacity to recognize, in light of their genre knowledge, such forms of patterning and coherence, in which the point is not so much about the relation of the different facts or even separate facts *per se* but how they are representative of the entextualizing and entextualized persons and their values.

Taxonomies of characteristics gradually shade into more narrative-like segments (see section 4.4.3). Once the descriptions start acquiring more specific chronotopic content, or descriptions of particular events and environments instead of generalized characteristics, and once the chronotopes start following one another in thematically and temporally connected ways, they are easier to interpret narratively and not merely co-hyponomously. Consider the following example:

> (4.25) ¶Olen jahkailija, joka rakastaa värejä, mielikuvituksellisia asioita ja tarinoita. Pidän kasviksista, pyöräilemisestä ja **luonnossa liikkumisesta**, mutta en halua asua **maaseudulla**. Välillä on ihanaa tanssia **vilkkuvien valojen loisteessa**, käydä artistien **keikoilla, ravintoloissa ja teatterissa**. En ole koskaan ollut **valmismatkalla**. Nautin **omatoimimatkailun** vapaudesta, seikkailuntunnusta ja haasteesta. Olen usein viettänyt synttäreitäni **Lontoossa**, jossa eräs suosikkin[i] on Tiedemuseon 3D Imax-teatteri. ¶Pelkään kehittäneeni addiktion **tummaan suklaaseen** ja viimeisin **keittiötieteellinen kokeeni** olikin **suklaaleivän** leipominen. Onneksi arkeeni kuuluu liikkumista sen verran, ettei **paino** ole minulle koskaan ollut mikään ongelma.
>
> (4.25) ¶I’m a hesitater who loves colors, imaginative things and stories. I like vegetables, biking and **strolling in nature**, but I don’t want to live in the **countryside**. Every now and then it’s wonderful to dance **in the glow of flashing lights**, go to artists’ **gigs**, **restaurants** and **the theater**. I have never been on a **package tour**. I enjoy the freedom of **independent travel**, the feeling of adventure and challenge. I have often spent my birthday in **London**, where one of my favorite [places] is the 3D Imax Theater of the Science Museum. ¶I fear I have developed an addiction to **dark chocolate** and in fact my latest **culinary experience** was baking **chocolate bread**. Luckily my everyday life involves enough physical exercise so that **weight** has never been a problem for me.

The segment begins with the writer describing herself with a role designator (“hesitater”) that is qualified with a relative clause that denotes a “love” for a number of things. The following clause picks up from here by denoting a list of things she “likes.” The beginning of the segment, then, sets the tone for the entire passage that is marked by a continuous chain of evaluative stances (see the underlined parts) towards increasingly specific objects. Moreover, there is clear lexical and topical cohesion (see the bolded parts) between many successive descriptions. For instance, the writer’s unwillingness to live in the countryside despite her love of nature becomes justified with an occasional

need for urban entertainment. There is an implicit argumentative link between the two sentences with complementarily contrasted chronotopic content ("countryside" versus "city"). The next link is perhaps inferentially less predictable, but there is an intuitively understandable transition from forms of urban entertainment to the topic of traveling (as another form of entertainment) and "package tours" versus "independent travel." One might even see a loose overarching theme of "preferring an adventurous urban independence." The fact that the sentences are located within one typographical unit, a single paragraph, makes it easier to interpret them in a thematically coherent manner. Perhaps the most notable leap from one topic to another is precisely between the two paragraphs.

The sentence that informs the readers that the writer has never been on a "package tour" breaks, with its perfect tense, the general dominance of the present tense. It scans the biographic past up to the present as a sort of lived proof for the general preference ("I enjoy the freedom of independent travel") formulated in the following sentence. Analogously, the last sentence of the paragraph gives an opposite illustration by describing what the writer habitually has done ("often celebrated my birthday in London"). Such linking of the past with the present is often seen as an essential trait of narratives (see e.g. Linde 1993: 107). That is, throughout the segment the writer moves between different dimensions (the past and the present; the habitually recurring and the sporadic; the general and the particular) in a relatively coherent manner, and formulates evaluative contrasts.

To sum up, in comparison with the earlier examples, there is more perspectival, causal, and logical continuity in the cross-clausal patterning of (4.25). The text flows smoothly from one state of affairs to another with only occasional breaks between consecutive segments. Nevertheless, despite the relative narrative-likeness of the patterning, the excerpt does not quite seem like a proper story. It is perhaps more reminiscent of a stream of consciousness (cf. section 4.2.3). The point of the segment is more about painting a picture of a way of life and a pattern of preferences than describing events or following a storyline. For instance, the stance the writer takes towards London is used to index and to identify with a particular chronotope and way of life, instead of actually reporting or narrating one's visits to London. That is, the goal is to illustrate and evaluate lifestyles, and the patterning is still more readily understood in terms of co-hyponomous relations of self-presentation than in terms of storytelling with complications and codas. The coherence is that of a *chronotopic or episodic taxonomy*, or an evaluative, hierarchical listing of events and environments.

### 4.4.3 NARRATIVES AND STORIES

Although narratives and stories have traditionally been considered and studied as one of the most important and typical forms of self-presentation and identity construction (see e.g. Linde 1993; Mishler 2006: 36; Schiffrin

2006: 104), they are quite rare in the data of this study. This section will pick up where the previous one left off and have a look at those patterns that come closest to narratives and stories. Fully-fledged stories hardly appear at all in the data. Even "small stories" (see e.g. Bamberg 2006) are somewhat rare. There are, however, differences in how strictly or loosely "narratives" have been defined and delineated from other forms of discourse. As was seen in the previous section, the boundary towards chronotopic taxonomies is not precise. Frequent or not, the question of narrativity itself, as a particular way of organizing experience, is interesting from the standpoint of online dating advertisements. One might even ask if there is something about narratives that makes them inherently unsuitable for the practice of online dating advertisements.

What precisely those essential traits are that separate narratives from non-narratives is, however, a question that is often not very explicitly dealt with in either more traditional or more modern approaches to narrative. A prototypical narrative can be seen as containing text-segments in which descriptions of events are understood to be linked so that latter events temporally and causally follow from or grow out of previously described ones (see e.g. Mishler 2006; cf. Labov & Waletzky 1967; Linde 1993). The link between described events is usually interpreted as "naturally" inherent in the states of affairs as if regardless of the emplotment of the narrative – unlike, say, argumentative links that are explicitly construed by the writer or the speaker in the speech event. That is, there is an attempt to produce iconicity between an experience and its description. Therefore, in a "minimal narrative," a temporal juncture, or a non-reversable link between events, can be achieved by merely placing two sentences in sequence (Labov 1997) (i.e., such events are represented as indexically linked to one another by indexically linked sentences). Usually narratives include at least one personified figure whose perceptions, intentions, actions, and their consequences serve as the more specific link between events and sentences, in patterns such as complication-resolution or problem-failure-solution or surprise-reaction (see e.g. Labov & Waletzky 1967; Hoey 1983, 2001; Ochs & Capps 2001: 130–155, 225). In short, narratives produce coherence of experience in light of the narrators' ontologies and values (see also e.g. Ochs & Capps 2001: 201). They enclose and project a particular episodic structure onto processes in the world in which states of affairs transform into others.

To make a sequence of events a meaningful whole (instead of a mere list or chronology), narrated events are evaluated and emplotted in terms of their relevance for the total organization of the narrative as well as the ongoing event of narration. In other words, it is the relation between the story (plot and evaluation) and the participation framework of the event of narration that yields the significance of the narrative (see e.g. Georgakopoulou 2006: 101–102). The representations of narrated events are interpreted in terms of the narrators' residence in the event of narration, and the emplotment of narrative serves the interpretation of an experience for the purposes of the

event of narration. Through narratives we can "restory" our past (Mishler 2006: 36), for example, by rearranging the temporal structure and relevance of a remembered experience (see also Ricoeur 1980), which may be precisely the appeal and value of narratives. Narratives are experience under re-interpretation. It seems, then, that the distinguishing trait of narrative accounts is their experience-near organization. Unlike, say, abstract logical analyses, narratives aim to retain the structures of the chain-like unfolding of particular "real-time" experiences (cf. 4.4.1 and 4.4.2).

Narratives can be metapragmatically calibrated in relation to the event of narration in many different ways. Since narrating involves meaningful linking of anterior events to posterior ones, factual narratives are generally speaking only possible about past events.[63] In factual worlds, the future can certainly be anticipated and virtually modeled with narratives in "irrealis" modes. In fictive worlds, however, the future can be known in advance so that "online" narrating becomes possible. Similarly, in narratives of past events, occasional shifts to a "dramatic" present may occur to produce an "online" perspective on past events. Narratives can, therefore, be set in "historicized," "online," or "imagined" pasts, presents, or futures in a variety of combinations – which might suggest that they would be considered useful by online daters.

The prototypical narrative tense, the preterite or the "imperfect," is quite rare in the data of this study. There are, for instance, only 16 preterite forms of the statistically most frequent verb *olla* ("to be"), most of them in example (4.29) below (versus about 830 present tense forms). The Finnish imperfect has been described as a means of definite temporal reference (see e.g. VISK § 1538; Pallaskallio 2013: 103). If we relate the notion of definite reference to online dating advertisements as an event of narration, we begin to see why narratives in the prototypic sense may not be considered useful by many writers. Whereas, for instance, close friendships are usually marked by the sharing of life experiences and histories, in a first encounter between two anonymous unknowns, specific accounts of particular past events are less relevant. Moreover, in online dating advertisements, part of the audience consists of non-ideal respondents that one wishes to sieve off rather than share personal experiences with. Negotiations of identity, desirability, and compatibility, then, operate with representative habits and generalized, recurring patterns of life instead of particular events.

Let us now consider the following example, which might be seen as fulfilling the minimal criteria of a narrative:

[63] Ochs & Capp (2001: 162–163) classify as narratives cases like sports coverage, in which commentators narrate a presently unfolding game. The central question, then, is to what extent genuine emplotment (as opposed to mere sequential description of perceived events) is possible in real-time conditions.

(4.26) Kävin retkellä Seurasaaressa luonnon helmassa. Istuin tuulisilla kallioilla ja samosin metsäpoluilla lintujen vienon laulun soidessa lehdoissa. Olen aina löytänyt mielenrauhan luonto Äidin yhteydestä. Jos vaikka olisit myös luontoihminen, olisi meillä jo jotain mistä keskustella.

(4.26) I went on a trip to Seurasaari [an island in Helsinki] into the midst of nature. I sat on windy cliffs and roamed forest paths as gentle birdsong rang in the groves. I have always found peace of mind in contact with Mother Nature. Should you happen to be a nature person as well, we would already have something to discuss.

We may, however, note at the outset that the imperfect could easily be replaced with the present tense or a modal expression ("I often go," "käyn [usein]"; "I would like to go," "haluaisin käydä") without notable changes in actual interactional consequences. Notice also the absence of any temporally localizing adverbials that would tell the reader when specifically this event took place. Also, the plural forms of the adverbials of location carry durative-habitual aspectual implications (cf. with e.g. past habit "I would sit on windy cliffs and roam forest paths" versus a singular event "I sat on *a* windy cliff"). The narrated event, then, remains indefinite and example-like, portraying a representative and valued *type* of behavior, and the factuality of the representation as a representation of a particular past event would probably not easily come up as relevant among respondents. Moreover, the relevance of the narrated sequence is summed up in the third sentence with the perfect tense of recurrence or habit ("I have always").

Nonetheless, we can see a difference, for instance, in the view of subjectivity conveyed by a text that uses the preterite tense. Locating both the narrated event ($E^n$) and the reference event ($E^r$), the point from which the narrated event is reckoned (see 4.2), as anterior in relation to the speech event ($E^s$) invites the reader to share or to witness the writer's act of reminiscing. That is, the mode of intentionality is the description of memories (or subsequent perceptions), instead of the assertion of general beliefs (see Kockelman 2006b: 98–99). The fact that the writer reportively represents contents of her event-memory reveals some of the actual structure of her past, even if in a relatively indefinite and non-specific way. It gives the person a minimal dimension of temporal and historical coherence, which may be an efficient technique precisely because it is marked and non-typical. Also, evoking memories serves as lived proof for further claims. In the third sentence, the writer interprets the narrated events as the cause for a particular mental state ("peace of mind," *mielenrauha*) and generalizes the pattern over biographic time and similar events ("I have always found," *olen aina löytänyt*). Finally, she generalizes this pattern into a social type ("nature person," *luontoihminen*) and addresses it to respondents as a criterion of identification and compatibility.[64] Moods, preferences, and

[64] This is the same writer as in the "Kallio" versus "north Helsinki" example (4.11).

desires, then, become concretely grounded in patterns of public behavior in specific environments.

Most narrative patterns in the data are, however, in the present tense. The most common type of cases consists of short segments that justify and biographically contextualize the writing of the advertisement or the process of looking for a partner in general. Example (4.27) merely suggests an emplotted temporal progression of life events. It is abstract-like (in the Labovian technical sense) since it orients to a story and plots the actual advertisement event *within* the episodic structure:

> (4.27) [Title] Syksy lähestyy.. ¶Hei! Jotain uutta elämään kaipailee 27-vuotta täyttänyt tyttö, jolla jo elämän perusasiat alkaa olemaan kunnossa, vaikka paljon vielä tuntuu puuttuvankin. Asunto, auto ja työpaikka on, perhe-elämä vielä perustamatta, sitä oikeaa etsiskellessä :)
> (4.27) [Title] Fall is approaching.. ¶Hey! Here's yearning for something new in [her] life a 27-year-old girl who is already starting to have the basic things in life in order, although a lot seems to be missing still. Apartment, car and job [I] have, a family life is yet to be started [lit. "founded"], waiting for the right one :)

The advertisement text is contextualized both in relation to a cyclic seasonal trajectory (e.g., the turning of summer into fall)[65] and in relation to a biographic trajectory. The writer presumes an ideal model of the progression of life in terms of the accumulation of social statuses and possessions. Since some things are still considered to be missing (as a kind of "complication" of the narrative), the advertisement becomes implicitly contextualized as the means of achieving the next step in life (as the "resolution" of that complication). Whereas the previous example justifies a need for a partner, the following example focuses more on justifying the particular means of finding one:

> (4.28) [Title] Puuttuvaa kylkiluuta etsimässä ¶Noniin, nytpä sitten päätin kokeilla tätäkin mahdollisuutta tutustua hameväkeen. Kapakoissa rymyämiseen alan olla lopen kyllästynyt ja lavatanssejakin on kokeiltu taka-aikoina. Töissä ja harrasteissa on kovin miesvaltaista, kirjastossa käynnin sijaan tilaan kotiini tai ostan kioskilta lukemista, niin mistäpä sitä sitten voisin löytää? Tiedän kyllä että sinä tavallinen kunnollinen suomalainen nainen olet jossakin vapaana ja sinäkin kaipailet rinnallesi sitä ihan tavallista kunnollista suomalaista perusjätkää.
> (4.28) [Title] Looking for the missing rib ¶Alright then, I have now decided to try this way of meeting women [ARCH/COLL PEJ, "petticoats"] too. I'm starting to get tired of bars and I've tried going to dances as well. My work and hobbies are male-dominated, instead of going to the library I order books home or buy them at a kiosk, so where could I then

[65] Apparently the time of the year makes such biographic "complications" even more acute for many, since similar patterns recur in the data. That is, changes in the seasons are stereotypically associated with a yearning for affinal relations and increased efforts at courtship.

find it [= the company of women?]? I know well that you, ordinary, decent Finnish woman, are free somewhere and that you too are longing for that ordinary, decent Finnish guy by your side.

The title intertextually frames the advertisement with a reference to a Biblical story, already projecting a storylike interpretation. Online dating is then presented as a kind of secondary alternative (*tätä=**kin***, "this too," "even this") to more primary forms of finding a partner. Online dating is only appropriate in a specific phase of life or after other methods have been tried or are not a viable option. (Such patterns will be returned to in 7.1.1 from the standpoint of negative stereotypic images associated with online dating.) In a manner typical of stories, there is a background of past failures to solve the complication or problem (see e.g. Hoey 1983: 96–102). The writer mentions that she has tried other methods but that process is nearing a sort of saturation point (*alan olla lopen kyllästynyt*, "I'm starting to get tired of"). The text at hand, then, is a new attempt with a new kind of tool. Finally, the text introduces another protagonist, *you,* who is described as a person with an interlinking perspective and fate ("you, too, are longing for"). (See also chapter 6.)

A few stories in the data are clearly "fictive" in the sense that they contain elements that cannot be plausibly interpreted in their prototypic denotational senses, such as the writer being a "princess" in example (4.29). The inferential mapping of the narrative to the actual person is metaphoric in the sense that it requires a process of translation between semiotic frames. The following advertisement employs a recognizable fairytale format, which is explicitly mentioned already in the title:

(4.29) [Title] Sadun prinssi hukassa.. ¶"Olipa kerran nuori neito, tai nuori ja nuori, ikää hänellä oli karvan alle 30, mutta nuoreksi hän vielä itseään kutsui. Neito asui pikku kodissaan kahden kissansa kanssa. Nuori neito eli kaikin puolin normaalia elämää, kävi töissä ja vietti aikaa ystäviensä kanssa. Aikaisemmin hän oli viettänyt aktiivista opiskelijaelämää ja saanut siinä sivussa AMK -tutkinnonkin valmiiksi. ¶Parasta hänessä, hänen omasta mielestään, oli silmät, nuo tumman ruskeat napit, jotka uteliaana maailmaa tutkaili. Muutenkin kaikin puolin itseään tyydyttäviä kasvoja kehysti pitkät tummat hiukset. Olemukseltaan neito muuten oli vuosien saatossa pyöristynyt, eikä noista kerääntyneistä kiloista eroon pääseminen ollut enää kovin helppoa. Ulkonäöllään hänen oli siis vaikea kilpailla nykypäivän pinnallisilla markkinoilla. Sen sijaan ihmiset, jotka pääsivät tutustumaan häneen paremmin huomasivat hänen olevan hyvin herttainen ja sosiaalinen ihminen, aina iloinen ja positiivinen. Tosi ystävilleen hän oli oikea aarre, niin paljon hän ystävistään välitti. ¶Silti nuori neito kaipasi elämäänsä jotain. Hän halusi jakaa arkensa Jonkun kanssa. Hän toivoi arkeensa Jonkun, jolle kertoa työpäivästä, jonka kanssa käydä kaupassa, aloittaa vaikka lenkkeilyn ja ennen pitkää perustaa perheen ja saada lapsia. Mutta mistä tuon jonkun löytäisi, kun baareissa notkuminen ei kiinnostanut, eikä hän Jonkun sieltä löytymiseen uskonutkaan. Oli siis kokeiltava muita nykyaikaisia keinoja.. ¶Ja vihdoin eräänä loppukesän kauniina iltana

hän tapasi Jonkun..” ¶Kuka ja millainen oli tuo Joku, mitä hän halusi elämältä, mitä hän halusi nuoren parin arjelta..? ¶Kerro se minulle, jos ajatuksesi kuulostavat lupaavilta, saatat saada myös kuvan paluupostissa ja pääset tutustumaan tähän neitoon tarkemmin..

(4.29) [Title] The prince of the fairy tale lost.. ¶“Once upon a time there was a young maiden, well relatively young, aged just a tad under 30, but she still called herself young. The maiden lived in her small home with her two cats. The young maiden led a life that was normal in every way, went to work and spent time with her friends. Earlier she had had an active student life and in the process she had finished a polytechnic degree. ¶The best thing about her, in her own opinion, were her eyes, those dark brown buttons that observed the world with curiosity. Her face that satisfied her in every other respect as well was lined by long dark hair. Otherwise her appearance had got rounder along the years, and it wasn’t easy to get rid of those accumulated extra kilos anymore. So it was hard for her to compete with her looks in the shallow market of today. However, people who got to know her better would notice that she was a very sweet and sociable person, always happy and positive. To her true friends she was a genuine treasure, that’s how much she cared for them. ¶Nevertheless, the young maiden was yearning for something in her life. She wanted to share her days with Someone. She wished she had Someone to whom she could talk about her workday, with whom she could do grocery shopping, start jogging and eventually start a family and have children. But where to find that someone, when she wasn’t interested in hanging out in bars and didn’t really believe that she’d find that Someone there. So she had to try other modern ways.. ¶And finally one beautiful late summer evening she met Someone..” ¶Who and what kind was that Someone, what did he want from life, what did he want from the everyday life of the young couple..? ¶Tell that to me, if your thoughts sound promising, you may also get a picture in the return mail and get to know this maiden a bit better..

It is notable that most of the propositional content *per se* does not really require a metaphoric reading. Many of the denoted life events (such as getting a college degree) are, in fact, more plausibly interpreted as objects of a non-fictive narrated world. The narrative creates a *hybrid* of two different entextualized worlds: the realistic biographic past of the person and the superimposed fairytale world. The metaphorical elements include, for instance, the princess-prince social relation between the writer and the ideal respondent and, in a sense, the preterite tense. Just as fairytales are usually situated in a fictive or mythic past, in (4.29) the descriptions of processes that are ultimately interpretable in the speech event as future-oriented (“She wanted to share her days with Someone” >> “I wish to find Someone to share my life with”) are in the past form, as if the chains of events had already unfolded and were merely retold here. The sign pattern explicitly sets the reference event ($E^r$) in the past of a fictive world, whereas in actuality the narrative will be re-calibrated in light of the purposes of the ongoing interactional event.

As in the two earlier examples, the narrative in (4.29) leads up to the interactional event at hand (“Tell that to me…”). In this case, the storyline is

left open and pitched to the respondents. That is, she invited repliers to co-construct her metaphorical life story and to expand it with an imagined future. The entire co-constructed story and the fictive figure of the replier in particular will then be evaluated by the writer in terms of desirability and compatibility (see the discussion of proposable characteristics and example 4.3b in 4.1.1). At the end of the text, when the rest of the story is offered to the respondent, the writer phases out of the princess persona and addresses the respondent as "you." The fictive roles, then, are clearly distinct from more "real" ones. There is a correspondence between the idealized writer as a "princess" or "she" (3SG) and the actual writer as "I" (1SG) and the idealized respondent as "Someone" (3SG) and the actual respondent as "you" (2SG). From the standpoint of the writer, we can see several different superimposed semiotic worlds here:

(1) the "fictive" past (the person as a narrated figure in past events with a fairytale-like emplotment and structure of temporality)
(2) the "real" past (narrated past life events not requiring a metaphoric interpretation or translation into non-fictive biography)
(3) the "ideal" present (the person as the narrator persona who organizes the "fictive" narration as a form of "promotional" self-presentation)
(4) the "real" present (the person as a non-promotional persona, implied by the promotional one, and more visible towards the end when phasing out of the narrative)
(5) the actual present (the person as the animator, the epicenter in whom all the figures and personae are grounded)

A host of reflexive models of discourse (e.g., an understanding of narratives, fairytales, online dating advertisements, and promotional discourse) are needed to interpret different layers of signs of personhood and to infer what to anticipate in terms of residential consequences. Each contrastively segmentable layer of personhood involves a different representational mode and can be translated into other modes (e.g., what the "princess" persona says can be translated into what the "promotional" persona says and what the "real" persona would say, etc.). In a sense, extreme cases such as fictive stories and fictive personae merely make such processes (or the inherent "fictiveness" of symbolic processes) more visible and tangible. (See also section 4.4.4 and chapter 7.)

When analyzed in relation to the event of narration (see also Georgakopoulou 2006: 101–102), the narrative functions as an instrument of biography and identity performance. The personae it mediates are *embedded personae* that derive their meaning in relation to another persona within which they operate (e.g., a "fictive" princess within a "promotional" persona). Embedded personae can serve, for instance, as a way of dealing with emotionally challenging or potentially stigmatizing biographical facts (such as overweight in 4.29; see also 5.2.2 and 7.2). Similarly, the narrative

discourse itself is embedded in the online dating advertisement genre (see e.g. Bhatia 2004; Mäntynen & Shore 2014). Some prototypic parts of story structure, such as the evaluation of the narrated events or a summarizing coda, may, therefore, be absent. The evaluation and summarizing of, say, the relevance or "moral" of the story can be left implicit because they can be completed by what is known about the purpose of online dating advertisements. The storyline itself can be left open as an anticipation of, and to be completed by, the residential consequences that are hoped to ensue from online dating advertisements. That is, representations of the writer's past life so far and hoped-for actual future events of life become coherently linked by such narrative emplotments and trajectories. The instance of the online dating advertisement genre, in turn, becomes partly entextualized and contextualized by the embedded narrative. There is, then, a functional complementarity and a divison of labor between the online dating advertisement genre and the embedded narratives in the cases analyzed above.

In narratives, persons appear as evolving figures in biographic and sociohistorical sequences of events – in sharp contrast to the taxonomic structures analyzed in the previous section. Persons appear as actors and patients embedded in environments instead of individual, isolated wholes that organize their own parts. As narratives link the here-and-now to sociohistorical and biographical chains of past events and expand them with imagined future sequences of events, they provide "identity of the self through time" (Linde 1993: 107) in controlled ways. Narrative patterns also readily enable the treatment of the ideal other as a story character ("you," "Someone") within the same storyworld. That is, the two persons become related to one another in perspectivally and causally coherent ways in chronological successions of events, and their mutual compatibility becomes something that is rooted in intentional actions and serendipities of life instead of, say, a comparison of taxonomized structures of characteristics.

### 4.4.4 FICTIVE PERSONAE

Closely related to the "fictive" narratives discussed in the previous section are performances of "fictive" personae. Although there are only a handful of such examples in the data, their analysis interestingly illuminates the range of possible textual patterns as well as the very nature of self-presentation in online dating advertisements – and more generally too. Why and how, for instance, is some performance interpretable as "fictive" and some others not? As discussed previously (and see also chapter 8), linguistic symbols as virtual models of other semiotic modes have an inherent "fictionality" to them. That is, it is a complex matter of interpretation and often a matter of degree, when, for example, the mapping of a symbol to perceivable human behaviors stops being "truthful" or starts being "metaphoric." In fact, as will be seen in chapter 7, some interactants think that all language in online dating

advertisements is “embellished” and “unreliable” and should not, therefore, be taken at face value. That is, representations embedded in online dating advertisements require a metaphoric reading, a mapping from one symbolic frame to another. Why, then, is the promotional persona itself not a “fictive” mode of personhood? The difference between “fictive” and “non-fictive” personae will become more readily understandable in terms of residential consequences and accountability.

In the following two examples of this section, the writers inhabit a more or less independently individuable and recognizable person-like entity. The fairy tale example in the previous section already included a fictive persona superimposed upon the other personae of the narrator. Such fictive personae are, however, possible in non-narrative contexts as well, as the following two examples illustrate. In example (4.30), the writer likens himself to a bear-like figure:

(4.30) nyt olis hakusessa tälle nallulle oma kulta. tää nallu on perusluonteeltaan kiltti ja huolehtivainen enkä turhasta mutise mutta osaan kyllä myös [sanoa?] suoraan jos tunnen tulleeni kohdelluksi huonosti. – – oon kokopäivä työssä täällä raumalla. harrastuksiin kuuluu autojen rakentelu ja prätkä.

(4.30) now there’s a search for a honeybunch for this teddy. this teddy is gentle and caring by basic nature and I don’t grumble unnecessarily but I can also [speak up] if I feel mistreated. – – I work full time here in rauma [a city in Western Finland]. my hobbies include building cars and my motorbike.

He refers to himself as “this teddy” (*nallu* being a sort of hypocoristic variant of *nalle*, “teddy bear”) and employs a style of writing and perceiving the world that might be characterized, for instance, as a “childlike” or “naivistic” view of subjectivity. He describes his personality in terms of pet-like cuteness (“lovable unless provoked into grumpiness”). However, the descriptions of his profession and hobbies do not really require, or even fit in with, a bear persona, and they are also set explicitly set in an actual geographical location.

Whereas the writer of (4.30) only lightly evokes a personified bear-like figure, phasing in and out of it, example (4.31) is a full-blown imitation of a popular cartoon character. Example (4.31), in contrast to the previous one, involves a specific, recognizable character that has a life of its own outside the advertisement. The cartoon character that the writer inhabits is the Cursing Hedgehog (*Kiroileva siili*), a small hedgehog with a nasty attitude. Accurate translation and glossing of the character’s speech style is impossible here, but it might be characterized as colloquial and miscellaneously (pseudo)dialectal, and it contains a host of real and invented swear words and profanities:

(4.31) [Title] Kiroileva Siili

¶Hakusessa: kiroileva siili(tär) ¶No niin, simputin samputti, joko alkavat bemaripurjehtijat riittää!? Tulevatko korvista ulos uraohjusten osingot ja alkavatko

niiden ”pitkien, tummien & komeiden” urheilevien sporttiadonisten hugobossit tuntua lähinnä mummolan lannoitteelta, jumpska! ¶Se on kuule menoa, kissavieköön! Aimo annos anarkiaa, sillä saadaan, neiti hyvä, rakkaus roihuamaan ja rääkyviä hunsvotteja kasvatustätien kauhuksi. Voihan tuhannen jampettia ja seitkytäyks mersuntähteä, mankuna ja vinkuna ja tää törkeä ”tottuuren vääristely” suapi riittää. ¶Se on kato se asenne, jota ei viistuhatta tommyhilfigeriä pelasta, eli jos pissiksissä on jotain, niin ne vetää ainakin reilusti alkkarit lipputankoo, niinko janhusen pertsa leirillä ysiysi. – – Hra Siili, bachelor

(4.31) [Title] Cursing Hedgehog
¶Looking for: a cursing hedgehog(ette) [FEM] ¶Well now, gosh dang, have you had enough of sailors with BMWs!? Are the dividends of high-flyers coming out of your ears and are the hugo bosses of the “tall, dark & handsome” sports adonises starting to feel like the fertilizer used at your grandmother’s place, crikey! ¶This is it now, jeepers creepers! A whole bunch of anarchy will, dear Miss, set our love ablaze and produce squalling rascals to terrify educators. Oh thousand popinjays and seventy-one Mercy stars, the groaning and the moaning and this outrageous “distortion of the truth” has to stop already. ¶You see it is the attitude, which can’t be replaced by five thousand tommy hilfigers, so if there’s anything to be said for valley girls, at least they hoist their undies honestly up the flagpole, like pertsa janhunen [male nickname+surname] at camp in ninety-nine. – – Mr. Hedgehog, bachelor

From the standpoint of identity performance, the first thing to notice is that the source domain of the performance is popular youth culture.[66] The writer, on the other hand, is a middle-aged man who, by showing mastery of the interdiscursively sourced character, can plausibly demonstrate his identification with this particular form of culture. Fictive personae, then, allow the performers to shift the sociocultural origo of the event. Secondly, animating a fictive persona brings in a specific representational mode. The animated representational contents cannot be directly or straightforwardly applied to the biographic individual but need to be mapped onto him through a process of inference (e.g., by translating hedgehog-like qualities into human-like qualities). As for accountability, part of the responsibility for and commitment to the contents one animates is relegated to the imitated character, or at least to some degree detached from the self. The properties of the character that serves as the model for the speech one animates can be appealed to as motivating factors (see also section 5.3 and Haakana & Visapää 2005: 456–461). That is, the writer’s more specific commitment to the represented contents also becomes a matter of inference.

---

[66] The cartoon was, however, published in the biggest national newspaper and as a popular hardcover collection the year the data was collected (2007). In that sense, it was clearly a mass-mediated cultural phenomenon. Perhaps it is merely the identification with, and the imitation of, a cartoon character that is stereotypically easier to associate with youth rather than middle-aged men.

In (4.31), the voicing of the fictive persona enables a somewhat straightforward commentary of different social types and their habits of self-presentation. Although there is no explicit reference to reading or writing dating advertisements, the questions addressed to the reader in the beginning ("have you had enough of…?") seem to presume a process of browsing through advertisements on a dating website. It is implied that one will find one polished profile after another, the writers invariably describing themselves as "tall, dark & handsome" high-flyers. The writer presumes that the reader, like the writer himself, has had enough of such advertisements – and sees them for what they really are, a "distortion of the truth." In other words, the writer paints caricatures of social types (e.g., career-oriented persons who like to show off their wealth) and, more specifically, portrays them as unreliable animators. That is, the writer fosters distrust towards the plausibility of their self-presentations. These discredited personae are then contrasted with the writer's own persona and an attitude "that cannot be bought." Interestingly, then, the fictive persona actually becomes a metaphor for the "true" self and the "authenticity" of the writer (as it obviates the need to resort to ordinary "inauthentic" promotional performances). Moreover, the poetic performance of the fictive persona serves as a kind of palpable iconic evidence of the validity of the claim that this writer is indeed different. The fictive persona in (4.31) is therefore also construable as a strategy of "authenticity" (see also section 5.2.2 and chapter 7).

One might imagine a continuum ranging from, say, clearly fictive context-specific personae towards imagined alternative or idealized personae towards habitually inhabited everyday personae (which are also habitually projected on the self by others). The degree of "fictiveness" (not to mention "authenticity") of any particular persona, however, is always a matter of specific metapragmatic calibration and ontological framing.[67] In the fictive performances analyzed above, the interactants seem to become accountable for the representativeness of the kinds their performances project on them, but not so much for the particular indices they employ. The writer of (4.31) would probably not be expected to continue speaking like the Cursing Hedgehog on a first date, but he would still be accountable for the characteristics the performance projected on him. (In contrast, the writers of 4.5 and 4.6, for example, might more plausibly be expected to exhibit similar indices of "analytical" or "laid-back" speech styles in subsequent events.) In some sense, then, the "fictiveness" of a persona is a matter of how disposable or alienable (or "instrument-like") that persona is regarded as, or conversely, how near it comes to that which is considered by self and others a necessary and inalienable part of the person (or "possession-like"). In some cases, such differences have to do with how far a persona is located in a chain of interpretation leading from what is relatively directly perceivable towards

[67] There may, of course, be movements along the continuum on biographical or sociohistorical time scales. A fictive persona can, for instance, gradually become a habitual alter ego, etc.

what is highly inferential and symbolic. That is, "fictiveness" is a secondary reflexive layer that needs some primary level it can be mapped to. For instance, perceiving a person in his daily routines would not necessarily entail or require an interpretation of him as a "teddy bear." A first layer of representational interpretants would probably consist of simple typifications of appearance and conduct. They might then give rise to more complex inferences or metaphoric representational interpretants, in which denotational stereotypes are troped upon by re-interpreting first-order typifications such as "robust" and "grumpy" with the concept of "bear." Channelling one's personhood through a "fictive" figure, then, brings out new symbolic dimensions. It reorganizes and reinterprets those indexical, iconic, and previous symbolic relations that it taps into and makes them experienceable in new ways. That is, it interprets the person from another point of personspacetime or sociocultural maps. It is, then, a creative process of self-invention and, as such, perhaps less susceptible to others' immediate normative regimentation.[68]

### 4.4.5 PSEUDONYMS AND REPLICATED PATTERNS OF DISCOURSE

One more type of textual patterning merits a closer look. So far we have looked at the relation between texts and persons mainly from the standpoint of how textual patterns symbolically and indexically mediate and organize icons of personhood and social relations. In section 4.4, the focus has often been on the capacity of patterns of discourse to representationally (re)interpret persons. It is, however, noteworthy that specific patterns of discourse *per se* can be construed as characteristics of persons. That is, discursive artifacts can be framed as instantiations or tokens of someone's habits of linguistic action rather than as representations. This section will take a look at forms of discourse that are conventionally recognizable as habitual speech behaviors (e.g., epithets, mottos, slogans). Finally, to connect the different lines of analysis in this chapter, the section will expand the discussion towards other patterns of discourse in order to note that, in fact, any specific describable or performable characteristic or any type of textual patterning itself can become habitually and recognizably characteristic of an individual. For instance, a particular view of subjectivity or a general penchant for narratives can reflect the habitual speech style of a person, or a person may be recognized in some community by some specific description.

As has been seen in earlier sections, habits as characteristics differ in terms of how they can be communicated via a digital text-artifact (cf. e.g. describable and performable characteristics in 4.1). For instance, physical activities (such as doing sports as a hobby) have to be interpreted in linguistic symbols in light of some ontology (e.g., in 1SG PRES IND transitive

---

[68] Or, such "fictive" performances might become more readily evaluated and regimented in terms of aesthetics rather than truthfulness (or as a "performable" rather than a "describable" characteristic).

clauses with appropriate lexemes and aspectual modifiers, etc.) before they are compatible with the communicative infrastructure (e.g., representable in the alphabet). As was seen in 4.1, characteristics that are indexed by speech behaviors (e.g., being funny or intelligent) can be relatively directly mediated via text-artifacts.[69] In a similar vein, habitual patterns of speech, in which a particular discursive formulation (e.g., a name, an epithet, a slogan or a motto, a repetend or a refrain) is habitually associated with a particular individual, can be redirected into the channel of digital online dating advertisements relatively directly. That is, instances of the same habit can be transmitted via new kinds of artifactual residues. In such cases we are dealing with *replication* and *recontextualization* rather than representation.

Simultaneously or subsequently, such stretches of discourse can, of course, become interpreted as representations too and mapped in various inferential and metaphorical ways to other available information about the person in question. The recontextualization of, for example, a motto in an online dating advertisement first of all makes knowable that the person *has* that motto as a habit of speech. That is, the sign pattern is an icon of the kind of thing the person might often be heard saying or writing. Secondly, one may infer what sort of worldview or values the motto is indexically grounded in. That is, the motto reflects the characteristics of the kind of person who would have such a motto. Thirdly, one may infer or speculate what that person would do in some particular situation, were that motto interpreted as a representation of that situation and its agentive possibilities.

Let us first consider the most typical type of *speech chain indexicals* (Agha 2007a: 65–67), i.e., personal names. In the case of online dating advertisements the particular subspecies we are most interested in are pseudonyms (or "user names" from the standpoint of their function within the dating service). Names become originally attached to individuals in various "baptismal events" (see Silverstein 2003: 203), and subsequently the link between the name and the individual is knowable to those who learn it through appropriate chains of semiotic encounters (e.g., introductions, observed address behaviors). An online dating advertisement is one such encounter, as a reader becomes aware of a person with a set of characteristics individuated by a pseudonym. The "anonymity" of the encounter, however, means that the person carrying the pseudonym is not (yet) easily linked with a particular biographic individual outside the world of that online dating service.[70]

---

[69] In which case the question is how representative they are, i.e., whether or not they are actual instances of a genuine habit.

[70] "Anonymity," then, is not so much a state of "namelessness" (as the etymology might suggest) as it is a lack of consistent linking between named personae in different worlds. The world of the embodied residence of the biophysical epicenter of the person is particularly crucial, since knowing the link between, for example, an Internet-based persona and the body that operates it enables forms of regimentation, including physical force, directed straight at that epicenter. – We may even parallel this

The focus here is how personal names function as a sign among others as part of person reference and self-presentation in the context of online dating advertisements. On most sites writers not only can but have to choose a pseudonym that will be visible to other users. It is, then, a somewhat marked form of "baptism," since usually and stereotypically personal names are given by others. Some writers volunteer what supposedly are their official first names or nick names, either as a pseudonym (e.g., *Pentti4238, 4rska, JukkaElias, jore68, sartsa*) or as part of their text (e.g., using *-Jussi-* as a signature). Neither the pseudonym nor the official name enables the reader to pick out any actual individual outside the "anonymous" virtual world. That is, any name in online dating advertisements only has an individuating function in a very specific channel-bound semiotic chain.[71] However, since names are grounded in and point to some practice of name giving and name usage as well as some community of namers and named ones, pseudonyms and official names do imply different practices and speech chains (see e.g. Alford 1988). The pseudonym points to the writer as a unique individual within both the technical world of online dating and the "ideal" semiotic world of self-presentation, whereas the official name points to the writer as a unique individual in the "real" society in which the ongoing semiotic encounter is embedded. "Revealing" one's real name as a sort of trust-provoking gesture may, then, imply that the "anonymous" and "promotional" persona in the text is securely anchored in the non-anonymous everyday world of the writer.

A small set of names also points to such "real" world demographic data that are usually given in the profile anyway, such as age or place of residence (e.g., *pete39porvoo* [Porvoo = a city in southern Finland], *Hki29v* [Hki = Helsinki; v = -year-old]). Such pseudonyms, based on more or less recognizable official names or nicknames or other standard information, are, however, a minority. Most pseudonyms seem to be clearly communicative in the sense that there is some uniquely decipherable meaning and motivation behind them (see also Alford 1988: 59–65). Sometimes the full logic of the

---

"rational" notion of anonymity with the "magical" logic(s) of traditional name taboos. In some cases, such taboos were based on the belief that revealing one's "true" name exposes one to dangers (such as evil spirits or others' spells or harmful intentions) – whereas a nickname or a replacement name was considered safer. Sometimes an essential difference was drawn between a name uttered by oneself with one's own voice and a name uttered by others. In the first case, the token of the name was regarded as an extension of the self, thereby making the person susceptible to the above-mentioned threats, whereas the latter was considered a mere referential usage that did not expose one to threats. (See e.g. Frazer 1998 [1890]: 198–204; cf. Gell 1998: 102–104; also Alford 1988: 105–118.) That is, different names in their specific contexts of utterance localize, and expose, the person differently in relation to patterns of life and selfhood, and the self-presentational act of giving one's own "true" name often has a special cultural status.

[71] In fact, last names, addresses, phone numbers, or any other unambiguously individuating indices are strictly edited out by administrators on most sites.

name remains (and is perhaps meant to remain) privy to the writers themselves (e.g., *JD0007*) (cf. also Hämäläinen 2012: 36; Sjöblom 2004: 219–225). Some such names include recognizable fragments of the Finnish language. They are, in other words, at least partly interpretable in light of denotational stereotypes. Many of them have some sort of correlative basis in the text. That is, they relate to similar objects or topics or employ the same signs as parts of the body text. The name the writer wishes to become individuated by and habitually known under, then, relates to other aspects of the writer's biographic and self-presentational performance. Table 6 presents a few examples of names and stretches of text they might, for instance, resonate with so that the name and the text mutually co-interpret one another.

| **Name** | **Text** |
|---|---|
| *sudenpentu* ("wolf cub," "Cub Scout") | "Surprises and new things can't be found unless you're open to them. :-)" [cf. the Scout mottos "Be prepared," "always ready"]; *Yllätyksiä ja uusia juttuja ei löydä jollei niille ole avoin. :-)* |
| *nuorekas69* ("youthful69") | "A man with a capital M I'm not, since I possess loads of playfulness and boyishness. Every now and then I get all kinds of crazy ideas and I have a desire to get to realize them – –"<br>*Mies isolla M:llä en ole, koska leikkimielisyyttä ja poikamaisuuttakin löytyy roppakaupalla. Päähäni pälkähtääkin silloin tällöin ihan hullunkurisia ideoita ja halu olis päästä toteuttaan niitä – –* |
| *Mahdollisuus07* ("Opportunity07") | "I like happy, humorous women who have a positive outlook on the future. The kind who are able to see life as a great opportunity and gift."<br>*Pidän iloisista, huumorintajuisista ja tulevaisuuteen positiivisesti suhtautuvista naisista. Sellaisista, jotka kykenevät näkemään elämän suurena mahdollisuutena ja lahjana.* |
| *_syysmeri_* ("automnal sea") | "I look forward to Fall, I love it. I like to stroll in nature and particularly on Fall evenings it would be wonderful to go on an evening walk to look at the stars, for example by the seaside."<br>*Odotan syksyä, rakastan sitä. Tykkään liikkua luonnossa ja etenkin syysiltoina olisi ihana mennä iltakävelylle katsomaan tähtiä, vaikka merenrantaan.* |
| *elinkautiseksi* ("a life sentence") | "If I'm an abomination, then you'll only lose a few minutes when you turn up and find out. – – But if it so happens that we are a match then you may |

| | |
|---|---|
| | lose the entire rest of your life with me, do you dare to take such a risk...?? *Jos olen aivan hirvitys, niin menetät ainoastaan pari minuuttia kun käyt toteamassa tilanteen. – – Mutta jos sattuukin kolahtamaan niin sitten voit menettää koko loppuelämäsi kanssani, uskallatko ottaa sellaisen riskin...??* |
| *kvasaari* ("quasar") | "Smart and peppy woman?" [e.g., one who masters astronomical vocabulary?] *Fiksu ja reipas nainen?* |

Table 6. *Semantically transparent pseudonyms and examples of correlative segments in the advertisement texts.*

Other interpretations are certainly possible too. The aim of Table 6 is merely to demonstrate how names can be construed as pointing to contents of the text but under more concise and abstract NP formulations that are often also modified orthographically or translated into another language. In other words, such names reflexively pick out elements from the texts, crystallize, emphasize, and aestheticize them and, in a sense, elevate them to an aphoristic or metaphorical level (cf. also with views of subjectivity in 4.2.1).

Sometimes semantically transparent names are not as easily linked to segments in the advertisement text. In these cases, too, they can be interpreted as evoking imagery and values that are somehow relevant to the writer or that he or she identifies with, such as ethnic foodstuffs (with metaphorical potential) (*pepperooni4644*), celestial bodies (*aurink0inen, aurinko1972, Aurinkotuli*, "sunny," "sun1972," "Sunfire"), signs of the Zodiac (*librakuuskyt*, "libra" + "sixty"), or conventional metaphors about life (*matka_JA_maaranpaa*, "voyage_AND_destination") (cf. 4.32a and 4.32b) (cf. also Sjöblom 2006: 210–211, 216–218). Another group consists of names that are either proper names or incorporate elements from languages other than Finnish or are in some other way less obviously or transparently interpretable. In other words, they are more selective and sieving in relation to the audience, since understanding the underlying logic requires appropriate non-linguistic knowledge or competence of another language. Table 7 presents a few examples.

| **Name(s)** | **Explanation** |
|---|---|
| *Feuillatte* | A brand of Champagne. The writer explains: "In accordance with my pseudonym, I'm a high-quality and sparkling specimen of my class." |
| *cereza74; SolRos75* | *Cereza* is "cherry" in Spanish. *Solros* is "sunflower" in Swedish. |
| *taikyoku77; aniki3006* | *Taikyoku* is a series of Karate movements. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *Aniki* is a Japanese honorific for a superior and the name of a Finnish anime forum. |
| *Sefadu* | A town in Sierra Leone, famous for a diamond discovery. Also a combat game figure. |
| *livEfOretsiniM* | "Minister Of Evil" spelt backwards. Perhaps a reference to the book *The Minister of Evil: The Secret History of Rasputin's Betrayal of Russia*? |

Table 7. *Less transparent pseudonyms*

In a few rare cases, the proper name used as a pseudonym may also be the actual spiritual name (e.g., a yoga name) of the writer. Such pseudonyms point to particular philosophical frames (remember also example 4.13 earlier). For instance, a writer called *manusham* ends her text by noting that an "appreciation of Ahimsa [the principle of causing no harm in Indian religions] is a big plus." Often, however, such pseudonyms seem more like intentional "Google & solve" tasks. They provide mysterious tidbits of knowledge about the preferences and identifications of the writer, which might be too specific or narrow as part of ordinary self-presentation (and would then lose the aura of mystery anyway), not to mention as requirements for others. But on the off chance that a reader would actually recognize and identify with them, that would be a special sign of compatibility as well as a great conversation starter – in other words, a "big plus" (cf. also Hämäläinen 2012: 101). In that sense, such characteristics may actually provide the most personal and uniquely individuating or differentiating pieces of information (compared with, for example, listing "sports" as a "hobby," found in dozens and dozens of advertisements; see section 4.4.2). We may see in these naming practices an interplay between two vectors of self-presentation that will come up on several occasions later: that of appearing sufficiently similar, recognizable, and categorizable (or "normal") to others and that of appearing sufficiently singular (or "unique") in comparison with others (see e.g. sections 5.2.1 and 6.4; also Alford 1988: 69; Sjöblom 2004: 220, 240).

Let us now move on to a different type of discursive artifact that can be habitually associated with a person, namely slogans, precepts, and mottos. Some of the names just examined already resembled aphoristic guidelines for life. The following two examples are explicitly framed as "mottos." The first motto is presented in one relatively isolated sentence, whereas the latter one is followed by an additional explanation and is therefore more tightly integrated into the surrounding co-text:

(4.32a) Mottoni on: elämä on elämistä varten- se ei ole suoritus!

(4.32a) My motto is: life is for living - it is not a performance!

(4.32b) Mottoni on : Anna mitä sinulta pyydetään. Sen häpeä=hän se on, joka liikoja pyytää.
(4.32b) My motto is : Give what you're asked for. The shame, after all, is on the one who asks for too much.

Whether the explanation in (4.32b) is part of the motto or not is a matter of interpretation. Nevertheless, it further explains the logic behind the core sentence and brings it closer to the topics and the participants of the interactional event. The clitic *-han*, for example, presumes a shared recognition of such a line of reasoning between the participants. The core of the motto ("Give what you're asked for") is framed as a relatively fixed discursive form that stays the same over time, from one event or encounter to another. Mottos, then, can be reflected upon in and applied to a variety of events on the biographical time scale of an individual. In that sense, they resemble general theoretical formulations or ideological positions (see 4.4.1), but mottos are not (merely) representations but habitually recurring discursive artifacts that as particular fixed forms are framable as characteristics of specific individuals. Moreover, as representations, they are more intimately about the particular individual who is committed to them, whereas ideological positions often provide guidelines for the interpretation and evalution of more general social phenomena and other people, too.

Next, example (4.33) contains an intertextual reference to a recognizable cultural artifact, a pop song (see also section 6.3.3). The writer recontextualizes a part of that discursive artifact in her own text, which indexes some kind of non-specified relation between the writer in the ongoing event and that artifact and whatever forms of life it is associated with. Example (4.33) first cites the pop song[72] in the title and then returns to the same song at the end:

(4.33) [Title] ”tahdon tanssia kanssasi tänään, kuten riemusta tanssia voi, tahdon tanssia kanssasi huomenna kun surun sammunut laulu soi…” – – ¶”tahdon tanssia kanssasi valssin suuressa salissa kristallikruunujen alla, kiihkosta hehkuvana. Lentää kiiltävän parketin halki, kuin ei jalkoja olisikaan, antaa viulujen viedä kauas jonnekin, jonnekin vaan” [Text ends]
(4.33) [Title] "I want to dance with you today, as one can dance out of joy, I want to dance with you tomorrow when the faded song of sorrow is playing…" ¶"I want to dance with you a waltz in a grand hall under crystal chandeliers, glowing with passion. To fly across the dance floor, as if we had no feet at all, let the violins take us far away somewhere, just somewhere" [Text ends]

[72] Googling reveals that the song is *Tahdon tanssia kanssasi* ("I want to dance with you") performed by Tomi Metsäketo and Johanna Kurkela (2004) – a slow, rhythmic, minor-key pop ballad, which might be characterized as "melancholic" and "dramatic."

The recontextualized parts are explicitly marked with quotes as interdiscursively sourced segments, but their specific source is not indicated. (It may be recognized, Googled, or otherwise figured out by the readers, or merely taken as a non-specific quote.) Furthermore, the text contains no explicit framing or reasoning about the personal or co-textual meaning of the cited passages. Rather, the cited passages seem to implicitly contrast with the somewhat ordinary or mundane self-presentational facts of the middle part of the text. The quoted passages envelop the self-presentational details in a song world chronotope of glamorous dancing, timeless elation, and passion. The intertextual framing, then, seems to derive from the writer's "ethnopoetic" vision of composition (cf. e.g. Hymes 2003; Blommaert 2007; Bauman 2014 from the standpoint of mainly oral, narrative performances; see also section 6.3.3). The writer has controlled the selection and expression of the signs and their indexical positioning within the text-artifact. But since the quoted passages, unlike the middle part, are only animated but not authored by the writer, their representational calibration to the ongoing event as well as the writer's accountability for them remains relatively implicit, ambiguous, and inferential. Such quotes can, then, be read in more concrete or more metaphorical representational modes with different kinds of consequences (e.g., whether we are talking about dancing in a concrete or figurative sense). On a scale of tightness of link between the person and the recontextualized discursive artifact, intertextual references are likely to be understood as more loosely associated with a writer than mottos or pseudonyms. In fact, the possibility of two persons making a similar intertextual reference or having similar personal commitments to the same discursive artifact is probably highest in such cases, since the discursive artifacts are pre-existing and public and therefore maximally independent of the entextualizer.[73]

Finally, let us consider cases in which others' words (or linguistic signs more generally) about the writer are recontextualized by the writer as characteristics of self. In the following example, the taxonomized list of characteristics is about the writer but attributed to others ("friends"):

(4.34) ¶Ystävät <u>kuvaavat [minua] sanoin</u>: vastuuntuntoinen, mutta nuorekas, iloinen, aikaansaava organisaattori, kun jotain hyvää haluaa tapahtuvan…kaipa niitä negatiivisiakin ominaisuuksia on…kaikki ominaisuudethan ovat sekä-että, tilanteesta riippuen.

[73] We could take this line of thought even further to include any attitudes expressed towards specific, particular discursive artifacts, such as favorite songs or books (cf. *Viimeksi olen lukenut Reko Lundanin ”Viikkoja, kuukausia,”* "The last book I've read is Reko Lundan's 'Weeks, months'"), or, in fact, any recognizable cultural object or place that is a definitely and specifically locatable referent for, and directly experienceable by, any respondent, regardless of whether it is discursive or not or embedded in the text or not. Both the animator and the respondent, then, have, at least potentially, equal access to such objects from their own perspectives.

(4.34) ¶My friends describe [me] with the words: responsible, but youthful, cheerful, efficient organizer, when [she] wants something good to happen…I guess there are negative characteristics as well…all characteristics (I suppose) are both-and, depending on the situation.

The interesting thing about example (4.34) is that it not only represents the speech of others about the writer, but it somewhat explicitly frames it *as speech* (“describe with words,” *kuvaavat sanoin*) that could be, would be, and allegedly has been spoken about the writer. (Similar examples will be seen in the following chapters too; see e.g. sections 5.2, 5.3 and example 7.19 in 7.2.2.) That is, the writer animates a sign pattern that has presumably been authored by others without taking an explicit personal stance towards its representativeness or truthfulness. (And later, in the last sentence, the writer provides a very general distancing metapragmatic remark on the relative nature of any kind of “characteristic talk.”) The mere fact that the writer animates such signs clearly shows some degree of non-specified commitment to their meaning and makes her accountable for their general relevance for the ongoing event. Nevertheless, the writer primarily commits to the existence of such habitual patterns of others’ speech rather than to their representational content.

This discussion evokes more fundamental questions concerning the relation between linguistic signs and persons. The previous examples bring out a number of important general points that apply to all forms of self-presentation. First, there is a continuum from more residential to more representational framings of discursive artifacts. For instance, instead of the conceptual content of a word, we may appreciate the way it sounds (or the aesthetic affordance it provides for some purpose). The act of animation can be interpreted merely as a commitment to the fact that such and such words may be, should be or have been uttered about some person (e.g., an act of simulation or imitation). Or, an act of animation can be interpreted as a commitment to the representational content those signs convey. Characteristics, then, can be interpreted relatively more as words (or sign vehicles more generally) indexically linked to some person or as icons of personhood predicated about some person. Moreover, we can sometimes take the speech act (e.g., “I am cheerful”) either as a commitment to the representation itself (a sort of *de dicto* approach; “I adhere to the description ‘cheerful’”) or as a commitment to the object it refers to at some particular instance of interpretation (a sort of *de re* approach; “I possess the qualities denoted here-and-now by ‘cheerful’”).

What a person considers an appropriate form of linguistic self-presentation is often precisely what has proven successful earlier (i.e., what has been corroborated by experience and recognized by others) or what the person has internalized from others’ speech about her. We develop self-presentational routines and accommodate to self-presentational registers. In other words, regularities and habits of self-presentation form on personal as

well as sociohistorical levels. To phrase this differently, rather than being emergent theoretical and reflective representations authored in the ongoing interactional event, self-presentational forms may be re-animations of habits or historical residues on biographical time scales. Such habits may change only gradually, for example when their validity becomes questioned and one is forced to re-reflect and re-theorize. Online dating advertisements, of course, are an example of potential circumstances in which that might occur. Between such revelatory moments, at any particular interactional event, the calibration of self-presentational forms to extra-linguistic aspects of reality may, therefore, be by degrees out of sync. Accordingly, the self-presentational forms someone animates may be motivated from two different directions. They may emanate from the biographical objects (e.g., attributes, habits, memories, experiences) that the animator has access to and wishes to entextualize (or interpret representationally). They may also emanate from existing patterns of speech that the animator wishes to replicate and recontextualize in the ongoing event for the sake of some anticipated desirable interpretant. (See also 5.2.1.)

Any described or performed characteristic, then, may become a speech chain indexical (see Agha 2007a: 65–67). It may become habitually and stereotypically linked to some individual and that individual may become recognizable by such descriptions for those interactants who are introduced to the link through appropriate semiotic chains or who have been present at the baptismal event. The relation of this indexical link to the symbolic content of the characteristic is itself a further layer of meaning. Over time the relation may begin to seem incomprehensible or outdated and lead to various consequences (e.g., self-presentational rebranding). That is, a discrepancy between an indexically linked discursive artifact and the representational interpretant it projects on the individual may eventually emerge (see e.g. example 7.15 in 7.2.1).[74] It seems that clarifying the nature of one's commitment to the signs one animates becomes particularly relevant in the case of explicit evaluative stancetaking, which will be the topic of chapter 5.

[74] And such discrepancies may sometimes be perceived as a problem – and sometimes not (that is, Little Steven may grow up or Skinny Joey may become fat without anyone having a problem with it, or daring to voice such problems). In order to maintain coherence, the representational mode of such seemingly outdated habitual typifications can be reinterpreted as, say, ironic or nostalgic (producing a kind of "double exposure").

# 5 EVALUATIVE STANCETAKING

This chapter complements the previous one by taking a more focused look at evaluative stancetaking. As discussed in the introduction, evaluation is a ubiquitous phenomenon. It refers to the value-directed aspect of the human mind and behavior and is ultimately grounded in the capacity of selves to care for whether things are good or bad, right or wrong, true or false (see section 2.3.2). It incorporates an affective dimension (i.e., reacting affectively to the unfolding of semiotic processes) and an agentive dimension (i.e., exerting agency on semiotic processes to guide them in light of some value). In a sense, then, evaluation refers to personal non-indifference in relation to reality (or those semiotic objects that reality consists of), which leads to preferences and choices of the type "this rather than that." There are complex processes of *existential rationality* (Kockelman 2013a: 194–196), in which persons opt for some patterns of life over others and plot paths through worlds in light of their ontologies and evaluative techniques (e.g., practical utilities; affects and intentional commitments, such as desires, fears, memories, or plans; cultural traditions, norms, and ideals; experience-based stereotypes and prototypes). The entextualization of parts of such processes in online dating advertisements is what this chapter is interested in.

Although evaluation is present in virtually all human processes, it does not necessarily become recognized by or explicitly communicated to others (e.g., in case of affective responses). That is, the signs that mediate evaluative processes may remain relatively private. Even when they do enter the public sphere, their conduciveness to interpretation may remain relatively low. Most evaluative processes, therefore, precede any linguistic formulation. In fact, the whole purpose of online dating advertisements as an instrument of sieving and selection of persons is evaluative. Moreover, all of the textual patterns in chapter 4, even before their formulation, were already multiply evaluated in terms of appropriateness, effectiveness, and desirability. That is, textual structure itself is a product of evaluative processes. Linguistic stancetaking, in which values become explicitly signaled, is, then, a special case that makes evaluative processes relatively public and unambiguous and speakers accountable for them as interactional positions or social statuses.

In linguistics, evaluation has sometimes been used as a general umbrella term for all those aspects of language – and grammar in particular – that are grounded in the perspective of a participant, as opposed to some supposedly objective realm of propositional meaning. Outlined this way, evaluation covers, for instance, forms of epistemic and deontic modality. (See e.g. Thompson & Hunston 1999.) On the other hand, reverse conceptualizations, i.e., ones in which modality includes "evaluatives" as one subspecies alongside epistemic and deontic modality, have been proposed (see e.g. Kangasniemi 1991). That is, the parameters and hierarchies that evaluation is

analyzed into and the descriptions such parameters are given are ontology-specific (e.g., Thompson & Hunston's "positive" vs. "negative," "certain" vs. "uncertain," "expected" vs. "unexpected," "important/relevant" vs. "unimportant/irrelevant"; cf. e.g. Martin & White 2004). This applies to local sociocultural ontologies as much as it does to scientific ones. The relation between practices of evaluation and those practices that reflexively represent and evaluate such practices of evaluation should, then, be placed at the center of inquiry (Kockelman 2010: e.g. 201; and see also chapter 7). Ultimately, the evaluations a speaker can communicate or become accountable for depend on the participants' local models of what kinds of evaluative processes there are and how they manifest themselves.[75]

All linguistic meaning is perspectival (i.e., grounded in speech events and their participants) and involves evaluation on many layers. One can, first of all, evaluate some perceivable state of affairs from one's perspective and in light of one's values by a linguistic representation either privately or publicly. Secondly, one can evaluate that linguistic representation as a representation in terms of different ontology-specific parameters, such as accuracy or aesthetic value. Thirdly, one can evaluate the act of expressing or repressing that representation in some event as, say appropriate or inappropriate. (Cf. also Cortazzi & Jin 1999.) To illustrate, someone can, for instance, evaluate the appearance of a person as unappealing with a colorful linguistic expression (e.g., *sairaalloisen ylipainoinen siideri valas*, "morbidly obese cider whale," see chapter 7) that one may privately consider brilliantly incisive and humorous. Simultaneously, however, one may regret and apologize for having said it out loud at the wrong time in the wrong place. That is, the animation of, the authorship of, and the commitment to linguistic evaluations are all distinguishable and themselves distinctly evaluable dimensions. However, in most events, some of these dimensions remain private, fleeting, ambiguous, or contradictory. Still, for such evaluations to make sense in the long run, others are needed to recognize, to endorse, to contest or to appreciate them. It is ultimately – on longer time scales – in or in relation to the public sphere that enduring evaluative processes and norms of evaluation are negotiated, controlled and internalized by interactants.

The focus of this chapter is on prototypic evaluative stances, i.e., those semiotic processes that make evaluation emblematic in some interactional

[75] That is, what can be understood by participants as a speaker's personal stance (or intentional status) is related to ontologies of personhood and epistemic formations that may vary considerably between different cultures (see e.g. Rosaldo 1982; Kockelman 2006b: 112–114). This is not to contest the fact that many basic categories (e.g., expression of epistemic and deontic stances or mental states of desire etc.) seem more or less "universal" or cross-linguistically recurring – but rather to broaden the scope of what can be understood as a stance and how stance is related to local typologies of events and personae (cf. also footnote 30 in 2.3.2). In other words, in addition to attending to e.g. lexico-grammar, discursive patterns, and participant roles, stances should also be accounted for as a form of ethnopsychological interpretation in light of local cultural understandings (see Kockelman 2004: 144).

event.[76] With regard to the data of this study, we are mainly interested in *phenomenological emblematicity*. Phenomenological emblematicity refers to the degree to which the signs that index a stance are public (i.e., perceivable and interpretable) and unambiguous. The more emblematic (i.e., maximally public and minimally ambiguous) a stance is, the more saliently it brings an evaluative process into the sphere of intersubjective negotiation. An emblematic evaluative stance expresses a commitment to the value of an object and makes the one who took the stance accountable for that value as an interactional position or social status. Emblematic stances also serve to mobilize responses from other participants. They bring forward some value as a matter of alignment[77] between the participants. This entails possibilities of endorsement, empathy, and affiliation but also risks of conflict and judgment. In a context that is "anonymous" like online dating advertisements, the risk of overt conflict is relatively low, which may, for instance, make some participants' stances more acrimonious. One way or another, then, stancetaking is guided by an anticipation of others' possible reactions.

We have established that evaluative stances as social or intentional statuses stand inherently in relation to others' actual or possible competing stances as well as one's own or others' reflexive stances towards those first stances, whether they are explicitly formulated in the ongoing event or elsewhere, or merely assumed, implied or presupposed. That is, the relation of what is symbolically figured and indexically presumed, or semantically encoded and pragmatically implied, is a necessary part of the analysis of stancetaking. In fact, the motivation behind making a stance explicit may be precisely to invite the addressees to infer contrary commitments (e.g., who or what kind of person would disagree) and take them into account in their alignment (e.g. how they evaluate such commitments and which side they are on). Therefore, evaluative stances are fruitfully analyzed in terms of *metastance relations* (see Kockelman 2010: i.a. 161–162). Any first-order

---

[76] Another way of clarifying the division of labor between the two concepts, as they are understood here, is to say that *evaluation* is a metaphysical or metatheoretical concept that refers to our belief that humans by nature have certain properties. That is, they are understood as intentional and value-directed in a variety of more detailed and ontology-specific ways. *Stance* approaches the question from the standpoint of the signs by which evaluative processes become knowable and empirically investigatable in particular contexts. Stances may be more or less emblematic along different dimensions of emblematicity. The particular mode and degree of emblematicity of a stance in many ways correlates with its possible roles in social life. As was argued previously, highly public stances have particular importance.

[77] *Alignment* is here used as an encompassing basic-level term to refer to the relation between an utterance and its responses (or signing behaviors and others' behaviors that can in whatever way be calibrated to them as responses) (see e.g. Agha 2005). Affiliations, endorsements, agreements, and disagreements, for instance, would all be particular types of alignment. (Cf. with e.g. conversation analytic or systemic-functional usages; see Lindström & Sorjonen 2013; Martin & White 2005: 95.)

stance is inseparable from second-order stances, i.e., one's own or others' stances toward first-order stances. It is in metastance relations that complex forms of subjectivity and selfhood reside. (Kockelman 2004: 142–144; also 2006b: 109.)

Denotationally explicit linguistic evaluative stancetaking is not the most frequent type of evaluative process by far, but, in a sense, it has a special status. It is a form of theoretical agency, in which evaluative processes are represented with linguistic symbols embodying cultural knowledge. Linguistic stancetaking brings evaluative processes on the symbolic stage by theorizing value and the objects it relates to or those evaluative techniques that produce value. That is, a linguistic stance (e.g., "quick-tempered women scare me") would typically be framed as a relatively self-controlled representational interpretant of previous phases in an evaluative process (e.g., a habit of mental or bodily reactions). In contrast, a gesture, such as flinching, would be framed as a more direct and less self-controlled sign of the same object.[78] Such theoretical representations, on which online dating advertisements heavily rely, tend to invite representational interpretants from respondents as well (i.e., others' theoretical representations of the same or similar objects). That is, they elicit cultural negotiations of value. Furthermore, online dating advertisements as written digital text-artifacts have the additional feature of allowing the linguistic stances to be anonymously displaced from the participant who is committed to them. In short, the evaluations of social reality examined in this chapter are mediated by a very specific and marked kind of infrastructure.

Finally, to link the previous discussion to the question of classifying and parameterizing evaluation or stancetaking, the focus of this chapter will be on what is theorized by online daters as "positive" versus "negative," "desirable" versus "undesirable," or "ideal" versus "non-ideal." Epistemic and deontic stances, for instance, are employed as auxiliary analytic dimensions where they are relevant (see also section 6.3.2).[79] In the very general sense in

---

[78] To put it slightly differently, to say that one has theoretical agency over one's evaluative processes means that one is evaluating in a more controlled and more conceptual manner one's less controllable and more practical evaluative processes. From the standpoint of affect, for instance, this means that online dating advertisements constitute an implicit or explicit metaemotional practice (see e.g. Wilce 2009a: 128, 161, 171), in which one has the possibility or the obligation to reflexively deal with one's affect. From normative standpoints ethical or moral questions can be raised: e.g., how well does one make use of the increased possibility of self-control.

[79] Whereas epistemic modality might be characterized as indexing the representational perspective of some subject(ivity), distinctions of the kind "good" versus "bad" or "right" versus "wrong" most distinctly index the values of some self (cf. second-order desires or preferences in Kockelman 2013a: 188–194 or strong evaluation in Taylor 1989: 25–52). In a sense, the "positive"-"negative" variable is the most abstract conceptual reflection of the "this rather than that" kinds of judgments that selves make in relation to the relative desirability of outcomes of processes. "Positive" and "negative" are abstract metarepresentational interpretants that through complex sense-relations regroup more

which the terms are understood here, "desirability" refers to the symbolic theorization of value by drawing on affective unfoldings (see 2.3.2, footnote 30), or personal experiences more generally, and "ideality" by drawing on social norms and stereotypes. As a third type one might include theorizing that draws on strictly "practical" means-to-an-end functionality (e.g. *Mutta parisuhteen en uskoisi toimivan tässä tilanteessa*, "But I don't believe a relationship would function in this situation").[80] The way value is theorized is, then, already a form of justification and persuasion, as it selectively approaches value from a single or limited perspective, whereas the actual evaluative processes that lead to linguistic stancetaking would involve many kinds of interpretations and evaluative techniques. As a special case, "argumentation" refers to those textual patterns that, in addition to making value emblematic, reason about the stance by, for example, making explicit the type-level or ideological basis of the stance or other evaluative techniques on which the value is based (see also 4.4.1) or the responses the writer is committed to. Finally, those others' interpretants (or metastances) that the writer is committed to may themselves be theorized as being in the realm of "ideal" (e.g., the other's esteem of the self), "practical" (e.g., the other's co-operation with the self), or "desirable" (e.g., the other's desire or empathy towards the self) (see e.g. 5.4).

Evaluative stancetaking in different forms has already figured importantly in many of the analyses seen previously. The goal of this chapter is not to enumerate different patterns and structures of evaluative stancetaking in the

---

specific cases (e.g., "good" versus "bad"; "right" versus "wrong"; "pleasant" versus "unpleasant," etc.) that, in turn, stereotypically relate to events in the world. That is, a particular semiotic community would more or less agree on which words or concepts are more specific instances of "positive" (such as "pleasant"), what a "pleasant" thing would stereotypically be like, or what would count as a prototypic instance of a "pleasant" thing. Similarly, different semiotic communities would disagree on some of these aspects. (Cf. Agha 2007a: 84–144.) Such general labels can, then, be used to interpret and negotiate the relative desirability of particular experiences or patterns of life. What is described, for example, as "unpleasant," is of course not necessarily linked to an actual feeling of unpleasantness on interactional time scales. The two are, however, linked via cultural and experiential knowledge. Committing to the "unpleasantness" of something makes the speaker knowable and interpretable (with, say, empathy or words of encouragement) from that perspective and accountable for such a feeling and whatever further inferences it may enable. That is, symbols and affect are related by a complex two-way dynamic of determination and mediation on different time scales. On sociohistorical time scales, the reality of human experience of particular communities and persons gradually works its way into cultural models (e.g., denotational stereotypes) and discursive behaviors (e.g., activity types). On interactional time scales, general cultural models contribute to the mediation of particular intersubjective experiences. And, as discussed in 2.3.4, on biographic time scales the ways in which the usage of symbols (re)structures experiences may gradually restructure the underlying habits of the persons involved.

[80] "Ideal" and "non-ideal" are also used in this study as default terms, when it does not really matter what more specific kind of "positivity" or "negativity" is in question.

data. Rather, the aim is to get at the norms and habits of evaluative practices associated with this type of event and personae by looking at some of the most revealing contrasts. As was discussed earlier, context-specific ontologies and models specify, for instance, who can (not) or should (not) say negative or positive things about whom and how. There are types of events in which communicating one's evaluative stances is expected, and contexts in which they are supposed to be held back. There are *alters* in the presence of whom one wishes or feels obliged to disclose one's evaluative stances, and *alters* in the presence of whom one wishes or feels obliged to conceal or even feign them. There are many kinds of empathy-seeking, consensus-seeking, or even conflict-seeking stancetaking behaviors, and so on. The point here is to get to the logic of evaluative stancetaking in online dating advertisements by analyzing different kinds of metastance relations and metapragmatic cues: What kinds of "positive" or "negative" stances are signaled as appropriate, inappropriate, or problematic? When and how is value explicitly theorized and addressed to others? How does stancetaking relate to the ongoing event and the textual patterns presented in chapter 4? To quote Goffman (1990 [1959]: 26), it is the "dramaturgical problems" of the presentation of self before others that this chapter is interested in.

## 5.1 EVALUATIVE STANCETAKING AS SIGNS OF MENTAL STATES

Sections 5.1 and 5.2 compare some of the most prominent ways in which the writers of online dating advertisements in the data perform evaluative stances towards selves, others, or patterns of life. The aim is to illuminate qualitative contrasts between different forms of stancetaking. This section takes a look at stances that can be seen as explicitly denoting the writers' mental states or mental habits by using a number of complement-taking predicates (CTPs). These CTPs, then, are emblematic signs of "mental states" (or intentional statuses), which in turn are indicative of personal preferences and values (see Kockelman 2006b; 2010: 52–84).[81] Section 5.2 contrasts

[81] "Wishes" and "desires" have been theorized in relation to action as *pro-attitudes* (see Brandom 1994). Pro-attitudes are intentional statuses (like perceptions, beliefs, and intentions) in the sense that they, too, are signified by intentional roles and interpreted by intentional attitudes. They, too, acquire propositional content when representational intentional roles, such as utterances containing CTPs like *haluta*, "to want," or *toivoa*, "to wish," are used to ascribe them to someone. They do, however, differ from perceptions, beliefs, and intentions in a number of ways. (For a more detailed discussion, see Kockelman 2006b: 101–102, 116–117; 2013a: 188–190; also section 2.3.2.) For instance, their indexical articulation in relation to states of affairs differs from that of perceptions or intentions. That is, a desire is not causally coherent with (caused by or causal of) a state of affairs in the same sense as a perception or an intention. Pro-attitudes are, however, essential ingredients in inferential chains that link, for

these kinds of stances with "naturalizing" ones that build on the use of lexico-grammatic symbols with positive or negative connotations.

Let us begin by contrasting the following two examples. The first one (5.1) is a line recycled from the previous example (4.4). It represents a state of "wanting" or "desiring" directed at a type of person (*a man who wants to love*) who, in turn, is characterized by his mental habits (*who wants [to love]*):

(5.1) Haluan miehen joka haluaa rakastaa
(5.1) I want a man who wants to love

That is, the writer announces a desire towards (finding) a type of person, from whom, similarly, a particular habit of desire ("wanting to love") is expected. The formulation implies that there are men who might perhaps seemingly "love" but do not have the right kind of attitude or commitment towards loving (i.e., who do not "want to love"). At the same time the writer implies that she too is committed to the latter kind of desire (i.e., that she "wants to love" too). Moreover, "loving," the object of the latter desire, is itself stereotypically understood as involving a mental component. There is, then, a relatively high degree of reflexivity in the representation of mental states (e.g., her mental states towards his mental states towards his own mental states). The writer's evaluative stance incorporates the stance of a desirable other and implies (1) the stances of undesirable others ("Some men do not want to love") and (2) the self's additional stances ("I want to love too"; "I do not want men who do not want to love"). That is, both the writer herself and ideal and non-ideal others become figured as highly intentional and value-directed and implicated in complex metastance relations.

The following example, in contrast, relates the ongoing event to a biographic trajectory ("something still lacking from life"). The described mental state (*tuntuu puuttuvan jotakin*), which may be interpreted as either affective ("feels to be missing") or epistemic ("seems to be missing"), is directed at the lack of a biographic constituent, not a type of person *per se* as in the previous example.

(5.2) Elämän perusasiat kohdillaan, yksin asustelen koirani kanssa – – ¶Vielä kuitenkin tuntuu puuttuvan jotakin, eli etsin elämääni maksimissaan noin 35-vuotiasta, miehekkään oloista, rehellistä ja mielellään sporttista yhdenmiehen miestä, joka uskaltaa ja haluaa sitoutua yhteen ihmiseen jos kemiat osuvat molemmin puolin kohdalleen.
(5.2) Basic things in life in order, I live alone with my dog – – ¶However, something still feels/seems to be missing, that is, I'm looking for a max 35-year-old, manly appearing,

---

example, beliefs (or epistemic commitments) and intentions (or practical commitments) with one another.

honest and preferably sporty one-man man, who dares and wants to commit to one person if chemistries match mutually.

The motivation for writing the advertisement is represented as a feeling caused by an interpretation of one's life in relation to a presumed biographic model. What the writer is looking for, then, seems to be an "ideal" scenario in life involving an "ideal" person, rather than a "desirable" person. In other words, in this latter case "positivity" and "negativity" are grounded in a combination of sociocultural ideals (or value rationality) and affect (or affective rationality) (cf. Kockelman 2013a: 193).

The writer's evaluative stance in example (5.2) does not seem to be quite as explicit or clearly localizable as it is in the previous example (5.1). However, with an understanding of the context, the textual patterns in both examples might easily be glossed as more or less similar in meaning (e.g., "this is the kind of man that I want"). In (5.2), the text ascribes an intention to the writer (*seeking P*), which implies that the achievement (*finding P*) is a desirable option. In addition, some of the lexemes used to describe P have mild positive connotations ("manly," *miehekäs*; "honest," *rehellinen*; "to dare," *uskaltaa*). In short, the text describes a felt absence of P, an intentional process of seeking P, and the positive attributes of P. Furthermore, what is explicitly figured in the text (*I'm seeking P*) is sufficiently iconic with the stereotypic event structure provided by the genre model ("In online dating advertisements the writer's intention and desire is usually to find a desirable or ideal person of the type X"). The text fills in the general stereotype with particulars that specify what is wished for (X=*P*). When different denoted partials of the text are interpreted in light of the type of event in question, they can be construed as an entextualization of existential rationality. That is, they theorize the writer's preferred and hoped-for paths through social worlds. This kind of less localized theorizing of one's preferences can be called *textually distributed evaluative stances*. In fact, the overall organization of many types of texts conventionally relies precisely on such evaluative patterns, such as Problem-Solution or Goal-Achievement (see e.g. Hoey 2001).

Many of the textual patterns examined in chapter 4 might be regarded as textually distributed stances. In fact, the voluntary description of one's attributes and habits in a context in which selection and control is possible readily implies that the selected ones are viewed as "desirable" or "ideal." That is, in addition to having been evaluated in terms of interactional appropriateness and effectiveness, such textual patterns (e.g., taxonomies, narratives, fictive personae, chronotopic or ideological formulations) are evaluative stances towards social reality, as they figure selected, preferred patterns of life against the backdrop of all other biographic possibilities. This bigger picture is what should be borne in mind, when we examine more specific cases, in which value receives its most explicit expressions. The next section will take a look at the use of some of the most common mental CTPs

focusing on the expression of desire and other "psych-action" (see Kockelman 2010: 56).

### 5.1.1 COMPLEMENT-TAKING PREDICATES AND THE EXPRESSION OF DESIRE

Formulating and communicating one's wishes and desires is a salient part of online dating advertisements. In fact, the writer of (5.3) emphatically explains in his advertisement that one of the reasons why he is writing in the first place is to be able to articulate what he wants:

(5.3) Miksikö sitten tänne kirjoittelen? Ainakin haluan päästä kertomaan, mitä haluan.
(5.3) Why, then, am I writing here? At least I want to get to say what I want.

In this formulation the voicing of one's desires is itself an object of desire (*I* ***want*** [*to get to tell* ***what I want***]). The comment seems to imply that having an occasion to communicate one's desires cannot be taken for granted and that a specific context is usually needed for that to be possible. As will be seen in this section and later ones, online dating advertisements seem to be particularly fit for such purposes. Expressions of desire are in relation both to the object of desire (e.g., whether it is an existent state of affairs in the world or merely a narrated ideal scenario) and to the speech event in which such desires are expressed. The aim of this and the following section is to see how such relations can be managed in online dating advertisements. The main focus in the following sections will be on the verb *haluta* ("to want," "to desire"), which will be contrasted to a number of other CTPs.

Instances of both *haluta* ("to want," "to desire") (n=97) and *toivoa* ("to hope," "to wish") (n=64)[82] are among the most frequent mental predicates in the data and have relatively similar patterns of usage. Their differences will be returned to shortly. Most instances of *haluta* ("to want") have as their grammatical object a complement clause, an infinitive clause, or an NP that denotes one of the following: the self's behaviors towards others and the consequences of such behaviors (5.4a), the behaviors of others towards the self and the consequences of such behaviors (5.4b), ideal or desirable events that lead to biographic turning points (5.4c), or the reflexive behavior of the self towards the self (5.4d). All sorts of combinations are also possible. For instance, in example (5.4c) the object of the writer's desire is to encounter some other whose behavior towards her causes a particular kind of desirable feeling.

(5.4a) Haluan ottaa ihmiset ympärilläni huomioon ja sen teen ainakin jos on uskomista perheeseeni ja ystäviini.

[82] The numbers of occurrence in the data (e.g., *n=97*) are noted here so that different CTPs can be roughly compared to one another and to the total number of texts (111) and sentences (2,010).

(5.4a) I want to take people around me into consideration and that I am doing at least if my family and friends are to be believed.

(5.4b) Haluan että mies saa minut tuntemaan itseni naiseksi, siihen on monia keinoja mutta oikea asenne vie pitkälle.
(5.4b) I want a man to make me feel like a woman, there are many ways to do that but a right attitude will take [you] far.

(5.4c) Haluaisin oikeasti tutustua rakastavaan ihmiseen ja kokea taas rakastumisen huuma.
(5.4c) I would really like to get to know a loving person and to experience the thrill of falling in love again.

(5.4d) Harrastan lisäksi lenkkeilyä ja punttisalilla puuhastelua vaikka ne eivät aina ole sitä mielekkäintä hommaa. Haluan kuitenkin pitää itseni kunnossa.
(5.4d) I also go jogging and to the gym although they aren't always the most meaningful things to do. I do however want to stay in shape.

In example (5.4d) the stance expressed with *haluan* ("I want") is used to balance the writer's own negative stance in the previous clause. That is, a relatively undesirable habitual behavior is justified with a desire to aspire towards a more fundamental ideal. In all of these examples the mode of commitment (a mental state of wanting or desiring) is explicitly denoted by the CTP and deictically calibrated to the writer via 1SG inflection. (The voicing of others' desires is possible in some cases too; see chapter 6.) Both the personal source of the value (mode event $E^m$) and the object in the world (content event $E^c$), then, are explicitly figured in the speech event ($E^s$).

Unlike its main rival *toivoa* ("to hope"), the verb *haluta* ("to want") can take an infinitive complement (see example 5.4c; cf. *toivon tutustua rakastavaan ihmiseen; for *toivon tutustuvani* see 5.1.2). That is, it can be used to formulate tighter interclausal relations between mode events and content events than *toivoa* ("to hope"). Hence, if the tightness of the interclausal relation is iconic to the distance or overlap between the denoted events (see Givón 1980; Kockelman 2010: 52–84; 2006b: 91–92), then *haluta* ("to want") in combination with an infinitive complement can be used to formulate content events that are causally and logically more dependent on self's stance (i.e., would not exist without the self's desiring or wanting them). Such linguistic formulation, then, can be used to specify to what extent the object of the desire is understood as ontologically distinct and independent from the act of desiring.[83] The high frequency of *haluta* may in part be explained by its syntactic flexibility, i.e., the fact that the tightness of

[83] In more specific terms, this notion of ontological distance refers to the degree to which such events (or intentional statuses and their objects) are iconically overlapping in phenomenological quality and indexically related through causality (see Kockelman 2006b: 93).

the interclausal relation can be scaled to the exigencies of a given point in the text. Such expressions of wish or desire are inferentially linked to values and current or future intentions (see also footnote 81 and section 4.4.1). Instead of highly mental or affective construals of the denoted process, in online dating advertisements the verb *haluta* ("to want") might be understood as a somewhat general marker of ideal worlds that (a) are relatively dependent on the self and (b) to the actualization of which the self is relatively strongly committed. In other words, *haluta* ("to want") can be used to mark explicitly the act of modeling and committing to an ideal or desirable world so as to mobilize an equivalent commitment from the respondent. This is in strict contrast to such cases, in which ideal worlds are naturalized by fading out their author (the one who composed the evaluative representation) or even their principal (the one who is committed to the evaluative representation) (see section 5.2).

Before moving on with *haluta* ("to want") and *toivoa* ("to hope"), let us compare them to a set of other frequent CTPs in the data that denote mental processes, beginning with the verbs *pitää* ("to like")[84] (n=44), *nauttia* ("to enjoy") (n=25), and *rakastaa* ("to love") (n=12). In contrast to *haluta* ("to want"), they usually presuppose the existence of their objects in the world (whether persons, habits of behavior, places, or periods of time). Their grammatical objects therefore tend to be NPs. As was seen in chapter 4, a typical use of these verbs is in taxonomies that hierarchically list attributes or habits:

(5.5a) Pidän syksystä, sateesta, merestä, teestä, kirjoista ja pitkistä keskusteluista.
(5.5a) I like the fall, rain, the sea, tea, books and long conversations.

(5.5b) Rakastan lapsiani, pidän työstäni, nautin harrastuksistani ja ystävistäni.
(5.5b) I love my children, like my work, enjoy my hobbies and my friends.

Of the three verbs, *nauttia* ("to enjoy") seems to be more flexible than the others. As seen in example (5.5b), like *pitää* ("to like") or *rakastaa* ("to love"), it can be used to denote a habitual affective stance towards objects in the world. However, it often appears in the data embedded in verbal chains (e.g., *osata nauttia*, "to know how to enjoy"*; lähteä ~ päästä ~ olla valmis nauttimaan,* "go to enjoy" ~ "get to enjoy" ~ "be ready to enjoy") and representations of shared activities (*olisi mukava nauttia kanssasi,* "it would be nice to enjoy with you"*; joista mielelläni nautin myös mieh[e]n kanssa* "that I gladly enjoy with a man too"*; nainen, jonka kanssa nauttia elämästä,* "a woman with whom to enjoy life"). That is, *nauttia* ("to enjoy") is involved in denoting more concrete and temporally bounded states, which seem to be understood as more "energetic" or "material," interpersonal, and attainable

[84] Another frequent sense of the verb *pitää* (+ ESS) is "to regard something as something." Such epistemic usages have not been included in the frequency count here.

by free will and conscious effort. Because of the syntactic flexibility of the verb, it can be used to insert a dimension of personal affect into representations of more concrete processes. Or, to put it differently, it can perhaps be used to give a positive prosody to "promotional" representations of concrete habits or goals (cf. *hyvä*, "good" in 5.2.1).

The relative distinction between "desirability" and "ideality" can be seen in the usages of the most common CTPs in the data too. For instance, the verb *arvostaa* ("to appreciate") (n=30) denotes the kind of value that is primarily based on some internalized social norm, stereotype, or prototype rather than affect. It, therefore, naturally lends itself to evaluations that are directed at social types, such as types of persons or types of characteristics:

(5.6a) Arvostan myös itseluottamusta, aloitekykyä, kunnioitusta, luotettavuutta ja rehellisyyttä.
(5.6a) I also appreciate self-confidence, initiative, respect, reliability and honesty.

(5.6b) ¶Arvostan miestä joka on aktiivinen, osaa pitää hauskaa ja on 100% uskollinen.
(5.6b) ¶I appreciate a man who is active, knows how to have fun and is 100% faithful.

What is common to all the previously examined CTPs as opposed to *haluta* ("to want") and *toivoa* ("to hope") is that they take an evaluative stance towards objects that are construed as existing relatively independently of the self's stance. That is, the writer is not so much modeling an ideal world to be actualized as he or she is selecting, theorizing, and committing to such objects in the world that he or she most cares for. Now that this distinction has been sketched, let us get back to *haluta* ("to want") and discuss the choice of grammatical mood.

### 5.1.2 INDICATIVES VERSUS CONDITIONALS

In the questionnaire data examined in chapter 4, one of the respondents drew special attention to the contrast between the indicative and conditional moods. According to the respondent, the image of the writer as someone who "knows what she wants" was enhanced by the fact that the writer had used the word *halua-n* (want-IND.PRS.1SG), which was "stronger" than *halua-isi-n* (want-COND-PRS.1SG) (*käyttää sanaa HALUAN, mikä on vahvempi kuin esim. HALUAISIN* [T1/20]). It is, first of all, noteworthy that this particular respondent did not frame the difference in terms of, say, (im)politeness or other kind of (in)appropriateness but merely in terms of the "strength" of the expression of desire. Moreover, we can note that the indicative (n=78) form is, in fact, considerably more frequent in the data than the conditional (n=19). This suggests that a strong expression of one's desires is considered appropriate for the "promotional" persona in online dating advertisements, at least in actual practice (cf. however, the ideological metadiscourses in chapter 7).

The Finnish conditional marks a variety of non-factive modes, such as intentions, volitions, and predictions (see Kauppinen 1998: 156–167). The conditional mood itself, then, is often an index of desired or predicted states of affairs (cf. 5.1.1). Both in the indicative and in the conditional cases, the predicate *haluta* ("to want") explicitly specifies a particular mode of commitment, but the choice of mood locates that commitment event ($E^c$), or the world in which the speaker is committed to the content, differently. That is, the choice of mood modifies the status of the commitment (see Kockelman 2010: 124). The unmarked IND.PRS.1SG form locates the commitment in a non-specified world but implies that that world is coextensional with the ongoing speech event ($E^s$). The commitment is construable as factive, as located in the actual world of the speech event.[85] The conditional mood operator (*-isi*), however, shifts the commitment event towards a wished-for (or optative) semiotic world or some other merely possible (or afactive) one so that $E^c \neq E^s$ (see Kockelman 2004: 141; 2010: 127; also Kauppinen 1998: 224). The conditional mood seems to signal that the speaker has less control over the realization of the content of the commitment (cf. Kockelman 2010: 134). In that sense, the conditional perhaps brings *haluta* ("to want") closer to the meaning of *toivoa* ("to hope") that stereotypically denotes a situation in which the person denoted by the grammatical subject is waiting for some desired state of affairs to actualize as a result of or as permitted by relatively external circumstances. In other words, the conditional of *haluta* ("to want") distinguishes the speech event ($E^s$) and the commitment event ($E^c$) from one another as ontologically separate events. Also, it more clearly distinguishes the animator and the principal from each other as separate personae. In a conditional framing, the realization of one's desire is in a more complex relation to the world of speaking. That is, it more explicitly takes into account and leaves room for aspects of the speech event that the self is dependent on, including social relations (e.g., the participant roles) and others' stances (e.g., the addressee's desires) (see also Kauppinen 1998: 218–223).

If the conditional mood brings the meaning of *haluta* ("to want") closer to *toivoa* ("to hope"), then we might argue that the conditional of *toivoa* ("to hope") further extends a fictive continuum into a direction in which the self's desire is construed as more dependent on the external world. It is, first of all, noteworthy that, with the exception of two 3SG forms, all instances of *toivoa* ("to hope") in the data, both conditional and indicative forms, are in 1SG (*toivo-n*, wish-IND.PRS.1SG*;* *toivo-isi-n*, wish-COND-PRS.1SG). Unlike *haluta* ("to want"), the verb *toivoa* ("to hope") is not used to denote others' stances

[85] This is, however, subject to many other layers of interpretation based on the co-text of the CTP and related ontologies. For instance, as was seen in example (4.4), the same metrical pattern in which seven CTPs were embedded was interpreted by some respondents in a "qualitative" way (implying a commitment in a possible world) and by some in a "quantitative" way (implying a commitment in this world). Such differences in genre models and ideologies will be discussed in chapter 7. What this section deals with are some of the very basic distinction between the indicative and conditional forms.

(see chapter 6). As was noted earlier, *toivoa* ("to hope") cannot take a direct infinitive complement, in which the process denoted by the infinitive would be controlled by the subject of the matrix clause. However, *toivoa* ("to hope") can be complemented by a non-finite clause with independent subject marking (as well as taxis or "relational tense" and the choice of active and passive voice) (see e.g. VISK § 538). When the subject is co-referential with the matrix clause, it is marked in the non-finite clause by a possessive suffix, as in the following example (-*ni*):

(5.7)

| ¶Toivoisin | löytäväni | itselleni | kumppanin, | joka |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| wish:COND.PRS.1SG | find:PTCP.1SG.POSS | self:ALL.1SG.POSS | companion | who |

| arvostaa | itseään, | on | rohkea | ja | itsenäinen. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| appreciate:IND.PRS.3SG | self | is | brave | and | independent |

(5.7) ¶I would wish to find myself a companion, who appreciates herself, is brave and independent.

In (5.7), the writer is hoping to find a partner with the kinds of characteristics he intensionally specifies, but without presupposing her actual existence. There is a tone of hoping for external circumstances to allow the desired biographic turning point to take place. (Cf. the strict contrast with e.g. the "I want a man who" example in section 4.2.1.)

Most of the *toivoisin* ("I would wish") cases, however, take as their complement a subordinate *että* ("that") clause. The issue is then further complicated by the fact that in subordinate complement clauses there is another predicate, whose choice of mood is relatively independent of the choice of mood in the matrix clause. Different mood choices in the matrix and complement clauses, in combination with other semantic and pragmatic factors, yield slightly different nuances. A conditional in the complement clause underlines that the denoted event is a mere possibility and more clearly links it with the intentional and evaluative stance of the matrix clause (see e.g. VISK § 1596; Peltola 2014).

If we now, somewhat simplistically, combine the semantic, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic considerations discussed above (even if they at times diverge), we might arrange the cases in the data on a rough continuum with *haluan* ("to want") + INF/NP at the leftmost extreme. The other extreme, then, would consist of cases of *toivoa* ("to hope") in the conditional mood complemented by a subordinate clause with a conditional-form predicate (*toivoisin että -isi-,* "I would wish that + COND"):

*haluan* *haluaisin*
IND.PRS.1SG COND.PRS.1SG
*toivon* ***toivoisin*** ***-vAni*** / ***että*** + ***IND*** / ***että + COND***
IND.PRS.1SG COND.PRS.1SG NFIN / C + IND / C + COND

Among the *toivoisin että* ("I would wish that") (n=11) cases in the data, eight complement clauses are in the conditional mood, only three in the indicative. Interestingly, in all of the cases the subject, or similar subject-like argument (e.g., the animate possessor in example 5.8), is in the second person (2SG pronoun or inflection). That is, the wished-for process is controlled by the kind of other ("you") who is, in some sense, maximally presupposed as existing independently of the self's desires, since that person can be picked out as the addressee.

(5.8) ¶Etsin – – miestä, joka olisi – – rehellinen ja luotettava, keskustelutaitoinen ja urheilullinen.
**Toivoisin,** **että sinulla** **olisi** aikaa parisuhteelle,
wish:COND.PRS.1SG C you:ADE[POSS] COP:COND.PRS.3SG time:PTV relationship:ALL

**et=kä** **olisi** sitoutumiskammoinen.
NEG:2SG=CONJ COP:NEG.COND.PRS.3SG with_a_fear_of_commitment

(5.8) ¶I'm looking for – – a man who would be – – honest and reliable, conversationally talented and sporty. I would wish that you had time for a relationship and did not fear commitment.

To put it another way, a construction that imposes as little as possible on the person-referent can be addressed to an actual reader without risk of conflict. In cases like (5.8), then, one might argue, the self's desire is maximally submitted to others' recognition and regimentation and reconciled with the limitations of the "real" world. (Cf. also chapter 6.)

A more detailed analysis would probably reveal more intricate patterns and regularities in the division of labor between different structural variants (e.g., when they are used and by whom). The point here, however, was to draw attention to the possibilities and concrete means of modifying the ontological relation between one's stance and its object as well as the status of one's commitment in relation to the speech event and its participants. The conclusion is that in online dating advertisements the communication of desire is frequent and unproblematic and it is relatively appropriate for the promotional persona to theorize and to communicate one's desires even without explicitly concerning oneself with the actualities of the speech event. The weight is clearly on the leftmost half of the continuum, and examples like

(5.8) are less typical. Strong stances are often expected from others as well.[86] As was noted earlier, most instances of *toivoa* ("to hope") in the data are in 1SG, whereas *haluta* ("to want") can also be used to represent others' stances (see also chapter 6). Others' desires, then, are not as readily represented as diminished in degree or as dependent on external circumstances or chance. In a sense it is logical, since, from the standpoint of the promotional persona, the self is the object of, and already the answer to, an ideal other's desires (cf. however 6.3.4).

The question of commitment relates importantly to the management of the relation between "real" and "ideal" worlds in online dating advertisements. In what world is the event of speech located? And in what worlds and under which personae are the participants committed to the contents? For instance, many *haluaisin* ("I would want to") cases sketch an "ideal" world as something separate from the "real" world of the speech event. In some *haluan* ("I want") cases, on the other hand, the writer fully inhabits an "ideal" world and a desiring promotional persona in the speech event. The effect was particularly salient in example 4.4, in which the speech event was, for some interpreters, contextualized in a "dramatic" world by the writer's performance. In other words, the actual world of the interactional event may itself be localized, by degrees, in different semiotic worlds. The writer may be speaking *in* the ideal world (perhaps with an occasional *sotto voce* of "reality" as in example 4.4, and see also section 5.2.2), or the writer may paint a picture of an ideal world *from* the real world.

As a final remark, to link the discussion of CTPs to questions of polarity that will figure prominently in subsequent sections, it should be noted that a clear tendency towards *unipolarity* can be seen in the CTPs. Negations of *haluta* ("to not want") (n=16), *pitää* ("to not like") (n=4) and *toivoa* ("to not hope") (n=0) are far less frequent than the corresponding affirmative forms and appear in very specific usages as will be seen later. Antonymous verbs like *vihata* ("to hate") (n=1) or *inhota* ("to dislike") (n=1) are practically absent. The following sections will take up the issues of commitment and polarity from other standpoints, and the cases of negated *haluta* ("to not want") and *pitää* ("to not like") will be dealt with in section 5.4.

## 5.2 THE NATURALIZATION OF EVALUATIVE PERSPECTIVES

The examples analyzed in this section do not explicitly denote a mode of representation or a source of evaluation. Rather, value in these cases tends to be treated as "naturalized" and "objectified" (cf. Parmentier 1994: 175–192;

[86] As one writer notes: "And since I'm aware of the fact that there are demands on the other side as well, it's probably reasonable to tell a bit more about myself" (*Ja koska tiedostan, että vaatimuksia on toisessakin suunnassa, niin lienee vähintään kohtuullista kertoa vähän enemmän itsestäni*).

also Irvine & Gal 2000: 37–38; Agha 2007a: 241–242). Such stances are communicated with the denotational or connotational evaluative dimensions of lexical items embedded in their co-texts. What becomes theorized is not the mental state of some actor directed at some object, as in the previous section, but the object as if it self-evidently embodied the value. In addition, there is often little or no reasoning about the bases of the value. Naturalization, then, can be seen as a specific manifestation of the more general (and unavoidable) phenomenon of *projection*, in which the properties of signs become taken as properties of the object they stand for (Kockelman 2006b: 106–107; Kockelman & Bernstein 2012).[87]

To illustrate the difference between the two patterns of evaluative stancetaking, let us compare an example already seen in the previous section, here repeated as (5.9a), with the kind of case dealt with in this section (5.9b):

(5.9a) Haluan ottaa ihmiset ympärilläni huomioon ja sen teen ainakin jos on uskomista perheeseeni ja ystäviini.
(5.9a) I want to take people around me into consideration and that I do at least if my family and friends are to be believed.

(5.9b) **Olen huomaavainen, lämmin ja intohimoinen**. Minulle rehellisyys, uskollisuus ja terve asenne ovat must.
(5.9b) **I am considerate, warm and passionate**. To me honesty, faithfulness and a healthy attitude are a must.

In example (5.9a), the writer first commits to a will to take others into consideration. Then he presents an epistemic appraisal of how well that commitment has so far translated into concrete action. That is, he explicitly recognizes the difference between a desire to behave in a particular way and actual habitual behaviors. Furthermore, he cites a group of others as a source in whose opinions his epistemic stance is grounded. Example (5.9b), in contrast, consists of a copula and a set of adjectival complements. The IND.PRS.1SG form of the copula indexically calibrates the imagery conveyed by the adjectives to the writer. The adjective *huomaavainen* ("considerate"), for instance, stereotypically denotes a person who takes others into consideration (cf. 5.9a). In any widespread, non-marked ontology of personhood it would probably be considered an ideal characteristic and therefore carries a positive connotation (i.e., a stereotypic indexical value).

[87] Kockelman & Bernstein (2012: 340–343) distinguish a number of different types of projection – many of which are relevant for the analyses in this study – such as *grammatical* projection (properties of grammatical categories transposed on referents), *evaluative* projection (qualities of value projected onto evaluated objects; or properties of valued objects taken as properties of value), *metrical* projection (the object taking on the organizational characteristics of the technology used to "measure" it; cf. e.g. taxonomies vs. narratives in section 4.4), and *technological* projection more generally (properties of a semiotic technology projected on the the object it interprets).

The writer, then, is theorized as embodying a valued characteristic, but no specific mode of representation or source of value is made explicit. Whose perspective or opinion are we dealing with? Who has authored the typifications and who are committed to their truth? The inference readily available is that the representation reflects the evaluative processes of the writer himself, but his perspective has been generalized and objectified. (See also Heikkinen 1999: 207–211, 282; Solin 2009: 263–266; and cf. also 4.4.5.)

In both examples, the writer is the *animator* (i.e., the one who controls the expression of signs and has allowed the physical manifestation of the particular segment of writing in the text-artifact), which inevitably brings a degree of accountability. In the former example, however, the representation virtually models (see Agha 2007a: 72) itself as *co-authored* by others ("friends and family, too, say I 'take others into consideration'") or at least corroborated by others ("friends and family say something similar"). Moreover, in addition to the writer himself, a group of others is represented as *principals* (i.e., as ones who are committed to the truth of the content). There is, then, more or less explicit intrasubjective coherence (between the intentions and the behaviors of the self), intersubjective coherence (between the self's and others' interpretations), and distributed coherence (what the self thinks or says originated as others' interpretations). That is, the first example explicitly distributes the self-presentational forms between intentions, behaviors, and others' testimonies. Or, from the standpoint of discursive agency, the first example explicitly acknowledges that *controlling* (by an animator), *composing* (by authors), and *commitment* (by principals) are distinguishable semiotic dimensions and may involve multiple agents – a matter which will be of importance for the remainder of this chapter.

Regardless of whether there is any possibility of actual empirical verification of the claims, the differences in the formulations alone affect the structures of accountability. In the case of (5.9b), the reader can only infer to what extent the animator coincides with the author of any particular typification and what the more specific nature of his commitment to the typification is (i.e., in what worlds and under which personae he is committed to the truth of the content). This implicitness leaves a lot of playroom for interpretations of intentions and coherence. It can even give rise to highly mistrustful and unempathetic interpretations, in which the writer is regarded, for instance, as "self-opinionated" and "delusional" (see chapter 7). That is, in such interpretations the writer is taken to be the willing, sole author of the positive typifications of self and to commit to them unconditionally. Simultaneously, it is often assumed that more objective others would probably disagree and use other kinds of typifications. The following section takes a look at cases in which these kinds of problems are dealt with more or less visibly.

The aim here is to underline the fact that the ways in which "signs of the self" are formulated have real and significant effects on how they mediate personhood in particular intersubjective contacts. However, it is equally

important to take into account the type of event and the kinds of epistemic formations and inferential practices that are made use of. In some circumstances, the two examples (*haluan ottaa ihmiset huomioon…* "I want to take people around me into consideration"… ~ *olen huomaavainen* "I am considerate") might communicate the "same thing" and be mutually glossable by one another. In other circumstances, the first example might be seen as describing some of the general conditions of the appropriate usage of the latter one. Or, the latter one might be seen as a generalization or a habitualization into a speech chain indexical (see 4.4.5) of instances of the former one (see also the analysis of 4.16 in 4.4.1), and so on. That is, the two cases seem to emblematize a similar process in different phases and from different perspectives. The way such theoretical representations appropriately and effectively relate to one another and to practical consequences is a matter of complex contextual and genre-specific interpretation (see also sections 5.4, 6.4 and chapters 7 and 8). Stancetaking strategies of the latter kind are highly common, even stereotypic, in online dating advertisements, but they are also problematic – for reasons that will become more evident as we approach chapter 7.

### 5.2.1 REDUNDANT AND RELATIONAL POLARITIES

Let us now move on in the discussion of naturalized evaluative stances by taking a look at the usages of the adjective *hyvä* ("good," n=92; n=130, with the comparative and superlative forms included). Besides its high frequency, it is one of the most stereotypic and general ways of expressing a positive evaluative stance. It can be used to evaluate all sorts of objects (persons, things, states of affairs). As an adjective it is relatively flexible and can be used in a variety of syntactic and discursive positions. We can use *hyvä* as a sort of heuristic aid to point out some of the most relevant kinds of positive evaluation in the data. We can also note at the outset the low frequency of the antonym *huono* ("bad") (n=5). Similarly, in negative clauses *hyvä* mainly appears in general type-level or ideological principles (*Yksin ei ole hyvä olla,* "It is not good to be alone").

The adjective *hyvä* denotes a positive evaluative stance, rather than connotes one. It has relatively little additional information content in most usages (in contrast to adjectives such as "beautiful," "considerate," or "bright"). "Good (person)" in a moral sense (*Olen kaunis, hyvä ja empaattinen olento,* "I am a beautiful, good and empathetic being") and "good (feeling)" in an affective sense (*rakastan sitä, että saan toiselle hyvän ja turvallisen olon,* "I love it that I can make the other [person] feel good and safe") are probably the ones with most independent denotational content. Otherwise *hyvä* has a sort of shifter-like placeholder usage. It marks a relevant grammatical position in a representation and makes an evaluative stance emblematic and alignable, but the more specific nature of the "goodness" in question (e.g., the techniques of evaluation; or the specific

qualities that are being graded and the comparison classes and standards that the grading is based on, see 4.4.1) as well as the source (i.e., the one whose evaluation is at stake) have to be inferred from the context. In contrast, adjectives like "beautiful," "considerate," and "bright" provide more accurate sketches of particular kinds of "goodness" in terms of appearance, personality, and intelligence respectively.

The objects of *hyvä* ("good") can be roughly located on a sort of parabolic curve ranging first from larger personable entities towards smaller constituents and then towards ever more abstract non-persons.[88] There are stances towards entire communities (*Olen hyvästä, välittävästä perheestä*, "I am from a good, caring family"), social types (*Hyvä mies on mielestäni sopiva sekoitus käytännöllisyyttä – – ja analyyttistä älykkyyttä*, "A good man is in my opinion a proper mixture of practicality and analytical intelligence"), social relations (*Parisuhteelta toivon luottamusta ja hyvää yhteispeliä*, "I expect trust and good team play from a relationship"; *niitä on paljon mukavampi tehdä hyvässä seurassa* "those things are much nicer to do in good company"), self or other as individuals (*Olen kaunis, hyvä ja empaattinen olento*, "I am a beautiful, good and empathetic being"), in particular social statuses (*En etsi heille täältä isäehdokasta, sillä heillä on hyvä isä*, "I'm not here looking for a father candidate for them, since they already have a good father"; *Sukkaa minä en osaa kutoa, mutta muuten olen ihan hyvä mummo*, "I can't knit a sock, but otherwise I'm a pretty good grandmother"), as analyzed into constituent processes (*Elämäni yksin asuvana on riittävän hyvää*, "My life as someone who lives alone is sufficiently good"; *Pidän työstäni ja olen siinä oikeastaan aika hyvä*, "I like my work and I'm actually quite good at it") or specific kinds or attributes (*Liikuntaharrastusteni takia olen hyvässä kunnossa*, "Because of my sports hobbies I'm in good shape"; *sinä reilu ja hyvällä itsetunnolla varustettu – – kaveri*, "you fair-minded guy equipped with a good self-esteem"). The other end covers stances towards concrete or abstract non-personal entities (*Elämääni sisältöä tuovat – – musiikin kuuntelu ja hyvä ruoka*, "Listening to music and good food bring content to my life"; *joka arvostaa – – hyvää koulutusta*, "who appreciates a good education"; *Pidän hyvästä huumorista*, "I like good humor"), states of affairs (*Yksin ei ole hyvä olla*, "It's not good to be alone"; *Hyvä kuitenkin, että niitä on tullut, sillä kipeät hetket ne opettavat paljon varsinkin itsestäsi*, "It's good though that I've had them, since painful moments teach a lot particularly about yourself"), as well as abstract conceptual constructs (*hyvässä mielessä*, "in a good sense") and temporal, causal, or logical relations (*Hyvä alku olisi, että et tarvitsisi

[88] One-dimensional distinctions like this are, of course, always highly relative and depend on particular framings and ontologies. Human worlds are inherently (inter)personal and personified so that all roads eventually lead to persons. That is, persons as agents or as merely imagined others are never many indexical or inferential steps away from even the most abstract or inanimate representations.

*minua, vaan haluaisit minut*, "A good beginning would be that you didn't need me but wanted me"; *Siltä pohjalta olisi hyvä jatkaa ja hyvässä tapauksessa rakentaa parisuhdekin*, "On that basis it would be good to continue and in a good case even to build a relationship"). Section 5.2.2 will continue the discussion of naturalized evaluative stances focusing particularly on stances towards the self as an individual or as analyzed into constituents. First, however, based on the *hyvä* ("good") cases and their co-texts, a few general remarks about polarity in online dating advertisements are made in this section.

From the standpoint of information value, one might claim that *hyvä* ("good") is altogether one of the more useless words in online dating advertisements. What is the point of saying that one is "interested in good company," "has a good sense of humor," or "likes good food," for instance? To quote the writer of (5.11): "Who doesn't?" In a sense, the co-occurrence of *like* and *good* is redundant in the first place. What one "likes" is "good," at least in one sense of the word. Unless the more specific nature of "goodness" is clarified, statements like these provide little knowledge about the writer as a person. On the other hand, the cited examples are more or less idiomatic expressions that are interpreted as a single construction. They point out domains of life that are, for example, "of interest or importance" or "like a hobby" to the person. For example, "I like good food" will probably not quite be interpreted as "I'm into gastronomy" – but something to that effect. Also, in cases like "I like my work and I'm actually quite good at it" it is relatively easy to infer some general ways in which one can be "good" at one's work (e.g., "efficient," "thorough," "creative," or "persistent"). More importantly, the stance implies that there is (a) some particular socially shared set of criteria in one's work community, and (b) that there are others who are equally committed to the same evaluative stance and, if necessary, would back the writer up. It is also noteworthy that the writer takes a double stance towards her work, both in terms of desirability ("like") and ideality ("good at it"). It is perhaps not the specific nature of "goodness" that is relevant but the fact that the two co-ordinated stances and their implied metastance relations point to a domain of life in which one's own and others' positive evaluations coincide, a sort of high point where the writer is at her best.

Moreover, the mere phenomenological presence of particular words and classes of words may have a purpose in itself. When positively evaluating lexemes accumulate textually, their indexical linking becomes a mutually intensifying force. That is, the fact that such lexemes are members of the same semantic class (e.g., pointing superlatively to the positive ends of various semantic scales and gradings) becomes a more prominent sign in itself. The recurrence and accumulation of even redundant instances, then, underlines the fact that one *has* criteria in the first place and points out those domains and processes in which one has particularly *high* criteria. Such textual webs remind that we are dealing with a world of ideals (cf. with the "prosodic" uses of *nauttia* 'to enjoy' in 5.1.1). In other words, explicit and

textually distributed stereotypic positivity has functions on more than one layer in promotional discourses. Using particular kinds of words to point to particular kinds of worlds and modes of personhood may be just as important as or more important than the more specific denotational information they may convey about the writer.

The issue of redundancy also applies more generally to any such positive characteristics that are understood by the participants as very general in nature or as widely shared among persons. If one were to imagine the description "I like good food" on a scale of relevance, then somewhere closer to the irrelevant extreme one might find truisms such as "I eat food." However, where the line between relevant and irrelevant information is drawn is a context-specific question. In another context the latter might be a perfectly valid self-presentational contribution. In the following examples the writers themselves clearly acknowledge the relatively low news value of parts of their descriptions:

(5.10) Pidän myös luonnosta, kulttuurista, matkustelusta **(kukapa ei)**, hyvästä ruuasta ja viinistä.
(5.10) I also like nature, culture, traveling (**who doesn't**), good food and wine.

(5.11) ¶Etsin tositarkoituksella, mutten hampaat irvessä noin ikäistäni miestä, joka olisi **- yllätys, yllätys! -** rehellinen ja luotettava, keskustelutaitoinen ja urheilullinen.
(5.11) ¶I'm looking, seriously but not desperately, for a man about my age, who would be - **surprise, surprise!** - honest and reliable, conversationally skilled and sporty.

The question then is: Why say things that are explicitly regarded as self-evident or not useful in selecting for ideal persons? In the first example, the redundancy seems to point to the type of information itself (i.e., liking traveling is considered self-evident), whereas in the latter one the sarcastic comment may be more specifically targeted at the specific linguistic typifications. That is, the problem in the latter example is the fact that the ideals of honesty and reliability are entextualized with symbol-tokens that are worn-out and perhaps somewhat naïve (since dishonest people usually have little regard for such requirements nor any intention to obey them). In fact, in some stereotypes of dating advertisements, *rehellinen* ("honest") and *luotettava* ("reliable") are placed among the most clichéd and useless typifications (see also chapter 7, e.g. 7.21).[89] Nevertheless, both writers above still regard these as things that they wish to or are supposed to say. That is, the felt need to say such things overweighs their low news value, their low verifiability, and their relative insufficiency in distinguishing one person from another. These sorts of descriptions, then, seem to denote

[89] In terms of actual frequence too, *rehellinen* ("honest") and *luotettava* ("reliable") were found to be among the most common adjectives in dating advertisements in two Finnish newspapers between 1951 and 2001 (Muikku-Werner 2009: 62–65).

characteristics that are seen as necessary constituents of a proper person and thereby index "normal" personhood (in the sense of non-abnormal or non-stigmatized but not necessarily in the sense of "ordinary") (cf. Sacks 1985). Committing to such characteristics explicitly is like proving one's personal instantiation of normative cultural models of personhood. Even if "interested in good company" may not be highly positive in any selective sense, at least it makes a promise that the person is not, say, "antisocial" (a characteristic often stereotypically associated with online dating, see 7.1) and that the person is aware of such norms and such risks. "Positivity," then, has two faces in online dating advertisements. One dimension is to appear "positively normal," preferably in some non-common or non-boring way (e.g., with humorous comments like in the above examples). Another dimension is to appear "positively unique," to selectively appeal to particular social types and preferably more so than those others that one competes with.

This discussion brings us back to some of the issues dealt with at the end of chapter 4. On the one hand, writers have access to biographic objects that they know about themselves and can represent in various linguistic sign patterns (e.g., remembered or habitually or perceptually present attributes or events). On the other hand, there are circulating cultural metadiscourses and ontologies of personhood, which the writers may find desirable or ideal and therefore attempt to calibrate with the objects in their lives. Some of these patterns are normative for communities (cf. "positively normal"), some prestigious (cf. "positively unique") (see e.g. the analysis of prestige wine talk, or "oinoglossia," in Silverstein 2003). Participating in such discourses allows signers to access the worlds and modes of personhood these signs index – but it also makes them accountable in new ways. In the composition of "promotional" self-presentation, then, there are in principle two possible directions. One can start from those biographic objects that one considers ideal or desirable and compose appropriate and effective textual patterns for them. Or, one can start from those symbols that one considers ideal or desirable and find some way to make them fit one's objects (see also 7.2.1).[90] In the latter case, the resulting discursive formulations are distinctly co-authored by particular sociohistorical discursive formations (such as "promotional discourses"), which, from the standpoint of self-presentation and individual agents, can be viewed as kinds of generalized other (i.e., they

[90] One is reminded of Hyacinth Bucket's [buːˈkeɪ] habit of introducing her sister Violet as "the one with a Mercedes, swimming pool, sauna, and room for a pony" in BBC's *Keeping up Appearances*. Apparently, in light of the cultural models she orients to, the prestige of owning a pony is so high that she feels the need to find whatever way she can of fitting the relevant symbols into the description. That is, the point of the joke is the way in which the lack of something, or mere empty space, is discursively interpreted so cleverly that it actually sounds like a valued possession comparable to, say, a Mercedes or a sauna. Wiktionary explains the idiom "room for a pony," introduced by the series, as a humorous reference to the "minimum trappings ['status symbols'] of the minor landed gentry" in the UK.

specify what is expected from the self by others and how the self will be interpreted by others). One's agency as an interpreter and communicator of one's own life melds with the agency of specific sociohistorical traditions as forces that fit particular lives into general models.

To get back to the case of "honest" (*rehellinen*) and "reliable" (*luotettava*) discussed above, we can now see more clearly into the different kinds of relations that these symbols organize and are organized by. "Honest" and "reliable" (as linguistic expressions) are first of all in relation to the actual 'honest' and 'reliable' behaviors that these words are used to refer to in discourse. These relations become in time generalized into denotational stereotypes. Second, "honest" and "reliable" stand in relation to those discursive events in which they are used to refer to such behaviors. That is, they live through particular tokens that are embedded in entextualized sign patterns used to mediate discursive acts. These relations become in time generalized into indexical stereotypes. Since 'honest' and 'reliable' behaviors *per se* are probably considered "positive" in most cultural ontologies, in most discursive events the tokens of the corresponding symbols are embedded in acts that confer "positive" connotational tones on them (e.g., complimenting someone for their honest behavior or condemning someone for the lack thereof). As will be seen in chapter 7, there are, however, more specific types of discourse, in which the use of these symbols is seen in a more problematic light. We can think of, for instance, narratives about new acquaintances who were, after a while, exposed as having faked 'honesty' or "honesty" all along or warnings according to which it is easy to falsely claim "honesty" in online communication, since the speech events are displaced from those actual behaviors in which 'honesty' or 'dishonesty' could be verified (see e.g. examples 7.2b, 7.6, 7.24b). Such conflicting indexical values can, then, complicate the use of these signs as instruments of self-presentation in particular settings, even if the represented behaviors themselves are not problematic but, rather, a default requirement for any "normal" person.

Self-presentational value can emanate relatively more from some object itself or from the linguistic signs that object is interpreted with. That is, a linguistic description can be a valuable or non-valuable interpretation of some valuable object or a valuable interpretation of some valuable or non-valuable object. Sometimes such evaluative relations converge, sometimes they conflict (e.g., when "[I'm] honest" is a problematic interpretant of one's 'honesty,' a valuable object as such). It is possible to disambiguate and clarify one's relations to different value-conferring sources by making one's metastances more explicit (e.g., *yllätys, yllätys*, "surprise, surprise" as a way of showing one's metapragmatic awareness of what "honest" and "reliable" are like as representational interpretants). What is essential, then, is not any single stereotypic value but how it relates to and is dealt with in the context of use.

Let us finish this section by having another look at the relational nature of evaluative polarity from a slightly different standpoint. The following two

contrasting examples employ the same lexical symbol (*snobi*, “snob[by]”) in opposing self-presentational polarities:

(5.12a) Olen älykäs idealisti ja romanttinen haaveilija. Luonnonlapsi ja **snobi** kulttuurin ystävä. Viihdyn taidenäyttelyissä, museoissa, kirjakaupoissa. Olen kaunis, hyvä ja empaattinen olento.
(5.12a) I am an intelligent idealist and a romantic dreamer. A child of nature and a **snob[by]** friend of culture. I feel at home in art exhibitions, museums, book stores. I am a beautiful, good and empathetic being.

(5.12b) Ehkäpä kerron ensin itsestäni. – – Fiksu ja filmaattinen - tarvittaessa. Äijämäinen - joskus. – – Suhteellisen sivistynyt, **ei** missään nimessä **snobi**. Eikä edes trendikäs. – – Vahva ja miehekäskin olen, joidenkin mielestä vaikeasti lähestyttävä. Mutta myös keskustelutaitoinen. Herkkäkin.
(5.12b) Perhaps I’ll describe myself first. – – Smart and stylish - when necessary. Ruggedly manly - sometimes. – – Relatively civilized, by **no** means **snobby**. And not even trendy. – – Strong and masculine I’m too, according to some inaccessible. But also conversationally skilled. Sensitive too.

To clarify this opposition, we might approximate the stereotypic meaning of “snob” by saying that it denotes a type of other from the standpoint of their cultural preferences and patterns of consumption. “Snobs” are people who are interested in what they consider quality and sophistication, and they are also self-assertive about the fact and like to show it off to others. The lexeme is also linked to stereotypes of symbolic and socio-economic power: a “snob” is how a proponent of “elitism” might be described by proponents of, say, more “populist” views. That is, “snob” is stereotypically a part of outgroup discourse and linked to an outgroup perspective: it denotes a type of person from the perspective of those who do not regard themselves as instances of the type. When a symbol already denotes an evaluated social relation like this, the user necessarily has to take a stance towards that configuration.[91]

In examples (5.12a) and (5.12b), both writers typify themselves both as “intelligent” (*älykäs*; *fiksu*) and “civilized” (*sivistynyt*; *kulttuurin ystävä*, “lover of culture”), which are in a sense prerequisites for “snobbiness.” However, the former writer, female, animates the typification “snob” to claim

---

[91] To reformulate this point from the standpoint of personhood, a persona is always a reflexive concept (a character or a social type from someone’s perspective). Specific perspectives may themselves become more or less enregistered: *[[a character from someone’s perspective] from someone’s perspective]* and so on. For instance, secondary foreign talk, or the natives’ way of imitating foreigners’ speech for some (e.g. derogatory) purpose, may ultimately give rise to a tertiary form of foreign talk, or the foreigners’ way of imitating the natives’ way of imitating foreigners, used by foreigners themselves for some novel but dialogically related (e.g. empowering or strategic) purpose. (See Lehtonen 2015: 211–224 for an analysis of stylized *“huono Suomi,”* “bad Finnish,” registers, and the references therein.)

it, whereas the latter, male, animates it to reject it, thereby presuming it as a possible interpretation. The latter writer further associates “snob” with *trendikäs* (“trendy”), which figures as a sort of less negative option on the same scale implied by the scalarizing *(eikä) edes* (“not even”). He also contrasts “snob” with *äijämäinen* (denoting a rugged kind of manliness), and later *miehekäs* (“masculine”). These relations, then, imply those aspects of personhood that the writer considers problematic. “Snobbiness” for him seems to entail a kind of “superficial flamboyance” and “unmanliness.” Gender, then, might be a contributing factor in these cases. The stereotypic load of negativity carried by “snob” may be heavier for those committed to particular models of masculinity. Throughout his entire text the writer is careful to balance sophistication (e.g., *sivistynyt*, “civilized”*; keskustelutaitoinen*, “conversationally skilled”; *herkkä*, “sensitive”) with manliness (e.g., *vahva ja miehekäs,* “strong and masculine”; *äijämäinen*). Within that scheme of balance, even the negative typification “inaccessible” or “not approachable” (*vaikeasti lähestyttävä*) seems almost like a positive characteristic in contrast to the evoked stereotype of a “snob.”

The writer of (5.12a), in contrast, identifies with the typification despite the fact that it bears a negative stereotypic tone, at least for some. She evokes a conflict between two separate lines of authors and principals: the ingroup and the outgroup. That is, by (a) selecting a typification authored by others in the outgroup and by (b) using that typification to compose her own ingroup self-presentation, she raises the question of the complex metastance relations between such groups (e.g., the question of her stance towards the outgroup and her stance towards their stance towards her). In short, she appropriates the outgroup perspective in her ingroup self-presentation to suit her own purposes. Since the text is one of the most openly self-eulogizing ones in the data, it is hard to construe the use as, for instance, a form of self-criticism or even sarcasm. She is recognizing the fact that others have negative stances towards the social type she identifies with but does not ratify those stances *per se*. Rather, she seems to embrace and reinforce the social contrast. She can be interpreted as openly committing to and normalizing an “elitist” stance and refusing to recognize the power of others’ negative regimenting interpretants. (Cf. also section 4.4.)

The previous discussion illustrated how metastance relations are entextualized and emblematized in online dating advertisements and how naturalized evaluative stances can implicitly conjure up complex relations on cultural stages. The next section will now explore the questions of polarity, authorship, and commitment more specifically from the standpoint of self-directed evaluative stances.

### 5.2.2 PERFORMANCES OF "HUMAN(E)NESS": METAPRAGMATICS OF EVALUATIVE POLARITY

This section deals with textual patterns in which the writers describe themselves using stereotypically negative or positive expressions and in some way, however implicitly, comment on such practices of evaluative stancetaking and evaluative polarity. In all of the cases below, the writers presume the idea that self-presentation in online dating advertisements generally speaking should be unipolar. That is, one is expected to focus on "positivity" and actively evade "negative" voices. Some of the writers, however, also appear to presume models in which persons are ideally seen through more balanced models with strengths and weaknesses ("nobody's perfect"). Many such patterns seem like more or less conscious performances that aim at an impression of, say, "honesty" or "humaneness," or other modes of personhood that are more nuanced than a stereotypically "promotional" one. The performances, then, reflect a preoccupation with reconciling the presumed norms of "self-promotion" with other models of personhood, including one's internalized self-conceptions.

In order to better understand the examples in this section, let us first discuss the different dimensions of the concept of "performance" from the standpoint of linguistic signs. For a linguistic sign to be effective in interaction it needs to be *performed*, given a perceivable form (e.g., through writing or oral articulation), by a participant. Once interpreted by others, performed signs mediate various social effects. That is, they are socially consequential or *performative*. (See e.g. Agha 2007a: 6, 55–64.) In its most marked sense, the term *performance* refers to a particular reflexive and poetic mode of communication, or:

> a specially marked, artful way of speaking that sets up or represents a special interpretive frame within which the act of speaking is to be understood [and] puts the act of speaking on display – objectifies it, lifts it to a degree from its interactional setting and opens it to scrutiny by an audience. (Bauman & Briggs 1990: 73.)

Performance in this restricted sense refers to a reflexive mode of discursive behavior in which either the process of producing language (i.e., the performing of signs) or the social action mediated by language (i.e., the performativity of signs) is explicitly signaled and drawn attention to. That is, the semiotic activity itself is brought on the stage. (See also Coupland 2009.) The salience of a performance can, in Bauman & Briggs's (1990: 74) phrasing "vary along a continuum from sustained, full performance to a fleeting break-through into performance." Performance, then, draws attention to different aspects of semiotic behavior and, as will be seen shortly, is naturally fit to mark distinctions between animators, authors, and principals.

There seems to be a tendency for the performance aspect of online dating advertisements to increase in saliency when writers formulate naturalized evaluative stances that are directed at the writers themselves. This increase

can be seen in both to positive (e.g., 5.14) and negative (e.g., 5.13) stances. The common feature of the cases analyzed below is that the texts draw metadiscursive attention to the forms, functions, and motivations of the activity being performed, i.e., the evaluative presentation of self. In many examples the focus of attention ultimately seems to relate to models of polarity.

Example (5.13) shows a particularly sharp orientation to negative self-presentation. What makes the example particularly interesting is the very explicit way in which the writer relates her discursive behavior to a presumed stereotype of the activity type:

> (5.13) ¶Katsotaas miten **rehellisyys** uppoaa teihin, arvon herrat: ¶olen yliherkkä, taideopiskelija, paniikkihäiriöinen, entinen syömishäiriöinen, piiitkällä matkalla kohti itsensä hyväksymistä mutta kuitenkin jo oikella suunnalla, epäitsenäisempi kuin kuvittelen, sosiaali huorampi kuin haluaisin, empaattisempi ja sydämellisempi kuin viisasta olisi. Ja **varmasti turhan suora deitti-ilmoituksen kirjoittajaksi**. ¶Niin. Jos siis et halua ongelmia, et takuulla tahdo minua. ¶Jos naisihanteesi on on normaali ja harmiton, minusta ei beibi siihen ole. – – ¶Ihmisenä lukuisista häiriöistäni huolimatta olen mukiinmenevä, jos päätän ottaa sinut siipieni suojaan, siellä sitten ollaan. – –
> (5.13) Let's see how **honesty** goes down with you, gentlemen: ¶I'm oversensitive, an art student, suffering from a panic disorder, used to have an eating disorder, on a loooong journey towards accepting myself but already moving in the right direction, less independent than I think, more of a social whore than I would want to be, more empathetic and cordial than would be wise. And **surely too outspoken to be writing a dating ad**. ¶Yeah. So if you don't want trouble, you sure don't want me. ¶If your ideal of a woman is normal and harmless, baby, I ain't up to it. – – ¶As a person I am ok in spite of all my faults, if I decide to take you under my wing, that's where you'll stay. – –

The negative elements include, for example, evaluative adjectives ("oversensitive," *yliherkkä*), descriptions of mental disorders ("suffering from a panic disorder," *paniikkihäiriöinen*), and comparative structures that portray the writer's characteristics as falling short of her ideals ("less independent than I think," *epäitsenäisempi kuin kuvittelen*; "more empathetic and cordial than would be wise," *empaattisempi ja sydämellisempi kuin viisasta olisi*). What is particularly noteworthy is that she evaluates herself negatively as a writer of a dating advertisement ("too outspoken to write a dating ad," *turhan suora deitti-ilmoituksen kirjoittajaksi*).

The metadiscursive framing that the writer begins the text with typifies the subsequent sequence as an instance of "honesty" (*rehellisyys*). "Honesty" explicitly evokes a model of language use in which what is publicly said corresponds to what one privately believes. Here "honesty" seems to entail that negative aspects of personhood are made public too. The negative in the text is, then, framed as a product of a stereotypically positive human characteristic. The segment incorporates complex metastance relations.

There are (1) the writer's explicit first-order stances towards herself (e.g., being "oversensitive"), (2) the writer's explicit second-order stances towards her own stances (e.g., "honesty," *rehellisyys*; "too outspoken to be writing a dating ad," *turhan suora deitti-ilmoituksen kirjoittajaksi*), (3) the writer's explicit anticipation of readers' stances towards herself ("you sure don't want me"), and (4) implicit stances towards other writers and the activity type in general. The writer implies that (i) in a dating advertisement one is not supposed to be as "honest" and "outspoken" as she is (as a general norm), (ii) most other writers are usually not as "honest" and "outspoken" as she is (as particular individuals), and (iii) being "honest" and "outspoken" is related to the polarity of evaluation: "honesty" entails an evaluative balance in stancetaking, whereas unipolar positivity is "dishonest" and means that one is intentionally retaining negative facts in the private realm. The heart of the matter, then, is not about "positivity" or "negativity" as separate aspects but about the balance of evaluative polarities in the entire text-artifact and the distribution of metastance relations between private and public realms.

In (5.13), explicit signals of performance include, for example, the fact that the selected strategy of self-presentation ("honesty") is named and addressed to respondents ("you, gentlemen," *teihin, arvon herrat*) and attention is drawn to their anticipated reactions ("Let's see how honesty goes down," *Katsotaas miten rehellisyys uppoaa*). In a sense, then, the respondents are explicitly made accountable for their responses to the writer's "honesty." Such dialogical elements combine with poetic elements (e.g., "Yeah," *Niin*; "on a loooong journey," *piiitkällä matkalla kohti*; "baby, I ain't up to it," *minusta ei beibi siihen ole*) that contribute to the particular mind style and narrative style conveyed by the text. In fact, one might say that she is aestheticizing the negative and the problematic in quite the same way as many other texts deal with positivity. In a specific framing, this could be interpreted as just another "promotional" strategy (cf. response T1/20 in table 1 in 4.2.1). Nevertheless, the performance enables the writer to confess particularly sensitive pieces of information in a controlled manner. This "honest" confession and the criticism of other writers' motivations may also be interpreted as lending credibility and authenticity to the writer's moderate positive evaluation of self ("honest," "ok").

The following two examples illustrate the fact that positive evaluation can be equally challenging. If the previous example dealt with "honesty," example (5.14) can be seen as orienting to an ideal such as "modesty," even if it is not explicitly mentioned in the text. Instead of merely describing positive characteristics, the writer fames them with explicit metapragmatic cues:

(5.14) olen 165cm "pätkä" normaali naisen kokoinen nainen, hiukseni ovat tummat ja lyhyet. **parhaat puoleni, hm, no ainakin** olen erittäin sosiaalinen ja asiani helposti ulos tuova ihminen.

(5.14) i'm 165 cm "short" normal woman-sized woman, my hair is dark and short. **my best sides, hm, well at least** I am a very sociable and communicative person.

A detached NP ("my best sides," *parhaat puoleni*) explicitly formulates the topic and the purpose of the framed segment ("I am a very sociable and communicative person," *olen erittäin sosiaalinen ja asiani helposti ulos tuova ihminen*). It acknowledges the fact that the writer is oriented to presenting positive, and only positive, biographic contents. A similar "my worst sides" sequence, for instance, is not included in the text. That is, the unipolarity of the task is understood as relevant and appropriate in the context without any explicit justification. It is explicitly brought on the stage though. In fact, the instructions on the dating forum as well as many guidebooks advise writers to "be honest" and "focus on their best sides" (see also chapter 7). The kinds of framings seen in (5.13) and (5.14) may also be seen as recontextualizations of such official norms in one's own text, as if to show to respondents that one is merely following the rules. The framed segment ("I am a very sociable and communicative person") is thus implicitly framed as the kind of act required by this type of event. The interjections and reactive particles evoke a process of thinking and responding to the task set by the genre context. There is a kind of dramatization of the task at hand (cf. Goffman 1990 [1959]: 40). Furthermore, the scalarizing focus particle *ainakin* ("at least") frames the positive description as a sort of minimal or most accessible response.

By drawing attention to and showing a heightened awareness of (a) the type of ongoing social activity, (b) the frame of participation, and (c) the concrete process of entextualization, the writer implicitly motivates and justifies the explicit positive stance towards self. The performance tones down both one's stakes of authorship and the intensity and scope of one's commitment to the truth of the presented information. That is, in a world in which one *is obliged to* commit to positive self-appraisal, this would be one *possible* formulation. In a sense, then, the positive stance towards self in the text is performed as a kind of "spontaneous" *ad hoc* response to the requirements of the event type, and not as a voluntary, calculated discursive act.

Example (5.15) similarly comments on the quantity and motivation of a list of positive attributes. The beginning of the segment sets up a double perspective: the writer is looking for a person who shares his criteria for an ideal partner. That is, the ideal self and the ideal other (as well as the self as the ideal other of the other, and so on) are described using the same typifications:

(5.15) Haen varmaankin ihmistä jolla omat tunteet tallella, jonka sydän läpättää kuin omani joskus edes toivosta tutustua ihastuttavaan, "hyvin käyttäytyvään", keskustelutaitoiseen, urheilulliseen, älykkääseen, kauniiseen, pirteään, uskolliseen **(jo=ko riittää)** [already=Q suffice:IND.PRS.3SG] ihmiseen.

(5.15) I'm seeking for a person who has his own feelings left, whose heart flutters like mine from the hope of at least eventually meeting a lovely, "well behaving,"

conversationally skilled, sporty, intelligent, beautiful, lively, faithful **(is [this] enough already)** person.

After listing eight typifications, the writer asks in parentheses whether this is "enough already" (*joko riittää*). The grammatical subject of the question remains implicit, but an obvious inference is that it points to the unfolding sequence of positive typifications. Whether the question is construed as being about the temporal duration of the sequence or about the accumulated number of typifications, it one way or another brings into focus the *quantity* of positive stancetaking (see also 4.4.1). The question, then, simultaneously shows that positive stancetaking is considered relevant and necessary with respect to the norms of the event but not entirely unproblematic in terms of its more specific nature. It is also implied that the positive presentation of self is, in fact, performed for the sake of the addressee, to whom the question is, at least figuratively, addressed and who is presented with the power to decide the appropriate quantity of positive description. That is, as in the previous example, the writer is portrayed as a self-aware and considerate animator and author, and his commitment is specifically related to the activity type and the needs of the respondent. This sort of strategy limits the interpretations that can be plausibly made about the writer's intentions (making interpretations such as "complacent" or "delusional" less sustainable; cf. chapter 7).

A typical co-text for the kinds of stances we are dealing with in this section is in taxonomies of characteristics (see 4.4.2). The gradual piling up of naturalized evaluative typifications in such structures easily evokes questions such as: Who is the author? What is his/her mode of commitment? What is the empirical validity of such typifications? It would seem that many performances attempt to deal with questions like this. In example (5.16), the writer presents a list of typifications that according to her own description have mainly been initiated by others, but partially by herself as specified in parentheses. Such framing implies that the taxonomy consists of or is centered around a set of speech chain indexicals (see 4.4.5). The exact degree of distribution of authorship is implicit, and no specific locatable sources are mentioned:

(5.16) ¶Lopuksi muiden mietteitä (ja joitakin omia) itsestäni: fiksu ja hyvännäköinen, kaunis ja suloinen, viehättävä, tyylikäs (**ainakin ajoittain, toim. huom.**), hauska, **huumorintajuinen, huumorintajuton,** erittäin kiltti, toisia ajatteleva, toisten puolesta uhrautuva, toiset edelleen laittava, monipuolisesti lahjakas, **itsekäs**, avarakatseinen, **tiukkapipo**, upea muodokas nainen, pepsodent-hymy **;)**, loistava lasten kanssa, **kärsimätön**, eteenpäinpyrkivä ja ihana.

(5.16) ¶Finally others' opinions (and some of my own) about me: smart and good-looking, beautiful and sweet, charming, stylish (**at least occasionally, editor's remark**), funny, **has a good sense of humor**, **has no sense of humor**, extremely kind, thinks about others, sacrifices herself for others, puts others before herself,

> versatilely talented, **selfish**, broadminded, strait-laced, a stunning curvy woman, pepsodent smile **;)**, great with children, **impatient**, aspiring and wonderful.

The clearest instance of the writer's authorial intervention is on the second line where she adds, in parentheses, an "editor's remark" to a typification. The addition brings out a contrast between two authorial voices, and identifies the writer more with the one in parentheses. The "editor's voice" adds a temporal qualification "at least occasionally" to the supposedly other-initiated typification "stylish." That is, a positive typification is modified so that the writer can better commit to its truth. Similarly, two appearance-related typifications, "pepsodent smile" (*pepsodent-hymy*) and "a stunning curvy woman" (*upea muodokas nainen*), are followed by a winking smiley that shows the writer's qualified commitment to their truth (e.g., an awareness of their slightly "exaggerated" nature).

Another recurring pattern is the juxtaposition of antonymous or otherwise contradicting typifications. The most visible instance in the previous example is the juxtaposition of *huumorintajuinen* ("having a sense of humor"), a stereotypically positive lexeme denoting a particular capacity, and *huumorintajuton* ("without a sense of humor"), a stereotypically negative lexeme denoting the lack of the same capacity. A similar but more implicit case is the contrast between *itsekäs* ("selfish") that is preceded earlier in the text by three consecutive typifications that all begin with a form of the lexeme *toinen* ("other") and denote some form of considerateness towards others. As the animator, it is the writer who has allowed the contradicting typifications to appear in the text. Even if these formulations were supposedly produced by others, as a co-author it is the writer herself who has composed the text so that, for instance, the two follow one another in the list and clearly contrast with one another. The fact that the writer publicly contrasts others' contradicting stances towards herself can be construed both as an implicit metastance towards those others' stances and as an implicit first-order stance towards herself. As a principal, then, the writer shows a relativized commitment. It is as if committing simultaneously to the relative truth of contradicting typifications implied a critical self-awareness of and a distancing from these simple representational interpretants altogether. It prompts from the respondent the inference of a suitable, more complex representational mode and an interpretation that reconciles the apparent contradictions. (See also the explicit relativizing metadiscourse in example 4.34 in section 4.4.5.)[92] That is, a contradiction between two sets of others' stances becomes the intermediary of the writer's and the reader's alignment in relation to one another. The previous example

[92] A "humorous" impression is, obviously, also part of the anticipated effects. In a sense, then, each reader can decide for themselves which description ("having a sense of humor" or "without a sense of humor") they choose to side with, since an example of the writer's sense of humor can be experienced and evaluated relatively directly by them (see also sections 4.1 and 4.2).

illustrates particularly well how a kind of staged dialogue (hence "performance") between self as animator and self as principal mediates a dialogue between self and others. This is relatively typical of self-presentational patterns in the data of this study. As the analysis shows, that dialogue has relatively more explicit and relatively more implicit branches that are equally important.

Let us now return to the example that was first analyzed as (4.4) in chapter 4. It resembles in many ways both the previous example and the first example (5.13) of this section. The first paragraph of excerpt (5.17) lists both positive and negative characteristics. Their authorship is, however, not attributed to others. In fact, the typifications in the first paragraph are calibrated to the writer very loosely with spatial deictics ("Here is X") leaving questions of authorship and commitment even more implicit than in 1SG cases ("I am X").

(5.17) Täällä rehevä, **kaunis (kauneus on katsojan silmissä)**, tumma, itsenäinen, työssäkäyvä, **neuroottinen, epävarma** ja **päivästä riippuen** joko iloinen ja hauska, tai **väsynyt ja kärttyinen**.¶**En väitä olevani täydellinen (sellaista ei ole)**, <u>mutta olen mukava, pidetty, ystävällinen, kiltti, aktiivinen ja sosiaalinen</u> nainen joka haluaisi löytää juuri minulle oikean ihmisen.

(5.17) Here is a luscious, **beautiful (beauty is in the eye of the beholder)**, dark, independent, employed, **neurotic, insecure** and, depending on the day, either happy and funny or **tired and cranky**. **¶I don't claim to be perfect (that does not exist)**, <u>but I'm nice, liked, friendly, kind, active and sociable</u> woman who would like to find the one who's just right for me.

There are no obvious contradictions between the typifications either. Rather, they explicitly hang together as alternating or complementary options (and not as differences of perspective between different subjects like in the previous example). As in the first example, there is an explicit framing that seems to justify the negative typifications. Instead of "honesty," this writer picks out "(impossible) perfectness" as a criterion that allows her to reflect upon and justify her own evaluative processes.

The typification "beautiful" (*kaunis*) is followed by an ideological formulation or a type-level theoretical representation (see 4.4.1) ("beauty is in the eye of the beholder") that justifies the first-order theoretical representation. It claims that the perception of "beauty" is incontestably subjective and individual and, thereby, shields the typification "beautiful" (and, in fact, *all* such typifications) from others' contradicting stances. The second paragraph begins with a metapragmatic comment ("I don't claim to be perfect") that metarepresents the writer's speech acts and intentions (i.e., she does not consider herself "perfect" and does not intend to communicate such with her text). This comment, too, is justified with a parenthetic addition ("that does not exist") that grounds it in a general truth (saying that, in fact, *no* claim of "perfectness" can ever be valid). In other words, the writer

interprets her own first-order stances in light of ideological principles concerning the appropriate distribution of metastance relations. The latter principle that postulates the general implausibility of "perfectness," a state with only positive aspects, justifies the writer's own negative self-presentational forms. Somewhat paradoxically, then, the comment states that "perfectness" is impossible and in contradiction with the writer's self-conceptions, but at the same time it implies that the notion is nevertheless somehow relevant in the context. Once again, it seems that stereotypic assumptions about "self-promotion" serve as the source of such presumed norms of perfectness. Finally, the comment serves as a lead-in for the following list of positive typifications, which now perhaps appear more believable as they are grounded in such demonstrated critical self-awareness. The performance in (5.17), then, seems to deal with a friction between different presumed models of evaluation (unipolar versus bipolar) – giving off a mixed impression, which may be interpreted positively as a kind of humanity ("authenticity," "honesty," or "openness") or negatively as "insecurity" or "low self-esteem" (see the analysis of questionnaire responses in 4.2.1).[93]

A final point to be made in this section concerns the use of the CTP *väittää* ("to claim") in the metadiscursive formulation in (5.17) and in the following example (5.18). We can compare the use of *väittää* ("to claim") both with the other examples in this section and with the expression of desire analyzed in section 5.1. In contrast to naturalized evaluative typifications, *väittää* ("to claim") brings the 1SG figure more prominently on the stage as a principal, as the CTP explicitly denotes a mode event (a particular kind of speech act implying a corresponding epistemic belief) and a (relatively factive) status of commitment. Let us consider the following example with an affirmative form of the CTP:

> (5.18) Aktiivisen harrastamisen pohjalta **väittäisin** olevani hyvässä kunnossa ja ulkonäkö on kohdallaan (tämähän on tietysti täysin objektiivinen arvio :).
>
> (5.18) Based on active exercise I would claim to be in good shape and [my] looks are in order (and this is of course a completely objective assessment :).

The positivity of the description is still conveyed by the positive typifications (e.g. "in good shape," "looks are in order"), as in the previous examples of this section. The difference, however, is that the CTP explicitly denotes the "I" figure as the one who has assessed and is committed to the truth of the content in the actual world of the speech event. As evidence for the claim, the writer cites his past behaviors and their cumulative effects ("active [sports]

---

[93] In fact, the two kinds of interpretations may not be far apart in the process of interpretation for some. One of the respondents in the questionnaire had initially typified the writer as "honest" (*rehellinen*) but had later crossed it out and replaced it with "insecure" (*epävarma*), a word also used by the writer herself (*Epävarma ~~rehellinen~~* [T1/17]) (see also 4.2.4).

hobbies”). Since both the claim and the evidence are grounded in the writer’s perspective and no other sources are even implied, it is inferable that the writer is also the source of the positive value and the author of the signs that express it. As the writer’s own sarcastic comment (“and this is of course a completely objective assessment”) suggests, the empirical verifiability of such self-initiated evaluative descriptions and their evidence is very limited. Expressions of desire, such as *haluan* (“I want”) and *haluaisin* (“I would want”), in contrast, are future-oriented and model a wished-for world of desires and ideals to the actualization of which the writer is committed and are therefore less easily contestable (cf. e.g. 5.4d). The modes and statuses of commitment, explicitly formulated or implicitly inferred, then, are essential for the consequences of evaluative stancetaking in online dating advertisements.

## 5.3 THE POETICIZATION OF EVALUATIVE STANCES AND THE RELATIVIZATION OF COMMITMENT

Let us now summarize and elaborate the discussion above, starting with an additional example that is slightly more explicit in terms of metapragmatic commentary. It crystallizes some of the questions above. The comment in excerpt (5.19) is situated towards the end of the text. It follows the writer’s first segment of self-description and precedes a latter, shorter one:

(5.19) Enkä$_j$ todellakaan ole niin mukava kuin minkälaisen kuvan tässä ehkä annan$_k$ :D¶
(5.19) And I$_j$ am certainly not as nice as the kind of image I$_k$ may give here :D¶

The comment typifies the anticipated effect of the self-presentation as “nice.” The latter 1SG reference (*annan$_k$*) points to the main animator of the speech event, i.e., the specific persona that gives the impression of niceness “here” in this event. It contrasts with the former 1SG reference (*Enkä$_j$ – – ole*), which points to a broader persona that has the power to evaluate and contradict the animator. That is, self$_j$ does not entirely commit to what self$_k$ has communicated “here.” The two personae are, however, linked to each another on an evaluative scale. Self$_j$ is *not as nice as* self$_k$, but not unrelated or entirely dissimilar either. The latter embodies a kind of idealized high point of selfhood on the presumed evaluative scale, a “promotional” persona. To summarize some of the intricacies from the standpoint of discursive agency, we may note that the writer-person simultaneously:

(a) is the animator of the “nice” self-presentation
(b) is the author of both figure self$_j$ and figure self$_k$ in the above comment
(c) is, as its voluntary animator, at least in some non-specified way committed to the truth of the “nice” self-presentation
(d) is, as figure self$_j$, explicitly *not* committed to the “nice” self-presentation

How to interpret the apparent contradiction of commitments here? We may note the "very happy" smiley at the end of (5.19), which indicates that the writer's comment about the discrepancy between the two personae should be taken "humorously." Humorous effects require some presupposed common ground between participants as the basis of humor. In this case, that basis may be, for instance, common beliefs about particular forms of idealized self-presentation that are only true in a specific mode and are to be interpreted with a pinch of salt (see also chapter 7). We might, for instance, conclude that the writer-person appears in (5.19) as a mere *co*-author of the "nice" self-presentation. It is equally co-authored by those presumed cultural norms of self-presentation that can lead to the kind of self-presentation that one *both* animates *and* contradicts. In other words, reflexive models of semiotic behavior (such as "promotional" discourses or the online dating advertisement genre) function as the voice of generalized others that project entitlements and commitments on the self and that one can also distribute agency and accountability to (see also Mead 1934: 156–158). Commitment to the truth of the presented content is, then, narrowed towards a specific persona in a specific world. That persona is grounded and embedded in another one, who is well aware of the complex relation between the two personae. That is, the previous example brings on stage the same friction between animators, authors, and principals that we saw in earlier examples but in a more explicitly figured way.

All of the examples above seemed to acknowledge the challenging nature of both (a) the self-authoring of naturalized and objectified evaluative stances and (b) the unipolarity of the presumed model of self-presentation. Some saw it relatively more as a problem, some relatively more as a possibility; some as something to avoid, some as something to engage in.[94] Such strategies can be seen as different kinds of individual stances towards the same cultural practices. Citing individual negative facts among positive ones as well as animating a secondary authorial voice in parentheses recurred in several examples, which suggests that such patterns of evaluative stancetaking may be relatively "conventionalized" traits of the genre. The performances that such features were part of relativize the writer's commitment so that it mainly applies in the ideal world inhabited by the promotional persona. In a sense, then, the "poeticization" of evaluative stances through such performances may to some effect counterbalance the "naturalization" of evaluation in this type of stancetaking (cf. Parmentier 1994; also Fairclough 2003: 182–184).

The analyses above point to the complicated nature of the presentation of self in this context: How to conform to several divergent norms at once? How to fulfill the goal of the genre and appeal to ideal respondents but still appear

[94] It is also noteworthy that the problematic aspects only seem to apply to "positive" evaluative stancetaking. That is, such practices are asymmetric in relation to polarity. The higher the stake one is claiming at a social game, the more susceptible it seems to be to suspicion. (See also chapter 7.)

human(e)? How to simultaneously avoid braggadocio and self-deprecation? How to aspire to ideal forms of personhood and stay true to one's own and others' perceptions of oneself? The choice between a unipolar and a bipolar model of evaluative stancetaking is in itself an act of identity. The writers can be interpreted differently by respondents on the basis of that choice. Awareness of such social consequences may increase the need to justify the choice and to execute it with heightened precision and control. The "performances of human(e)ness" analyzed above seem to open a space of self-awareness between the texts and the presumed stereotypes in order to reconcile "promotionality" with other models of personhood. The performances and their explicit or implicit metadiscursive commentary on evaluative stancetaking seem to mediate between different personae and conflicting models (cf. Holmes 2004; Ben-Ze'ev 2004: 173; Korobov & Laplante 2013). The implicit model of personhood that such examples seem to point to, referred to here as "human(e)ness," not only approves of but almost seems to necessitate certain negative traits, a few rough edges. The performances of "human(e)ness" in a sense deconstruct the difference between unipolar and bipolar models of evaluation. They set up an interpretative frame in which, for instance, isolated negative characteristics become positively valued in light of the total effect or the ultimate consequences.

A heightened reflexive awareness of and orientation to the relationship between the person and the personae performed in the text leads to texts in which the problem of performing one's personhood also becomes performed in the text – distinguishing more clearly, for instance, between animators, authors, and different kinds of principals or the person-as-promoter and the person-as-promotee. Interpretations of coherence between such fractions of personhood will be returned to in chapters 7 and 8. Such distancing performances could be seen as one way of resisting the threat of "commodification" – or the reduction of the self to a mere list of positive characteristics – that has been associated with "promotional" discourse (see Coupland 1996; cf. however Agha 2011a). That is, the above examples could be seen as the writers' attempts to assert their agency against commodifying social practices through their metadiscursive capacity (or as just a conscious form of succumbing to those practices).

## 5.4 ANTICIPATING OTHERS' INTERPRETATIONS

This section expands the previous ones by looking at the writers' anticipation of others' interpretants of the signs they have animated. The patterns of evaluative stancetaking in this section orient to possible but non-desired or non-ideal interpretations. They reflect the writers' commitment to particular interpretants and their wish to reject other interpretants, which they are nevertheless able to anticipate based on, for instance, an understanding of

others' partly differing ontologies, epistemic formations, or denotational stereotypes. This section, then, focuses on the writers' attempts to control sign-interpretant relations, or the consequences of their signs. (A particular focus will be placed on representational interpretants; chapter 6 will take notice of affective and energetic ones.) In a sense, the cases dealt with in this section are at the heart of selfhood, as they make visible the reflexive processes of caring about and committing to others' interpretants of one's signs.[95] In many cases, others' interpretants figure as *internalized*, i.e., as belonging to the self and having been taken into account in one's behavior (see the discussion of Me-self in 2.3.1). In some cases, however, non-ideal interpretants are explicitly *dialogized* and *othered* as belonging to a type of addressee, not the self. (See Kockelman 2010: 128; Wilce 2009a: 59.)

The writer in such cases is primarily taking a negative stance towards others' *acts of interpreting* him or her with a particular representational interpretant, not necessarily the *content* of the interpretant as such. For instance, in the following example, the writer rejects an interpretation that could be made on the basis of what was said earlier about her hobbies. The negation and the contrastive structures clearly dissociate the unwanted description ("a bundle of energy brimming with endless drive and dashing forward all the time") from the writer, and contrast it with the ensuing hedonistic imagery that she does commit to:

(5.20) Harrastukseni ovat urheilullisia, mutta kropan kurittamisen ohella myös pääkopan sivistäminen on minulle tärkeää. **En kuitenkaan ole** koko ajan eteenpäin säntäävä, loputonta energiaa pursuava tehopakkaus, **vaan** sohvalla makoilu ja hyvän ruoan ja juoman nauttiminen ovat myös arjen kohokohtia.
(5.20) My hobbies are athletic, but in addition to tormenting my body I also find it important to educate myself. **I am not, however,** a bundle of energy brimming with endless drive and dashing forward all the time, **but** lying on the sofa and enjoying good food and drink are also highlights of my everyday life.

The formulation of the rejected social type itself, however, might also be understood as relatively positive ("a bundle of energy brimming with endless drive…"). The connotation of *sännätä* ("to dash"), implying a sort of rash and irrational movement, is the only clear sour tone.[96] Writers may perfectly well

[95] In another (pragmatist) terminology, we are dealing in this section with discursive manifestations of what Charles H. Cooley (1956 [1902]: 184) named the "looking-glass self," a self-conception consisting of three elements: (1) the imagination of our appearance to others, (2) the imagination of their judgment of that appearance, and (3) a self-feeling (such as pride or shame) resulting from that imagination.

[96] And, in fact, the scope of the negation and the position of the adverb *koko ajan* ("all the time") in the clause structure could be construed in two different ways. In one construal, the writer merely temporally restricts the appropriateness of the description: "However, I am not all the time a bundle of energy… [but I am sometimes]." This would also change the construal of the additive relation

wish to reject such interpretations that either they or others do consider positive on the level of desires or ideals – but that the writers are either not willing or not able to pull off. They are, then, problematic only *as interpretants* of the self in the context of a particular social relation. One may, for instance, reject an anticipated interpretation, if one considers it "too good" from the standpoint of oneself or "too demanding" from the standpoint of others (e.g., "I don't mean that you should be a runner-up of some beauty pageant, quite the contrary," *En kuitenkaan tarkoita, että sinun olisi oltava joku missikisojen perintöprinsessakaan, päinvastoin*). Usually, however, it is quite clearly a negative stance towards some social type that leads to the rejection of an anticipated interpretation (e.g., "If the first things that came to your mind are trendy clothes, a convertible, and a high education then please move on to the next advertisement," *Jos mieleesi tuli ensimmäiseksi trendikkäät ryysyt,avoauto ja korkea koulutus niin ole hyvä ja hiihdä seuraavaan ilmoon*). In short, the particular reasons for and the complex metastance relations behind the negative stances taken towards representational interpretants vary in the following examples – and are sometimes more, sometimes less recoverable empirically from the data available.

Another specification is in order as well. The cases in this section deal with non-desired *interpretations* of one's own signs. A closely related set of cases in which the writers orient to types of non-desired *interpreters*, i.e., types of persons whom the writer wishes to exclude from the group of respondents altogether, will be examined in chapter 6. It is in such cases, when the writers explicitly address and reject non-desired *alters*, that the self-other disjuncture receives its fullest extent. The examples examined in this section deal with stereotypic, inferable, or otherwise anticipatable links between positive and negative characteristics. The general pattern is as follows: some characteristic ($C_1$) described by the writer (e.g., a role name, an attribute, or a behavior) is explicitly or implicitly dissociated from one or more other characteristics ($C'_1 \ldots C'_n$) that are somehow incompatible with the writer's ideals. There is, then, some presupposed *general* cultural or experiential link between the ideal interpretations and the rejected ones, but in the case of the *particular* figures at play (the writer, ideal readers) that link is severed. This section, therefore, also relates to the concerns of the previous chapter, since the cases examined make explicit the writers' understandings of alternative inferences and alternative theoretical representations of the same processes. That is, they make visible the writers' own orientations and attitudes towards social and linguistic realities as well as the writers' understandings of others' corresponding orientations and attitudes.

---

expressed by *myös* ("also"), i.e., whether the state of affairs that "lying on the sofa…" is paralleled with is "[being] a bundle of energy…" or "tormenting my body" and "educat[ing] myself."

The rejection of non-desired interpretations is a pervasive phenomenon in the data. Table 8 illustrates some of the simplest kinds of cases. Most of the examples are textual patterns in which the writers either describe the attributes or habits of themselves or others (adjectives, VPs) or identify themselves or others with a role name (NPs). These different kinds of typifications are closely related via cultural knowledge and stereotypes. One enables inferences about the other: role names allow inferences about the typical attributes and behaviors of that type of person and, vice versa, descriptions of attributes or behaviors point to a set of appropriate noun phrases that could be used to designate that type of person. In the examples below, the writers explicitly reject negative role names, attributes, or habits suggested by the descriptions they formulate. They may also specify the proper degree of some characteristic by renouncing descriptions of excessive or insufficient degrees of the characteristic. These patterns, then, point to the kinds of diacritics that separate ideal and non-ideal personae from one another.

| **Textual pattern** | **Presented information and allowed inferences** | **Examples of rejected inferences** |
|---|---|---|
| | Role name | Attribute or habit |
| (5.21a)<br>My favorite character in Winnie the Pooh is Eeyore, **but** I am still capable of (sometimes even unfounded) optimism concerning my future<br>*Suosikkihahmoni Nalle Puhissa on Ihaa, mutta pystyn silti (joskus katteettomaankin) optimismiin tulevaisuuden suhteen — tässä minä nytkin olen kirjoittamassa treffi-ilmoitusta :)* | [Identifies metaphorically with] “Eeyore” > [has some of the characteristics of Eeyore] | “Eeyore” > “pessimist” |
| (5.21b)<br>I’m no sports enthusiast, **but** I try to keep fit.<br>*En ole mikään himosporttailija, mutta yritän pitää kuitenkin kuntoa yllä.* | “not a sports enthusiast” > “does not particularly enjoy sports” | “not a sports enthusiast” > “does not do sports a lot” > “not fit” |
| (5.21c)<br>I am quite the romantic **but still** a reasonable, down-to-earth Karelian-born woman.<br>*Olenkin melkoinen romantikko, mutta silti jalat maassa oleva, järkevä karjalaissyntyinen nainen.* [See example 4.1.] | “a romantic” | “a romantic” > “impractical, daydreamer” |

| **Textual pattern** | **Presented information and allowed inferences** | **Examples of rejected inferences** |
|---|---|---|
| (5.21d)<br>Because of my sports hobbies, I stay fit, both mentally and physically. – – As for my looks, I could say that I look quite nice. I have even been complimented as being handsome, and not just by my girlfriends and my mom. **Still**, I am not the Mister Finland type.<br>*Liikuntaharrastusteni takia olen hyvässä kunnossa, sekä henkisesti että fyysisesti. – – Ulkonäöstäni voisin sanoa olevani ihan kivannäköinen. On minua joskus komeaksikin kehuttu, muutkin kuin tyttöystävät ja äiti. En kuitenkaan ole mikään Mister Finland -tyyppi.* | Attribute or habit<br><br>“fit mentally and physically, handsome” | Role name<br><br>“The Mister Finland type” [Refers to a stereotype of the contestants of male pageants.] |
| (5.21e)<br>I hunger for romance and like to be petted and pampered. **Even so**, I am not a princess who cries about a pea under the mattress.<br>*Olen romantiikannälkäinen ja tykkään, että minua hellitään ja hemmotellaan. En silti ole prinsessa, joka itkee herneitä patjan alla.* | “likes romance and pampering” | “A princess who cries about a pea under the mattress” > “spoiled” [Refers to a fairy tale character.] |

| **Textual pattern** | **Presented information and allowed inferences** | **Examples of rejected inferences** |
|---|---|---|
| (5.21f)<br>I want a man who is satisfied with what he sees in the mirror but **without being too vain**.<br>*Haluan miehen joka tyytyväinen siihen mitä näkee peilistä olematta kuitenkaan liian itserakas* | Attribute or habit<br><br>“satisfied with one’s own physical appearance” | Excessive degree of the attribute or habit<br><br>“vain” |
| (5.21g)<br>I hope you are fairly uninhibited **but not** ‘pervy’, whatever that means...<br>*Olethan suht estoton, et kuitenkaan ’pervo’, mitä ikinä sekin tarkoittaa...* | “uninhibited” | “’pervy’” |

Table 8. *Rejecting unwanted interpretations.*

Some of the examples in the table explicitly coordinate two or more ideal characteristics and merely imply that their co-occurrence is somehow unexpected. In such cases the rejected inference ($C'_1$) remains relatively implicit. Example (5.21c), for instance, claims that the writer is a “romantic” ($C_1$) and implies (“but still”) that the characteristic does not stereotypically

combine with attributes such as "reasonable" ($C_2$) or "down-to-earth" ($C_3$). The implicitly rejected characteristic ($C'_1$), then, is some stereotypic characteristic of "romantics" that somehow contradicts the kind of practical reasonability described by $C_2$ and $C_3$ (such as "daydreamer" like qualities). The decribed characteristics ($C_2$, $C_3$) serve directly as proof against the implicit rejected characteristic ($C'_1$). The rejected characteristic is merely implicitly projected both by stereotypes of personhood (i.e., knowledge about what "romantics" can or cannot be like) and the (antonymous) sense-relations of $C_2$ and $C_3$ (e.g., $C'_1 \neq$ "down-to-earth"; $C'_1 \neq$ "reasonable"). With a pattern like this, the writer does identify with the stereotype of "romantics" but only in a modified form (i.e., building a new emergent configuration of diacritics).

Other examples formulate the rejected characteristic more explicitly. Example (5.21d), for instance, first describes characteristics such as "physically fit" ($C_1$) and "handsome" ($C_2$). After that, the writer dissociates himself from what he calls the "Mister Finland type" ($C'_1$), an interpretation activated by $C_1$ and $C_2$. The use of the role name presumes that the social type is to some degree recognizable for the addressee and locatable on a map of the social world. Both in example (5.21d) and the following example (5.21e), the rejected role names ("the Mister Finland type"; "a princess that cries about a pea under the mattress") point to either completely fictive realms or such social realms that are somewhat remote from the everyday life of an average person. That is, they would probably be interpreted relatively metaphorically (cf. sections 4.4.3 and 4.4.4) and might be given adequate paraphrases with more everyday designations (e.g. "macho" or "exceptionally fit and good-looking"; "spoiled," "cry-baby," etc.). In fact, once again the stereotypic connotations of the symbolic designations ("the Mister Finland type"; "a princess that cries about a pea under the mattress") are not highly negative in any unanimous sense. Rather, it is the negation and distancing from the self that imply an evaluative stance. However, the rejection of "the Mister Finland type" as an interpretant of the self might as easily be motivated by a negative stance towards that social type (e.g., not liking "the Mister Finland type") as by a fear of promising too much in a positive sense (e.g., not claiming to be that fit or good-looking). One might argue that, from the standpoint of the respondent, the interpretation of the text requires some inference about the writer's stance towards the social type as such to properly motivate the rejection of it as an interpretant of the self. As will be seen later, in many cases the formulation of the rejected representational interpretant is much more revealing of the writer's stance.

The last example (5.21g) in Table 8 is particularly interesting, since the rejected designation ("'pervy'", '*pervo*') is explicitly singled out with quotes to draw attention to it *as a word* (see also section 4.4.5). In addition, the writer explicitly notes that the meaning of the word is somewhat unclear or disputable ("whatever that means..."). The example makes visible the distinction between 'uninhibited' behaviors as such and the symbols that

denote such forms of “unhibitedness.” The designation for the excessive degree (“‘pervy’”) is animated by the writer with a certain insecurity and distanced from the self as the word of others and as pointing to others’ behaviors. That is, the writer orients to two kinds of diacritics: embodied social behaviors and discursive practices. The line between the acceptable and the excessive is drawn both at the level of behavior (not behaving in too ‘uninhibited’ ways) and discourse (not behaving in ways that are talked about as “perviness”). The example makes explicit a more general concern, the calibration of symbols to actual embodied behaviors (see also sections 5.2.1 and 7.2). It is probably safe to say that in most cases the writers are controlling representational interpretants precisely in order to control consequences at the level of actual embodied behaviors. That is, they are ultimately not interested in representations or words *per se* but in how others actually look or behave or what others expect them to actually look or behave like. Many of the cases in this section simultaneously deal with both levels: (1) how the same linguistic signs can be differently interpreted and (2) how the objects made knowable by the interpretation of linguistic signs can be further interpreted as signs of personhood.

Let us now take a look at two more complex cases. The first might be regarded as relatively more “dialogized” and the latter as relatively more “internalized.” In example (5.22), the writer first approaches a description of his persona by positing it in a middle ground between negative extremes ($C'_1$ and $C'_2$). After that he presents a general ideological formulation ($C_1$) that applies to all individuals and crystallizes his ideal of personhood (“one must have self-esteem and honesty”). It is inferable that $C'_1$ and $C'_2$ are particular examples of cases that fall outside the ideal. Furthermore, it is strongly implied that the writer himself does, in fact, fulfill or instantiate the ideal and that ideal respondents should too:

> (5.22) En ole **avaruuteen kurkottaja** ($C'_1$) mutten myöskään pidä **siitä että ”tässä maan matosena kuljen”** ($C'_2$) itsetuntoa ja rehellisyyttä pitää olla ($C_1$).
>
> (5.22) I am not one who reaches for space but I don’t like it either that “here I walk as a worm of the earth” one must have self-esteem and honesty.

With the initial negation the writer dissociates himself from the kind of persona designated by the NP *avaruuteen kurkottaja* (“one who reaches for space”). The attributes and habits associated with this role name are left for the respondents to infer based on general cultural knowledge, and might be, for instance, along the line of “excessive ambitiousness” or even “arrogance.” Secondly, within the same sentence the writer dissociates himself from another kind of social persona by denoting a negative stance towards a quoted segment of their speech (“here I walk as a worm of the earth,” *“tässä maan matosena kuljen”*). The represented speech can be interpreted as the

kind of thing the non-ideal type of other would say or think.[97] That is, the indexical origo of the 1SG and spatiotemporal deictics ("here," *tässä*) in the quote is an imagined typical event in the life of the non-ideal type. The reported speech itself interdiscursively sources from Biblical discourse an idiomatic expression of humility and insignificance ("a worm of the earth," *maan matonen*), which is projected as a self-initiated designation (i.e., as if the quoted person himself had used that designation about himself). These elements suggest an exaggerated or ironic voicing. That is, there is a superimposition of the writer's voice and the figure's voice so that the signs are at least partly composed by the writer to serve his interests. In other words, the persona of the other is inhabited not to represent it realistically (i.e., as they would actually speak) but to caricature aspects of it so that their speech would maximally correspond with and justify the writer's negative interpretation of them (see also section 7.1.2). In a sense, then, the writer is speaking his own mind with another person's mouth, or invading the persona of an other to make a point about himself. For instance, a particular kind of ("Biblical") humility is caricatured, dissociated from characteristics such as "self-esteem," excluded from ideal types of personhood, and described as the object of negative affect. Moreover, the writer's stance is naturalized by grounding it in the others' own purported speech behaviors.

The text carves out a model of ideal personhood in the social space by delineating the ideal from the excessive and the insufficient. All this happens within a single orthographic unit (which is unorthodox from the standpoint of official norms of writing but makes sense functionally). The text starts by setting points of reference in the non-ideal extremes and by distancing the self from non-ideal others ("one who reaches for space" <> "a worm of the earth"). What lies between in the middle ground is represented as the domain of "self-esteem" and "honesty" in which the self resides and others should as well. Even such a short segment of text diagrams a relatively complex set of social relations. There is a core set of diacritics that the writer uses to evaluate persons. They might be described as, say, a balance between assertion of oneself and accountability to oneself. These diacritics are then layered with more specific emblematic values and justified ideologically (e.g., described symbolically as "self-esteem" and "honesty" that one "must have" in order to avoid the excesses of individual hubris or Biblical humility). Similar patterns are common in the data (see also example 5.23). It is also noteworthy that, in this case, the diacritics are relevant for the ongoing interactional event as well. That is, the described ideals of personhood also implicitly regiment the ongoing evaluative self-presentation as one kind of practice in which the general characteristics of "self-esteem" and "honesty"

[97] Strictly speaking, there is nothing in the example that forces one to attribute the voice to another *person*. It might also be understood as a voicing of another, non-ideal or imagined, persona of the writer himself. Nevertheless, it is not the *actual* persona currently inhabited by the writer and, therefore, an *other*.

should be manifested. (For the more general relationship between description and performance, see sections 4.1 and 4.2.)

The writers can also undertake the task of deconstructing or modifying the stereotypes they orient to. That is, while they presume and reparticularize such stereotypes in their text, they simultaneously attempt to change or reorganize them. Instead of merely rejecting potentially negative interpretations, they can use them as building blocks and useful contrasts for new, emergent figures. Such textual patterns then function as metasemiotic constructs that re-regroup the diacritics associated with a stereotype and give them new emblematic values. In example (5.23), the writer orients to the disclosure of his profession as an act with potentially negative consequences because of the interpretations he assumes others might make. At least in light of his performance, the writer has thoroughly internalized others' interpretants of his profession. It is considered a stigmatizing part of the self that the writer has to somehow explain and deal with:

(5.23) ¶Oman ammatin **myöntäminen pelottaa** aina, mutta tulisi sekin kai jossain vaiheessa ilmi. **Olen insinööri-ihmisiä** [*be*:IND.PRS.1SG *engineer_person*:PL.PTV] ja ihan vakituisissa oman alan töissä. **En todellakaan ole mikään elämäntapainsinööri**, enkä tuo töitä kotiin, vaan jätän ne toimistolle. **Työt töinä ja oma elämä omana elämänä.** Tiedän, kuinka paljon insinöörejä **karsastetaan**, ja **<u>ihan aiheesta</u>**. **<u>Ei meikäläistäkään kiinnosta</u>** kun esimerkiksi työpaikan saunailloissa jotkut **<u>nörtit</u>** kertovat naama vaahdoten muutaman oluen jälkeen rakentelemistaan ihmeellisistä vempaimista... Tyylinsä kullakin. Noh, alaa tuskin vaihdan, pidän vaan elämää tasapainossa sitten muulla tavalla. Ai niin, en pukeudu kauluspaitoihin ja kainaloihin asti vedettyihin suoriin housuihin, vaan rock-henkisemmin. Joku onkin sanonut, että näytän enemmän teinirock-bändin rumpalilta kuin keskimääräiseltä diplomi-insinööriltä. :) Noh, mielestäni en kyllä näytä kummaltakaan. :)¶

(5.23) ¶**Admitting** [my] own profession **frightens** [me] always, but I suppose it would come up at some point. **I am an engineer** ["an engineer person," "of the category of engineer persons"] and I have a permanent job in my own field. **But I'm certainly no lifestyle engineer** [i.e., being an engineer is certainly not a way of life for me], and I don't bring work home, but leave it at the office. **Work as work and own life as own life**. I know how engineers **are shunned**, and **<u>quite rightly so</u>**. **I'm <u>not interested either</u>** when, for example, during company sauna nights after a few beers some **<u>nerds</u>** start ranting about the weird contraptions they've built... To each their own [lit. "everyone has their own style"]. Well, I doubt I'll be changing fields anyway. I'll just try to keep my life in balance in other ways. Oh yeah, I don't wear dress shirts and straight trousers pulled up to my armpits, but in a more rock-oriented way. In fact, someone has said that I look more like a drummer of a teen rock band than like an average engineer. :) Well, in my own opinion, I don't look like either one. :)¶

Before revealing his profession ("I am an engineer person" or "of the category of engineer persons," *Olen insinööri-ihmisiä*), the writer describes that act as

something that “frightens” him and names it as “admitting,” i.e., as an act stereotypically caused by an external pressure. An example like this might, then, be considered as an orientation to a “feared self” (see section 2.3.1). In fact, in many ways the writer agrees with the generalized other. The underlined parts are examples of points where the writer clearly ratifies others’ negative stances towards engineers. For instance, he represents a general stance without an explicit source (“engineers are shunned”) and supports it with his own stances (“quite righly so”; “I’m not…either”).

The writer’s defensive strategy is to first split the problematic type of personhood in two: into “lifestyle engineers” (negative) and an initially unnamed type of non-lifestyle engineers (non-negative) that the writer identifies with. He then attempts to demonstrate that the latter is, in fact, a type of engineer that the common stereotypes do not apply to. Part of the writer’s strategy is to maintain a clear distinction between his professional and personal life (“work as work and own life as own life”). That is, regardless of what the respondent is or is not willing to believe about engineers, that is only one fraction of his identity. The second step of the strategy is to personally ratify many of the presumably common prejudices about engineers – that is, to join the attack along with the generalized other. Several negatively portrayed attributes and behaviors (working hours, interests, conversational habits, clothing) are redirected specifically towards the category of “lifestyle engineers” that are now also referred to as “nerds,” here used as a negative outgroup designation (cf. section 5.2.1). Finally, the writer replaces some of the refuted stereotypic images with more suitable ones. The appearance of a non-lifestyle engineer is dissociated from that of a “lifestyle engineer” (e.g., trousers up to the armpits) and linked to positive, “rock-oriented” images.

What links this example with all the others in this section is the fact that there is explicit negative stancetaking towards something that is considered a possible but non-desirable interpretation of the self’s signs. Therefore, in many cases, the object of negativity is something close to or easily associatable to self. If no conceivable link existed, such dissociative patterns would be pointless. Like the earlier examples (5.20) and (5.22), the previous one exhibits an intricate pattern of diacritics that distinguish the self from some closely associated other in terms of more or less perceivable signs. Example (5.23) also gives an overarching representational interpretation of the distinction: “lifestyle engineers” versus a kind of “rock drummer engineer.” We can, then, view this as an example of *stereotypical dualism* (see e.g. Hall 1992: 215–216) and *dissociative argumentation* (Perelman 2002: 159–171). Other examples of the kinds of symbolic oppositions that such self-other dissociations are based on in the data include, for instance, “traditional” versus “modern” (grandmotherhood), “deep” versus “shallow” or “materialistic” versus “spiritual” (values); “authentic” versus “inauthentic” (attitudes). Finally, one might conclude that the previous example is clearly *stigmaoriented* (i.e., it treats some of one’s characteristics as contradicting

with one's own and others' norms or ideals) but not exactly *stigmaphilic* as one might think, for instance, example (5.13) is in section 5.2.2 (cf. Goffman 1990 [1963]: 21–22, 31–32, 44). The previous example combines confessional and defensive strategies, whereas in example (5.13) the writer is not even attempting to pass as "normal," gain acceptance, or explain away the stigma but, rather, revels in the fact and uses it to select for respondents who could accept her regardless of the stigmatizing characteristics (i.e., the "own" or the "wise" in Goffman's terms).[98]

## 5.5 DEFENDING ONE'S ACT OF PARTICIPATION AGAINST NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES

This section takes a look at a special case of evaluative stancetaking, in which the writers defend themselves against presumed negative stances towards online dating and online daters in general. The issue will be taken up again from the standpoint of the metadiscourse data in section 7.1.1 and summed up in the discussion in chapter 8. This section takes a look at the advertisement texts alone. In these cases, compared with the previous section, the negativity or potential stigma that the writers orient to derives not from their described characteristics but from the participation in the practice of online dating – which, of course, is one kind of sign of the self too. Presuming that a negative image of personhood befalls anyone who merely takes up the genre implicitly also projects a similar stigmatizing image onto the respondents, who are in a similar or intimately related role. Such aspects, however, are never explicitly dealt with in the data. The examples in this section focus solely on the writer.

About 10–15 % of the texts, depending on the strictness of the criteria, include a pattern that explicitly explains or justifies the motives and reasons for engaging in the activity of online dating. Usually it is located towards the beginning of the text. In the first example (5.24a), for instance, the writer makes his point very explicit. According to him, all people encountered on

---

[98] Another writer first describes his text as "not much of an advertisement" (*Eipä tämäkään teksti toisaalta ole kummoinen ilmoitus*, cf. example 5.13 in 5.2.2) and continues: "To make sure that no one contacts me, let me add that I have mental problems" (*Jotta kukaan ei varmasti ottaisi yhteyttä niin kerrotaan vielä, että olen mielenterveysongelmainen*). That is, he presumes that (a) in the context of online dating advertisements stereotypically non-positive information is automatically problematic and leads to negative responses from others, and (b) his self-presentation is so stigmatizing that it completely sieves off all respondents. Reveling in the futility of the effort can, of course, be interpreted as one more strategy that may appeal to a particular type of respondent. In fact, the ending of his text clearly betrays a personal tone of bleak humor: "I watch porn daily and I don't like morning shows on the radio. Amen. Oh, and I'm an atheist too" (*Katson pornoa päivittäin enkä pidä radion aamuohjelmista. Aamen. Niin ja ateistikin olen*).

the Internet should be treated with initial caution (see also 7.1.1), which is why he takes the time to assure his readers that *he* is not a threat:

(5.24a) ¶Hei, Kiitos kun avasit tämän lukuisten ilmoitusten joukosta. Toivo[i]nkin, että runsaasta valikoimasta valitsisit juuri tämän. Ihan aluksi totean, että tämän ilmoituksen takana on ihan täyspäinen mies. Sanon näin, koska netissä varmasti liikkuu monenlaisia viheltäjiä.
(5.24a) ¶Hi, Thanks that you opened this [one] among the many ads. I [am/was] hoping that out of the wide selection you would choose this one. Let me start by saying that there is a completely sane man behind this ad. I'm saying this, because there are for sure many kinds of questionable persons [litt. whistlers] on the move on the Internet.

In the second example (5.24b), in contrast, the writer focuses on the consequences of online dating by expressing a lack of faith in "virtual worlds," echoing similar negative stereotypes as were seen in the previous example. That is, she does not really believe that online dating would work. Simultaneously, however, she leaves a door open for a change of attitude:

(5.24b) [Title] Vastauksia vienoon toiveeseen… ¶Pimeän Syksyn lähestyessä rohkenen kokeilla onneani täällä.. vaikken juuri tällaiseen virtuaalimaailmaan uskokaan.. kerta se tosin voi olla ensimmäinenkin kun mieli kääntyy:)
(5.24b) [Title] Replies to a modest wish… ¶As dark Fall approaches I venture to try my luck here.. although I don't quite believe in a virtual world like this.. there's a first time for everything though and I may change my mind:)

The title of the text ("Replies to a modest wish…") metapragmatically typifies the advertisement as a "modest wish" and implicitly encourages respondents to produce desired responses ("replies"). That is, the writer's wishes and her anticipation of actual consequences seem to contradict. Nevertheless, making that contradiction explicit seemingly reduces the writer's stakes in the game and shows that she has a realistic awareness of the situation (i.e., she is prepared for the worst-case scenario too). Example (5.24b) also makes a dramatized reference to the approaching season (*Pimeä Syksy*, "dark Fall").[99] As was seen in section 4.4.3, online dating advertisements are sometimes contextualized in light of biographic or seasonal trajectories. That is, the interactional event is explicitly located as a point on a biographic time scale. When such contextualizations include explanations of why one is single and looking for a partner through online dating, they have the additional function of justifying why it is "normal" or appropriate to engage in online dating in the kind of biographic situation the writer is in (e.g., if other methods are not available or have not been successful; see example 4.28 in 4.4.3).

[99] "Dramatized" because in Finnish the names of seasons (as well as days of the week, months) are not normally spelled with capital letters.

Negative general preconceptions can also be turned into the virtues of the particular writer. Like example (5.24b), the following two examples strongly imply that the consequences of online dating advertisements are rarely desirable and therefore engaging in the activity requires a suitable attitude. In the following cases, the focus is on the formulation of that attitude in a positive light, for instance, as "optimism":

(5.25a) ¶Kokeilenpas nyt sitten tätä nettihakuakin… – – [M]utta pystyn silti (joskus katteettomaankin) **optimismiin** tulevaisuuden suhteen — tässä minä nytkin olen kirjoittamassa treffi-ilmoitusta :)
(5.25a) ¶Well, I'll give this net search a try too now. – – [B]ut I am still capable of (sometimes even unfounded) **optimism** concerning my future – see, here I am writing a dating ad just now :)

(5.25b) ¶Olen avoin, empaattinen, elämästä utelias, innostuva ja toivoton **optimisti** (siksi täälläkin).
(5.25b) ¶I'm open, empathic, curious about life, enthusiastic and a hopeless **optimist** (that's why [I'm] here too). [--]

Let us now take a look at two more examples that discuss such negative stereotypes more specifically in the light of texts and interaction. The writer of (5.26), first of all, claims that he has read a number of women's advertisements and, therefore, has an empirical grasp of what women are saying they are looking for. He can, therefore, plausibly typify himself as "tolerable" or even "desirable" from the women readers' perspective. The formulation of his next move, however, implies that such men should or would *not* normally be writing an online dating advertisement. The combination of a question word and an interrogative clitic implies that the utterance is a reformulation of someone else's actual or potential question. It confirms one's understanding of the other's interrogative intentions. That is, the writer animates a question as if it was asked by the respondent ("Why am I writing here then, one might ask?" or "Why am I writing here then? Is that what you're asking?"). In the writer's underlying interpretation, then, the kinds of desirable men women are looking for on online dating forums are not usually found there – because they have "normal" options for courtship available – and women know and expect that – otherwise they would have no reason to ask why such a desirable man is writing there:

(5.26) ¶Sikäli kuin luin ilmoituksia ja yhtään maailmasta tai naisista ymmärrän, olen siis varsin siedettävä mies. Haluttava jopa.
**Miksi=kö sitten tänne kirjoittelen?**
[why=Q then here write:1sg.ind.pres]
Ainakin haluan päästä kertomaan, mitä haluan. – – Kyllästynyt odottelemaan, että satun tutustumaan oikeanlaiseen naiseen.

(5.26) As far as I read from these ads and understand anything about the world or women, I'm a fairly tolerable man. Desirable even.

**Why am I writing here then, you/one might ask?**

At least I want to get to tell what I want. – – Tired of waiting that I'll just happen to meet the right kind of woman.

The writer's view seems to implicitly resonate with and recycle common images of, for instance, the "desperation" of online daters (see also 7.1.1). The writer's reply to the question is equally interesting. As in many of the biographic narratives examined earlier, the writer underlines that online dating is not his only option but merely an appropriate instrument with respect to his particular interests. According to him, the interactional structure of online dating enables particular kinds of discursive acts ("telling what one wants") as well as fast access to particular kinds of selected respondents ("the right kind of woman") (see also example 5.1 and section 7.1.1).

Finally, the last example locates the problem specifically in the semiotic behaviors of the writers of online dating advertisements (see also 7.2.2). According to him, it is the strict demands and the high degree of selectivity, which seems to increase according to the type of social relation one is looking for, that give online daters a bad name:

(5.27) ¶Mikä ihme näissä deittipalveluissa oikein on... ¶Olen lueskellut "ystävää etsitään" ja "ei luokitusta" -ilmoituksia ja niistä**kin** tuntuu löytyvän **vaan vaatimuksia toisen perään**. – – **Itse en** vaan sellaista ymmärrä.

(5.27) ¶What is it with these dating services... ¶I have been reading "looking for a friend" and "no classification" ads and they **too** seem to be filled with nothing but **requirement after requirement**. – – **Personally** I just **cannot** understand that.

Rather than attempting to refute some negative stereotype, the writer in fact ratifies and reinforces one, but attempts to dissociate himself as an individual from it. In that sense, this example is akin to earlier examples (5.13) and (5.22).

To sum up, we have seen that many writers presume and more or less explicitly orient in their writing to negative stereotypes of online dating and online daters (e.g., "online dating requires optimism because it's a hopeless task," "online dating is appropriate only after normal methods have been tried or are not a viable option," "people reading and writing dating advertisements are often suspicious, have undesirable characteristics, and online dating is probably their last or only hope"). To refute negative interpretations of themselves, some writers take explicit counter-stances that rationalize and justify why others should not interpret them in the light of

negative stereotypes.[100] That is, there are systematic relationships between stereotypes of personhood and stereotypes of discursive action that manifest themselves in actual discourse. The conclusion that we can draw is that for some interactants, there are *stigmatized default personae* attached to the genre itself. That is, in addition to dealing with one's own values as an individual self, one has to deal with the value that threatens to fall upon one as an instance of a type of participant. Similarly important – and an additional challenge to self-presentation – is the fact that the stereotypes of personhood associated with a particular communicative practice may differ considerably between semiotic communities, as will be seen more clearly later in chapter 7.

## 5.6 STANCE, EMBLEMATICITY, AND POLARITY IN ONLINE DATING ADVERTISEMENTS

In this chapter, we have seen examples of how writers publicly theorize their values in evaluative stances and how different kinds of reflexive models (e.g., notions of "self-promotion" or "honesty" or "modesty") regiment the distribution of metastance relations. If we now compare chapters 4 and 5 with each other, we can see that any process of idealization or "promotion" of self involves much more than evaluative stancetaking. In fact, the formulation of explicit stances might be one of the more challenging aspects of self-presentation in the context of online dating advertisements. Negative stances in particular make self-other disjunctures and social boundaries clearly visible – and therefore make or break social relations with a certain severity. That is, negative stances sieve and select *efficiently*. Whether that is a problem or a prospect, depends on a particular participant's purposes.

Evaluation manifests itself in online dating advertisements as much through the selection of those "signs of the self" one chooses to entextualize (i.e., as practical agency) as it does through explicit evaluative stancetaking (i.e., as theoretical agency). For instance, the composition and hierarchical structuring of the taxonomies discussed in 4.4.1 can be regarded as a prime example of evalution in biographic discourse. What is included and what is excluded, communicates the values of the writer. The included biographic contents signal which constituents the writers value in their own lives and what types of constituents they consider important in general. The implicit reverse is the enactment of privacy or biographic control. The exclusion of biographic contents signals what types of constituents are considered less

[100] For some writers in the data (collected in 2007), such suspicious attitudes may at least partly be explained by the relative newness of the cultural practice and a lack of prior personal experience. However, even a brief look into brand new advertisements will show that similar phenomena abound eight years later. Most likely, then, such sterotypic conceptions are continuously re-motivated by features of the instrument and its relation to social life (see also chapter 7).

valuable or relevant. Moreover, the more specific organization of whatever is revealed can be interpreted as a sign of the relative importance of individual constituents. That is, the textual patterning is interpretable as iconic to how one evaluates one's kinds (in terms of, say, inalienability and desirability). More important constituents can be, for example, located higher and earlier in such taxonomies.

It is important to note the role of the genre of the ongoing event. For instance, the meaning of such taxonomic structures could be quite different in other contexts. In online dating advertisements, one tends to expect relatively polished and premeditated contributions (see also section 4.2 and chapter 7) so that one can expect such taxonomies to be intentionally and purposefully organized. A particular genre model may, then, increase the *epistemic emblematicity* of particular linguistic patterns. That is, the genre increases the degree to which a sign pattern is considered a sufficient and reliable basis for some inference (see Kockelman 2013a: 77). The epistemic salience of particular linguistic patterns can, then, change between types of events, even if their phenomenological form remains constant. If we understand stance as whatever can, in light of local models, be interpreted as a speaker's personal contribution to event construal (Kockelman 2004: 144), then such taxonomies of privacy and disclosure might indeed be understood as genre-specific forms of stance.

The patterns of stancetaking examined in this chapter are (also) marked by *phenomenological emblematicity*. That is, they make the writers' values maximally perceivable and minimally ambiguous with symbolic representations. Of the two different types of stancetaking discussed, CTPs explicitly denote some mode of commitment (e.g., desiring, liking, appreciating) towards some content. They explicitly theorize selves or others as value-directed entities and locate the source of the evaluation in these entities. That is, they figure some mental process against the background of the entire person. As we saw, the "promotional" persona is allowed to be highly explicit and direct about one's desires and need not necessarily relate them to concerns of the actual world or actual others. The other pattern of stancetaking discussed in this chapter consists of "naturalized" value based on lexical symbols with evaluative connotations and of such textual and grammatical relations (e.g., negation) that direct the value to or dissociate it from selves or others. In self-directed (or egocentric) cases, the writer appears as a 1SG figure (via pronouns and inflection), but no mode of commitment is denoted and the source of the value is left implicit. Authorship can, therefore, be partly relegated to particular or generalized others. In other-directed (or altercentric) cases, the writer is typically not symbolically represented at all but merely indexically linked to the utterance as its animator. The positive or negative evaluative tones necessarily index someone's perspective and therefore raise the question of the animator's commitment to that perspective. That is, even though such utterances are *not*

*about* the writer as a self, they are necessarily understood as *grounded in* the writer as a self.

The term "naturalization" here indicates that value is theorized as if questions of authorship and commitment were self-evident or irrelevant and left on an inferential plane. That is, an evaluative typification embodies some agent's perspective and values, but it is predicated about some object as if the link between the object and the value existed relatively independently of any agent. Naturalized value is ostensibly "aperspectival." It is projected on some object on a public stage as its inherent quality. Such stances, then, easily imply that only one perspective can apply at a time. The simultaneous attribution of a characteristic ($C_1$=*huumorintajuinen,* "with a sense of humor") and its opposite ($C_2$=~$C_1$=*huumorintajuton,* "without a sense of humor") seems, on the face of it, like a contradiction – that can serve as the basis of, for example, humorous performances leading to inferences of relativized commitment, as in example (5.16). The respondent of a naturalized stance has to either accept the speaker's interpretation or explicitly challenge it. Consequently, naturalized evaluative stancetaking easily leads to a battle for a figured cultural stage. Naturalized stances figure selves' stakes in a game of symbolic representation of the world, whereas CTPs such as *want*, *wish*, *love*, and *appreciate* commit selves to their own processes directed at the world. From the standpoint of personhood, naturalized stancetaking is oriented to the *present* and the past that the present embodies. A person appears as an accumulation of possession-like properties that one holds onto on a public stage. The CTP-based cases examined earlier, in contrast, emphasize the *future-oriented* aspect of personhood. A person appears as the locus of appreciation, wish, or desire, or other aspirations towards particular kinds of future selves and worlds. The two models of evaluative stancetaking, then, represent two quite different approaches to the description of ideal patterns of life.

It is noteworthy that the model of evaluative stancetaking that was dubbed *unipolarity* relates slightly differently to the two kinds of stances. The most prototypic form of unipolar stancetaking is perhaps the case in which all "naturalized" evaluative stances towards the same object exhibit similar polarities (e.g., only "positive" stances towards self or ideal others). That is, there is an active effort to control the entextualization of existing metastance relations so that only specific kinds of stances appear in the text-artifact – a kind of fight against "evaluative entropy." Unipolarity, then, is an additional layer in the more general process of biographic control in which only particular biographic contents are selected and only particular interpretants of one's contents are committed to. A secondary dimension of unipolarity is that all stances taken by an interactant exhibit similar polarities (e.g., only saying "positive" things about others or the world). Such a tendency, too, can clearly be seen in the data, although there are specific functions for negative stances towards others, as was seen in section 5.4 and will be seen in section 6.3.4. In such cases, negative stances are secondary

and correspond to primary positive ones in a coherent way (e.g., if one desires something, then one can dislike its opposite). Explicit negativity is used as an aid to positive self-presentation, as it clarifies the boundaries between the ideal and the non-ideal.

The unipolar model of stancetaking is linked to specific images of personhood. For instance, in the questionnaire data one of the respondents criticized the writer of text (4.5) for his "self-praise & expectations from the other" and also noted that he was "lacking in healthy self-criticism" (*Itsekehu & odotukset toiselta. Myös terve itsekritiikki puuttuu* [T2/17]). In contrast, the writer of text (4.4), who did employ negative typifications of self, was indeed interpreted as "honest" by many – but also as "contradictory," "insecure," or "desperate" by some, because she "mixed positive and negative choices of words" (*positiiviset ja negatiiviset sanavalinnat sekaisin* [T1/9]; *esittää positiivisiakin ominaisuuksia, mutta – – kumoaa ne jollain tavalla esittämällä negatiiv. ominaisuuksia perään* [T1/18]). There is, in other words, a risk that the signer's and a particular interpreter's ontologies do not match. For the reasons discussed above, "naturalized" stances seem to be more risky in this regard. As will be seen in chapter 7, the negative stereotypes of personhood associated with online dating advertisements in the metadiscourse data are often linked precisely to what is viewed as excessive and unfounded positive evaluation of oneself and disproportionate negative evaluation of others (sometimes described as characteristics such as "complacency" or "pickiness"). The expression of desire or appreciation as such (particularly when they are not understood as "expectations from the other") are rarely noticed in such stereotypes.

One way of interpreting the analyses, then, is that, for many writers, idealization or "self-promotion" is a stereotypic feature of online dating advertisements and unipolarity is a stereotypic feature of such idealization or "self-promotion." Many texts, however, seem to exhibit an acute awareness of the problems related to unipolarity (e.g., its unidimensionality or its apparent conflict with models such as "honesty" or "modesty"). We saw a number of more or less marked ways to break or even deconstruct the norm (while nonetheless presuming it). As the following excerpt (5.28) crystallizes, there are complex contrasts between stereotypes of positivity and negativity and actual positive and negative stances at play on many levels:

(5.28) **¶En kaipaa** <u>sixpackin omaavaa kesäkollia</u> **vaan** <u>ihmistä kumppaniksi</u>. Siihen kuuluu <u>mansikoiden ja kuohuvan</u> **lisäksi myös** <u>astianpesukoneen täyttöä</u>. (Siis henkisesti. Oikeasti olen tottunut hoitamaan omat tiskini itse)
(5.28) **¶I do not need** <u>a summerboy with a six-pack</u> **but** <u>a human for a partner</u>. **In addition to** <u>strawberries and sparkling wine</u>, that **also** includes <u>loading the dishwasher</u>. (Mentally, that is. In reality I'm used to taking care of my dishes myself)

In (5.28), the writer first rejects a particular type of person as non-ideal and something that she does "not need." The description ("a summerboy with a

six-pack") reduces the type of person to a limited set of diacritics: a well-trained body parts and an uncommitted, careless attitude. In another context these might be considered positive characteristics, but here the distancing of them from the self and the contrast with the ideal of being "human" clearly marks them as non-ideal (and even non-human). We may interpret the description as not only the writer's self-authored description of the type of person but as her caricature of the exaggerated, superficially "positive" self-presentation of this type of person (cf. the "worm of the earth" in example 5.22). What she, in strict contrast, is looking for is a "human for a partner." The ensuing ideological formulation explains that being a "human" is itself divided into a balance of "festive" and "mundane" chronotopes. The order ("in addition to strawberries and sparkling wine, that also includes…") implies that descriptions of festive imagery is what is primarily expected or encountered in this kind of context. Being "human(e)," however, also includes mundane activities such as "loading the dishwasher" – both in a concrete sense and as a metaphor of moods and atmospheres. There is, then, both an exclusive contrast (*ei–vaan*, "not X–but Y") and an inclusive complementarity (*lisäksi myös*, "in addition, also") between the "positive" and the "negative." The former one distinguishes the ideal (or what is positive for the self) from the non-ideal (or what is "positive" for others), and the latter one applies within one's own ideal ("festive" versus "mundane," cf. "uniquely positive" versus "normally positive" in section 5.2.1). In a sense, the writer expresses a negative stance towards what some might consider "positive" self-presentation and a positive stance towards "mundane" things that in light of the presumed unipolar model might be regarded by some as more or less "negative." That is, the writer is simultaneously evaluating the presumed stereotypes of evaluation. In some ways this is a more explicitated version of what seemed to be the point behind some of the performances of "human(e)ness" examined in 5.2.2 (i.e., allowing oneself or others to be non-unipolarly typified).

The underlying problem is not always so much about the balance of "positivity" or "negativity" as such as it is about the problematic nature of self-initiated and self-directed naturalized evaluation in the first place. (See also section 7.2.) We saw examples of attempts at source-based stancetaking, in which (co)-authorship and (co)-commitment is explicitly attributed to others (e.g., friends, family, ex-partners). Secondly, we examined performances that, instead, perform a particular kind of attitude towards the norms of the ongoing event. They manifest an awareness of the "part one is playing" (Goffman 1990 [1959]: 28) and imply a particular kind of (lack of) belief in that role. For instance, by showing, through a performance of "human(e)ness," that one is aware of the game being played one may imply that one is only committed to it as a game or that one is only committed to the promotional persona in that specific world and not in all worlds. Performances of "revealing" or "confession" can also contribute to the "intimacy" of the intersubjective contact and social relation (see Goffman

1990 [1963]: 94, 108–110; Wilce 2009a: 171; see also 7.3).[101] However, as we have seen, such attempts can always be interpreted in a number of ways. They index different social statuses and mind styles to different respondents. In an early pilot of the questionnaire used in this study, the writer of one of the then included advertisements had spent a lot of effort in rejecting all kinds of inaccurate and undesirable interpretations but ended up being bluntly interpreted by one respondent as "not really being anything" anymore. Sometimes the more one tries to control, the further one's goal may slip away, which testifies to the indeterminate, fractionated, and distributed nature of social reality.

We have now sketched a number of genre-specific models of evaluative stancetaking that specify who can or should say negative or positive things about whom and in what way. Later in chapter 7, we can compare these patterns to explicit metadiscourses that take place outside the actual advertisements and see how they relate to one another. That will provide additional viewpoints on the interpretation of such patterns (i.e., how others align themselves with promotional personae). For instance, views on how much positivity or selectivity a promotional persona is allowed to exhibit seem, indeed, to be points of conflict and contestation. As we saw, selectivity in the form of negative stances towards non-desired others, for instance, seems to be relatively common in actual practice. In part this might be explained by the fact that in the context of online dating advertisements one necessarily evaluates others more as a *type* of person, whereas to oneself one is (more of) a *particular* person. Chapter 6 will now take a closer look at how the ingredients discussed in chapters 4 and 5 are employed in relation to actual readers, i.e., how figures of personhood are mapped onto roles of participation. In such cases others are not merely described as non-present others-in-the-world but become explicitly addressed as *alters*.

---

[101] The appeal of such acts of confession and hierarchies of privacy was understood on the American dating service *OkCupid*, where one of the standard questions on the profiles used to be "The most private thing I'm willing to admit." The fact that in such games of confession more is not always better and that there is, indeed, an "art of revealing" things about oneself in an appropriate and effective manner is evidenced by the large number of Internet memes that consist of collections of strange and alarming examples of apparantely real online daters' replies to this question. (Cf. also Korobov & Laplante 2013.)

# 6 ADDRESSING OTHERS

This chapter is about how desires meet reality. It examines the different ways in which the symbolically figured ideal worlds discussed in chapters 4 and 5 are mapped onto the participation frameworks of actual interactional events. Regardless of whether an advertisement ever leads to any subsequent encounters, such as e-mails or first dates, it will mediate an experience of social reality every time it is read. Any text is likely to address many more people than the writer will ever be aware of. The question then is: how do you make your text-artifact address others in your name?

The chapter explores the different ways in which writers can select for specific types of addressees and control the interactional consequences of their texts. From another standpoint, the question is how the sieving of others into types of persons relates to the sieving of others into types of participants, or how the group of respondents relates to the group of addressees. The analytic focus will be on person reference, particularly on first-person and second-person person deictic elements and their modal cotexts, as well as such stretches of explicit metapragmatic discourse that denote aspects of participation. (See e.g. Jakobson 1957; Benveniste 1971: 217–222; Silverstein 1993; Hanks 1992, 1996; Agha 1996; 2007a: 278–339; Goffman 1981; Stivers & Enfield & Levinson 2007; Larjavaara 2007: 316–319.)

The role of such emergent and genre-specific patterns of address, as one dimension of the management of "ideal" and "non-ideal" self-to-other relations, will be approached from three perspectives. The main analytic section (6.3) examines various types of "I"-"you" relations. They emerge from an interplay between deictic elements, symbolic figurements, and the indexical facts of participation – or the relations between specific referential figures and their dynamic indexical backgrounds (including, for example, perceptual and cognitive or corporeal and social fields) (see Hanks 1992, 1996). Section 6.4 explores one particular, recurring genre-specific pattern (*jos* "if" clauses) that is specialized in modeling the readers' interpretative processes and linking them to social-interactional consequences. Finally, section 6.5 looks at the modeling of self-to-other interactions beyond the current event or the writers' attempts to contextualize the ongoing event as part of a longer semiotic chain of interactional events.

## 6.1 OF "I'S" AND "YOU'S"

The functioning of personal pronouns in discourse depends on metaindexical (or metapragmatic) frameworks that guide the interpretation of indexical signs (see Silverstein 1993; also Urban 2001). The pronoun "I," for instance,

stereotypically points to the producer of the utterance containing the sign-token.[102] This stereotypic referential indexicality can easily be cancelled or redirected in any actual instance of use in which the sign-token appears as a part of a text segment consisting of an array of co-occurring signs (see e.g. Urban 1989; Agha 2007a: 51–52). For instance, in direct or quoted speech, such as "He said: 'I will do it!'", the "I" becomes anaphoric, i.e., co-referential with "he." The matrix clause functions as a metapragmatic device that "reportively" calibrates the signaling event and the textualized event-structure in relation to one another (Silverstein 1993: 49). That is, the indexical origo is transposed so that the one who is speaking is understood to voice what another self uttered previously (see e.g. Agha 2007a: 52, 324–325). There are also forms of open or generalized reference in which any participant is invited to inhabit the perspective of the "I" (see e.g. Helasvuo 2008). On the other hand, there are cases such as myth narrations in which the performer is understood to really inhabit the "I" of some other (e.g., by assuming, or being assumed by, the self of an ancestor) or theatrical performances in which actors inhabit the "I" of a fictive character (for more detailed examples, see Urban 1989; 1991; 2001: 109). If explicit verbal framings (such as the constructions used in reported speech) are absent, there are other co-present metaindexical cues that signal to interactants how to interpret the relation of the "I" to the utterer.

In discursive behavior, the pronoun "I" works simultaneously at two different semiotic-functional levels. It is "indexical-referential" (i.e., pointing to a participant in the speech event) and "anaphoric" (i.e., pointing to symbolic co-texts) (Urban 1989: 31). It is this dual functioning of "I" that allows individuals to assume cultural roles and inhabit semiotic personae by stepping into an "I" of other selves or cultural traditions — making discourse "the fulcrum between self and culture, between individual and society" (Urban 1989: 50). The relative divergence of the two "I's" can vary. Midway between "everyday" selves and strictly "fictive" ones we might situate narrative characters, i.e., speakers as represented by themselves as particular figures of personhood ("'I', the good father"; "'I', the brave cancer patient" etc.). A metapragmatic awareness of the functioning of the two "I's" can also be linked to "depth psychological" phenomena (or reflexive subjectivity or selfhood), such as the interplay between the self and various ego ideals (ibid.; also Piers & Singer 1971 [1953]; Goffman 1990 [1963]; Markus & Nurius 1986). It opens up a space of inner dialogue between, for instance, "real" and "ideal" or past and imagined future selves. As a symbolic sign, the first person pronoun resides with the organized web of the totality of linguistic symbols and cultural knowledge. As an indexical sign, it points to an

[102] In such cases, the one speaking and the one spoken about are the same. Since speakers are part of their own audience too, the same person is also one spoken to. The performer, the character, and the audience all overlap. (See e.g. Kockelman 2013a: 177; Cf. also with the notion of self-to-self interaction in sections 2.1.3 and 2.3.3.)

individual of flesh and blood as a self-aware entity. That is, it enables the indexical mapping of symbolic and logical structure onto selves.

The question of the two "I's" relates to a more general phenomenon, namely, the performance of participation roles (i.e., persons seen from the standpoint of their relative access, entitlements, and contributions to the performance and construal of discourse in an interactional event) (see e.g. Goffman 1981; Levinson 1988; Irvine 1996). Participation roles, in turn, are specific kinds of social roles (i.e., persons seen from the standpoint of any particular status or persona). Any segmentable stretch of semiotic behavior can be interpreted, by participants and analysts alike, as a sign of who the actor is, either biographically (i.e., as a recognizable individual) or socially (i.e., as a type of person). Similarly, segmentable alignments between persons can be interpreted as signs of social relations between these persons. (See Agha 2005; Kockelman 2013a: 70; cf. Goffman 1981: 144.) Instead of reifying particular kinds of role fragments, the focus should be on the *processes of fragmentation* of participation roles and on the interplay of such processes with other layers of interpretation (see also Irvine 1996; cf. Levinson 1988).

The performance of most social roles involves other layers of semiosis besides discursive ones. They may incorporate many forms of semiotic behavior, such as gesture, posture, or various appurtenances. Many of these signs, such as wearing a particular kind of clothing, are by nature actor-focal indexicals. That is, they point to and give off information about the one performing them. Many roles are effortlessly performed without a denotationally explicit, symbolic reference to the person or self they are about. To clarify the distinction and interplay between symbolic and non-symbolic actor-focal indexicals, let us have a look at the 2SG counterpart of "I," the "you" to which the "I" is stereotypically related. "You" – discussed here only as the 2SG form, "thou" – stereotypically denotes an addressed other self. It presupposes an established indexical contact with that other. The addressee can be, for instance, the previous speaker, or the one gazed or gestured at, the one called by name, or the one motivated by the ongoing action, or the one institutionally ordained. To determine who, among all potential candidates, the addressee is, interactants need to be able to read the complex semiotic co-texts in which the symbol-token is grounded (e.g., visual and auditory cues, interactional history, established social relations and knowledge of the other, cultural metapragmatic models, choice of register, etc.). (See e.g. Goffman 1981; Goodwin 1981, 2003; Agha 2007a.) In other words, entextualized pronouns explicitly model the participation framework by denoting participant relations, but the mapping of the denoted "I"-"you" relation to the ongoing event is an inferential process that requires a variety of indexically co-present signs. The projected symbolic model can have a complex, dialectic relation to the independently established and indexically presupposed relations between the interactants.

Take the seeming paradox "I'm not talking to you" as an example. First, one has to figure out whom "I" and "you" point to. Second, what is denoted

obviously cannot be taken as a simple diagram of the moment of uttering (when the "I" is necessarily talking to the "you"), but a more complex inferential process (involving, for example, knowledge about the social statuses and mental states of the interactants) is needed to link the denoted model to actual consequences in the speech event. Furthermore, the addressee of a token of "you" might not even be any of the physically or virtually co-present existent individuals. Just as "I" enables persons to assume fictive roles, "you" can be used for fictive addressees.

## 6.2 THE INTERACTIONAL STRUCTURE OF ONLINE DATING SERVICES

When an online dating advertisement is being read, the reader will know that some real person somewhere has written the text. The writer, likewise, knows at the time of writing that there will eventually be some real person or persons reading the text, insofar as it is ever to be actualized as interpersonal interaction. In other words, every time an advertisement actually mediates an interactional event between two persons, the two interactants will be mutually aware of one another in a minimal sense. They are aware of each other's existence – but not of each other's biographic identity (i.e. who the other one is as a recognizable, individuable human being) (see Agha 2005). As for social and personal characteristics, the situation is asymmetrical. In the beginning, both interactants may have some idea of who the other one probably is in terms of demographic variables (such as age, sexual orientation, geographic location etc.), since they will normally have encountered one another through a search or matching function provided by the dating service. At the end of the encounter, however, the reader will know some purportedly genuine biographical facts about the writer as well as other characteristics (such as "views of subjectivity"), whereas the writer can never know anything about a particular, actual respondent before a subsequent interactional event (such as an e-mail reply). The writer will have modeled an ideal respondent, but it is the readers that align themselves with that model and decide whether or not there is a sufficient degree of mutual "compatibility" or "desirability" (or whatever other relevant reason) for a subsequent semiotic encounter.

These are some of the indexical facts of participation that are established independently of the advertisement text. They are based on what has necessarily happened before the encounter mediated by the advertisement or what is generally known or inferable about the type of interaction. To the extent that actual participants are aware of such facts (e.g., based on inferences or genre knowledge), they form an implicit interactional structure that is present at every reading of an advertisement text. In addition to such indexical facts, there are many ways of explicitly denoting, or figuring, participants and their relations in the advertisement text. The texts can

similarly virtually model their own history and future, i.e., the ways in which they are related to other interactional events along semiotic chains (see Agha 2007a: 71–73; also Irvine 1996). It is the interplay between the two dimensions – what is explicitly signaled in the text and what is contextually known – that enables the performance of a variety of different participation roles between the interactants (see Irvine 1996: 138–139; Hanks 1996: 176–184).

On the one hand, then, the interactants are actual persons of flesh and bone connected by a text-artifact. As described above, they already stand in an indexically presupposed interactional relation. On the other hand, the interactants appear as semiotically formulated figures in the text. As the text unfolds, there is a *serial refigurement*[103] of reader-writer relations that continuously shapes role configurations. Section 6.3 will examine the cumulative effects of such processes and the different ways of relating actual and figured persons in order to select for a particular kind of audience. Tokens of 1SG and 2SG pronouns can be used to point to different semiotic worlds ("real" or "ideal" and actual or possible) with different kinds of consequences for the participation roles in the interactional event. The writers can, for instance, non-selectively address everyone ("you," the actual reader, regardless of what kind you are) or merely the ideal subset of all readers ("you," insofar as you are of a certain kind) or even a purely fictional figure ("You," the man or woman of my desires). The following section explores such genre-specific patterns of pronoun usage and the metaindexical frames that guide them (see Urban 2001: 93–144; also Heikkinen & Lounela 2009).

## 6.3 PATTERNS OF ADDRESSIVITY

The built-in interactional structure of online dating services typically means that there is a kind of "many-to-many" flow of interactional events going on. Each advertisement may be read by many readers. Each reader usually reads many advertisements. Some writers also read and reply to advertisements — and so on. However, each advertisement is always read by one person at a time. That is, each encounter mediated by an advertisement sieves one person at a time into categories such as "desirable" or "undesirable." From the standpoint of the writer, the text needs to address both the entire audience of anonymous readers and the limited subset of one or more ideal respondents that are potential objects of one's romantic desires. How to handle a situation like this rhetorically?

The most impersonal solution would be to treat others as third-person figures and not to explicitly address them at all. Excerpt (6.1) is from a text that systematically employs an "I"-"He" pattern. That is, the self is denoted

[103] This term was suggested by Asif Agha in personal communication.

with 1SG inflection and the ideal other with NPs that describe social types and attributes of persons:

(6.1) ¶Etsin vapaata aikuista miestä, jonka silmät tuikkivat iloisesti ja joka suhtautuu uteliaasti elämään ja sen käänteisiin. ¶Arvostan aitoutta ja odotan rehellisyyttä ja vastuuntuntoa. – – ¶Etsin miestä, jonka kanssa voi olla olla ystävä ja keskustella kaikesta maan ja taivaan väliltä, harrastaa mitä milloinkin, käydä konserteissa ja näyttelyissä sekä matkustella lähelle tai kauas.
(6.1) ¶I'm looking for a free adult male, whose eyes twinkle cheerfully and who has a curious attitude towards life and its twists. ¶I appreciate authenticity and expect honesty and a sense of responsibility. – – ¶I'm looking for a man who I can be friends with and discuss everything between heaven and earth, take up all kinds of things, go to concerts and exhibitions and travel near and far.

The readers are not explicitly picked out as addressees with expressions such as 2SG pronouns that stereotypically denote some co-present other. The sign configurations *per se* are, however, addressed (in the sense discussed in 2.1.3) to readers in a particular manner. That is, they have been expressed for the sake of specific kinds of responses that the writer is committed to. The strategy of not directly engaging the readers leaves the readers the role of a kind of active, co-present onlooker and the process of sieving respondents is left relatively implicit in the event.

Only a handful of texts, however, use third-person patterns exclusively throughout the entire text. Of the 111 texts in the data, only 17 (15 %) contain no second-person deictics at all.[104] As the next example (6.2) illustrates, even the self can be denoted in the third person. Not one single text, however, completely lacks first-person deictics. The "I" is always explicitly present, if only fleetingly. Different combinations of deictic and non-deictic forms of person reference along the unfolding of a text, then, allow for a wide range of participation roles and social relations.

Example (6.2) illustrates the division of labor between different kinds of self-to-other formulations. The writer initially describes himself as "a man from Tampere" (*tamperelaismies*) looking for companionship. Gradually, the text moves from a "He"-"Her" pattern towards an "I"-"You" pattern:

(6.2) ¶Tamperelaismies haeskelee seuraa arjen aherrukseen. Toiveissa olisi [*wish*:PL.INE *be*:COND.PRS.3SG] löytää samoilla linjoilla oleva neitokainen, jonka kanssa jakaa elämän tarjoamat haasteet ja mahdollisuudet. ¶Töitteni [*work*:PL.1SG.POSS] puolesta olen

[104] Even some of these texts still contain other constructions that somewhat less explicitly or specifically address some co-present other, such as greetings (e.g., *Terve!*, "Hi!"; *Moikka kaikki ihanat urokset!*, "'Hey, all lovely males!"), questions (e.g., *Miksi on niin vaikeaa löytää molemminpuolista rakastumista?*, "Why is it so hard to find mutual love?"), or zero person constructions (*jos löytyy halua tutustua ni en jätä kylmäks*: if be_found:IND.PRS.3SG wish:PTV get_to_know then NEG.1SG leave:NEG.IND.PRS ø cold-TRANSL, "If [you] wish to get to know [me], then I won't leave [you] cold").

[*be*:IND.PRS.1SG] tekemisissä tietokoneiden kanssa, joten suotavaa olisi ettet ainakaan kauheasti kammoaisi kyseisiä aparaatteja. – –
(6.2) ¶A man from Tampere is seeking companionship amidst everyday toil. It is [my] wish to find a like-minded miss, with whom to share the challenges and opportunities that life offers. ¶ In my work, [I]'m involved with computers, so it would be desirable if you did not terribly dread these apparatuses. – –

There is, in other words, a particular pattern of focalization in the text. The third-person reference to a "man from Tampere" in the first sentence is followed by a reference to "wishes," i.e., the subjective state of mind of some person. The obvious contextual inference here is that that person is as the man from the previous sentence. The next sentence introduces an explicit 1SG possessive suffix and, later, a 1SG inflectional suffix, the use of which then continues throughout the text. Similarly, there is a progression from "companionship" and "miss" to "you," which first appears as a 2SG inflectional suffix and later as a full personal pronoun. That is, the narration breaks into the writer's own subjectivity from the outside, through the particular figurement formulated in the first two sentences. The self and the other are first socioculturally anchored in particular kinds of roles in a particular type of process to which the later "I"-"you" relation corresponds.

To deal with the dilemma of addressing a lot of anonymous people personally, another interactional option would be to address the respondents simultaneously as a group. However, the data only contains two instances of the 2PL personal pronoun (*te*), illustrated by (6.3a) and (6.3b), and two instances of 2PL (imperative) inflection, illustrated by (6.3c):

(6.3a) ¶Katsotaas miten rehellisyys uppoaa teihin, arvon herrat:¶
(6.3a) ¶Let's see how honesty goes down with you, gentlemen:¶

(6.3b) Viestini teille [*you*:2PL] seksiseuraa vonkaavat varatut miehet [*man*:NOM.PL] on: ole [*be*:IMP.2SG] mies, eroa ensin, hanki uusi seura sen jälkeen.¶
(6.3b) My message to you taken men angling for sex is: be a man, break up first, get a new partner after that.¶

(6.3c) – – elikkäs heinäkuun leijonia ollaan (ja uskon vakaasti horoskooppeihin, älkää naurako [NEG.IMP.2PL *laugh*:NEG.IMP.2PL] :D).
(6.3c) – – so I'm a Leo of July (and I believe firmly in horoscopes, don't laugh :D).

The first writer addresses a list of her own characteristics that she treats as stigmatizing to the whole audience with the 2PL pronoun and an appositive NP ("gentlemen").[105] When she then moves on to discuss the readers'

[105] It is, in fact, slightly surprising that 2PL forms are not more common, since such patterns of address should be relatively easy to recycle from, for instance, popular or classic courtship-related

anticipated reactions to the list she just presented, she switches to 2SG (see earlier example 5.13). The second writer addresses a group of non-ideal respondents collectively. The ideal respondent in the same text is addressed in 2SG. Also, in the ensuing list of imperative clauses ("be a man" etc.), she switches to a 1SG-to-2SG perspective. The last writer humorously anticipates and scolds others' affective interpretants (i.e., laughter) towards what she has just revealed. All cases, then, in some sense deal with more or less problematic aspects of the ongoing or anticipated interactions. Although there are not enough cases to say anything substantial about 2SG~2PL variation in online dating advertisements, at least in this particular set of data all prototypic instances of "promotional" address of ideal others are of the 1SG-to-2SG type and 2PL address only occurs in contexts that are somehow marked (i.e., where the writers imagine themselves in relation to respondents that are somehow problematic either by being "non-ideal" or by taking a "non-ideal" stance towards the writer).[106]

We have now established that the writers' relations to the respondents are most of the time handled on a one-to-one basis in the data, as a dialogue between an "I" and a "you" (or a "thou"). However, as we have already seen, there are many different kinds of "you's" that the writers can address and consequently many different kinds of "I"-"you" relations.

### 6.3.1 "YOU" REGARDLESS OF WHAT KIND YOU ARE

This section deals with cases in which 2SG deictics are used in non-selective formulations that point to *whoever* happens to be reading the text. That is, they address the actual interactants who are reading the text in any actualized interactional event regardless of what kinds of persons they are (though presupposedly they are within the predefined demographic criteria, such as age, gender, sexual orientation, and location). Consider first the beginning of text (4.5) from 4.2.2 here repeated as (6.4). The excerpt begins with a philosophical musing concerning the status quo of human relations in today's world:

(6.4) ¶Tuntuu=ko [*feel*:IND.PRS.3SG=Q] sinusta=kin [*you*:ELA.SG=PTCL], että nykymaailmasta olisi rakkaus vähentynyt / vähentymässä? Minusta ainakin tuntuu ja se

television programs, such as *Unelmien poikamies* (*The Bachelor*) or *Napakymppi* (*The Dating Game*). The form used in (5.3a), for example, is something one might expect to hear often in *Napakymppi*.

[106] It should also be noted that the 2SG personal pronoun appears mainly in its full standard form *sinä* (over a hundred tokens in the data), which is also frequent in some regional varieties of Finnish. In many varieties of colloquial speech and writing, however, a predominance of the contracted variant *sä* would probably be more predictable. The advertisement text data contains only 5 tokens of *sä* (including one quote from a popular song). The corresponding contracted 1SG form *mä* is considerably more frequent (several dozens of tokens).

ilmenee monessa seikassa. Toivon löytäväni naisen, jonka kanssa rakkautta voisi ainakin paikallisesti lisätä ;)
(6.4) ¶Do you too feel that in today's world love has decreased / is decreasing? I at any rate do feel so and it can be seen in many things. I am hoping to find a woman with whom love could be increased at least locally ;)

The 2SG pronoun is the second word-token of the entire body text (i.e., it has hardly any preceding discursive co-text) and is not modified syntactically (i.e., it is not narrowed down in terms of intension). The question is ostensibly addressed to any reader. That is, all readers are equally acknowledged as co-participants in the reflective experience mobilized by the question. Only later does the writer proceed to characterize the kind of ideal person he is looking for. This is done entirely through third-person figures (e.g., "a woman with whom "). The criteria of compatibility are, in a sense, negotiated *with* the actual person spoken to, whether she fulfills those criteria or not.

Let us look at three more examples of non-selective address. Example (6.5a) opens with a greeting and a thank you (see also 5.24a). The description in which the 2SG deictics are embedded in the subordinate clause ("you opened this") directs the greeting and the thanks at anyone who has chosen to open the advertisement. That is, the description applies to anyone who is reading it and therefore is not selective in terms of address. In (6.5b) open address is achieved by the initial greeting, which contains the explicitly non-selective indefinite plural pronoun *kaikki* ("all") pointing to all conceivable participants. The next sentence, however, begins a movement towards a radically more selective form of address (see sections 6.3.2 and 6.3.3). Similarly, in (6.5c) the 2SG figure ("would you smile at me") is grounded in the plural pronominal expression *muut* ("others") of the previous sentence, which indicates that the "you" in the latter sentence is anyone from the group of "(all) others." It is also the only explicit 2SG reference in the text. That is, no preceding or subsequent criteria that would narrow down the address are set.

(6.5a) ¶Hei, Kiitos kun avasit tämän lukuisten ilmoitusten joukosta. Toivo[i]nkin, että runsaasta valikoimasta valitsisit juuri tämän.
(6.5a) ¶Hi, Thanks that you opened this [one] among the many ads. I [am/was] hoping that out of the wide selection you would choose this one.

(6.5b) ¶Kaunista kesää kaikille! ¶Sattuisikohan tämä tekstini juuri sinun silmiisi.. ¶Sinun, joka olet mukava, sosiaalinen – – Voisimmeko siis kenties olla juuri ne kaksi, jotka etsivät toisiaan :)?
(6.5b) ¶Beautiful summer to all! ¶I wonder if this text of mine would happen to catch your (very) eyes… ¶You, who are nice, sociable – – Could we then perhaps be precisely those two who are looking for one another :)?

(6.5c) Kiva saada aina muitakin hymyilemään, kun (ø) katsoo [*look*-IND.PRS.3SG] (ø) silmiin:) hymyilisitkö sinä minulle jos katsoisin silmiisi:)
(6.5c) Nice to make others smile too, when [one] looks [them] in the eye:) would you smile at me if I looked into your eyes:)

In the last set of examples (6.6a–d), the process of relating "ideal" or other selective symbolic figures of personhood to actual respondents is itself more or less explicitly denoted in the text and addressed to all readers. The examples are analyzed in terms of the more specific type of stance they take towards that relation. There are, for instance, interrogative structures that ask the addressee (i.e., *any* respondent) whether they match the writer's ideal ("Are you [= whoever is reading] a nice-looking well-groomed single man from the capital region [= the writer's ideal]"). There are also conditional structures ("If you, whoever you are, are [IDEAL], then…"), exemplary or illustrative structures ("You, whoever you are, might, for example, be [IDEAL]…"), and evaluated structures ("Should you, whoever you are, be [IDEAL], that would be [EVALUATION]"). The evaluation can relate more specifically, for instance, to feelings (affect), social appropriateness (judgement), or esteem or social worth (appreciation) (see e.g. Martin & White 2005: 45 and chapter 5). (See also example 5.8 for a "desiderative" case: "I would wish that you, whoever you are, would be [IDEAL].")

(6.6a) [Interrogative] ¶Olet=ko [*be*:IND.PRS.2SG=Q] kivannäköinen itsestäsi huolta pitävä sinkkumies pääkaupunkiseudulta?
(6.6a) [Interrogative] ¶Are you a nice-looking well-groomed single man from the capital region?

(6.6b) [Conditional] ¶Jos olet etsimäni henkilö, olet siis nainen, ikää voisi olla luokkaa 25–30 vuotta.
(6.6b) [Conditional] ¶If you are the person I'm looking for, then you are a woman, you could be aged around 25-30 years.

(6.6c) [Evaluated: affect] ¶Olisin [*be*:COND.PRS.1SG] iloinen, jos sinä olisit [*be*:COND.PRS.2SG] kaltaiseni romantikko, joka pitää myös koti-illoista ja mökkireissuista.
(6.6c) [Evaluated: affect] ¶I would be glad if you were a romantic like me who also likes evenings at home and trips to the cabin.

(6.6d) [Evaluated: judgement] ¶Hyvä alku olisi [*be*:COND.PRS.3SG], että et tarvitsisi [*need*:COND.PRS.2SG.NEG] minua, vaan haluaisit [*want*:COND.PRS.2SG] minut. [Evaluated: appreciation] Mahdottoman hienoa on [*be*:IND.PRS.3SG], jos osaat [*can*:IND.PRS.2SG] asennoitua elämään siten, että osaat [*can*:IND.PRS.2SG] olla tosissasi olematta vakavissasi.
(6.6d) [Evaluated: judgement] ¶A good beginning would be that you didn't need me but wanted me. [Evaluated: appreciation] It is truly wonderful if you can take life so that you can be earnest without being serious.

(6.6e) [Illustrative] Voisit olla [*can*:COND.PRS.2SG *be*] hieman määrätietoinen, johdonmukainen, nuorenoloinen ja tempperamenttinen hieman. [Evaluated: judgement] Olisi suotavaa myöskin että tulisit hyvin toimeen ihmisten kanssa. [Unmarked] Olet myös mukava kaikintavoin oleva nuori mies.
(6.6e) [Illustrative] You might be a bit determined, consistent, youthful and temperamental a bit [*sic*]. [Evaluated: judgement] It would be appropriate also that you would get along well with people. [Unmarked] You are also a young man who is nice in every way.

The previous examples, then, illustrate more specific modes of correspondence between actual persons and figured ideals. In these examples, such modes are explicitly denoted and addressed to respondents. As we can see, different modes can appear in varying combinations. They may also "prosodically" extend to subsequent unmarked stretches of text (see e.g. the last sentence of 6.6e). On the other hand, the texts can gradually slide towards more selective criteria (see e.g. 6.5b). The next section will discuss patterns of addressivity in which selectivity for addressees and selectivity for ideal persons are interwoven more tightly.

### 6.3.2 "YOU" INSOFAR AS YOU ARE OF A CERTAIN KIND

This section discusses utterances that cannot be construed as addressing whoever happens to be reading the text. Only a particular kind of person is able to appropriately and effectively inhabit the role projected by the 2SG deictics in their co-texts. Who exactly is being addressed, and in what kind of act, is often a matter of complex contextual inferences. In excerpt (6.7), for instance, the writer starts describing in explicit detail the mental and verbal capabilities and biographic facts of the person addressed as "you":

(6.7) Negatiivinen asenne vie ilon elämästä. Osaat asettaa selvät rajat ja avoimesti keskustella arjen aiheista. Olet jo työurallasi pitkällä ja et uhraa jokaista päivää työllesi vaan osaat nautti[a] elämästä!
(6.7) A negative attitude takes the joy out of life. You are able to set clear limits and openly discuss everyday topics. You have advanced far in your career and do not devote every day to work but know how to enjoy life!

The descriptions are embodied in a declarative sentence set in the indicative mood. That is, in terms of stereotypic morphosyntax, they are presented as factual. From the standpoint of any actual reader, however, the denotata are things that the writer can have no knowledge of, access to, or control over, not to mention the fact that they are far too specific to apply to all readers. A logical interpretation is that they, in fact, point to the writer's ideal respondent. That is, the denoted figure of personhood consists of characteristics that the writer can only imagine, desire, and expect from

others. The specific mode of correspondence between the ideal and the actual person is left relatively implicit, and the utterance is directly addressed only to those who match the ideal.

Any social relation mediated by a semiotic encounter consists of a number of more specific constituents, one of which is the cognitive and epistemic symmetry between the participants (see Goffman 1983: 4). In the example above, there is a tension between the writer's *epistemic stance* (what the writer more or less explicitly claims to know) and the writer's *epistemic status* (knowledge about the writer's access and rights to knowledge) (see e.g. Heritage 2012; 2013). To rephrase this in the terminology used in chapter 5, such epistemic statuses point to a particular subset of metastance relations (e.g., others' stances towards someone's knowledge; knowledge about what someone could or should know, etc.) (see also Kockelman 2004). The tension in metastance relations in the above example functions as a metaindex that redirects the "you" to a particular semiotic figure (i.e., the "ideal" other) and contributes to a particular act of addressivity (i.e., only acknowledging "ideal" others with one's speech). We can see, then, that epistemic performances both depend on and contribute to the personae the interactants currently inhabit. The kind of performance seen in (6.7), for instance, is possible because the writer is allowed to and intends to inhabit a "promotional" persona. An epistemic status, then, is not only dependent on the knowledge that some biographic individuals have but also on cultural modes of personhood with associated entitlements and commitments to use knowledge in particular ways to achieve particular ends.

The "ideal" audience segment that the writer addresses does not exist before the act of addressing. The example above is a performative act that creates an interactional asymmetry among the respondents. It creates a divide between addressees and onlookers. Explicitly, the writer is only acknowledging the "ideal" respondents. However, not acknowledging someone is often a relatively perceivable act as well. Implicitly, the "you" also points to those who are excluded by the symbolic co-text. There is, then, a kind of "shadow" address of the "non-ideal" respondents (implying that "I am talking to those people, not you") (cf. Irvine 1996). The cumulative serial refigurement of "I"-"you" relations (e.g., many cases like 6.7 over longer stretches of text) has the effect of gradually pushing respondents off the role of an addressed, ideal respondent and ratified replier to the role of non-addressed, non-ideal respondent. In other words, the epistemic performance is an ingredient in a performance of interpersonal power and control.

Example (6.8) represents, in a sense, a deontic parallel to the previous epistemic case. Here the description of the addressed other gets a directive-like or request-like tone from the clitic particle -*han* added to the predicate:

(6.8)

| ¶Olethan | sinut | itsesi | kanssa, | onnellinen | yksin=kin, |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| be:IND.PRS.2SG=PTCL | 2SG:ACC | yourself | with | happy | alone=too |

| arvostat | elämän arkeen=kin | kuuluvia | asioita, |
|---|---|---|---|
| appreciate:IND.PRS.2SG | life:GEN everyday=too | belong:PTCP.PTV.PL | thing:PTV.PL |

| osaat | nauttia | läheisyydestä, | nautit | aikaan saamisesta |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| know:IND.PRS.2SG | enjoy | intimacy:ELA | enjoy:IND.PRS.2SG | accomplishing:ELA |

ja tekemisestä, ja edelleenkin tutkit maailmaa ihmeellisenä paikkana etkä pidä elämääsi jo valmiina omassa uomassaan kulkevana.

(6.8)
¶[I hope/request/expect that] you are familiar with yourself, happy alone too, you appreciate even everyday things in life, you know how to enjoy intimacy, you enjoy accomplishing and doing things, and you still explore the world as a wondrous place and do not regard your life as already ready-made in its track.

In its typical uses, the particle *-han* appeals in one way or another to the reasoning processes of an other (e.g. reminding of presupposed shared knowledge or goals or expressing a sense of pondering) (see e.g. Hakulinen 1976; Carlson 1993: 79; VISK § 830). In the co-text above, the total effect of the particle might be approximated as something like "I hope/request/expect that you make sure you are [IDEAL]."[107] But how to interpret a directive that contains such detailed denotational information but is addressed to an unknown, anonymous person? The only things that the writer can realistically control, or has deontic authority over, is the kind of respondent who is 1) ratified as an addressee, 2) authorized to reply and 3) whose communicative efforts will, in turn, be reciprocated by the writer. That is, the respondents are invited to participate in the evaluation of the relation of the entextualized figures to the actual participant in the event of speech ($P^tE^t/P^s$) but requested to comply with the ideal figure of personhood, insofar as they wish to appropriately and effectively inhabit the role of addressee or replier.

The following example is otherwise similar but shows a more explicit orientation to the respondents' subsequent actions after the ongoing encounter ($n^{th}$). It contains an explicit reference to the reader's reply ("your message") ($n+1^{th}$) combined with a predicate that expresses the writer's future-oriented commitment ("I promise to be"), which implies an even further subsequent encounter, such as the writer's reply to the reader's message ($n+2^{th}$) or a first date ($n+x^{th}$):

(6.9)

| Olet=han | luotettava | ja avoin, | minä lupaan |
|---|---|---|---|
| be:IND.PRS.2SG=PTCL | reliable | and open | 1SG promise:IND.PRS.1SG |

[107] It is noteworthy that in the English translation the mode of correspondence between the ideal figure and the actual person has to be more explicitly denoted with, for example, some CTP construction. The translation, in some sense, is closer to the kinds of cases examined in section 6.3.1.

| olla | viestisi | arvoinen.¶ |
|---|---|---|
| be | message:2SG.POSS | worthy |

(6.9)
[I hope/request/expect that] you are reliable and open, I promise to be worthy of your message.

The actual respondent ($P^s$) of the ongoing speech event ($E^s$) (i.e., the reader reading the advertisement) is, then, modeled in the entextualized event ($P^tE^t$) already as a *replier* in a subsequent interactional event ($P^{s+1}E^{s+1}$). That is, the respondent is addressed with reference to a future event ("should you write to me, I request you to make sure that you are like my ideal"). The correspondence of the ideal figure to the actual respondent is seen by the writer as relevant only in relation to subsequent interactional phases.

Let us now take up a different kind of deontic case, which allows us to link the concerns of this chapter with some of the themes discussed in chapter 5. In the following example, the writer formulates a deontic obligation for the addressed other by using a construction that includes the copula, the noun *pakko* ("must"), and an infinitive. This formulation allows the writer to use the abbreviation *ns.* (abbreviated from *niin sanotusti*, "so to speak") before the noun "must":

(6.10)

| ¶Luonteestasi | olisi | ns. | pakko | löytyä | seuraavia |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| personality:ELA.2SG.POSS | be:COND.PRS.3SG | ABBR | must | be_found:INF | following |

| luonteenpiirteitä: | Asiallinen, reilu, fiksu, hyväkäytöksinen, – – |
|---|---|
| characteristic:PTV.PL | decent, fair, smart, well-behaved |

(6.10)
Your personality, so to speak, must include the following characteristics: Decent, fair, smart, well-behaved, – –

The abbreviation frames the expression of obligation as a recognizably conventional or habitual act in such contexts. The combination of the abbreviation and the conditional mood (*olisi*) distinguishes the speech event, the commitment event, and the deontic event to a degree from one another. That is, the writer's commitment to the obligation is relativized as applying only under particular conditions, and the writer is relatively distanced from the source of the deontic obligation (cf. section 5.2.2). Such relativizing indices suggest that the writer is merely animating the kinds of discursive and social patterns that are expected in an event like this. She commits to the addressed demands only under a particular persona. At the same time, then, the relativizing indices implicitly point to another set of social relations

outside the ones being performed right now. Just as the formulation splits the audience in two (i.e., into those who can comply with the obligation and therefore can inhabit the role of addressee and into those who cannot), it also implicitly splits the writer in two (i.e., into the one who is committed to enforcing the obligation and into the one who is not). There are simultaneously more explicitly figured and more implicit (or "shadow") relations between the writer and readers.

To illustrate the interplay between different kinds of "I"-"you" relations and the various combinations and hierarchical patterns they enable, let us consider the following example:

(6.11)
Minusta saat erityisen uskollisen kumppanin.
1SG:ELA get:IND.PRS.2SG especially faithful companion

¶Haluan löytää miehen, joka on suurin piirtein ikäiseni,
want:IND.PRS.1SG find man:GEN who is approximately aged:1SG.POSS

kykenevä keskustelemaan, joka on uskollinen ja rehellinen – –
able converse:INF who is faithful and honest

¶Olet kiltti ja huomaavainen, todellinen herrasmies. – –
be:IND.PRS.2SG kind and considerate true gentleman

[O]saat hymyillä valloittavasti, pukeudut hyvin – –
know:IND.PRS.2SG smile charmingly, dress:IND.PRS.2SG well

¶Ehkä suhtaudut elämään hieman huvittuneesti ja
Maybe view:IND.PRS.2SG life:ILL slightly amusedly and

olet kenties nähnyt sen nurjemman=kin puolen. – –
AUX perhaps see:IND.PERF.2SG its reverse:COMP=too side

(6.11)
You will get an especially faithful companion of me. ¶I want to find a man who is approximately my age, able to have a conversation, who is faithful and honest – – ¶You are kind and considerate, a true gentleman. – – You know how to smile charmingly, you dress well – – ¶Maybe you view life with a slight amusement and perhaps you have seen its uglier side too. – –

The first sentence in the excerpt is the first explicit 2SG reference in the text. It is of the non-selective kind discussed in section 6.3.1. It is, however, special in the sense that it turns around the typical self-to-other orientation into a kind of other-to-self approach (see also 6.3.5). It represents a process of transformation of the "I" into something beneficial (a "faithful companion")

in the life of the "you" (for the clause type, see VISK § 904). Syntactically speaking, the 1SG pronoun is an adverbial in the clause and the 2SG inflection occupies the subject position, but the 1SG pronoun remains in the theme position. That is, the topic is still the self, but it is approached from the perspective of the addressee. In such a formulation the question of participation roles becomes not so much whether a particular respondent is able to inhabit the role of addressee but whether he wishes to do so. The balance of agency shifts towards the respondent. Next, the writer describes with a CTP her desire to find a particular kind of ideal person, who is described in a third-person formulation ("a man that…"). That is, at this point, the addressee and the ideal other are separate figures. Implicitly, the second sentence begins to narrow the segment of addressees. Then, in the third sentence of the excerpt, there is a move to explicitly selective address of the kind discussed in this section. At this point, the writer is only addressing those who match the ideal. The "you" here, then, is different from the "you" in the first sentence. Some earlier addressees may still be able to inhabit the more narrowly defined role; others may have been sieved off.

Finally, in the last sentence, the writer switches into a new kind of address (that will lead us to the concerns of the next section 6.3.3). She begins to conjecture about things that "perhaps" pertain or "may" pertain to the ideal addressee. That is, such formulations no longer narrow access to the role of addressee. Rather, the criteria are now fixed, and the writer is merely speculating about optional characteristics or illustrating ideal possibilities (cf. 6.3.1). Let us take a look at another example from a different text:

(6.12) Työelämässä olet **kaiketi** kunnianhimoinen, mutta työ ei ole koko elämäsi.
(6.12) In working life you are **probably** ambitious, but work is not your whole life.

Both (6.11) and (6.12) combine an epistemic certainty (i.e., the addressee is presumed to be an existant person with certain required characteristics) with epistemic uncertainty (i.e., wondering or guessing what the addressee is like more specifically). These epistemic stances have deontic and evaluative implications: saying "you probably are (ambitious)" can be interpreted as implying that "you are allowed to not be (ambitious) although that would be preferred." Nevertheless, in cases like this, the ideal other appears both (a) as a specified type of person that the writer has total epistemic and deontic control over and (b) as an actual person somewhere out there who instantiates the ideal type but also has singular characteristics that the writer does not know but can guess, conjecture and evaluate. That is, in example (6.11), those addressees who make it thus far, become secured in their role of addressee and become the object of a game of guessing and conjecture concerning their more personal and unique characteristics.

### 6.3.3 A FICTIVE "YOU" AS THE ADDRESSEE

Further along on the continuum of gradually narrowing address, we have cases in which the writer seemingly addresses as "you" – or "You" – only one specific person. One of the recurring ways to do it is to use the Finnish adverb *juuri* ("precisely," "specifically," "the very [one]," "just the [right one]") as in the first example:

(6.13)
¶Rankka suhde takana ja jälleen yritän päästä
rough relationship behind and again try:IND.PRS.1SG get:INF

jaloilleni. Siihen tarvitsen juuri Sinua.
foot:PL.ALL.1SG.POSS that:ILL need:IND.PRS.1SG ADV You:PTV

(6.13)
I have a rough relationship behind [me] and I'm trying to get on my feet again. For that I need You, of all people.

The adverb *juuri* ("precisely") and the capitalized 2SG pronoun (*Sinä*) imply that the ideal other, whom the writer is looking for, is specifically the addressee. The indexical fact, however, remains that there are numerous actual respondents and the writer is not aware of their biographic identities. This tension, then, points towards the interpretation that the writer is, in fact, not directly addressing actual respondents at all but an imagined ideal person in a kind of dramatized dialogue. Similar forms of address are, of course, a familiar convention from literature and popular culture.

The following examples emphasize the process of locating that specific individual within the world. Both of the examples below simultaneously employ or imply both a "You" that points to the ideal individual and a "you" that points to the actual respondent of the ongoing interactional event and link the two with one another:

(6.14a) ¶Hei! En ole onnistunut vielä löytämään Sinua vaikka olen maailmaa kiertänyt. Löytyisitkö sitten täältä, vain me voimme ottaa siitä selvää?
(6.14a) ¶Hi! I have not yet succeeded in finding You although I have been around the world. Could you be found here then, only we can find that out?

(6.14b)
[Title] Huhuilen ja etsin.. ¶Olet=ko
call_out:IND.PRS.1SG and seek:IND.PRS.1SG be:IND.PRS.2SG=Q

se sinä, joka et ole vielä tullut minua vastaan,
it you who NEG:2SG AUX:NEG yet come:IND.PERF.2SG 1SG:PTV against

vaikka tiedän, että olet siellä jossakin..?
although know:IND.PRS.1SG that be:IND.PRS.2SG there somewhere

¶Tiedän, että olet noin 32-38-vuotias vapaa
know:IND.PRS.1SG that be:IND.PRS.2SG about year-old free

suomalainen mies. Olet huumorintajuinen, hauska, puhelias, – –
Finnsih man

(6.14b) [Title] I'm calling out and looking for... ¶Are you the one who I have not yet met although I know that you are out there somewhere..? ¶I know that you are about 32–38-year-old free Finnish man. You are humorous, funny, talkative, – –

In (6.14a) the first "You" points to the ideal person the writer has been looking for previously and in many places (see also 4.7b). The following sentence links the process of seeking one's ideal companion to what is going on "here," in the ongoing event. The ideal "You" that the 2SG deictics point to, then, is different from the "you" embedded in the 1PL pronoun (i.e., "we" = actual "I" + actual "you" in this event "here"). The opening sentence of (6.14b) ("Are you the one who I have not yet met although I know that you are out there somewhere") in some sense it asks if "you are You." That is, the 2SG indices in the main clause ("Are you the one") and the subordinate clauses ("I know that you are out there somewhere") point to different objects (the actual respondent and the ideal individual respectively). The writer presumes the existence of an individual ("you are out there somewhere"), whom she has not located yet. Whether or not the actual reader could be that ideal individual is what is being investigated by the sentence and by the entire online dating event. The sentence, then, is a kind of metapragmatic icon of the entire ongoing activity. The latter sentences address the fictive, ideal person that the writer "knows" to be "somewhere out there" with particular characteristics.

Most of the examples we have seen so far in the previous chapters have formulated idealized types of persons (or icons of personhood) that can be calibrated to actual respondents to see whether they match the ideal type. What is common to the examples in this section, in contrast, is that they address one specific individual that is presumed to be "out there" but whose definite identity or specific whereabouts the writers are not fully aware of. That is, such a model of address indexically presupposes the existence of an individual (in the sense discussed in 2.1.3) who embodies the ideal. The individual is "fictive" in the sense that there is no relation to any actually existent person (yet). In such forms of address, then, ideal personhood is oriented to in terms of an ideal individual (who exists or could exist) rather than in terms of ideal kinds and indices (that existent individuals can have to various degrees). In such cases, instead of being a token of an ideal type of

person, an actual respondent can be (sufficiently similar to) the ideal individual.

It is noteworthy that some examples that employ this type of address undertake various poetic or aesthetic efforts or forms of dramatization. In fact, the whole model of "fictive" address might be seen as as a form of dramatization. Instead of, say, a "realistic" cultural model of courtship (in which one is oriented to delineating an ideal subset of dateable candidates), such patterns of address presume a "romantic" ontology, according to which there is one and only one special person for everyone (e.g., *se oikea*, "the right one; Mr./Ms. Right," n=9). Some examples include segments that have been borrowed from sources that characteristically take similar perspectives on reality, such as pop songs or literary fiction (see also section 4.4.5). In examples (6.15a) and (6.15b), there is a recognizable[108] interdiscursive link to the genre of pop songs and its stereotypes of pronoun usage:

> (6.15a) Kahden toisilleen vieraan ihmisen kohtaamisessa kemioiden yhteensopivuus tai joku seikka ulkoisessa olemuksessa voi heti aikaansaada mukavan huomion: <u>se jokin Sinulla on....</u> ¶
> (6.15a) In an encounter between two persons unfamiliar to one another the compatibility of chemistries or some trait in outward appearance may instantly bring about a nice observation: <u>You've got that something...</u>

> (6.15b) ¶"Jos Sua ei ois ollut, olisin keksinyt sut. Ois susta samanlainen tullut, mitään en ois muuttanut" Ilmoita toki itsestäsi, muuten en tiijä missä oot:) [Text ends]
> (6.15b) ¶If You hadn't existed, I would have invented you. You would have become the same, nothing would I have changed" Please do let me know about yourself, otherwise I won't know where you are:) [Text ends]

Both examples recontextualize a pattern of address from pop songs into the dating advertisement genre. In such cases the "fictiveness" of the addressee seems even more obvious. In the metaindexical frame of pop songs there is no expectation that the object of a token of "you" actually exists in the realm of the physical world. That is, 1SG and 2SG deictic elements do not, by default, point to events of performance but only to the fictive narrated worlds. However, when such a pattern of address is recontextualized in an online dating advertisement, it has to be inferentially re-mapped to the metaindexical and participatory frames of the ongoing event by the respondents (e.g., whether such quoted pronouns have a pointing function at all in the speech event; whether the object is the reader or a fictive addressee; how actual respondents should align to the fictive addressee). Such inferences also depend on how the function of the intertextual reference itself

---

[108] Example (6.15a) refers to Ronny and The Loafers' "Se jokin sinulla on" (1964) (a cover of Gerry & The Pacemakers' "You've Got What I Like") and example (6.15b) to Kaija Koo's "Jos sua ei ois ollut" (2000).

is interpreted (see also section 4.4.5). One might suggest that such quotes are distancing, poetic reflections on the general nature of dating advertisements and courtship. Moreover, dating advertisements are much like pop songs in the sense that "You" and "I" are generalized and idealized performances somehow relatable to real life through complex inferential and even metaphoric processes.

The cases discussed in this section represent the other extreme of the continuum we have been looking at. Despite the immediate stereotypic capacity of 2SG pronouns to point to whoever encounters them, no actual respondent can entirely plausibly inhabit the role of addressee in these cases, when the discursive co-text and sociocultural context is taken into account. Whereas in the most non-selective type of address discussed in section 6.3.1 all respondents were addressed equally, in this type all respondents are equally excluded. It is not used to select a subset of addressees out of all respondents. Rather, it is more like a simulated dialogue with a fictive figure that the actual respondents are invited to follow (cf. also Hanks 1996: 259–260). In a sense, as we move along the continuum, the actual respondents become more and more depersonified and the writer's ideals and desires more and more personified.

### 6.3.4 "YOU" AS NON-IDEAL

Finally, there is an altogether different type of address in which the focus of address shifts from the usual target, ideal respondents, to non-ideal respondents. As was seen in the previous sections, their destiny is usually to be effaced from the interactional event. Some exceptions, however, are found in the data. Occasionally the writers address in explicitly negative terms persons that represent undesirable social types:

(6.16) ¶Viimeisin asia maailmassa mistä olen kiinnostunut on varattujen miesten viihdyttäminen. Jos olet varattu tai olet näitä- laitan avioeron juuri vireille miehiä, älä missään nimessä edes harkitse vastaamista. Viestini teille seksiseuraa vonkaavat varatut miehet on: ole mies, eroa ensin, hanki uusi seura sen jälkeen.¶
(6.16) ¶The last thing in the world that I'm interested in is entertaining taken men. If you are taken or one of these- I'm about to file for divorce men, do not on any account even consider replying. My message to you taken men angling for sex is: be a man, break up first, get a new partner after that.¶

Cases like this are related to rejections of unwanted interpretations examined in 5.4. In cases like (6.16), however, the writers orient to types of non-desired persons whom they wish to exclude from the group of ratified respondents altogether (i.e., rejecting individuals instead of kinds or indices). In (6.16), the writer first formulates the basis of the exclusion of a type of respondent as a general principle in third-person terms, which is then followed by 2SG address and finally widened into a 2PL address (which was already discussed

in the beginning of section 6.3). The direct 2SG address serves to maximize the effect of such disjunctures between selves and undesirable others.

An inverse kind of non-ideal addressee is someone who regards the writer as non-ideal. In example (6.17), the writer imagines herself as undesirable, and her self-promotion as unsuccessful, from the perspective of the addressee:

> (6.17) Ja, jos nyt sitten kuitenkin kävi niin, etten onnistunut herättämään mielenkiintoasi, niin hei, onneksesi maailmassa on naisia enemmän kuin puolet. Onnea etsintään.
>
> (6.17) And, if it so happened that I didn't succeed in raising your interest, well hey, luckily more than half of the people in the world are women. Good luck for the search.

From the writer's standpoint, the respondent is not necessarily non-ideal as a person but merely as a respondent. Perhaps precisely because of that, in strict contrast to example (6.16), the respondent is not addressed with the purpose of harsh rejection but, rather, to acknowledge him and to write him off as a ratified interactant, even wishing him luck in subsequent interactions with others. (For the most part this analysis applies even if one interprets the writer's comment as sarcastic.) The contrast between the two cases, then, goes to show that non-ideality and interpersonal conflict can be managed in highly different tones with different patterns of addressivity. In part, the choice of direct address in cases of potential interpersonal conflict may be facilitated by the anonymity of the encounter as well as the presumed right of the "promotional" persona to be highly selective (see also e.g. sections 5.1.2, 5.6 and 7.2).

### 6.3.5 WHAT ABOUT "WE" AND "I"?

In a conceptual sense, the idea of "we" or "us" is prominently linked to the activity type of online dating, as the stereotypic goal is to accomplish a sustained romantic relationship with some other (i.e., a social relation that can be referred to as "we" in two ways, as "I" + "him"/"her" in outgroup settings and "I" + "you" in ingroup settings). It also figures prominently in conventional cultural discourses related to dating and relationships, including the advertisements themselves (e.g. *Olisihan se kieltämättä mukavaa jos voisi alkaa jonain päivänä puhumaan meistä eikä aina musta,* "It would admittedly be nice if [one] could some day start talking about us and not always about me") (see also Muikku-Werner 2009: 159–161). That is, the pronoun itself has become a stereotypic emblem of a particular (Western) kind of romantic relationship. Actual tokens of inclusive 1PL deictics, forms

that specifically point to the writer and some addressed other ("I" + "you"), are, however, not very frequent in the advertisement text data (n<40).[109]

As has been seen in passing in previous examples (see e.g. 4.14, 6.14a), 1PL deictics can point either to the actual interactants in the ongoing interactional event or more selectively to ideal figures. A particularly relevant type of usage relates to the addressing of chronotopic scenery to respondents. In examples like (6.18), the writer models the ideal self and ideal other as already dating or in a relationship (i.e., "I" and "you" as "we" would or should be in "our" relationship):

(6.18) ¶Minulle riittää pääasiassa ihan hyvin se, että käy kävelemässä ulkona, välillä katsomassa kirahveja Korkeasaaressa ja se, että välillä voimme [*can*:IND.PRS.1PL] auttaa toisiamme miten milloinkin. Jos olet loukkaantunut onnettomuudessa, voin tulla katsomaan sinua sairaalaan ja tuoda omenapiirakkaa.

(6.18) ¶In principle it suffices quite well for me that one goes out for a walk, sometimes going to see the giraffes at Korkeasaari [a Zoo in Helsinki] and that every now and then we can help each other in different ways. If you've got injured in an accident, I can come and see you in the hospital and bring apple pie.

Cases like this link "proposed" characteristics (discussed in 4.1.1) with addressivity. To be effective, "proposed" characteristics require other's co-operation and commitment to the chronotopic imagery. That is, they distribute the characteristic between the self and others and assign more agency to respondents than, for example, "described" characteristics or requirements. Cases like (6.18) address "proposed" characterics personally to respondents. In addition to commitment and co-operation then, in order to be effective, they also require the respondent's willingness to inhabit the proposed role of addressee (cf. also example 6.11).

In the cases examined in sections 6.3.1–6.3.3 the focus was heavily on the addressee. The use of "we" highlights the "I"-"you" relation and construes that relation as a connection rather than a disjuncture. It also brings the addressor more clearly as a figure on the stage. That is, it distributes the focus of attention to both to the addressor and the addressee. The latter part of this section makes a few more observations about such less frequent patterns in which the explicit focus turns more on the "I" and the "you" becomes a relatively indirect addressee.[110] The following two examples (6.19)

[109] All sorts of general and idiomatic formulations, such as "As we know," "We all have our traumas," or "We only live once," have been excluded from the count, although technically they can be construed as inclusive too ("I" + "you" + everyone else).

[110] In many ways, cases like this are akin to the kinds of internal fractionation of the writer that has already been dealt with extensively in previous chapters (particularly from the standpoint of managing the relation between "real" and "ideal" personae). That is, the writer is split into the animator, the author, and various principal personae, from which others can be addressed (or in which any forms of addressivity are grounded). We have also touched upon (e.g., in chapter 1) the idea that the texts are

and (6.20) are from the same text, which suggests that they might be part of a relatively intentional strategy of using unusual patterns of addressivity. In previous examples, we have seen patterns of focalization that gradually move from a 3SG perspective to a 1SG perspective. The following example, in contrast, employs a reverse technique, a sort of “3SG-ization” of 1SG (cf. also example 4.29):

(6.19)

| ¶Minä | lyhyesti: | Polttaa | tupakkaa, | juo | ajoittain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | briefly: | smoke:IND.PRS.3SG | cigarette:PTV.SG | drink:IND.PRS.3SG | sometimes |

| itsensä | humalaan | ja | kiroilee=kin. – – |
|---|---|---|---|
| self:POSS.3SG | drunkenness:ILL.SG | and | swear:IND.PRS.3SG=PTCL |

| ¶Edellisistä | huolimatta | olen | kiva kaveri, |
|---|---|---|---|
| previous:ELA.PL | despite | be:IND.PRS.1SG | nice guy |

mahdottoman hauska, romanttinen höpsö sekä miehekäs mörri ja ihan tajuton rakastaja.

(6.19)

¶I briefly: Smokes cigarettes, gets drunk from time to time, and even swears. – – ¶Despite the previous I’m a nice guy, terribly funny, a romantic fool and masculine and an insanely good lover.

The interplay of three elements is of interest here: 1) the 1SG pronoun (*minä*) as a deictic element that stereotypically points to the animator, 2) the way it is textually used as a third-person figure by superimposing 3SG verbal inflection on it, and 3) the writer as the animator of the entire sign pattern. In the first sentence, the writer does not fully inhabit the “I” but merely characterizes it as a third-person figure. That is, the symbolic figure is distinguished and displaced to a degree from the self as the animator. Such a third-person perspective is used in a particular kind of act: to present a list of characteristics oriented to as potentially non-ideal. Later, when describing ideal characteristics, the writer does fully inhabit the 1SG figure (“I’m…”). The writer’s commitment to the ideal figure, then, is different from his commitment to the previous “realistic” one. The first figure is displaced farther from the self than the latter one. That is, they both point to the self but at different distances. The first figure, in a sense, reduces the writer into an outside observer of himself. Both the writer and the readers share the same viewpoint and look at the figure from a third-person perspective. (See

often addressed to self as well (e.g., in self-to-self or “I-self” to “me-self” dialogues). The self is, however, not symbolically formulated as a direct addressee in any of the texts (although that would be a conceivable rhetorical possibility).

also Raevaara 2015.) Moreover, the mutual interplay of the two figures (i.e., the fact that the writer has the capacity to take two different kinds of stances towards himself) is itself a further sign of the self.[111]

In keeping with this “outside observer” perspective, the first set of 2SG deictics that the writer employs are the possessive suffixes in the excerpt (6.20), in which the writer situates himself as a figure in an imagined future scenario that includes the parents and friends of the addressee (“your mother,” “your father,” “your friends”):

(6.20)

| Äitisi | hullaantuu | luonnollisesti | minuun | heti |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| mother:POSS.2SG | be_taken_with:IND.PRS.3SG | naturally | 1SG:ILL | instantly |

| ja | isäsi | kanssa | ollaan | heti | parhaat | kalakaverit. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| and | father:GEN.POSS.2SG | with | be:PASS(IND.PRS.1PL) | instantly | best:PL | fishing_pals:PL |

| Tyttökaverisi | ovat | tietysti | kateudesta | vihreitä -- |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female_friend:PL.POSS.2SG | be:PRS.2PL | of course | jealousy:ELA | green:PTV.PL |

(6.20) Your mother will naturally be instantly taken with me and with your father we’ll instantly be best fishing pals. Your female friends will of course be green with jealousy --

Here, the writer models himself from the addressee’s point of view (i.e., how “you,” “your” kin, and “your” friends would see the ideal “me”). That is, it continues the writer’s use of an other-to-self perspective. Moreover, the addressee is not fully denoted (e.g., with a personal pronoun) but serves merely as a reference point (i.e., the possessor of social relations) for directing joint-attention to the simulated perspectives of the addressee’s kin and friends. The combination of the features of the two examples, then, contributes to a pattern of addressivity in which the addressee is engaged with in a considerably more indirect manner than in the cases examined in sections 6.3.1–6.3.4.

As has been seen in numerous analyses, it is understood as the right of the “promotional” persona to be highly selective. There is a certain correspondence between the addressing and addressed personae so that it is the ideal “I” that is usually understood as the one who addresses an ideal “you.” That is, a certain degree of selectivity implies the kind of persona that has the right to and the interest for such a degree of selectivity. There is one

[111] The superimposition of the 1SG pronoun and the 3SG verbal inflection also makes visible the writer’s double role as the animator and the 1SG figure. By detaching oneself from the “I,” the writer draws attention to object-sign and sign-interpretant relations. He makes transparent the fact that the “I” and any characateristics predicated about it are merely particular kinds of symbolic constructs and virtual models. In a sense, then, there is some level of “denaturalization” of self-presentation and evaluative stances here – contrary to the kinds of cases discussed in section 5.2.

recurring genre-specific pattern in which the writers phase out of the "promotional" persona and simultaneously shift their address from more selective to less selective. The next section will discuss this pattern. It also leads us further in the examination of how writers can control their interactions with others even beyond the ongoing encounter.

## 6.4 *JOS* ("IF") CLAUSES AND ONTOLOGIES OF COMPATIBILITY

This section examines a pattern of addressivity that makes visible the writers' reflexive awareness and purposes regarding the interpretation of their signs. The pattern also further illuminates the managing of the relations between "ideal" and "real" intersubjective contacts and forms of personhood. In its prototypic form, the pattern consists of two parts: (1) a sentence-initial *jos* ("if") clause that describes the addressee's response to the writer's signs in the ongoing event and (2) a main clause that models the further interactional consequences of that response:

(6.21)
IF [ADDRESSEE'S RESPONSE IN THIS EVENT] THEN [INTERACTIONAL CONSEQUENCES]
E.G.

| Jos tunnistat | itsessäsi | jotakin |
|---|---|---|
| if recognize:IND.PRS.2SG | self:INE.POSS.2SG | something:PTV |

| samankaltaista | sieluntoimintaa, | toimi. |
|---|---|---|
| similar:PTV | soul's.workings:PTV.SG | act:IMP.2SG |

(6.21) If you recognize within yourself some similar workings of the soul, act.

The *jos* ("if") clauses include some metasemiotic typification of the preceding text and of the specific nature of the reader's anticipated ideal response. The previous example, for example, typifies the preceding text segment as a description or a manifestation of the workings of the writer's "soul." The modeled ideal response is the recognition of something similar within oneself. Insofar as that condition is fulfilled, the appropriate course of action is to "act," which presumes an understanding of the typical action in this kind of event (i.e., replying in one of the ways enabled by the online dating service). The *jos* ("if") clause, then, is usually addressed non-selectively to any respondent (see 6.3.1) and the main clause to that subset of respondents that fulfills the formulated condition. This pattern, then, sieves respondents into addressees and non-addressees based on their interpretations of and alignments to the writer's signs, not based on their personal characteristics (cf. 6.3.2).

The *jos* ("if") patterns typically embody an ontology of "compatibility" or "match" between persons. That is, they denote a particular kind of logic that links others' responses to self's signs with the possibility of subsequent semiotic encounters and a sustained interactional relation. Recognizing similarities or equivalencies of various kinds, as in example (6.21), seems to be the most common type of "compatibility." In that example, the similarity is located at the level of mental processes or "workings of the soul" (i.e., the readers perception of their soul corresponds to their interpretation of the workings of the writer's soul as mediated by the text). Similar examples abound:

(6.22a)
Jos koit samankaltaisuutta, kirjoitat=han?
if experience:IND.PST.2SG similarity:SG.PTV write:IND.PRS.2SG=PTCL

(6.22a) If you experienced similarity, will you write me?

(6.22b)
On=ko Sinulla samanlaisia haaveita.
COP:IND.PRS.3SG= Q you:ADE similar:PL.PTV dream:PL.PTV
Jos on niin avataan peli!
if COP:IND.PRS.3SG then open:PASS(1PL.IMP).IND.PRS game

(6.22b) Do You have similar dreams. If you do then let's open the game!

It is noteworthy that these examples contain no expressions that explicitly refer to the text-artifact or the signs it carries. They employ 2SG address, verbs that denote mental processes ("recognize," "experience"), the pronoun *sama* ("the same") or derivatives (*samankaltaisuus*, *samanlainen*, "similarity," "similar") that point to non-specified earlier phases of the ongoing semioc process, and noun phrases that name the objects mediated by the text ("workings of the soul," "dreams"). That is, the writers operate directly at the level of intersubjectively experienced objects (e.g., experiences of kinship between souls; similarity of dreams or views of subjectivity, etc.) effacing the process of textual mediation. The following examples, in contrast, locate the equivalency more specifically between the reader and the writer's text:

(6.23a)
¶Jos tunnistat yhtään itseäsi ylläolevassa tekstissä, niin
if recognize:IND.PRS.2SG at_all self:PTV.2SG.POSS above:SG.INE text:SG.INE then

laita=han tulemaan rohkeasti viestiä, niin kurkistetaan,
send:IMP.2SG=PTCL come:INF bravely message:SG.PTV so peek:PASS(1PL)

jos=ko puhuisimme suurin piirtein samaa kieltä keskenämme.
if=Q talk:COND.1PL approximately sama:SG.PTV language:SG.PTV between:1PL.POSS

(6.23a)
¶If you recognize at all yourself in the above text, then go ahead and bravely send me a message, so we can see if we happened to speak approximately the same language with each other.

(6.23b)
Eli jos olet sitä mitä kerron hakevani*,*
so if be:IND.PRS.2SG that:PTV what tell:IND.PRS.1SG look_for:PTCP.1SG.POSS

vastauksesi ei mene hukkaan.
reply:2SG.POSS NEG:3SG go:NEG.IND.PRS waste:ILL.SG
(6.23b) In other words, if you are what I say I'm looking for, your reply won't go to waste.

Example (6.23a) models a feeling of recognizing oneself in other's semiotic artifact (which is described as situated "above" the current focus of attention) and in the representations the artifact mediates. That is, the similarity is projected between the reader's self-conceptions and the figures mediated by the writer's textual patterns. Example (6.23b), on the other hand, models a more straightforward equivalency between the reader's "being" and the writer's discursive act of "telling what I'm looking for." That is, it does acknowledge the role of language in the mediation of actions but directly compares the writer's representation and the reader's being as if they were one-to-one commensurable without intermediate phases of interpretation.

To take up a few more cases, example (6.24a) refers to the respondent's evaluation of his "capability" to fulfil the writer's criteria. Example (6.24b) draws attention to both the positive affective impact felt by the respondent and the respondent's capacity to imagine shared future activities:

(6.24a) ¶Jos kykenet kaikkiin noihin ja tämä teksti tuntuu kertovan myös sinusta, niin ota yhteyttä ja edetään siitä sitten ties minne asti. :)
(6.24a) ¶If you're capable of all those and this text feels/seems to talk about you too, then contact [me] and let's proceed from there up to who knows where. :)

(6.24b) ¶Jos kolahti ja tuntuu että voitaisiin keksiä kaikkea hauskaa yhdessä älä epäröi hetkeäkään kirjoittaa mulle. Jään jännityksellä odottelemaan..
(6.24b) ¶If [this] struck a chord and it feels/seems like we could think of all kinds of fun things to do together don't hesitate for a moment to write me. I will be waiting with excitement..

Example (6.24a) explicitly mentions the text(-artifact) and points to a set of more specific individual objects ("all those") accessible in the event. Those objects can be either previously experienced effects ("all those things I

described to you earlier") or, more concretely, spatially contiguous visible signs ("all those things we can still see above").[112] The beginning of example (6.24b) ("If [this] struck"), instead of merely focusing on the content of the respondent's experience, specifically implies the cause of the affective impact (i.e., that in the writer's performance which "struck").

In short, the *jos* ("if") clauses denote authoritative, regimenting virtual models of actual responses. They sieve actual responses into ones that comply with the model and into ones that do not. This effect is based on a cross-modal and intersubjective iconicity in which self's and other's processes in different semiotic modes correspond to one another in some relevant way and both are aware of this correspondence (e.g., whether the respondent's feeling is understood as sufficiently similar to the animator's representation; or whether the respondent's abilities match up to the animator's desires) (see also Urban 2001: 146; Agha 2007a: 22; Kockelman 2005: 253). Where that iconicity is explicitly located in the model both reflects and creates an understanding of the nature of the intersubjective contact (i.e., which processes of self and other are connected and how directly) and what kinds of further interactions that can lead to.

There are also a few cases in the data in which "compatibility" is modeled as a form of complementarity or other non-similarity. In (6.25), the *jos* ("if") clause anticipates an interpretative approach in which the respondent is making an active effort to find something non-appealing in the advertisement:

(6.25) Jos oikein suurennuslasilla haet, niin varmasti löydät tästä ilmoituksesta "jotain ei niin sinun juttua", eikös juu?? Minua ei häiritse ollenkaan jos en jaksa kiinnostua aivan kaikista sinun jutuistasi, tai jos kaikki minun juttuni eivät iske sinuun. Ole sinä Nainen, minä olen Mies!! ;-)
(6.25) If you look with a magnifying glass, then surely you will find "something not so much your thing" in this ad, isn't that right?? I'm not at all bothered if I'm not able to get excited about all of your things, or if all of my things don't spark your interest. You be a Woman, I am a Man!! ;-)

The writer signals with quotation marks that he is voicing, in a kind of free indirect speech, the respondent's negative evaluative stance, which is based on an idiomatic expression ("not someone's thing") describing otherness and non-identification. The writer, however, rejects the problematic nature of such a stance by superimposing on it a further layer of interpretation. He claims that a certain degree of non-similarity is the natural result of ideal gender roles, which should be based on complementary opposites. To take up another example of such less frequent ontologies of compatibility, let us

[112] The difference, in fact, may not be practically relevant in such short digital text-artifacts in which all the signs are continuously perceivable and meaning (qua object-sign-interpretant relations) may appear relatively spatially fixed (versus e.g. oral conversations).

consider example (6.26), which does not involve a *jos* ("if") clause. The excerpt seems to demonstrate a naturalized understanding of which characteristics require similarity and which complementarity:

> (6.26) ¶Sopiva vastakappale olisi hakusessa – – Itse olen aika ujo, huumorintajuinen ja kiltti metalistityttö, <u>joten</u> vastapuolelta odotan puheliaisuutta ja aloitekykyä sekä tietysti hyvää (ja/tai kieroa) huumorintajua.
> (6.26) ¶Looking for a suitable counterpart – – I myself am a quite shy and kind metalhead girl with a good sense of humor, <u>so</u> from the counterpart I expect talkativeness and initiative and of course a good (and/or twisted) sense of humor.

According to her own description, the writer is "shy" and has "a good sense of humor." The causal consequence, expressed by *joten* ("so, hence"), is that the characteristics required from the other are, on the one hand, a "good sense of humor" (similarity) but, on the other hand, "talkativeness and iniative" (complementary opposition). That is, there is an implicit logic that dictates when an "opposites attract" kind of complementarity is desirable and when similarity is the ideal alternative. Textual coherence overlaps with a kind of biographic coherence, an understanding of how personal characteristics are appropriately organized in relation to one another.

As was already seen in earlier examples in this section, the interactional consequences modeled in the main clauses that follow the *jos* ("if") clauses vary in scope and in the degree to which they are removed from the ongoing event. Some concentrate on relatively immediate next phases (such as "replying" or "contacting"), others point to even further subsequent events (e.g., "If you are like that, then contact me - in my life there is a space just your size to be filled!," *Jos olet sellainen, niin ota yhteyttä - elämässäni on juuri sinun kokoisesi tila täytettävänä!*; "Your reply won't go to waste," *Vastauksesi ei mene hukkaan* [implying that the writer will reply to the reader's reply, and so on]; "Let's open the game," *Avataan peli*). In other words, the main clauses model participant-linked semiotic chains (see Agha 2007a: 67) of various kinds and lengths. In its most typical form, the entire pattern, then, links the ideal respondents' feelings (affective interpretants) with their actions (energetic interpretants).

**Feeling** → **Action**

> (6.27) Jos [tämä yhtään tuntuu miltään], niin [tavataan].
> (6.27) If [this feels like anything at all], then [let's meet].

They model a transition from an ideal affective response to an ideal concrete action. As was noted earlier, such patterns sieve respondents into "ideal" and "non-ideal" based on their responses to the writer's text or their evaluations of the writer's performance, whereas the patterns discussed in previous sections sieve based on the respondent's personal characteristics. An overlap of the two kinds of sieving is naturally what is expected. That is, "ideal"

respondents should be “ideal” both at the level of personal characteristics and at the level of their responses to the writer’s performance (including, for example, evaluations of views of subjectivity, see section 4.2). Such constructions, then, make particular kinds of (meta)evaluations (e.g., how the writers evaluate the readers’ evaluations of them) public and unambiguous and are another candidate for genre-specific forms of stancetaking (see section 5.6).

Within one single text, a *jos* (“if”) pattern often marks a shift from more “ideal” to more “real” figures and implicitly relate the two worlds with one another. The pattern functions as a junction in which writers phase out of their earlier performances and negotiate those performances with actual respondents with the purpose of deciding the future course of their social relation. This explicitly contextualizes and grounds the “ideal” persona in relation to other aspects of personhood and other biographic processes (e.g., more general, stable, or widely recognized personae). As exemplified by (6.28), some writers end their texts with less selective figurement and encounter the reader under a “real” persona as well. Sometimes these transitions even divide the writer’s self-presentation into two parallel sections:

(6.28)

| jos | tuntuu | siltä | että | haluaisit | tutustua |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| if | feel:IND.PRS.3SG.IMPRS | it:ABL | that | want:COND.PRS.2SG | get_to_know |

| niin | heitä | viestiä. | oon | ihan | mukava | heppu |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| then | throw:IMP.2SG | message:PTV | be:IND.PRS.1SG.COLL | quite | nice | guy |

| ja | mun | kaa | on | helppo | tulla toimeen :) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| and | I:GEN.COLL | with:COLL | be:IND.PRS.3SG | easy | get_along |

(6.28)
if it feels like you’d like to get to know [me], throw [me] a message. i’m a pretty nice guy and it’s easy to get along with me :)

In (6.28), the writer has already amply described himself (see example 4.30). Regardless of these earlier descriptions, after the *jos* (“if”) pattern he goes on to add one more line that emphasizes that he is, in fact, a “nice guy.” That is, he adds a very general evaluative characterization to a previous sequence of detailed self-presentation. It seems that such parallel descriptions have altogether different functions and relate to different personae. The latter one is oriented to the actual participants under more “real” figurements negotiating the possibility of further interactions (see also example 6.24b) Also, his speech of “getting along” implies a more sustained chain of interactions over a longer stretch of time. There is, then, a clear contrast to the preceding “ideal” persona. This contrast entails a tone of persuasion, as if

the writer was convincing the respondent that he actually is “nice” and that the previous performance has actual validity. In a similar vein, the writer of example (5.23), the engineer afraid of admitting his profession, after his previous stigmaoriented performance, assures in a *jos* (“if”) pattern that he is, in fact, “a quite nice guy” despite the things that came up in the performance (“Go ahead and send me a message if something common was found. I’m actually a quite nice guy despite everything,” *Ei muuta kuin laittamaan viestiä, jos jotain yhteistä löytyi. Olen tosiaan ihan kiva tyyppi kaikesta huolimatta*).

As a final example, let us have a look at a case in which the writer also explicitly addresses the reader under a different persona in the *jos* (“if”) pattern. The writer of example 4.6 in 4.2.3 incorporates additional criteria of “normality” towards the end of her text:

(6.29) Jos kiinnostuit ja olet suhteelllisen normaali kaikin puolin, eli olet muuttanut kotoa pois ja työpaikallekkin on raahauduttava, otappa yhteyksiä:)
(6.29) If you got interested and you’re relativelly normal in every way, that is you have moved away from home and have to drag yourself to a workplace, get in contact;)

Whereas the main part of the text deals with “ideal” personhood in the sense of personal characteristics and individual uniqueness, the movement towards a more “real” world adds to the picture the level of compliance with social norms (see also sections 5.2.1 and 7.1.1). The *jos* (“if”) pattern, then, ensures that the respondent fulfills the basic requirements of “normality” (exemplified by the writer with housing arrangements and employment status).

The previous sections of this chapter has further shown that there is an orientation to two distinct (“promotional”) roles or personae in online dating advertisements. There is a more “real” figure that is in charge of managing actual social and interactional relations with (any kind of) others and a more “ideal” figure that conveys a sense of identity and is used to sieve others into “ideal” and “non-ideal.” Those writers who do not employ the multifunctional *jos* (“if”) pattern examined in this section or some similar construction, either rely on the fact that the respondent shares similar ontologies of compatibility or do not see a reason to explicitly regiment and narrow the scope of acceptable response. Even among those that do thete are difference in the specificity and rigidity with which further interactions are controlled. The next section takes a look at even further attempts to control the unfolding of interactional chains.

## 6.5 MODELING INTERACTIONS BEYOND THE ONGOING SPEECH EVENT

So far our main focus has been on the selection for addressees and the sieving of respondents and responses in the ongoing event. This section takes a look at how even further subsequent events and interactional consequences are controled and how the "promotional" personae inhabited in the advertisement event are related to such subsequent events. The first example (5.31) starts with a *jos* ("if") pattern and then continues with a sequence that describes in some detail a progressing chain of interactions that could potentially follow from the respondent's reply:

> (6.30) Jos – –, niin kirjoittele toki minulle. Aloitetaan vaihtamalla pari viestiä ja tapaamalla vaikkapa leppoisan tee-/kahvituokion merkeissä ja katsotaan olisiko mahdollista löytää se yhteinen sävel pikkuhiljaa. Mitään tässä ei menetä, mutta voitto voi olla arvokkain mahdollinen :-)
> (6.30) If – –, then please do write me. Let's begin by exchanging a couple of messages and by meeting say over a nice cup of tea/coffee and let's see if it would be possible to get in tune with one another gradually. Nothing can be lost here, but the prize may be the most valuable possible :-)

Sequences like this model ideal semiotic chains and specify the kinds of consequences the writer is willing or not willing to commit to. Such commitments may concern, for instance, specific semiotic modes of interaction or particular kinds of social relations (e.g., continuing writing-based encounters in 5.32a versus 5.32b; or being just friends instead of having a romantic relationship in 5.32c):

> (6.31a) Haluan aluksi tutustella ihan vaikka kirjoittelemalla, mutta jos jutut menee yksiin niin treffeillekin lähden oikein mielelläni.
> (6.31a) For a start I want to get acquainted just by writing, but if our talks prove compatible then I'd love to go out on a date too.

> (6.31b) Kirjeenvaihtoseuraa minusta et valitettavasti saa: jos mielestäsi jätin jotain oleellista kertomatta, se selviää minuutissa puhelimessa.
> (6.31b) You won't unfortunately get a pen pal out of me: if you think I left something essential untold, it can be clarified over the phone in a minute.

> (6.31c) Minusta saa kyllä ihan kaverinkin jos se paljon puhuttu rakkauden liekki ei jostain syystä roihahdakkaan..
> (6.31c) You can also get just a friend out of me if the famous flame of love won't blaze up for some reason.

The previous cases concentrate on the writer rather than the readers and are somewhat concessive and optimistic in nature. In fact, the writer in example

(6.30) explicitly mentions that there is “nothing to lose” here, only to gain. However, it is not uncommon for the writers to anticipate more adverse consequences and to attempt to shield themselves from unwanted responses and non-ideal respondents (cf. also sections 5.4 and 6.3.4). Example (6.32), for instance, sieves respondents into non-ideal repliers based on the way they evaluate persons in general and self in relation to others in particular (cf. 5.3.2). It also explicitly treats particular linguistic typifications (e.g. “reliable” and “honest”) as unimpressive (cf. 5.2.1):

(6.32) ¶On mielestäni matala standardi luokitella ihmisiä varallisuuden, vallan tai julkisuuden perusteella. On myös helppo omassa päässään ylentää itsensä ihan vaan alentamalla muut. Toivon kyseisten henkilöiden jättävän vastaamatta minulle. Luotettavina, rehellisinä ja huumorintajuisina itseään pitävät ei myöskään tee minuun suuremmin vaikutusta.
(6.32) ¶It is in my opinion a low standard to classify people based on wealth, power or publicity. It is also easy to exalt oneself in one’s own head just by demeaning others. I hope those persons won’t reply to me. Also those who regard themselves as reliable, honest and having a good sense of humor do not impress me much.

Some texts even explicitly formulate concrete sanctions that will befall those respondents that do not abide by the authoritative model laid down by the writer:

(6.33) ¶Todettakoon lisäksi, että minä heti deletoin vastaukset, joissa m.m. tarjotaan seksiseikkauluja ja isoja varustuksia nuorilta tai vanhemmilta tai tilataan salarakkaaksi.
(6.33) ¶I should also mention that I will instantly delete replies that offer for example sexual adventures and large equipments from younger or older or look for secret lovers.

In (6.33), the writer both commits to a particular form of sanctioning (i.e., the instant deletion of replies) but already anticipates and imagines specific ways in which some repliers might not comply with the writer’s ideals.

Analogously to the *jos* (“if”) patterns in the previous section, the cases in this section are authoritative, regimenting virtual models of the interactional consequences of the advertisement text beyond the respondent’s initial reaction in the ongoing event. That is, they specify what is ultimately at stake in the ongoing interactional event and what replying to the text requires and may lead to. As was seen in the examples, such models may be formulated as more “imperative-like” (i.e., focus on regimenting others’ behaviors) or “promise-like” (i.e., focus on committing self to particular behaviors). In any case, they model an ideal chain of events between self and others, grounded in norms of personhood and interaction, and make self and others accountable for compliance with the model. Such examples are, then, linked to wider metacultural questions, such as agency in relation to the regimentation and transmission of culture (e.g. who has the authority to issue commands or other norms of behavior to others; what is the range of

appropriate responses; what are the consequences of disobedience) (see Urban 2001: 145–163).

The more problematic aspects of such questions tend to become more visible in "backstage" conversations where one need not maintain the "promotional" front. The following Internet conversation (6.34) is from the external metadiscourse data (see 3.2). It discusses the social and moral implications of the "disobediance" of some repliers (i.e., what do with responses that do not conform to the modeled ideal response). It also touches upon similar sanctioning behaviors as example (6.33) as well as the more general entitlements and obligations that writers of advertisements have towards repliers. The following excerpt has been cut down to the most essential fragments of the thread (i.e., the original post, two replies, and the original poster's later reply):

(6.34)

[Original post from a woman]

Mulla on ollut pari kertaa ilmoitus, johon olen saanut oikeastaan aika paljonkin vastauksia. Mutta minkälaisia.... huh huh. [– –] Ukkkomiehiltä tulee aina epätoivoisia treffiehdotuksia, vaikka ilmoituksessani on ollut aina maininta, että miehen täytyy olla ehdottomasti vapaa. Ikätoivomustakaan ei yhtään kunnioiteta, vastauksia tulee myös 10-15 v nuoremmilta miehiltä.... [– –]

[Reply from a man]

Joo-o.Osaan kyllä kuvitella,että naisen laittama deitti-ilmoitus kerää paljon enemmän vastauksia kuin miehen.Vaikka laittaisit siihen mitä tahansa rajoituksia esim. "Vain meilikaveri","Olen varattu" tai mitä tahansa ikärajoituksia viestiä sataa solkenaan.Ja suureen määrään mahtuu varmasti myös näitä **"akanoita"**. [– –]

[Reply from a woman] [– –] Naikkoselle... olen törmännyt samaan.. valitettavasti.. sinkkut-sivuilla löytyy edes jotain tasoa, mutta deitti on puhtaasti päiväkahvimesta ja **pervojen** pelleilykenttä. :)

[Original poster again]

Kiitos kommenteista :) Vastauksia tippuu edelleen ja oikeastaan **poistan niitä sitä mukaan**. Yksi aika mukavakin kirje tuli, kokeilen nyt kepillä jäätä, lähetin vastauksen. Jutun juju lienee siinä, että vastausmeilissä täytyisi olla "se jokin" joka herättäisi ilmoituksen laatijan mielenkiinnon.

(Suomi 24: Jul 17, 2002.)

(6.34)

[Original post from a woman]

I've posted an advertisement a couple of times, and I've actually got quite a lot of replies. But what kinds of replies... ugh [– –] Marrried men always send desperate invitations for dates, although my advertisement has always included a mention that the man absolutely has to be free. The age request is not respected at all either, replies come from men who are 10–15 years younger.... [– –]

[Reply from a man]

Yea-a.I can imagine that a woman's dating ad will get much more replies than a man's. Even if you put in it whatever limitations e.g. "Only a mail friend,""I'm taken" or any age limits at all messages will rain down non-stop. And the large number of replies will certainly include some of this "chaff". [– –]

[Reply from a woman] [– –] To Naikkonen [= the original poster]... I've encountered the same.. unfortunately.. The singles pages [at Suomi24] have at least some class, but deitti [= Deitti.net] is purely a place for people looking for sex and a playground for **pervs**. :)

[Original poster again]

Thanks for the comments :) Replies keep pouring in and as a matter of fact **I delete them as they come in**. One pretty nice letter arrived as well, I'm now testing the waters, I sent a reply. The trick seems to be that the reply mail should have "that something" that would rouse the interest of the writer of the advertisement.

(Suomi 24: Jul 17, 2002.)

The participants of the conversation somewhat unanimously agree that non-compliant replies are inappropriate and therefore sanctionable. There is a progression from relatively neutral terms of non-compliance (e.g., wrong demographic parameters, such as marital status or age) to, first, the "chaff" (i.e., non-desirable individuals) and, later, to "pervs" (which specifically targets the users of the *Deitti.net* service). That is, the focus gradually moves towards more problematic types of disobedient repliers and the judgements become harsher. The agreement and support of the other participants, for which the original poster later thanks them, seems to vest authority into the original poster's acts of sanction. The negotiated consensus in the conversation is that non-compliant repliers need not be taken seriously and their replies can be deleted without a second thought – just like example 6.33 warns. In other words, even what may feel like a relatively slight breach of the authoritative virtual model formulated by the writer (e.g., the replier being 10 years younger than the age range specified in the advertisement) can give rise to dramatic social-interactional consequences. The breach can be interpreted as "disobedience," and disobedient replies need not be handled according to the same social and moral norms as obedient ones. In such "backstage" conversations, then, interactants negotiate defensive and protective practices aimed at excluding those who do not play by the rules and therefore threaten others' performances (see Goffman 1959 [1990]: 207–230).

Towards the end of the excerpt, it is, in fact, made explicit that replying to others' replies is considered optional even in the case of "obedient" replies, although for different reasons. To be more precise, as the reasoning of the original poster shows ("the reply must have 'that something'"), the same criteria of selectivity that apply for imagined ideal respondents and addressees in the advertisement event apply for actual repliers (i.e., those actual persons who have taken interest in the advertisement writer and made the effort of producing a personal interactional contribution). This kind of selective behavior, then, is the uptake of the promotional persona in a

subsequent event with different stakes and a different frame of participation. The promotional persona is entitled to sieve actual replies, too, into those that are acknowledged and those that are ignored. Or, in a sense, the promotional persona has the right to evaluate actual persons based on their performances in the same way as they previously evaluated the promotional persona. The tables have turned.

This chapter has shown a variety of different orientations of the "promotional" persona towards others in online dating advertisements. It has shown different, more or less strictly selective, ways of relating "real" and "ideal" others in terms of addressivity, compatibility, and appropriate responses. The next chapter will explore the external metadiscourse data more systematically from the standpoint of how the patterns examined in chapters 4, 5, and 6 are interpreted and dealt with in those metadiscourses. It will also delve deeper into the question already raised in this chapter, namely, how the text-mediated encounter is understood as a type of intersubjective contact.

# 7 ONLINE DATING ADVERTISEMENTS AS AN OBJECT OF CULTURAL METADISCOURSES

The previous chapters have focused on patterns of entextualization that instantiate online dating advertisements as a particular type of interactional practice. The data that will be examined in this chapter consist of a variety of other types of discourse that talk *about* online dating advertisements as a type of interactional practice (see section 3.2). That is, we are dealing with metapractices, forms of metasemiosis that have another practice as their object. Online dating advertisements seem to have given rise to an exceptional amount of, often heated, metapractices that debate the nature of online dating advertisements as a semiotic encounter and the interpretation of others' signs in such an encounter. The sections of this chapter will explore online dating guidebooks (7.1.1, 7.1.2, 7.2.1, 7.3), Internet writings and conversations about online dating advertisements (7.1.1, 7.2.2, 7.3), and a segment of a television program (7.3), in which online dating is discussed. Some of the data, then, have been produced by "experts" (persons who claim some degree of expertise in the matter, such as guidebook authors; see 2.1.5), some by "peers" (persons who merely have personal experiences or opinions concerning online dating). Some of it is fragmentary (e.g. anonymous commentaries on Internet discussion forums or comment sections); some of it is relatively systematic and intricately elaborated (e.g. online dating guidebooks). Some of it takes a narrative approach and focuses on particular experiences; some of it is more normative and generalizing in nature. As explained in chapter 3, the external metadiscourses can be seen both as sources of normative or prestige models and as "backstages," in which the object-performances can be freely discussed and negotiated (see Goffman 1990 [1959]: 114, 129). Each source of external metadiscourses, then, has its own frames of circulation and participation and is produced by particular kinds of interactants and only consumed by particular types of interactants. That is, they relate to the semiotic division of labor (see 2.1.5) in different ways and constitute an unevenly distributed set of interpretants. None of the interpretations examined in this chapter, then, can apply to all online dating advertisements or all online daters. Furthermore, the external metadiscourse analyses here cannot be causally or sequentially linked to the advertisement data examined in earlier chapters. Rather, this chapter explores general tendencies, cultural prerequisites, and possible points of contention in the interpretation of online dating advertisement practices. The goal is to illuminate further layers of semiotic ontologies involved in such practices.

The data examined in this chapter could be even more specifically dubbed "external metageneric discourse," since it is discourse that is about a

recognizable genre but not located within an instance of the genre (but, rather, in another genre with its own purposes and frames of participation and interpretation). That is, unlike the kinds of text-internal metapragmatic comments discussed in previous sections, the “external” metadiscourses and the ideological views of language use they embody do not co-occur with the objects they refer to. They are not reflexively calibrated to the ongoing interactional event in which they are entextualized. They are displaced discourses about another practice that occurs somewhere else. (See Silverstein 2003: e.g. 196.) The assumption in this chapter is that the interactants in the two sets of data (actual advertisements and external metadiscourses) are – to a sufficient degree – dealing with the same cultural practice. The very fact that online dating advertisements can be discussed and modeled in a detailed but totally decontextualized manner (e.g., in guidebooks or newspaper articles) shows that there is a recognizable, culturally motivated reflexive model of semiotic behavior that can be jointly oriented to across events.

There are many forms of metasemiotic regimentation of social life. Online dating advertisements, for instance, are checked prior to their publication by online dating service providers for violations of rules and regulations. That is, such forms of “legal” metadiscourse are enforced instantly and directly. The kinds of “ideological” metasemiotic discourses examined in this chapter, in contrast, are highly decontextualizable and more loosely calibrated to the actual events they regiment. They are made to bear on actual online dating events by those participants whose assumptions and interpretations they affect. (See Parmentier 1994: 128, 142–155.) They laminate more displaced and implicit additional layers of experience on the online dating process. In fact, the very existence of such metadiscourses and their mutual differences is interesting as a form of *metaculture* that interprets and evaluates other forms of culture shaping the future unfoldings of those object-processes. (See Urban 2001; Wilce 2009b: 171–180.) As will be seen in this chapter, different metacultural discourses tap into the features of their object in different ways and project different kinds of meanings on them. Insofar as such metadiscourses coherently link empirical investigations (what we observe) with theoretical representations (how we theorize what we observe) and practical interventions (how we act on what we observe based on our theories), they constitute *epistemic formations*, or cultural practices of reasoning that link perceptions with beliefs, beliefs with other beliefs, and beliefs with intentions (Kockelman 2006b: 111–112; 2013a: 142, 169, 182).

To sum up, the points of interest in this chapter are the semiotic ontologies and epistemic formations that the external metadiscourses embody and disseminate. The focus will be on those segments of metadiscourse that most specifically and concretely deal with language and text-artifacts and their role in the mediation of personhood. In a sense, the approach here is comparative and contrastive. The online dating advertisement genre functions as a cultural arena that brings different kinds

of people with different ontologies in contact with one another. The aim is to tease out relevant positionalities and points of contention that are crucial to an understanding of the dynamics of the genre and how the "promotional persona" is interpreted as a mode of personhood.

## 7.1 STEREOTYPES OF ONLINE DATERS AND THEIR LANGUAGE USE

Sections 7.1–7.3 explore from different perspectives how the external metadiscourses in the data model the relationship between signers, text-artifacts, and interpreters in the context of online dating advertisements. They examine ethnotheoretical notions of how particular kinds of signs can be used to infer information about persons. At the same time, they imply wider language ideologies and reveal how the "thing called language" (Agha 2007c) in general is understood and approached by particular communities. This first section starts off by looking at some general stereotypic links between online dating as an interactional practice and stigmatized forms of personhood.

### 7.1.1 THE STIGMATIZATION OF AN INTERACTIONAL PRACTICE

As promised in section 5.6, this section takes up the question of stigmatization from the standpoint of the external metadiscourse data. Section 5.6 showed that many writers orient to fighting off negative default images of personhood stereotypically attached to online daters. This section further illuminates the contents of such negative stereotypes and clarifies how they are motivated by the interactional structure of online dating. These stereotypes attribute to online daters characteristics that contradict cultural models of "normality" (see e.g. Goffman 1963 [1990]). Although clearly not everyone commits to such views, they are nevertheless widely recognized as opinions that others may have and therefore need to be taken into account. That is, such generalized others and their default interpretations have to some degree become part of the genre knowledge for some interactants. As was seen in 5.6, from a writer's standpoint the problem is about convincing others that the stereotype does not apply in his or her particular case. This section approaches the question more from the standpoint of an interpreter.

A large amount of metadiscourse portrays online daters as more or less non-ideal or abnormal kinds of persons. Let us first take a look at a few examples from Internet conversations. Often such conversations are polarized: some participants warn others based on the experiences they claim to have access to and others try to balance the picture by recounting more "normal" or "ideal" experiences. The negative images of personhood that frequently occur in the discussions could be divided into three groups based

on the quality and quantity of the "non-ideality" in question. All groups make an appearance in the first example (7.1):

(7.1) Itse myös n. 1,5v vuotta kävin treffeillä ja myös kahdenlaisia naisia tuli vastaan. Sellaisia joita kukaan ei tunnu kelpuuttavan (fyysisesti normaalista poikkeavia, matala koulutus, huono maine, lääkitys ei kunnossa, eksyksissä vailla päämäärää yms.) ja sellaisia jotka oli ns. liian hyviä (korkea koulutustaso ja palkka, normaalia parempi ulkonäkö yms.) joilla kriteerit aivan tajuttoman tiukat. – – Monet treffatuista häpesivät nettitreffejä ja keksivät aina jonkin muun tarinan miten on tavattu. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)
(7.1) I myself also went on dates for about 1.5 years and also encountered two kinds of women. Ones that nobody seems to want (physically deviant, low education, bad reputation, medication not right, lost without a purpose etc.) and ones that were so to speak too good (a high level of education and salary, better looking than the average) who had insanely tight criteria. – – Many of the ones I met were ashamed of net dates and would always come up with some other story of how we met. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

The first group depicted in the metadiscourse consists of persons who are socially abnormal in the fullest pathological sense of the word, such as cheaters, fakes, perverts, sociopaths, narcissists, and the mentally ill. The second group consists of persons who are merely physically undesirable or socially inept but who are seen as closer to the confines of "normal" and usually without deceitful or harmful intentions. The third group consists of people who are "too good" and have unattainably high criteria. All of these forms of "non-ideality," then, are relative to the interpreter's own position on social maps. The last group is problematic because of its higher status and presumed negative stance towards the interpreter. Both of the first two groups are lower in status in relation to the interpreter, albeit each of the two has a different kind of statistical distribution in society. That is, the first group consists of forms of personhood that are regarded as truly marginal and stigmatized instead of merely "non-desirable."

From the point of view of the interpreter, who is usually presumed as the baseline for normal personhood in such comparisons, the challenge is to avoid these problematic types of persons. Few pieces of metadiscourse, however, offer concrete instructions on distinguishing between the normal and the problematic beforehand. Rather, the choice of interactional infrastructure (i.e., the choice of the online dating advertisement genre as a channel) alone is the sign that becomes indexically linked to negative stereotypes of personhood with a certain probability. The epistemic emblematicity of the sign, then, is understandably only of a certain degree, as exemplified by the percentages offered by the interactants themselves (e.g., *99 %* in 7.2a or *30 %* in 7.2b):

(7.2a) Naiset todella saavat enemmän yhteydenottoja kuin miehet -mutta millaisia! 99% viesteistä on joko vonkausviestejä ukkomiehiltä tai suorasukaisia pervoja ehdotuksia

kirjoitustaidottomilta peräkammarinpojilta. Nämä siitä huolimatta että naisen profiili on asiallinen ja kaikkea muuta kuin provosoiva. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

(7.2a) Women really do get more contacts -but what kinds [of contacts]! 99% of the messages are either messages from married men asking for sex or blunt pervy propositions from illiterate elderly bachelors. All of this despite the fact that the woman's profile is decent and anything but provocative. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

(7.2b) Pettäjiä joilla onkin oikeasti vielä perhe vaikka ovat siellä statuksella "eronnut" on n. 30 %. Mielenterveysongelmaisia n. 30% käyttäjistä ja loput 30% on sekalaista sakkia joiden joukossa voi olla jokunen pervo. (Vauva Mar 23, 2012.)

(7.2b) Cheaters who really still have a family although their status there [in the dating service] is "divorced" constitute ca. 30 %. Ca. 30% of the users are mentally ill and the remaining 30% are a random bunch who may include a few pervs. (Vauva Mar 23, 2012.)

Examples like this foster a general attitude of wariness: online daters should not expect too much from repliers and, at some point, repliers may turn out to be something else than they first appeared. The problem from the standpoint of the "normal," then, is twofold. First, statistically, the interactional infrastructure is understood to attract stigmatized persons (7.2a, 7.2b). Second, it may allow for such stigmatized persons to pass as normal (7.3, 7.6) with, for instance, entirely faked profiles:

(7.3) Nettitreffaamisessa on nykyisin niin paljon feikkejä, että ei herätä enää juurikaan uskoa. – – Onneksi ihmiset ovat heränneet tälle scam-ilmiölle ja ovat nykyisin erittäin varovaisia. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

(7.3) There are so many fakes in net dating nowadays that it doesn't inspire much trust anymore. – – Luckily people have awakened to this scam phenomenon and are nowadays very careful. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

Perhaps the most relevant division among "non-ideal" respondents, then, is between those who have deceitful intentions and attempt to mask them and those who have more or less acceptable intentions and need not mask them in any marked sense. Similarly, there are two kinds of passing based on an understanding of the person's intentions and motives. The different groups of "non-ideal" respondents differ in terms of what exactly it is about online dating advertisements as a semiotic encounter that makes it possible for them to pass as "normal" in the advertisement event. That is, each negative stereotype relates differently to the interactional and infrastructural features of the online dating advertisement genre. In the first group, it is the fact that anonymous online dating advertisements detach persons from everyday metastance relations and semiotic chains. There are no third parties with previous interactional histories with the new person who could vouch for their normality or warn about their abnormality. In the second (and the third) group, however, the problems relate more directly to the lack of a visual and conversational contact. For instance, a lack of looks and conversational skills can to some degree be compensated for with a careful

composition of the written text-artifact. From the standpoint of the interpreter, the icon of personhood mediated by the advertisement may not be entirely reliable, but it can hardly be regarded as intentionally insincere of deceptive either (and as will be seen in example 7.4, for some, this feature of the encounter is seen precisely as its main advantage over other techniques of courtship). The two kinds of passing, then, differ in terms of accountability and regimentation. In fact, in the case of non-deceitful stigmatization, we can even find the following kinds of ingroup perspectives in the metadiscourse data:

> (7.4) Meille vähemmän ulkonäöllisille ja enemmän introverteille netti on se parempi vaihtoehto yrittää onneaan (Vauva Mar 23, 2012.)
> (7.4) To us less good-looking and more introverted the net is the better option for trying our luck. (Vauva Mar 23, 2012.)

In (7.4), the interactant himself claims membership of the described non-ideal category ("us less good-looking"), and rationally explains why people like him would opt for online dating. Whereas the earlier examples concentrated on interpreting others negatively, the previous interactant, in fact, seems to personally testify that such stereotypes indeed have a certain validity.[113]

One of the consequences of such stereotypes is that, in light of them, each indice in an online dating advertisement basically becomes interpretable both in a "trusting" mode (i.e., what kind of person would express herself like this) and in an "exposing" mode (i.e., what kind of person would feign or mask like this). To give a few examples of how such stereotypes become involved in the interpretation of concrete textual patterns in online dating advertisements, let us first consider the following excerpt from a comment section discussion. The discussion is related to a newspaper article that itself quotes opinions from actual online daters. The topic of the debate is strict selectivity. The more specific focus is criteria related to outward appearance. Throughout the metadiscourse data, strict selectivity is given competing negative and positive rationalizations. The animator of the comment below quotes a remark from the article ("At least my interest flags already at the point when the advertisement says right away that the criteria are related to appearance"), according to which advertisements that set strict criteria for outward appearance are off-putting:

[113] In spite of being aware of stereotypes that are potentially stigmatizing for oneself, individuals may not identify with such sterotypes or stigmas. They may even bear the stigma in the eyes of others without being "impressed or repentant about doing so" (Goffman 1990 [1963]: 17). Some minorities may even thrive because of a reflexive contrast with other (semiotic) communities (ibid.; see also Kockelman 2005: 262). In other words, you can relish the fact you are "abnormal" in the eyes of some community of others, whose values you consider questionable.

(7.5) ”Minun kiinnostukseni saa ainakin lopahtamaan jo siinä vaiheessa, jos ilmoituksessa lukee että kriteerinä on heti ulkonäköasiat”.. Mitä muutakaan voi jos on ruma ja pullukka? Normaalit mukavat ja hyvännäköiset ihmiset saavat seuraa vaikka yleisestä unisex-vessasta. Ei tarvi alentua chatteihin. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

(7.5) “At least my interest flags already at the point when the advertisement says right away that the criteria are related to appearance”.. What else can [one do] if [one] is ugly and a fatty? Normal nice and good-looking people find company even in public unisex restrooms. [They] do not need to lower [themselves] to chats [*sic*]. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

The original remark downplays both the importance of physical appearance and the problems related to a lack of face-to-face contact. The remark itself then becomes interpreted by the commenter (in an “exposing” mode) as a sign of the remarker’s own stigmatizing appearance. That is, the interpretation implies that strict criteria are only problematic for those respondents who cannot fulfill them. Strict criteria concerning physical appearance in advertisements can be interpreted either as (1) a sign of a “superficial” writer’s excessive focus on outward appearance or as (2) a sign of the writer’s own valued appearance (and wish to sieve off those for whom he or she is “too good”). Correspondingly, defending a lack of emphasis on such criteria, or an actual lack of such criteria in one’s advertisement, can be interpreted either as (1) a sign of a “deep” person or as (2) a sign of the writer’s own stigmatized appearance (and wish to elude the topic). On the one hand, then, high selectivity is seen as a relatively reliable sign of a non-“cheater” and non-“fake,” since they would hardly intentionally narrow the range of repliers, but the risk of a “too good” or “narcissist” case similarly increases. On the other hand, some interactants suggest that, for a writer, strict criteria are a problem, since the stricter one’s criteria are, the more likely the replier will be a “fake” (“if the demands are excessive then the replier is a fraud,” *jos vaatimukset suhteettomat niin vastaaja on huijari*, ND: 55). That is, the “too good” tend to attract repliers with deceitful intentions, since the latter need not really care about the criteria at all.

In a similar vein, the following commenter deplores the effect of such negative stereotypes on the performances of “normal” and “decent” men:

(7.6) Kunnollisia miehiä löytyy kyllä sivustolta [Suomi24], mutta ne urpot jotka ovat pilanneet sivuston maineen, ovat myös aiheuttaneet sen että kunnollisten, etenkin sellaiset **ilmoitukset jotka tuntuvat liiankin hyviltä, naisten mielestä vaikuttavat ”pelimieheltä” tai huijaukselta**. (Vauva Mar 23, 2012.)

(7.6) Respectable men can really be found on the site [Suomi24], but those idiots who have ruined the reputation of the site, have also caused the fact that the **advertisements** of the respectable, particularly those **that seem even too good, seem like a “player” or a hoax to women**. (Vauva Mar 23, 2012.)

According to the comment, “normal” participants become affected in more than one way. Firstly, a general shadow of suspicion is cast on any online

dater. Secondly, those who succeed in fighting off that suspicion and giving a good impression of themselves are at risk of appearing suspiciously good. They may be taken as “players” or “fakes.” That is, there is a risk of being mistaken both for a stigmatized person and for a stigmatized person trying to pass as normal (i.e., faking their way through the advertisement phase). One must simultaneously avoid appearing socially inept and “too good.” The comment also points to those cultural norms that regulate the kinds of lives and personae “ordinary” people are entitled to (see Sacks 1985 [1970]). Unless one is a celebrity or some other type of person with special biographic rights (e.g., rights to a seemingly “glamorous” or “glorious” life) (see Marshall 2010), it may be problematic to appear too ideal, for this might be taken as a sign that you do not fully understand the appropriate reality of your social type and are, therefore, either a fake or otherwise suspicious. That is, “ideal” personhood has to feel sufficiently “real” and “normal,” too, to be effective (cf. also sections 5.2.1 and 6.4).

The stigmatizing metadiscourses also have counterforces. That is, the negative stereotypes of personhood associated with online dating are actively fought against by a number of parties. Unsurprisingly, a positive only imagery of online dating is disseminated by the online dating service providers with commercial interests. The branding and advertising of dating services follows clear patterns in terms of slogans and pictures. The icons of online daters disseminated by the services invariably include, for example, attractive couples in amorous poses (see e.g. figure 2 from *Match.com*).

**Figure 2** Attaching positive imagery to an interactional practice.

However, in the Internet discussions themselves, negative images of personhood often become balanced by participants who have had or have heard of positive experiences:

(7.7) Olenkohan ollut jotenkin poikkeuksellisen onnekas, kun olen päätynyt nettitreffeille ainoastaan normaalien ja mukavien naisten kanssa? (IS Oct 19, 2012.)
(7.7) I wonder if I have been somehow exceptionally lucky, as I have only ended up on net dates with normal and nice women? (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

The guidebooks, for their part, usually present a relatively balanced and diplomatic picture. They do warn their readers about possible risks but, on the other hand, take a clearly positive stance towards online dating practice in general. For instance, the preface of *Nettideitit – Uusi onni verkosta?* ("Net dates – A new happiness from the web?) (ND), published in 2011, ends with a kind of mission statement in which the writers acknowledge the problematic imagery associated with online dating but argue against it:

> (7.8) Yhä edelleen nettideittailua hieman hävetään, se salataan, sille naureskellaan ja siitä varoitellaan. Turhaan: nettideittailu on vain yksi tapa muiden sosiaalisten nettipalveluiden joukossa hyödyntää verkon tarjoamia kontaktimahdollisuuksia. Jos suhtautuu nettideittailuun sopivalla yhdistelmällä avoimuutta, kepeyttä ja järjenkäyttöä, se on mitä kätevin tapa löytää (monenlaista) seuraa. (ND: 6.)
>
> (7.8) Still today people are ashamed of online dating, it is kept a secret, it is laughed at and warned about. Unnecessarily: online dating is just one way among other social net services to take advantage of the contact possibilities offered by the Internet. If one views online dating with an appropriate combination of openness, light-heartedness and presence of mind, it is a most convenient way to find (all kinds of) company. (ND: 6.)

The starting point for ND, then, is that such a stigma should not exist anymore. The preface, like many comments in Internet conversations, attempts to substitute rational reasons for the stigma-oriented ones. It emphasizes the interactional possibilities offered by online dating. A typical sales pitch for the guidebooks is that, as long as one has the right attitude and the right techniques, such as the ones offered by the guidebook, one can better anticipate and avoid the minefields of online dating and it becomes a "practical" instrument. Both the stigmatization and the "rational" advantages of online dating, then, are in part based on the same features of the interactional infrastructure.

### 7.1.2 METASEMIOTIC MODELS OF LANGUAGE AND PERSONHOOD

This section compares the three guidebooks in the data (*Sinkkunaisen käsikirja*, *Nettideitit – Uusi onni verkosta?* and *Nettideittailijan eloonjäämisopus*, see Data sources and section 3.2) from the standpoint of the kinds of relations between language use and personhood they direct attention to. Similar viewpoints do appear in various feature articles and Internet discussions in the data too, but in a more fragmentary and passing form. Let us begin with *Sinkkunaisen käsikirja* (literally "A single woman's handbook"[114], 2006), which is a chronologically organized, diary-like guide

[114] The author herself calls it a "Girl's Survival Book" in the English section of her website, also characterizing it as "The bachelorette's Bible" and "Sex in the City meets Bridget Jones" (http://viiviavellan.com/blogi/?page_id=170) [Nov 30, 2013].

to living the life of a single woman, written by a Finnish, then 29-year-old female celebrity reporter. In this particular guidebook, online dating is just a subplot but the way social types of people are treated makes it especially interesting. The writer groups men into ten different types (see Table 9) that systematically appear in different contexts throughout the book. In a number of tables, the types are associated with a wide range of behaviors and attributes, including drawn pictures and real-life icons (i.e., celebrities who embody one of the ten types):

| **Designation** | **Translation or explanation** |
|---|---|
| *renttu* | misbehaving, good-for-nothing |
| *filosofi* | philosopher |
| *jäkkis* | hockey guy, jock |
| *Herra Näsä* | Mr. Wiseguy |
| *rokkari* | rocker |
| *silkkisukka* | silk socks |
| *surffari* | surfer |
| *runopoika* | poem boy |
| *teekkari* | engineering student, gearhead |
| *äijä* | macho |

Table 9. *Types of men according to "A single woman's handbook" (SK)*

The focus in this section will be on a table called "How to analyze men on the Internet" (SK: 198–201), since it most explicitly discusses the relationship between linguistic self-presentation and the ten social types. For each type, the table presents five kinds of data: 1) typical "code names" used by the type; 2) what a representative of the type tells about himself; 3) what they wish or expect from "you" (i.e., their female respondents); 4) a drawn picture; and 5) a representative sample of discourse (i.e., typical comments or slogans or habitual patterns of self-presentation). Earlier in the book, when the types are originally introduced, each type is specifically assigned a "motto" (SK: 50–60). Each type is, then, known both by the author's descriptions of their characteristics (some of which are discursive habits) and by their own direct speech (some of which represents their own characteristics). That is, three representational perspectives are co-present: the author's representations of the type's (habitual) behaviors or attributes, the type's own (habitual) linguistic representations of those behaviors or attributes, and the author's representations of the type's own (habitual) linguistic representations. (Cf. also section 4.4.5.)

One of the ten types departs clearly from all others. For the crude-looking macho guy, no information is provided in any column. Instead, his whole row is replaced by one capitalized statement: "online dating is for gays" (*NETTIDEITTAILU ON HOMOJEN HOMMAA*). The rocker's comment is in English (*"Let me be your light and smile, somewhere, someday, somehow... It's your*

*turn"*), but all others are in Finnish. Let us take a closer look at the "philosopher" and the "surfer" (see Table 10).

| **Type** | **Code-name** | **Tells about himself (e.g.)** | **Wishes from you (e.g.)** | **Comments** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Filosofi* | *Stratagem, Pietro-maria, Jekyllhyde* | *Harrastaa – – kirjallisuutta, pseudo-tieteitä – – Kertoo leipovansa ja laittavansa ruokaa mielellään. "Nalle-karhuksikin ovat sanoneet."* | *Etsii sievää, sopusuhtaista, humoristista naista, joka ottaa täysin rinnoin vastaan kaiken mitä karuselli eteen heittää.* | *"Tiedän, että sinä lymyilet siellä jossain, vaikka sitten bittiavaruudessa."* |
| Philo-sopher | Stratagem, Pietro-maria, Jekyllhyde | Hobbies include – – literature, pseudosciences – – Says he bakes and cooks with pleasure. "They have called me a teddy bear too." | Looks for a pretty, normally built, humorous woman, who takes in fully all that the carousel throws in front of you. | "I know that you are hiding somewhere out there, if only in bit space." |
| *Surffari* | *Goodbye-porkpie, Arizona, Cod* | *Kertoo olevansa rauhallinen sekoilija ja harrastavansa musiikkia ja extremeurheilua.* | *Haluaa hauskuttajaksi elämäänsä jonkun, jota voi ihailla, kannustaa, kiusoitella, rutistaa, tukistaa, peitellä, tukea, piristää, naurattaa, suudella, nipistää, tanssittaa, halailla, hemmotella ja rakastaa.* | *"Olen makoillut koko päivän sängyssäni ja fiilistellyt vanhoja legendakappaleita. Mahtavaa!"* |
| Surfer | Goodbye-porkpie, Arizona, Cod | Says he is a calm freak-out and does music and extreme sports. | Wants an entertainer in his life, someone whom he can admire, encourage, tease, squeeze, pull by the hair, tuck in, cheer up, make laugh, kiss, pinch, dance with, hug, pamper and love. | "I have been lying in my bed all day enjoying old legendary songs. Great!" |

Table 10. *Two types of men and some of their self-presentational characteristics.*

We might first of all note that the philosopher, who is represented as an ensemble of various intellectual, elitist, and even relatively effeminate characteristics, employs the kind of "fictive" 2SG address examined in 6.3.3 and alludes to the kind of "teddy bear" persona, an example of which was

examined in 4.4.4. In light of the advertisement data, the pattern of addressivity in question is relatively frequent and used by many kinds of writers. In this metasemiotic taxonomy, however, it is attributed only to a very specific social type.

Although each type's own comments are presented in quotes, somewhat obviously they are not plausible direct representations of the style of writing of the type in question. First of all, they exhibit a normalized register that does not differ markedly from the narrator voice. Those comments that include the 1SG pronoun do use, unlike the narrator voice, the colloquial variant (*mä*), but otherwise they conform fairly systematically to standard orthography and morphosyntax, which, of course, might reflect ideologies of publication. Secondly, "old legendary songs" is probably not the level of specificity at which an actual "surfer," a connoisseur of music according to the description, would speak. Rather, the patterns of speech of the characters are generalized and represented from the perspective of a single woman. That is, the bits of direct speech are recognizably a single woman's voicing of the speech of each type. This is even more obvious in the case of the "hockey guy" who bluntly declares: "my charisma grows in step with my arms [i.e., muscles]." The comment seems like a humorous parody of the denotational and interactional tendencies of the social type from the standpoint of a single woman, drawing attention to the type's allegedly self-absorbed speech style and excessive focus on muscle growth. We can see, then, that there are several different layers of voicing operating in the examples: the characters' behaviors and their own speech about their behaviors are all seen through the lenses of the narrator figure, a young, urban female, who is the professional writer of a commercially published work. The focus in the discourse samples is mainly on denotational patterns and some very general interactional patterns, such as patterns of addressivity or the use of exclamations ("Great!"). In short, rather than conveying an accurate image of ten different speech styles, the table conveys the general idea of the social indexicality of language: namely, that language use reflects the characteristics of the writer in relatively specific and fine-grained ways and that the interpretation of others' language use is relative to the interpreter's social type.

A fair number of dating and lifestyle guidebooks on the market seem to have a more or less light, humoristic, and playful tone (perhaps because, according to these very same guides, lack of humor or playfulness is not exactly an asset in the dating game). The stereotypes in SK clearly have a dimension of humorous exaggeration. That, however, does not stop them from genuinely serving as models of personhood and having real effects (see also Hill 2008). In fact, in a newspaper interview the author admits that she uses some of the role names with her friends "even in reality" (*oikeastikin*) (IS Sep 22, 2006). Her comment implies that the types are used both jokingly – which, of course, is a very *real* usage, too – and in earnest. In Internet conversations and blog comments (IT Oct 13, 2006; S24 Jul 28, 2011) that

discuss the book, some commentators actively identify with one or more types and even add new ones to the list. Some commentors aggressively shoot down the stereotypes, yet many of them still use them as actual, if not particularly effective, interpretants of their personhood (*Itseäni en ainakaan tunnista yhdestäkään, ei mene edes lähelle*, "I don't recognize myself in any of them, not even close").

Similar stereotyping and discussions about social indexicality appear in the other two guidebooks as well, albeit in a much less elaborated forms (see also 7.3). The section "The profile creates the first impression" (*Profiili luo ensivaikutelman*) in ND (p. 40), for instance, instructs as follows:

> (7.9) Parhaat profiilitekstit kuvastavat aina jollain tapaa kirjoittajaansa. Tyyli voi vaihdella lakonisesta hullunhauskaan, pääasia että teksti on omaleimainen, erottuva ja rehellinen ja sen lukemalla pystyy luomaan kirjoittajan persoonasta ja elämäntyylistä edes alustavan mielikuvan. "Hei sinä tätä lukeva mies/nainen, otapa yhteyttä niin katsotaan mihin se johtaa!" -tyyppiset profiilit eivät kerro kirjoittajasta mitään.
> (7.9) Best profile texts are always in some way a reflection of their writer. The style can range from laconic to hilarious, the main thing being that the text is original, distinguishable and honest and by reading it one can construct at least a tentative image of the writer's persona and lifestyle. Profiles of the type "Hey you man/woman who are reading this, write me and we'll see where it leads!" tell nothing about the writer.

These guidelines are very general and abstract, and, unlike the ones in SK, they are centered on individual "personality" rather than social types. Similarly, in NE, the section "You are text, you are pictures" (*Olet tekstiä, olet kuvia*) (p. 40) acknowledges the importance of the writer's "persona" and how it is mediated by the text-artifact:

> (7.10) Säteilevä persoona, joka ei osaa kirjoittaa edes yhdyssanoja oikein, ei välttämättä pääse näyttämään säteilyään kiinnostuksensa kohteelle.¶ Ihmisen tuottama teksti on melko hyvä älykkyyden näyttötaulu, ja siitä voi päätellä myös sosiaalisia taipumuksia.
> (7.10) A radiant persona who cannot even spell compound words correctly, may not get a chance to show his or her radiance to the target of their interest.¶ The text that a person produces is a fairly good indicator of intelligence, and one can infer social tendencies from it as well.

However, the focus is entirely on spelling and orthography. They become linked to social and mental kinds, such as intelligence and social competence. According to NE, a person who cannot spell correctly cannot appear intelligent and, therefore, cannot be taken seriously as a candidate in a courtship process. Although the chapter warns against making too hasty conclusions based on someone's written performance, there is a heavy focus on evaluating texts in terms of normative correctness as a sign of the mental or social abilities of the writer. The entire following chapter in NE (p. 45–49) is devoted to belaboring the point that the spelling of compound words is of

utmost importance. The four and a half page chapter presents countless more or less "humorous" examples of how misspelling can change the meaning of a word or a sentence (although most of the examples are highly contrived).[115] The chapter later (NE: 47) further clarifies the authors' definition of a "grammatical error":

> (7.11) Puhekielen ja kieliopillisesti väärän kielen kirjoittaminen ovat kaksi ihan eri asiaa. Puhekieli on tyylijuttu, kielioppivirheet taas merkki välinpitämättömyydestä.
> (7.11) Writing spoken language and grammatically incorrect language are two totally different things. Spoken language is a matter of style, grammatical errors a sign of indifference.

Writing "spoken language" is not a "grammatical error" (i.e., an index of the lack of a proper mental disposition) but a "matter of style" (i.e., an index of individual personality). Since all the examples concern spelling, it is impossible to say precisely what else the writers would regard as a "grammatical error."

ND puts forth similar ideas, although in a less stern manner. The importance of the normative correctness and skillfulness of textual performance appears several times in the book as does the logical implication that online dating favors people who "write well":[116]

> (7.12) Nettideittailun sanotaan usein suosivan hyvin kirjoittavia ihmisiä. Jos profiiliteksti vilisee yhdyssanavirheitä ja on kirjoitettu täysin ilman välimerkkejä, siistiin kirjalliseen ilmaisuun mieltyneet karsiutuvat vastaajien joukosta ensimmäisinä. (ND: 41.)
> (7.12) It is often said that net dating favors people who write well. If your profile text is full of misspelt compounds and is written entirely without punctuation marks, those who appreciate neat written expression will be eliminated from the group of repliers among the first. (ND: 41.)

However, according to ND, the reason for the importance of "correct" language is the fact that *some* people demand "neat" written expression. In other words, unlike in NE, the reasoning appeals to a type of norm-guarding generalized other rather than the norms *per se*. ND also emphasizes that signs such as the choice of words, the frequency of smileys, and the degree of

[115] For instance, the misspelt compound "mieli pide" (*mielipide*, "opinion") is analyzed as consisting of the words *mieli* ("mind") and *pide* ("a type of Turkish bread") (NE: 47): *Sinulla on "mieli pide". Pide on turkkilainen leipälaji. Minä laitan sen päälle makkaraa. Entä sinä?* ("You have a 'mind pide.' Pide is a type of Turkish bread. I put sausage on it. What about you?")

[116] At another point (ND: 59), the guidebook emphasizes the importance of skilled writing by referring to a survey according to which the most common reason for the writers not to reply to a message they received was that the message was "boring or crass" (*tylsä tai tökerö*) (cf. section 6.5). In strict opposition, one of the quoted respondents of the writers' own survey claims that the most skilled writers are hustlers (ND: 62) (cf. section 7.1.1).

"matter-of-factness" versus "speech-likeness" of one's style are more important than orthography in the interpretation of individual personality:

> (7.13) Sanavalinnat, hymiöiden käyttäminen (liika on aina liikaa) ja tekstin yleinen tyyli – onko se kovin asiallista vai puheenkaltaista tekstiä – ovat oikeinkirjoitustakin merkittävämpiä seikkoja, kun tulkitsee viestin takana olevaa persoonaa. (ND: 60.)
> (7.13) Word choices, the use of smileys (too many is always too much) and the general style of the text – whether it is very matter-of-fact or speech-like text – are even more important matters than spelling when interpreting the persona behind the message. (ND: 60.)

For ND, the object of interpretation, the writer's "persona," appears as something that lies "behind" the text-artifact. The more concrete surface-level patterning and formulation of writing is something that stands between the respondent and the writer's "persona." The kinds of signs that are highlighted are, then, less emblematic and more indirect than in NE. It is emphasized that one should read others' messages with "sensitive senses," since in some cases even a "careless and unskilled" textual surface may belie the "own voice" of an agreeable person (*Viestejä kannattaa lukea herkin aistein, kuulostella kirjoittajan omaa ääntä jopa huolimattoman tai taitamattoman viestin takaa*, ND: 59).

For the most part, then, ND and NE focus on the kinds of evaluative dimensions (e.g., "right" versus "wrong") that are almost entirely absent from SK. Each of the three guidebooks adopts a slightly different kind of approach towards evaluating written performances in online dating advertisements, but the biggest difference is between SK and the two others. SK is mainly interested in social types and their distinctive interactional features and only more implicitly in individual characteristics. It should be noted that the focus in SK is on the (female) reader's perspective, whereas the other two guidebooks emphasize the writer's perspective. ND and NE do acknowledge the fact that writing conveys an impression of the writer's individual persona, but superimposed over that layer of interpretation lies the normative dimension of "(in)correctness" and "(un)skillfulness."[117] NE, in particular, further links that dimension to (un)intelligence and social (in)competence. There is a primary test that *everyone* (regardless of their more specific kinds) must pass and that functions as a kind of gateway to deeper layers of meaning. Only by appearing "correct" and "skillful" (and "smart" and "competent") does your text attract readers long enough for them to be able

[117] ND (p. 60) does, in passing, cite one "brilliant example" of "writing incorrectly" (*väärinkirjoittaminen*) that relates more directly to social types. In that example a 50-year-old academic man writes in a highly colloquial and slang-tinted style. That is, the relation between language and social types is most explicitly acknowledged in the case of what is regarded by the authors as intentional and successful troping on stereotypic expectations.

to see your personal identity.[118] "Unique" individuality is secondary to collective "normality." Or at least it is limited to specific semiotic layers, such as the denotational content of the text. Individual differentiation by means of language stylizing (see Irvine 2001), then, is not exactly encouraged. SK, in contrast, has little concern for unitary social norms and presents linguistic variation according to social parameters as natural, although all actual illustrations of discourse in the book are relatively polished and standardized.

In more specific terms, the guidebooks differ in terms of *orders of indexicality* (see Silverstein 2003), as they appeal to different value-giving models or organize them differently. Each guidebook embodies a different kind of ontology and epistemic formation. That is, each guidebook theorizes and directs attention to different kinds of empirical observations and suggests different kinds of practical consequences for these observations. In their own specific ways, they narrow the range of appropriate and effective linguistic signs in online dating advertisements. If we now compare the ideas disseminated in the guidebooks to the interpretation of "views of subjectivity" in chapter 4 or to a variety of other textual patterns analyzed in chapters 4–6, we immediately see that a great number of actually occurring sign patterns in the data sharply contrast with the examples in all three guidebooks. That is, the many forms of non-standard (whether "creative" or "incorrect"; "personal" or "negligent") syntax and orthography that actual online dating advertisements abound with are not publicly represented in any of the guidebooks (or anywhere else in the metadiscourse data to any significant degree). SK might, in principle, accept them as type-specific forms of language use. Conversely, the kinds of interpretations suggested by NE and ND were indeed numerous in the questionnaire responses examined in section 4.2. Excerpt 4.6 in 4.2.3, for instance, was typified as the product of an "uneducated bimbo" by some respondents. Some, in contrast, found the writer "laid-back" and "funny." That is, they were able to interpret the same textual patterns as a positive index of a particular kind of personality or mind style precisely because of their non-standard forms – or "grammatical errors" and lack of "neatness" as they would be typified in light of NE.

Finally, we might note that all three guidebooks, in some form, exhibit and disseminate an acute awareness of social indexicality and of the importance of details of language use in social life. There seems to be little trace of such common ideologies as referentialism (i.e., language seen merely as a means of referring-to and predicating-about extralinguistic states of

[118] In addition to these two dimensions, "politeness" is also mentioned as something that should apply to the Internet as much as it does to other fields of life. Politeness is, however, not explicitly linked to specific features of language use in the advertisement text. For instance, the section *Kohteliaisuus kuuluu myös nettiin* ("Politeness belongs in the net too") in NE (p. 50–51) talks in a very general manner about "not being rude" (e.g., notifying the other person if you wish to end the online contact or if you are late for your date).

affairs) or personalism (i.e., "real" meaning reduced to the intentions and inner states of the speaker and language reduced to a means of conveying them) (see Rosaldo 1982; Bauman & Briggs 2003; Hill 2008; Wilce 2009a). In part, this might be explained by the fact that many of the authors (i.e., a reporter, a journalist, and a researcher) are clearly classifiable as professional "language workers" (Thurlow 2007), implying a more reflective relation to language use. It is, however, equally important to point out that the phenomenologically rich variation among actual online dating advertisements is not represented in any of the guidebooks. Most of them rely on polished or generalized examples and on interviews, narratives, or opinions *about* online dating advertisements (i.e., on other forms of metadiscourse).

For some writers, there may be a contradiction between being linguistically true to one's social type or personality (or ideals thereof) and complying with generalized others and presumed general cultural norms. For many people the two might, of course, never even conflict. The next section, instead, discusses a concern that seems to preoccupy in some way most interactants and that comes up in all subsets of the metadiscourse data.

## 7.2 PROMOTIONAL DISCOURSE, EVALUATIVE STANCETAKING, AND "TRUTH"

This section approaches the external metadiscourse data from the standpoint of how language use in online dating advertisements is understood to correspond to the "truth." This correspondence may be framed in more specific ways with terms such as "(dis)honesty," "(in)sincerity," "(im)modesty," "(un)reliability," or "(in)authenticity," which all point to particular kinds of (in)coherence between different kinds of semiotic processes (such as someone's linguistic representations and their private beliefs). The main focus in this section will be on cultural and ideological stereotypes concerning various discrepancies between the "real" person and the "image" or "persona" conveyed by online dating advertisements. These discrepancies can concern various kinds (e.g., personality, moods, bodily features, social statuses) and be ontologized in many different ways in relation to agency, intentions, or motives (e.g., "delusional" versus "insincere" or "immodest").

Unlike commercial advertising of products and services, online dating advertisements are not legally or institutionally regimented in terms of their "truthfulness." Neither are they monitored by government agencies or ruled on by courts. Similar problems, however, do arise in the domain of commercial advertisements and dating advertisements (such as ones concerning the "misleading" of readers), but they are settled in quite different ways. Parmentier (1994: 142–155) traces historical changes in the legal metasemiotic regimentation of advertising discourses in the US. In the

1800s, advertising was understood as persuasive by its very nature, and, consequently, any sensible consumer was expected to use their critical judgement when interpreting advertisements. The official metapragmatic label for such language use was "puffery." Moreover, what legally counted as acceptable "puffery" could still be morally evaluated as reprehensible. Cultural changes, such as the extension of constitutional protection to commercial discourses that were seen as vital to the functionality of the economic system and society, gradually led to a legal re-interpretation of advertisements as essentially informational in character, although their *de facto* persuasive nature remained. According to Parmentier (id. p. 151), one of the effects was an increased trust among consumers in the fact that government regimentation ensured the truthful referential nature of advertisements. That is, if a consumer believes that it is illegal to make "false" representations, their sense of critical judgment may weaken.

The line between legally acceptable "puffery" and unacceptable "misrepresentation" was drawn, for instance, based on whether the qualities that a product actually had were merely "fancifully" exaggerated or whether a product was assigned qualities it did not actually possess. Another essential criterion concerned the metapragmatic marking of the advertisement. "Puffery" was not supposed to include any signs that might have suggested that the representation was to be interpreted as "literally" descriptive of the product. Whereas Parmentier's discussion focuses on the referential (and persuasive) concerns of early advertising, in modern advertising the performative aspect is emphasized. Advertisements attach attractive imagery of personhood and lifestyles to commercial products, thereby formulating them as social indexicals that can be effectively used for self-presentational purposes by consumers (see Agha 2011a; also Wernick 1991). The notion of "truth," then, becomes more complicated. Moreover, when the object of "puffery" is a person, it becomes increasingly obvious that the line between qualities (or kinds) that an object (or an individual) actually has or does not have is much more complicated than the above legal discourses about commercial products would imply. The matter of "acceptable" representations, then, is not only about how signs stand for objects but how various agents of interpretation expect them to stand for objects in light of their cultural models. That is, the "embellishing" or "beautification" of representations or performances is simultaneously evaluated in light of a number of different dimensions (see also Parmentier 1994: 148; Bauman 1983). What is regarded by some community as technically acceptable self-presentation (or "puffery of self") may still not be regarded as entirely "truthful." On the other hand, even a sufficiently "truthful" embellished representation may be morally disapproved of because of the particular individual intentions (e.g., vanity) or general cultural motivations (e.g., commercial interest) behind such representations.

Similar, albeit more implicit, categorizations of types of discourse based on their "truthfulness" appear in scientific discourses as well. In discourse

and genre studies, "promotionality" has been closely linked with the polarity of evaluative stancetaking (or "saying only positive things") and with notions such as "persuasion" and "interest." That is, promotional discourses have been seen as discourses that aim to promote the "interests" of the producers and to persuade the readers to adopt them (see e.g. Shaw 2006: 9). "Puffery," then, is seen as a stereotypic feature of these discourses. In addition to prototypical cases of promotional discourse (e.g., advertisements, sales letters), Bhatia (2004) groups under the colony of promotional genres, for instance, certain kinds of book and film reviews, in which one may find promotional concerns (id., p. 61). For Bhatia, "promotion" is strongly anchored in the polarity of evaluation. That is, one of the most distinctive features of promotion seems to be its focus on only positive aspects (see e.g. 2004: 59, 90; cf. Catenaccio 2008: 27). Shaw (2006), on the other hand, criticizes Bhatia for lumping together such a heterogeneous set of genres and proposes a distinction between evaluative and promotional genres according to the notion of "interestedness." In Shaw's words, "book reviews are not promotional" since the "recipients may justifiably expect them to be disinterested." Among other examples of "disinterested" genres Shaw lists, for instance, the scientific research article and, interestingly, the government health propaganda item.

Bhatia's and Shaw's models differ in the way the relationship between promotionality, interest, and discourse is understood. For Bhatia, promotionality seems to be, first and foremost, a matter of discourse organization and surface-level textualization. There is a somewhat straightforward link between promotionality and positive evaluation. Shaw (2006: 10–11), however, makes the essential distinction between concrete discourse, promotional purposes, and the expectations of readers. For Shaw, positive evaluation is a feature of "promotional discourse" but does not directly ensue from promotional purposes. In some cases it may be in accordance with the promotional purposes not to employ overt "promotional discourse" in order to induce impressions of "modesty" or "humility" (see also Östman 2005). Shaw does not, however, give a particularly satisfying definition of "interest." Exactly in what sense is the book review, let alone the health propaganda item, not "interested?" Shaw's (2006: 1) criteria, which refer to the "profits or personal happiness" of the producers of the text, suggest a highly specific and limited approach to "interest" (and do not specify concrete ways in which texts may or may not contribute to "personal happiness"). They seem to exclude, for instance, the "promotion" of social structures, statuses, and identities. Furthermore, however we choose to understand "interest," there is an essential difference between *having* an interest and *pursuing* that interest. After all, humans are capable of, for instance, morality and self-control. In any actual event, many kinds of more specific goals, beliefs, and desires co-incide and conflict, and (linguistic) action is the result of their complex interplay. (See also Ylikoski 2001.) To sum up, one might claim that all forms of discursive behavior are marked by

a variety of interests. In contrast to Shaw, it could be claimed that (1) any type of stereotypically "evaluative" or "promotional" discourse is in actuality mediated by a number of different more specific "interested" goals and that (2) many types of both "evaluative" and "promotional" discourse additionally share the goal of performing an image of "disinterestedness" (cf. also 5.2.2).

In this study, "(dis)interest(edness)" in discourse is approached solely as an issue of ethnometapragmatic negotiation (see Silverstein 2003; also e.g. Keane 2002; Shoaps 2002; Bauman & Briggs 2003). That is, "disinterested" and "interested" are interpretants of personhood that participants negotiate in light of their ontologies in the unfolding interactional processes. As sections 7.2.1–7.3 suggest, such interpretations are fractionated and participants do not often agree on them. Interpretation of discourse, then, overlaps with a variety of folk psychological and language ideological evaluations of, for instance, in what sense and for what purpose particular forms of language use are or are not "reliable" (see Bauman & Briggs 2003). The ideal of and the very possibility for, say, making one's words correspond with an inner truth, thereby making that inner truth transparent to others, rely on particular sociohistorical ontologies. For instance, according to Keane (2002: 74), the Protestant notion of "sincerity," the transparent correspondence between words and interior states, is linked to the historical emergence of referentialism, a family of language ideologies that emphasize the referential function of language (over or instead of, say, the performance of social identities) (see also Trilling 1972; Bauman & Briggs 2003: e.g. 59–63; Wilce 2009a: 39, 199; 2009b: 101–102). The above discussions illustrate that in many ontologies unilateral representations of objects that are understood as somehow closely linked to the speaker have a special status. The distrust that is often related to such representations seems to stem not so much from the representations *per se* but from a one-sided organization of metastance relations in which corroborating or contrasting accounts from others in independent vantage points are missing. The following sections take an empirical look at metadiscourses that discuss such matters in relation to online dating advertisements.

### 7.2.1 TRANSLATING PROMOTIONAL DISCOURSE INTO NON-PROMOTIONAL DISCOURSE

Let us start by taking a look at a recurring metadiscursive pattern that is particularly well crystallized in the online dating guidebooks. All three guidebooks contain a section with more or less humorous guidelines for translating the language use in online dating advertisements into everyday language. In other words, the underlying assumption is that language in online dating advertisements is not quite reliable at face value but relates in a variety of conventional and inferential ways to the "truth." A particular mode of interpretation, then, is needed, and it is the aim of the guidebooks to illustrate that mode to their readers. The first short and simple example from

ND stresses that online dating advertisements, like other promotional discourses such as housing advertisements, have their own "code" (i.e., a conventional set of relations between particular signs and particular denotational stereotypes):

(7.14) Ja kuten asuntoilmoituksissa, myös nettideitti-ilmoituksissa on oma **koodistonsa**: ylipaino on kurvikasta pyöreyttä ja katseenkestävyys miehillä tarkoittanee sitä, ettei kukaan ole tavatessa juossut pakoon. (ND: 39.)
(7.14) And just like housing ads, dating ads have their own **code**: overweight is curvy roundness and, as for men, looking tolerable probably means that no one has run away at their sight. (ND: 39.)

That is, according to ND, certain sign patterns used in the advertisements cannot be taken simply in their standard (denotational or connotational) meanings but need to be redirected to slightly different denotational stereotypes. "Curvy roundness," for instance, is referentially equated with "overweight" but registerially contrasted with it. Both expressions could be used to interpret the same person (as an object), but they are indexically linked to different personae (as animators). "Curvy roundness" is used by the promotional persona, and "overweight" would be used by relatively neutral and objective non-promotional personae. (For the "demotional" extreme, cf. example 7.8 in 7.2.2.) It is not that "curvy roundness" would not truthfully denote the particular aspect of the object that it does denote, but the interpreter needs to be aware of the very specific mode of denotational entextualization (e.g., what this particular symbolic formulation draws attention to; what it elides and why; how it relates to other modes).

The other two guidebooks offer even more elaborate and concrete examples. In SK, a section called "Interpret him right" warns guidebook readers about "boasters" and their advertisements that may contain "modified personal histories." The ensuing table instructs readers how to interpret their advertisements. (Only a few representative examples are included in the following excerpts.) The first column lists different ways in which they can present the matter in the advertisement and the second what those formulations can "really" mean:

(7.15)
*Maailma on miehiä täynnä, mutta millaisia!? Keekoilevia kukkoja ainakin riittää, mutta usein heidän itsetuntonsa lepää hienovaraisesti muokatun henkilöhistorian varassa. Aikaa näihin wannabe-tyyppeihin ei kannata kuitenkaan hukata. Joten tuntosarvet pystyyn: mitä enemmän tyyppi on saanut aikaan, sitä vähemmän hän teoillaan pröystäilee.*
The world is full of men – but what kind of men!? There is no shortage of cocksure boasters, but their self-esteem often rests on a slightly modified personal history. It is useless to waste time on these wannabes. So prick up your antennae: the more the guy has actually achieved, the less he brags about it.

| How he presents the matter: | ...and what it can really mean: |
|---|---|
| *Toimin elokuvien levityksen parissa.*<br>work:IND.PRS.1SG<br>I work in film distribution. | *On myyjänä videovuokraamossa.*<br>be:IND.PRS.3SG<br>[He] is a clerk at a video rental shop. |
| *Olen ottanut osaa laajaan farmaseuttiseen tutkimukseen.*<br>AUX participate:PP (=IND.PERF.1SG)<br>I have participated in a large pharmaceutical study. | *Poltellut pilveä viimeiset kymmenen vuotta.*<br>smoke(FREQ):PP<br>[Has] Been smoking pot for the last ten years. |
| *Olin nouseva tähti jääkiekossa; vain polvet eivät kestäneet.*<br>be:IND.PRET.1SG<br>I was a rising star in ice hockey; only [my] knees couldn't take it. | *Kävi lapsena luistelukoulua ja harjoitteli lähiöliigassa D-junioreissa.*<br>go:IND.PRET.3SG<br>[He] went to skating school as a child and trained in the suburban junior league. |
| *Olen freelance-pelisuunnittelija.*<br>be:IND.PRS.1SG<br>I am a freelance game designer. | *Riippuvainen pelikonsoleista.*<br>-<br>Addicted to game consoles. |

(SK: 194–195.)

The predicates and nominal verb forms in the examples have been glossed in order to show the systematic change of perspective between the two columns. The first column voices a simulated promotional persona. In the first column, all but one of the twelve sentences contain explicit 1SG deictics. In the latter column, the first-person perspective has been transformed into a 3rd- person perspective that simulates an independent non-promotional vantage point on the same person. That is, it makes explicit (or "exposes") part of those metastance relations that are normally not accessible to readers of online dating advertisements.

It is noteworthy that the characteristics denoted in the first column are relatively neutral biographic representations, particularly when taken individually. They do not contain explicit evaluative stancetaking or lexemes with clearly positive connotations and are not particularly salient or exceptional in any way. However, when juxtaposed with the second column, a clear pattern emerges. The latter column denotes a state of affairs that is recognizably a lower, anterior, or less valued degree of the first one in light of stereotypes of social life, biographic trajectories, or career ladders. That is, the table itself makes an evaluative contrast relatively emblematic. The biographic facts in the first column appear as somehow superior in relation to the latter ones. More specifically, the contrasts imply that the "promotional" formulation is a sort of wished-for version of the "actual" fact. The third example ("a rising star in ice hockey") further implies that the writer is attached to and longing for a self-presentational form that may have been true a couple of decades ago but certainly not anymore (cf. habitualized and "out of sync" self-presentation in 4.4.5). In one way or another, then, the

exposing other in the second column cuts the simulated promotional persona down to size before the eyes of the guidebook reader.

Similarly, in NE, the chapter called "A new dictionary" sketches a lexicon of the "new language" that online daters should master. The chapter is addressed specifically to novices. A list of 19 thematically grouped expressions (nouns, adjectives, an adverb and a pronoun) and their glosses is offered. "Ordinary-looking," for instance, means "ugly" and "teddybear" means "overweight and hairy" (cf. 4.30 in 4.4.4). Someone who lists "computers" as their hobby is a "net addict." Furthermore, the word "romantic" means that the person it refers to "wants to get married right away":

(7.16)
Uusi sanakirja
Voi sinua noviisi. Osasitko kuvitella, että nettideittailulla on ihan oma sanastonsa?
Luulisi sitä itse kunkin oman äidinkielensä hallitsevansa. Väärin. Alla ote uudesta kielestä, jota olisi hyvä osata.
Viiskymppinen = 58 v.
[- -]
Pukeutumistyyli:
mahdollisimman mukavasti = verkkarit ja kaljamaha/riippurinnat
[- -]
Harrastukset:
Tietokoneet = nettiriippuvainen
Naiset = vonkaaja
[- -]
Sinä = naiset = vonkaaja
[- -]
Tavallisen näköinen = ruma
Nallekarhu = ylipainoinen ja karvainen
Romanttinen = haluaa heti naimisiin
Huomaavainen = huomaa, kun tuot kaljan
(NE: 135–136.)

(7.16)
A New Dictionary
Oh, you poor novice. Could you imagine that online dating has its very own vocabulary?
You'd think that everyone masters their native tongue. Wrong. Below is an excerpt of a new language that you should know.
In their fifties = 58 years old
[- -]
Dressing style:
as comfortably as possible = sweatpants and a beer belly/saggy breasts
[- -]
Hobbies:

Computers = a net addict
Women = a sex pest [lit. "a pesterer" (for sex)]
[- -]
You = women = a sex pest
[- -]
Ordinary-looking = ugly
Teddybear = overweight and hairy
Romantic = wants to get married right away
Attentive = notices when you bring [them] a beer
(NE: 135–136.)

A man who lists "women" as his hobby is a sex pest. A man who lists "you" as a hobby is also someone who pesters for sex, according to the logic of the guidebook. In this metasemiotic model, too, a particular way of using the 2SG pronoun in the online dating advertisement context is picked out as a salient feature and linked to a specific, and in this case relatively stigmatized, social type (cf. section 6.3 and remember also the example in Table 10 in 7.1.2). The definition of *huomaavainen* ("attentive, considerate") is a pun that restores the lexicalized meaning of the adjective to the verb *huomata* ("to notice") from which it has been derived. An "attentive" (male) partner, then, is one who notices when you bring them a beer. This might be interpreted as a parody of a particular way of using linguistic symbols in promotional discourse. That is, *huomaavainen* ("attentive, considerate") represents a positive, prestige typification that one should have, if only by manipulating the logic of interpretation so that one finds whatever way one can to fit that symbol to one's life (without "lying" at least in the prototypic or most obvious sense). The direction is, in a sense, opposite to the "embellishing" cases in the lexicon, in which the point of departure is some potentially problematic constituent of the self (e.g., being "overweight and hairy" or "ugly") for which one tries to select the most unproblematic and effective symbols. (For these two directions, see also sections 4.4.5 and 5.2.1.)

What is common to all three excerpts above is, first of all, that the actual examples are clearly a form of humor. They are, in fact, a sort of parody of the language use in dating ads. However, this humorous aspect can easily belie the ideological importance of such representations. It is under the guise of humor that ideological constructs can sometimes get a much wider circulation than they would in any "serious" form (see Hill 2008; also Agha 2007a: 197). Secondly, each of the excerpts presents a contrast between two sets of formulations that point to, as it were, the same state of affairs but are indexically linked to different personae: one with "promotional" interests and one with non-promotional or even "exposing" interests. Sometimes these contrasts of perspective involve a clear pattern of evaluative revalorization. That is, what is stereotypically positive (or "prestigious," "unique") or merely neutral in the speech of the promotional persona is turned into something stereotypically negative or neutral (or "banal," "ordinary") in the speech of

the other persona. The table, then, is translating "interested" discourse into its "disinterested" equivalent, thereby fostering a certain distrust of promotional language. It is, however, noteworthy that the contrasts are not explicitly interpreted here as a difference between honest and dishonest intentions (which does happen in the Internet discussions, see section 7.2.2), even if what people say is seen as differing from what would be closer to the "truth." Rather, the examples give advice on how to reinterpret biographical performances in light of the goals and interests of the reader. Obviously, these "dictionaries" can also be used the other way around too, i.e., to turn one's biographic contents into promotional discourse. In all, the discrepancies between the two personae appear here as a relatively normal part of the game. One needs to appear desirable or ideal without being either "dishonest" or naively "sincere." It is, nevertheless, a challenging gray area, and appropriate "embellishing" is always a matter of degree ("the more the guy has actually achieved, the less he brags about it"). One must be wary of overstepping the line.

Similar gradual patterns of "exposure" or steps of decreasing "promotionality" are modeled in SK in relation to courtship discourse in general. The evaluative tone of discourse, in particular, is linked with the phase and duration of the unfolding relationship. In a table titled "Do it yourself: A Real Man," the writer gives examples of how a woman's way of speaking to her partner changes over time. The examples are thematically organized (into "car," "home," "work," "sports," and "sex"). In the domain of work, for instance, some of the examples include:

(7.17)

1) "I bet your customers and all the ladies at your workplace have a crush on you"; "Your job sounds really interesting and responsible" [first few dates]
(*Kaikki sun asiakkaat ja varsinkin työpaikan leidit ovat varmasti aivan ihastuneita suhun*; *Sun työ kuulostaa tosi mielenkiintoiselta ja vastuulliselta*)
2) "I'm so proud of you! If your boss doesn't soon realize your value to the company, I'm going to set him straight" [after two months]
(*Olen niin ylpeä susta! Jos sun pomo ei kohta tajua sun arvoa yritykselle, niin mä menen sanomaan sille suorat sanat*)
3) "I don't understand why you don't demand a raise. Are you such a wuss that you don't dare to speak up in front of your boss?" [after two years]
(*En ymmärrä miksi et vaadi palkankorotusta. Oletko sä niin nössö, ettet uskalla puhua pomollesi suoraan?*)
(SK: 218–219.)

As the interactants' mutual discursive history grows in length and their social statuses change (from early courtship into steady dating and an established relationship), the evaluative tone of their interactions changes considerably (from flattering and supporting to belittling and challenging). According to this stereotype, then, explicit positive stancetaking is the salient feature of

specific, marked phases and events of social life (and will not last). The next section takes a closer look at metadiscourses related to explicit positivity and selectivity in online dating advertisements.

### 7.2.2 POSITIVITY AND SELECTIVITY

A similar, although slightly differently inflected distrust of the language of online dating advertisements that we saw in the guidebooks in the previous section can be found in the Internet discussions in the external metadiscourse data. Compared to guidebook writers, the interactants in these discussions include people who have more immediate personal interests in online dating and also represent opposite sides of the interactional process (e.g., women versus men, writers versus readers). In the following extract, a man replies to a woman's earlier complaint according to which a lot of men have unrealistically and exaggeratedly positive ideas about their own physical appeal and, therefore, demand too much from their ideal respondents:

(7.18)

<u>[Post from a woman]</u>

Siellä on paljon miehiä jotka kuvittelevat olevansa itse ihan vitun hyvännäkösiä ja sitten ne olettaa/haluaa että myös nainen on missinmitoissa ja missin näköinen. **Tavallinen tallaaja kelpaa harvalle.**

<u>[Reply from a man]</u>

Minulle kelpaisi tavallinen normaalipainoinen maatiaisnainen. Ei minua haittaa jos naiselle on vähän pömppömahaa sillä on minulla itsellänikin muutaman kilo ylimääräistä. **Mutta sanat ”pyöreä” ja ”rehevä” tarkoittavat** Suomi24 treffeillä **olen sairaalloisen ylipainoinen siideri valas**.

(Vauva Mar 23, 2012.)

(7.18)

<u>[Post from a woman]</u>

There are a lot of men there who think they are fucking good-looking and then they assume/want that the woman too has the measurements and looks of a beauty queen. **Few are content with an ordinary person on the street**.

<u>[Reply from a man]</u>

I would be content with an ordinary down-home woman of a normal weight. I don't mind if the woman has a bit of belly on her since I myself have a few extra kilos. **But the words "round" and "lush" mean** on Suomi24 dates **I'm a morbidly obese cider whale**. (Vauva Mar 23, 2012.)

According to the woman, few men are content with "ordinary" women. The replier, however, assures that an ordinary woman of normal weight would suit him perfectly well. The problem for him is, on the one hand, the relationship between self-presentation and truth and, on the other hand, the

general (stigmatized) nature of online daters (see 7.1.1). Those who describe themselves as ordinarily "round" and "lush" in reality turn out to be "morbidly obese cider whales." According to the man, then, the limits of acceptable and appropriate embellishing are crossed. Another point of interest in the above example is the way in which the idealization of self is linked to the strictness of the criteria that one can impose on others. The woman seems to presume (normatively) that one can only demand ideality from others to the degree to which one is ideal oneself (e.g., the more good-looking a man is the more good-looking ideal respondents he is entitled to). At the same time, she assumes (empirically) that this is not the case in actuality (i.e., the men are not as good-looking as they should be based on their demands). That is, both the writers' self-presentations and their descriptions of ideal others are seen as discrepant in relation to some ideal of "truth." Highly positive evaluation of self and high selectivity for ideal others are interpreted as inherently problematic activities, but specifically so if they do not relate to one another in an appropriate manner.

Whereas in the previous example the writer's concern with positive evaluative stancetaking was its excessively "embellishing" nature (i.e., the misleading way in which it interperets the object), in example (7.19) the quantity and composition of evaluative stancetaking is itself seen as a problem (more so than its "truthfulness"). The example is from an Internet discussion in which a woman has posted two actual replies to her advertisement as examples of the "low quality" of the respondents on a particular dating site. (According to her own experience "about 0,0000000000000001 per mille [of the respondents] were fully sane.") Example (7.19) consists of excerpts from one of the replies the woman received:

(7.19)
Hei! ¶ Hyvää joulua... toivottavasti tämä viesti tuo joulumielen :) – – ¶ Mulla on sellainen tunne, että meille voisi kehittyä jotain hyvää, sillä **mulla on jäljittelemätön, vankkumaton ja pettämätön urheilullisuuden, älykkyyden, huumorintajun sekä kirjoitus- ja keskustelutaidon yhdistelmä.** Ties vaikka sullakin olisi sellainen? Miten voin olla sulle iloksi ja hyödyksi? Olisi paljon sanottavaa ja kerrottavaa... – – ¶ No, jospa selvitän vielä vähän, millainen olen ja millainen persoona minuun kätkeytyy? – – Jos yritän selvitä vähällä, vastaan: **monipuolinen, pohtiva, tuumiva, älykäs, herkkä, huumorintajuinen, hauska ja urheilullinen. Oikeastaan monipuolinen kattaa tämän kaiken**. Tietysti jokainen meistä sellainen on, enemmän tai vähemmän, mutta **haluan kohdallani käyttää silti sitä sanaa**. ¶ (Vauva Mar 23, 2012)

(7.19)
Hi! ¶ Merry Christmas... hopefully this message will bring Christmas spirit :) – – ¶ I have a feeling that something good could develop between us, since **I have an inimitable, unwavering and infallible combination of sportiness, intelligence, sense of humor as well as writing and conversation skills**. Who knows maybe you have

> one [= a similar combination?] too? How may I be of use and delight to you? I'd have a lot to say and tell... – – ¶ Well, perhaps I'll explain a bit more what I'm like and what kind of persona lies within me? – – If I try to do it with little effort, I reply: **versatile, contemplative, reflective, sensitive, humorous, funny and sporty. Actually versatile covers all this**. Of course each of us is like that, more or less, but **I still want to use that word in my case**. ¶ (Vauva Mar 23, 2012)

We can first note that the reply resembles an independent dating advertisement and contains hardly any references to the advertisement it is a reply to (i.e., it is self-presentational rather than responsive). The replier continues with, for example, several paragraphs related to physical intimacy. The replier's discursive performance is not only regarded as potentially "untruthful" but also as a sign of social and mental abnormality (cf. section 7.1.1) by both the original poster and another female interactant, who sees indices of "clear mental health problems," "perhaps a character disorder" with "megalomania" and an "obsession with sex" and draws special attention to the "sick self-praise" (*aivan selkeitä mt-ongelmia, kenties luonnehäiriö johon liittyy suuruudenhulluutta – – omakehu oli aivan sairasta – – ja pakkomielle seksiin*). (The interactant has also bolded all instances of the word "sex" in the above text that she quotes in her reply.)[119] The patterns of evaluative stancetaking (and the topical foci) of the reply become publicly interpreted as "pathologically" abnormal (see also Wilce 2009a: 172). The terminology the interactants use points to particular epistemic formations (such as popularized psychology that has found its way into folk psychological discourses) that both enables and justifies such interpretations. The contrast between the first two examples serves to illustrate that explicit positive evaluative stancetaking in the context of online dating can be problematized both as a cover-up for some stigmatizing fact or as a stigmatizing fact in itself (i.e., as a sign of some non-desirable mental disposition) in light of particular ontologies.

Let us now return to the link between the positive evaluation of self and the selectivity for ideal others by looking at some more specific textual patterns. Excerpt (7.20) below is a parody of a woman's online dating advertisement that was posted in a Finnish language-related Facebook group (*Kielletyt sanat ja sanonnat*, "Forbidden words and expressions"). In the first part his message, the writer condenses his experience of women's online dating advertisements into five rules:

> Rule 1: The greeting is in the plural [cf. section 6.3] (*Tervehdys laitetaan monikossa*).

[119] Another female interactant, however, finds no fault with the advertisement and later challenges the two others by questioning their attitude and asking for a more specific explanation ("Could someone explain what is wrong with those ads? – – What is it with you women?", *Voisiko joku selvittää mitä vikaa noissa ilmoituksissa on? – – Mikä teitä naisia vaivaa?*).

Rule 2: The text begins with a disclaimer-like comparison to *Pikku-Myy* ["Little My," a small and feisty female Moomin character], which justifies all sorts of (inappropriate) behavior [cf. section 4.4.4] (*Tekstiosuuden alkuun ujutetaan "Pikku Myy" -vastuuvapauslauseke (jolla saa ennakkoon luvan millaiseen käytökseen tahansa*).
Rule 3: One's diverse activities are illustrated with the kinds of shoes one wears (*Omista monipuolisista aktiviteeteista kerrotaan jalkinein*).
Rule 4: One's multi-talentedness, self-directedness, and independence are illustrated by listing the kinds of tools one can handle (*Monitaitoisuudesta, omatoimisuudesta ja riippumattomuudesta kerrotaan luettelemalla, mitkä työkalut pysyvät kädessä*).
Rule 5: Finally, one describes what one is NOT looking for and other vague and unspecified things [cf. sections 5.4, 6.3.4] (*Lopuksi kerrotaan mitä EI haeta ja jotain muuta epämääräistä*).

Parodies are a particularly interesting form of metadiscourse, since they have to deal with very specific semiotic details. The writer illustrates each rule with a fictive advertisement that consists of the parts listed above. The following excerpt contains section 4 ("the kinds of tools one can handle") and the first part of section 5 ("what one is NOT looking for") as well as one representative example of readers' comments:

(7.20)
[Excerpt from the original post; examples of rules 4 and 5]
¶Kädessäni pysyy ruuvimeisseli, pajavasara, pöytäsirkkeli, momenttiavain, kulmahiomakone, kaasujuotin, laastinsekoitin, tärytin, iskuporakone, täsmäjyrsin, kivisirkkeli, poravasara, epäkeskolaikka, tasohiomakone, hitsauskone, runkonaulain, dieselsuutintesteri, liitosjyrsin, särmäyskone, putkileikkuri, induktiokuumennin, kierretankoleikkuri, paalutuskone, asfalttijyrsin, pylväsporakone, moottorisaha, jyrä, korkeapaineruisku, aggregaatti, oikohöylä, pulttipyssy, nauhahiomakone, NC-sorvi, pallonivelen ulosvedin, raivaussaha, puskutraktori, huopakattonaulain, paineilmatunkki, leikkurimurskain, betonimylly ja hydrauliprässi.
¶En etsi lapsilleni isää, sillä se heillä jo on. En myöskään etsi avio- tai avomiestä, kirjeenvaihtoseuraa, elämänkumppania, tanssipartneria, juttukaveria, kahviseuraa, remonttireiskaa, matkakumppania, vakiopanoa, kämppäkaveria, baariseuraa, lounasdeittiä, kotiorjaa, arjen sankaria, seikkailua, mökkeilykaveria, nallekarhua, talonmiestä, ulkoiluseuraa, ystävää, seksipartneria, leffaseuraa, rakastajaa, salikaveria, avecia, yhden illan juttua, helluntaiheilaa, poikaystävää, varattua tai vapaata, renttua tai herrasmiestä enkä myöskään vanhempaa tai nuorempaa miestä.
[Comment from a man]
Tämä on loistava ja pureutuu suoraan suomalaisen naisen ongelmaan, että vaatimustaso on huomattavasti omaa tarjontaa korkeampi. Kuvitellaan, että miehen rimaa voidaan korottaa, kunnes on päästy pilviin.
(KSS 23 Jun, 2012.)

(7.20)

[Excerpt from the original post; examples of rules 4 and 5]

¶I know how to handle a screwdriver, a smithy hammer, a circle saw, a momentum wrench, an angle grinder [+ 36 other tools, including a type of tractor] – –

¶I'm not looking for a father for my children, since they already have one. I'm also not looking for a husband or a boyfriend, a pen pal, a lifepartner, a dance partner [+ 28 other social types, including "teddybear"] – – or an older or a younger man.

[Comment from a man]

This is brilliant and tackles directly the problem of the Finnish woman, namely that the level of demands is considerably higher than one's own offerings. They think that the bar can be raised until the clouds have been reached.

(KSS 23 Jun, 2012.)

Many of the rules can be related to patterns that are actually frequent or salient in the advertisement data of this study, although the interpretations given in (7.20) are somewhat different. The use of 2PL address, for instance, is not frequent in the data, but it is used in specific, marked contexts (see 6.3). Although the specific kind of metonymic or metaphoric presentation of self with long lists of artifacts, such as shoes or tools, is not frequent in the advertisement data, the list-like structures (associated with rules 3, 4, and 5) clearly ressemble the kind of taxonomic structuring examined in chapters 4 and 5. Moreover, each object is metonymically related to some chronotope and habit of behavior, which are the essential ingredients of such taxonomic structures. In chapters 4 and 5, we analyzed such lists as hierarchical patternings of those constituents of the self that the writer considers most important. In the parody, however, the lists are interpreted quantitatively (cf. section 4.2.1) as an index of the writer's wish to showcase her "diverse activities" and "multi-talentedness." That is, the parody animates similar (meta)indices (e.g., lists and taxonomies) as the actual writers but interprets them differently, or at least in an exaggerated and more explicit manner, in terms of (meta)kinds (e.g., as stances towards the self and its constituents). As for rule 5, the accumulation of descriptions of what the writer is not looking for ends up excluding all conceivable persons (since the excluded social types cover all kinds of partners, lovers, and friends as well as "taken and free" and "older and younger" men). This is easy to interpret as a parody of the highly selective criteria for ideal others (cf. sections 5.4, 6.3.3, and 6.3.4). The text, then, seems to parodically voice, for example, the bitter perspective of someone who has been rejected or sieved off by advertisements and their writers. Finally, we see that, as in example (7.19), the constitutive (positive) kinds of the self and the restrictive (negative) criteria for the ideal other are linked, implicitly in the parodic advertisement and explicitly by the sarcastic commenters. The more you (think you) have, the more you (think you) can demand – but both excessive self-praise and selectivity can easily turn against you.

Finally, we may compare this ("bitter male") interpreter's perspective to a ("bitter male") writer's perspective. In the following Internet discussion, two men talk about the composition of a dating advertisement. The first poster has listed three rules that an advertisement should follow. The two men agree on the first two rules, namely, that the profile should (1) attract the readers' attention immediately and (2) be distinguishable and personal. However, they disagree on the third rule, namely, that the profile should be "truthful":

(7.21)
[Original post]
Jonkun pitäisi kirjoittaa ohjeet treffiprofiiliin kirjoittamisesta. ¶ Ainakaan siihen ei kannata laittaa mitään sosiaalisuudesta, optimismista tai ulospäinsuuntautuneisuudesta koska kaikki sanovat olevansa sellaisia. ¶ **Profiilin 1) pitää herättää huomio heti, 2) erottua eli olla persoonallinen ja 3) olla totuudenmukainen**.
[Reply from another man]
Roskaa. ¶ 1 ja 2 kohta ovat oikein, **mutta 3 kohdan tulisi olla juuri tuollainen mitä mainitset aiemmin eli ulospäinsuuntautuva jne.** ¶ Missään nimessä ei saa olla "tervettä itsekriitiikkiä" – – ¶ Eli varsinkin miehenä jos olet sitä tyyppiä joka ei laita tosielämässä liikaa voita leivän päälle koskaan niin se tapaa tulee opetella netissä ja päälle vielä höysteeksi kinkkua, juustoa, salaattia jne. jotta varmasti sinusta saa kuvan sinä unelmien prinssinä. – – ¶ Sitten yksi tai kaksi värikästä harrastusta ja miehen "persoona" netissä on valmis. ¶ Mutta **mitkään terveet itsekritiikit, realismit ja "ole oma itsesi" tyyppiset häläpölöt** eivät tuo normimiehelle naisia netissä.
(IS Oct 19, 2012.)

(7.21)
[Original post]
Someone should write instructions on writing a dating profile. ¶ At least one shouldn't put in it anything about being social, optimistic or outgoing because everyone says they are like that. ¶ **A profile 1) must attract attention immediately, 2) stand out, i.e., be personal and 3) be truthful.**
[Reply from another man]
Rubbish. ¶ 1 and 2 are correct, **but item 3 should be precisely of the kind that you mention earlier, i.e., outgoing etc.** ¶ Under no circumstances should one have "healthy self-criticism" – – ¶ So particularly as a man if you're of the type who in actual life never puts too much butter on your bread then that habit you must learn in the net and on top of it ham, cheese, salad etc. so that they will surely get an impression of you as that prince of their dreams. – – ¶ Then one or two colorful hobbies and the man's "persona" in the net is ready. ¶ But **none of that healthy self-criticism, realism and "be yourself" type of nonsense** will bring a normal man women in the net. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

The two men seem to agree on the fact that the truthfulness of the advertisement is a secondary feature and the primary function is to arouse interest and mediate an impression of personality. That is, the choice of self-

presentational forms should be governed by an understanding of what appears "unique" to readers. In fact, the first writer specifically dissuades writers from using "normal" positive typifications that are used (or usable) by "all" and essentially non-provable in the advertisement event, even if they are true (cf. sections 4.1, 5.2.1, and example 6.32 in 6.5). The other man, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of such general typifications. Since he would replace rule 3 ("being truthful") with the presentation of such typifications, it seems that to him they somehow contradict "truthfulness." Later, he further implies that "truthfulness" to him would mean "healthy self-critique" and "being yourself." The two men, then, seem to understand the "truthfulness" of a self-presentational performance in quite different ways. The first writer insists on the truthfulness of the profile in the sense that whatever "distinguishable" and "personal" typifications one uses need to be chosen from that set of expressions that are understood as true. For him, then, idealization in the sense of unipolar biographic selectivity does not clash with truthfulness. It is entirely acceptable to exert biographic control and only select such contents that are positive, without compromising the truthfulness of one's performance. To the latter writer, in contrast, truthfulness would seem to require "critique" and an evaluative balance (see also sections 5.2.2 and 5.6). His sarcastic comment, according to which one should learn to color "modest" biographic contents, further illustrates that his understanding of a successful advertisement is in contradiction with his self-conceptions. It is this discrepancy that seems to be the source of his affective comment. The writer exhibits angst over the felt obligation to appear like a "prince," to suspend "healthy self-criticism" and to artificially appear more "colorful" than he really feels. Vice versa, "being himself" would require entextualizing contents that, according to his anticipations, would prove ineffective and non-desirable. Therefore, one should feign general positive characteristics. However, honesty (and trust) can only be achieved by revealing such inner vulnerabitilies.[120]

[120] Another factor that is sometimes linked to the reliability of a person's words in the metadiscourse data is money. It is feared that free dating services will attract problematic social types: "Sites that charge a fee have less of these 'sickos' or taken [men] pestering [for sex]" (*Maksullisilla sivuilla on vähemmän näitä "sairaita" tai varattuja vonkaamassa*, IS Oct 12, 2012), "Suomi24, apparently because it is a free service, contained way too many adventurers and/or psychically disturbed individuals (*Suomi24 ilmeisesti juuri ilmaispalveluna sisälsi aivan liikaa seikkailijoita ja/tai psyykkisesti häiriintyneitä*, Plaza Sep 9, 2008). The implication is that by offering something from the self, whether sensitive biographic contents or money, one can redeem trust and show that one is earnest (as a kind of "trust mechanism," see Giddens 1991: e.g. 19). To a certain extent and for some people, then, the degree of default "reliability" of a speaker's words is a buyable thing. Both the reliability of language and the stigmatization of the type of discourse (see 7.1.1) vary according to whether or not the token has been subject to a charge.

## 7.3 ONLINE DATING ADVERTISEMENTS AS AN INTERSUBJECTIVE CONTACT

The last section of this chapter focuses on those segments of metadiscourse that discuss the relationship between persons and their text-artifacts from the standpoint of intersubjective contacts and interpersonal interaction. This section examines how interactants understand the kind of contact mediated by the online dating advertisement (or subsequent other forms of written communication) and to what extent and in what capacity a displaced text-artifact is seen to stand for a person in interaction with others. The relationship between the body (as the epicenter of personhood) and the various artifactual extensions of a person will, then, be an essential part of the question. We will see that different semiotic communities have differing views on, for example, how "distant" versus "close" the interactants are; or how "direct" versus "indirect" or "complete" versus "incomplete" the encounter is; and how "authentic," therefore, the contact with others is. To demonstrate the range of possible understandings, this section builds on a contrast between two opposite views.

The first group of examples illustrates the common view that online dating advertisements are somehow incomplete encounters and unreliable indicators of what the writer is really like as a person. That is, these text-artifacts are seen as "insufficient" or "inauthentic" extensions of a person. Example (7.22) is an extract from a popular documentary-like reality television show *Parittomat* ("The Pairless") about a group of 30+ urban single women looking for a partner. Three women are writing a dating ad for one of them (Leni). The other two (Kati, Mesku) are presented as "experts," although from the standpoint of this chapter they would be more appropriately classified as "peers" with some previous experience in online dating. The point of the short but emphatic discussion is to underline that online dating advertisements and the ensuing written communication (such as e-mails) are not a good method of "getting to know" someone "really":

```
(7.22)
Parittomat, ”oikeesti tutustuminen” (10:12)
   Leni = the writer of the advertisement
   Kati = an “expert” advisor
   Mesku = an “expert” advisor

01 Kati:      mut tää  ei  o hyvä keino +tu↓tustua
   kati                                 +nods
              but this NEG COP good way  get_to_know:INF
              but this is not a good  way to get to know
02            ihmisiin eli [ei kannata jäädä niinku
              people    so   it’s no use to keep like
03 Leni:                   [nii.
                            yeah
04 Kati:      [viikkokaupa[lla kirjottelemaan
```

week after week writing
05 Leni: [↑nii::::: [aivan jo-o,
yeah that's right
06 Kati: ↑säh[köpostia, (.)
e-mail
07 Mesku: [#joo ei#.
yeah no
08 Leni: nii.
yeah
09 Kati: koska ei sillä tavalla kehenkään
because NEG that way anyone
10 +oikeesti tu+tustu mut
*mesku* *+nodding +looks at Kati*
really get_to_know:NEG but
because that way one doesn't really get to know anyone but
11 Kati: [↑jos vaikuttaa että ↑kiinnostava tyyppi
if appear that interesting guy
if it feels like this is an interesting guy
12 Leni: [nii justii.
yeah right
13 Kati: ni si[t +vaa treffit ja
*kati* *+slams her hands together*
then then just date and
then just [go] on a date and
14 Leni: [sit.
then

Kati is the one who does most of the talking. She begins by claiming, in a highly emphatic way, that "this is not a good way to get to know someone" (line 01) (see Figure 3). The women are sitting in front of a computer discussing the dating profile they are writing for Leni. Later, in line 06, e-mails are explicitly included in the picture. *Tää* ("this"), in other words, seems to refer to the whole writing-based part of the practice of online dating. The other "expert" Mesku expresses her agreement with *joo ei* (line 07) and by nodding (line 10). Based on her enthusiastic back-channeling (e.g. emphatic *nii* and *aivan jo-o* in line 05, *nii justii* in line 12), the "novice" seems to find the "experts'" advice intuitively and logically sensible.

**Figure 3** "not a good way to get to know people"

The three participants, then, negotiate a strong consensus on the fact that online dating advertisements and the later e-mail communication are not a proper way to "get to know" someone, at least not "really." This implies that written communication may, in fact, produce a sort of illusion of "getting to know" someone, but something essential remains missing. According to the participants, written communication is only suitable for arousing "interest," after which one should proceed to a face-to-face encounter. The advertisement, then, can only stand for the person as an index of their existence and as a summary, non-specific, or "fuzzy" icon of that person's characteristics. The "essence" or "true self" of the person, or whatever else it is that one "really" gets to know, however, is not present in the text-artifact. The text-artifact merely has the capacity to point a certain kind of person in the direction of a certain kind of person.

The mass-mediated face-to-face conversation is able to convey this point with different semiotic dynamics than, say, an Internet discussion. Even if the event itself is scripted as part of the program, the unfolding and contents of the conversation seem relatively spontaneous. In that sense, it resembles all other forms of non-solicited external metadiscourse in the data (such as the Internet discussions). The face-to-face conversation, however, has a different pattern of temporal and interpersonal organization. The relatively immediate reactions between persons and the presence of gestural and prosodic signs allow the program to disseminate images of (generalizable) others that convey their point in an embodied rather than embrained way and appeal to intuitions of everyday conversation and personhood (as compared with, for instance, the highly processed and stylized guidebooks with author personae that are very deliberately performed). The conversation also breaks the anonymity typical of Internet dicussions, or at least organizes it differently.[121]

[121] Just to underline the relative nature of anonymity: From the standpoint of the unfolding conversation, the participants are not anonymous to each other at all, since they have come to know each other quite well. From the viewers' standpoint, these persons would hardly be accessible or locatable in the world independently of the program (since, for instance, the participants' last names

Other more or less similar examples abound in different sources. Example (7.23a), according to which real getting to know someone can only occur in a face-to-face setting, is from the advertisement data. Examples (7.23b) and (7.23c) are from the section "The minuses of online dating" in ND (p. 29–33), which displays comments from the respondents of the survey organized by the writers of the guidebook:

(7.23a) Loppujen lopuksi tällaisesta ilmoituksesta voi kuitenkin saada vain suuntaa antavan käsityksen toisesta ihmisestä. Todellinen tutustuminen=han tapahtuu vain kasvotusten.
(7.23a) After all from an advertisement like this one can only get a summary conception of another person. Real getting to know [naturally] only happens face to face.

(7.23b) Olemus on aina piilossa niin kauan kunnes ihmisen tapaa. Tosin lukutaitoa oppii.
(7.23b) The essence is always hidden until you meet the person. Though your ability to read [advertisements] will certainly improve.

(7.23c) Luulisi että kirjoittaen tutustuisi syvällisemmin mutta monetkaan miehet eivät osaa ilmaista itseään kirjallisesti ja ne keiden kanssa kirjoittelu on sujunut, tavatessa puuttuu taas kemia, eli toisaalta tuntuu että sittenkin ensi katseen kipinä on tärkeämpi tekijä…
(7.23c) One/you would think that one/you would get to know [someone] better by writing but many men cannot express themselves in writing and those with whom writing has gone well, the chemistry is lacking when meeting them, so on the other hand it feels/seems like the spark of the first look is a more important factor after all.

The last two examples employ expressions such as "essence" (*olemus*) and "chemistry" (*kemia*) to point to such individual and interpersonal objects in which "real" and "ideal" personhood is anchored and which, according to these examples, can only be truly experienced in face-to-face settings. All three examples imply that the image mediated by the text-artifact, however elaborate or informative it is, is not reliable enough. For these interactants, the reliability of the image does not necessarily seem to stem from the length of shared discursive and biographic histories. As the writer of (7.23c) points out with her talk of the "spark of the first look" (*ensi katseen kipinä*), their understanding of reliability prioritizes particular kinds of semiotic process over others (e.g., intuitive affective interpretants, sight of the body, gaze versus inferential and representational interpretants, cognition, patterns of speech).

Others, however, link the "unreliability" of such text-artifacts to the lack of corroborating experiences. That is, text-artifacts are "incomplete" in the

---

are not given) and are therefore relatively anonymous. They would, however, certainly be recognized if encountered in the street, and their full names could probably be found out in a number of ways.

sense that the information they provide is partial. Reliability comes from the quantitative accumulation of different kinds of semiotic processes rather than some specific kind (such as the first exchange of gazes). In the following examples, getting to know someone "really" is the result of a gradual process of de-anonymization, de-promotionalization, and accumulation of biographic knowledge:

(7.24a) Muutamalle [vastaajalle] olen antanut puhelinnumeroni että voidaan puhelimessa tutustua – –. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)
(7.24a) To a few [repliers] I've given my phone number so that we can get to know [each other] over the phone – –. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

(7.24b) Tapasin kaikkiaan 30-40 hlöä ja huomasin että mielenterveys-ongelmaisia oli aika paljon, lähes joka neljäs, osa selvästi leikitteli, salaili intressinsä tapailuun eikä antanut itsestään mitään, mm. yksi oli aviossa mutta valehteli sujuvasti. – – ¶ Mieheni tapasin omassa kodissani puhelin- ja skypekeskustelujen, valokuvien vaihtojen ja sähköpostitutustumisten jälkeen. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)
(7.24b) I met with altogether 30-40 persons and noticed that there were many with mental health issues, almost every fourth, some were clearly playing games, hiding their interests for meeting and would not give anything of themselves, e.g. one was married but lied fluently. – – ¶ I met my husband in my own home after phone and skype conversations, exchanging photographs and getting to know [each other] through e-mail. (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

In example (7.24a), talking on the phone is presented as a subsequent and more effective means of "really getting to know" one another after the advertisement event (i.e., prioritizing phonetic voice over textual voice). Example (7.24b) emphasizes both the importance of face-to-face encounters in detecting flaws and stigmas in others and a proper succession of different types of semiotic encounters. Examples like this, then, imply a gradation of successive encounters, in which one type of encounter presupposes a previous encounter of a particular kind and can, if successful, lead to a further, other kind of encounter that is even closer to the "real" person. Based on a number of examples in the data, one particular reconstructed version of such a gradated continuum of encounters might look, for example, as follows:

| Dating advertisement > messages via the dating service > e-mailing > exchanging pictures (if not part of the advertisement) > text messaging (SMS) > talking on the phone > technologically mediated visual contact (e.g. Skype) > bodily co-presence at a public place (in a date context) > bodily co-presence at a private place (in a functionally non-specific context) > … |
|---|

That is, the unfolding of a social relation is mapped to a specific order of types of interactional events. Different communities would, however,

organize these types of interaction and infrastructure in different orders. The essential point to notice, however, is that the first group of interactants would also interpret such a gradation as a cline of decreasing intersubjective distance, bodily co-presence being the ultimate “real” or “authentic” contact.

There is, however, an entirely different community of interactants that seems to hold an opposing view. Instead of focusing on the limitations of written textual interaction, they emphasize the possibilities it offers compared to other types of encounters. In contrast to the first set of examples, in the second one text-artifacts are seen as a particularly (or at least sufficiently) “authentic” and “real” extension of a person. The first two examples are from Internet discussions and the last five from ND. Examples (7.25d) through (7.25g) are from the section “The pluses of online dating,” which displays comments from the respondents of the survey organized by the writers of the guidebook (cf. 7.23b and 7.23c above):

(7.25a) Tiesin jo heti ensimmäisestä sähköpostista, että tässä on se oikea minulle. Edelleen olemme naimisissa, eikä kaduta! (IS Oct 19, 2012.)
(7.25a) I instantly knew from the first e-mail that this is the right one for me. To this day we’re married, and [I/we] have no regrets! (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

(7.25b) Ja silti tekisi mieli peitellä tätä nettitapaamisosuutta, koska pelkään sosiaalisten taitojen puutteen leimaamista. Mutta kumpiko on oikeasti pahempi, (umpi)kännissä ulkonäön perusteella tapahtuva valinta vai kriteerien täyttäminen/persoonaan tutustuminen ensin? (W, IS Oct 19, 2012.)
(7.25b) And yet I feel like hiding this net encounter part, because I’m afraid it will be seen as a lack of social skills. But which option is really worse, choosing someone (dead) drunk based on appearance or fulfilling criteria/getting to know their persona first? (IS Oct 19, 2012.)

(7.25c) Netissä voi tutustua siihen, mitä ihminen ajattelee ennen kuin tietää, miltä hän näyttää. Ei tule niin helposti hairahtaneeksi vääränlaisiin tyyppeihin. (ND: 23, N38h.)
(7.25c) In the net one can see what a person thinks before knowing what they look like. Less risk of falling for the wrong types of guys. (ND: 23.)

(7.25d) Se, ettei katsota ensimmäisenä ihmisen ulkonäköön vaan siihen mitä hauskaa tekstiä hän on osannut kertoa itsestään. (ND: 28.)
(7.25d) The fact that one doesn’t look first at the person’s appearance but the kind of nice text they have been able to tell about themselves. (ND: 28.)

(7.25e) Tutustuminen on enemmän järkipohjaista kuin livetilanteissa. (ND: 29.)
(7.25e) Getting to know [someone] is more rational than in live situations. (ND: 29.)

(7.25f) Kirjoittaminen yleensä tiivistää sanomista. (ND: 29.)
(7.25f) Writing usually condenses what one has to say. (ND: 29.)

(7.25g) Lisäksi jos haluat rajat hakuasi sellaisiin ominaisuuksiin, joita et ensimmäisenä kehtaisi tuntemattomalta kasvotusten kysyä, tämä on ilmoitustekstissä mahdollista. (ND: 27.)

(7.25g) Moreover, if you want to narrow your search to such characteristics that you wouldn't dare ask a stranger face to face, this is possible in the advertisement text. (ND: 27.)

According to the retrospective narrative from which the first example is an excerpt, the first e-mail alone (i.e., the third writing-based phase in the chain, following the original advertisement and the first reply) can be an indicator of someone being the "right one" (i.e., of the highest degree of interpersonal compatibility, cf. also 6.3.3). The second example (7.25b), in turn, relies on a strictly polar opposition between a writing-based first encounter and one in which bodies are physically co-present. The writing-based encounter is seen as the preferred alternative, since it allows for rational demographic and biographic selectivity ("fulfilling the criteria") and focuses on cognitive and mental propensities of the person ("getting to know the persona") (see also 7.25c, 7.25e). In contrast to the previous group of examples, here it is the image mediated by bodily attributes and behaviors that is considered potentially misleading, unreliable and inauthentic (i.e., not representing the person's "real essence"). The physical body, then, is regarded as a distraction in the intersubjective contact (and can cause a person to "lapse" into the wrong kinds of relationships). Similarly, example (7.25e) links writing-based encounters with more "rational" intersubjective contacts. That is, they allow for contacts between more cognitive and rational constituent processes of persons. Examples (7.25d) and (7.25f) draw attention to the more thought-out and concise nature of writing-based "mind styles" (see 4.2) compared to face-to-face conversations. Moreover, example (7.25g) points out that anonymous and displaced writing-based encounters instantly enable interactants to accomplish more direct intersubjective contacts by bypassing some of the steps of gradated progression described above. This is an entirely different kind of interpretation of the continuum of encounters sketched above. In this version, the progression gradually leads to more socially and culturally regimented intersubjective contacts so that a certain possibility for (or freedom of) directness diminishes, although intimacy may increase. The different constituent processes of intersubjective contacts may, then, develop into different directions as such successions of encounters unfold.

In the preface of the guidebook NE, the writers present as their goal the diminishing of the relative importance of outward appearance and pure chance in courtship. Instead, they wish to inform their readers of how to establish a first contact to another person on the Internet via their "thoughts":

(7.26) Me koetamme jossain määrin vähentää noiden kummankin [ulkoisen olemuksen ja sattuman] merkitystä kertomalla siitä, kuinka kumppania etsivään ihmiseen otetaan

ensimmäinen kontakti hänen ajatustensa kautta Internetin deittipalveluissa ja muuallakin maailmanverkossa. (NE: 9.)

(7.26) We are attempting to decrease to some extent the importance of both [outward appearance and chance] by giving advice on how to get in contact with someone looking for a partner through their thoughts in online dating services and elsewhere in the world wide web (NE: 9.)

Later, the guidebook warns readers about impatient online daters who try to rush others into face-to-face encounters. People like this are grouped into three stereotypes according to their linguistic behavior and psychological dispositions (NE: 18–20). The “curious” (*uteliaat*) are chatty and genuinely sociable and favor fast-paced interaction. Written communication may be too slow for them. For the “illiterates” (*kirjoitustaidottomat*, humorously abbreviated as *kooteet*, “kt’s”), on the other hand, writing is “Chinese torture.” The guidebook, however, reminds us that even though writing, sometimes even conversation, is difficult for these people, they may still have great personalities and “practical talents.” People like this typically want to meet face-to-face as soon as possible, since they are more at ease in that type of encounter. The “rascals” (*venkulat*) can be highly entertaining as companions, but they might not be trustworthy or sincere. Those who look for a serious relationship should stay away from them. The guidebook, then, propagates a view according to which the encounter mediated by online dating advertisements is based more on rational selection than serendipity and the intersubjective contact mediated by online dating advertisements highlights well-articulated thoughts over other constituents of persons or minds (such as spontaneous co-construction of patterns of speech; or more “practical” and less linguistic ways of being in the world). Therefore, online dating advertisements sieve persons according to their mental and discursive propensities and competencies into those who are more “at ease” or “authentic” in that kind of contact and those who, for one kind of reason or another, wish to move on to a further encounter. The guidebook reminds the readers of their right to decide when they are ready to progress from one type of encounter to another and not to be pushed into the types of encounters they are not ready for (and also formulates others’ desire for a different type of encounter as a sign of one of three particular kinds of personhood).

Let us now sum up and discuss the findings of this section. The focus in this section has been on cultural ideologies of interaction and intersubjectivity (as particular kinds of semiotic ontologies). If intersubjective encounters are mediated by ensembles of different kinds of semiotic processes and their artifactual residues on different time scales, then different semiotic communities can ideologically evaluate and hierarchize those constituents differently. Therefore, their attitudes towards the kind of encounter mediated by online dating advertisements as well as their inclinations to signify and interpret in particular ways in such encounters will differ. The online dating advertisement genre and the

infrastructure it relies on temporarily split the person into a "body" fraction and a "writing" fraction. The "writing" fraction is displaced from the body and sent out to represent that person in interactions with others. The ways in which the interactants understand the nature of such fractions and their role in the mediation of personhood and social relations in part determines how such interactions are interpreted. Various ethnotheoretical terms (such as *persoona*, "persona"; *olemus*, "essence"; *sieluttomuus*, "soullessness"; *kemia*, "chemistry"; *kipinä* "spark"; *(oikeasti) tutustuminen* "getting to know (really)"; *ajatukset* "thoughts") are used in the metadiscourse data to describe those aspects of personhood and interpersonal relations that online dating advertisement text-artifacts either can or cannot mediate. The precise meaning of these terms often remains relatively vague, but their co-texts reveal clear contrasts between semiotic communities in terms of how the nature of the intersubjective contact is understood.

In particular, stances towards the body and its relations to one's "persona" or interpersonal "chemistry" seem to be an important divide. A co-present face-to-face encounter is certainly not favored by all. For some, an encounter mediated by signs embodied in written artifacts rather than physical bodies is seen as a better first contact. It gives a more "authentic" or "reliable" impression of the "real" person, since the "carnal" aspects of personhood are temporatily effaced (cf. also Bauman 1983).[122] The images mediated by visually present bodies, however complete or desirable those images may feel, are not seen as reliable enough in relation to subsequent events. For others, the attraction of writing-based first contacts seems to relate more to the social and biographic anonymity that enables exceptional directness and freedom, which gradually starts to diminish as one becomes more and more accountable as a biographically recognizable individual to another biographically recognizable individual. Moreover, attitudes towards self-controlled selection versus uncontrolled serendipity in social life seem to have an effect on the evaluation of contacts. Whereas some value the "rationality" or "reliability" that preselection of interactants based on various criteria brings, others might consider such encounters too "calculated" or "unromantic." Particular encounters and contacts, then, are evaluated in relation to the unfoldings that lead to them and that can follow from them.

[122] The other side of the coin is that those who place special value on their bodily appearance may not appreciate the (online) dissolution of appearance-based (offline) social hierarchies. One interactant, for instance, deplores how "boldly" women who are "entirely below his level, frankly butt-ugly" contact him online (*Olen ihmetellyt myös sitä kovasti, kuinka rohkeasti täysin omaa tasoa alapuolellani olevat, suorastaan sysirumat naiset ottavat kontaktia netin kautta*). In "real life" he would not "even glance at" them, because he himself is "really good-looking, muscularly sporty and versatilely smart" (*Elävässä elämässä en vilkaisisikaan heihin päin, koska olen itse todella hyvännäköinen, lihaksikkaan urheilullinen ja monipuolisen fiksu*, IS Oct 19, 2012).

That is, intersubjective contacts, like all semiotic processes, have more or less distributed roots and fruits.

Throughout the entire chapter, we have seen examples of mass-mediated personae that disseminate particular kinds of models of and stances towards online dating advertisements as a practice and the interpretation of others as part of that practice. These personae may be internalized by actual participants to varying degrees as generalized others whose interpretations the participants may take into account. The participants' orientation and positioning in relation to the genred encounter may, therefore, be quite different at the outset. The different kinds of data examined in this chapter all showed an acute awareness of how patterns of discursive behavior relate to social and personal characteristics but offered very different interpretations. There was a strong air of mistrust and doubt towards the persons behind displaced, anonymous, and promotional personae in terms of their social normality, the truthfulness of their representations, or the representativeness of their performances. Then again, a writing-based first encounter was occasionally seen as having definite advantages, offering a more direct contact to "thoughts" and "personas" (in the sense of "personality") (cf. e.g. with views of subjectivity in 4.2). Different forms of metadiscourse and metaculture then tapped into partly the same infrastructural and interactional features (e.g., spatiotemporal displacedness of signers, signs, and interpreters; non-presence of the other's body; anonymity; detachedness from semiotic chains and metastance relations; strong reliance on writing-based performances; positive evaluation of self; high selectivity in relation to others) but evaluated them quite differently. The experienced quality of an interactional and intersubjective contact, then, does not follow straightforwardly from such features. The interactants' symbolic understandings of these features shape their semiotic behaviors and experiences in such encounters.

# 8 CONCLUSION

This study has examined the mediation and evaluation of personhood in Finnish online dating advertisements. It has approached the online dating advertisement genre as one kind of practice in the interactionally and infrastructurally distributed semiosis from which interpretations of personhood and social relations emerge. The online dating advertisement genre has also been approached as an instrument that mediates semiotic encounters and intersubjective contacts between interactants. It involves the performance of "promotional" personae, a distinct mode of "ideal" personhood with specific entitlements and commitments. The goal of the study has been to relate the studied practices to various cultural metapractices in order to take into account the role of different, sometimes conflicting ideologies and ontologies of interaction. Section 8.1 now summarizes and discusses the empirical findings in the light of the research questions, and section 8.2 reflects on the conceptual approach taken towards the idealization of personhood in this study.

## 8.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The empirical goal of this study was to examine from four different perspectives how "ideal" worlds are distinguished semiotically and interactionally from what are understood as more "real" ones. Chapter 4 focused on textual patterns that function as indices projecting various kinds (such as mental or social propensities) on individuals. The focus of the chapter was on different modes of personhood (or different ways of inhabiting personspacetime) rather than on the biographic facts or ideals that people tell about themselves or demand from others. There were, certainly, clear tendencies in the source domains that writers drew from (such as hobbies, preferences, physical appearance, personality, scenarios of dating and courtship; as well as more personalized tidbits hidden in, for example, pseudonyms). The focus, however, was on how such biographic contents were textually structured and interpreted in relation to dimensions such as subjectivity, selfhood, space, and time. Chapter 4 first discussed the micro-level mediation of spacetime and views of subjectivity. It was noticed that some writers locate the spatiotemporal origo of the intersubjective encounter within the online dating world, others in some geographic location or biographic phase. Some view the participants as relatively co-present, others as separated by a distance that the advertisement traverses. Secondly, it was examined how the advertisement sieves selves in a prism-like manner into relatively more iconic-indexical (or "performable") and relatively more indexical-symbolic (or "describable") fractions. The former fraction (e.g., in

the form of views of subjectivity) is encountered and evaluated more directly by the respondent. The latter fraction has the nature of a promise, the substantiality of which will be negotiated in a later event (e.g., whether or not the linguistically described object adequately corresponds to the perceived object), insofar as such an event is ever actualized. The study of views of subjectivity showed that there was patterned fractionation of interpretations in the questionnaire responses. Even the same textual pattern could be interpreted quite differently as a sign of personhood (see e.g. the qualitative and quantitative or agent-centric and patient-centric interpretations in 4.2.1). Such fractionation, however, can be made sense of in terms of the respondents' orientations to different signs or different ontologies of interpretation. Both the questionnaire data in chapter 4 and the external metadiscourse data in chapter 7 showed that the effects based on text-level indexicality are often difficult to report and become localized by interactants in easily accessible individual symbol-tokens or visible patterns of orthography or typography.

Those aspects of the advertisement texts that were understood as contradicting official norms or standards got a dualistic reception from respondents. There was a relatively clear contrast between two approaches or indexical orders. In the questionnaire data (4.2), the same textual pattern was, for instance, interpreted by some as "funny" or "laid-back," whereas others took the same signs as indices of "indifference," "laziness," or "uneducatedness." More generally, both in the questionnaire data and the external metadiscourse data (e.g. 7.1.2), there seemed to be two alternative branches of interpretation of text-level indexicality. The same patterns could be interpreted either as indices of individual personality (i.e., indices of what is positively or negatively unique about the individual) or as indices of the individual's status in relation to social norms and order (i.e., indices of to what degree the person is normal or abnormal). These are, then, two different lines of regimenting interpretants that control writing-based subjectivities on different grounds sourcing from different cultural models.

The questionnaire data also illustrated the fact that the interpretation of linguistic representations in texts is undetachable from interpretations of the animator's persona. That is, the representational mode, which links the representational content to residential and representational conditions and consequences, is affected by the propensities projected on the one accountable for that representation (i.e., ultimate interpretants such as intentions, purposes, interests, moods, or any other material, mental, or social kinds). This, of course, is an example of the *indexical-inferential* nature of human communication (see e.g. Kockelman 2013a: 22–24). There is an interplay between more immediate objects (e.g., states of affairs represented by linguistic utterances; objects of phenomenologically emblematic gestures, such as pointing a finger at something) and more mediate objects (e.g., interpretations of the speaker's communicative intentions). Pointing (hence indexical or "ostensive") to more immediate

objects is a means of directing attention to more mediate objects (hence inferential or “abductive”). For instance, when a writer describes some recurring state of affairs (e.g. “I have often celebrated my birthday in London” in example 4.25), the reader can interpret that the writer’s aim is to induce inferences about the writer’s preferences, social statuses as well as the compatibility between the writer and the reader. Conversely, immediate objects are interpreted in relation to more mediate objects. For instance, whatever description someone animates about themselves is interpreted radically differently depending on whether their communicative intentions are understood as “deceitful” or “cynical” versus “sincere” (see e.g. 4.6 in 4.2.3). Chapter 7 suggested that there are nearly opposite ontological beliefs about the nature of the intersubjective contact in online dating advertisements (e.g., “authentic” versus “inauthentic”; “reliable” versus “unreliable”). Such ontologies essentially consist of beliefs about the writers of online dating advertisements as dynamic objects that give rise to signs of the self (e.g., whether those signs emanate from the “true” self and are “authentic” and “reliable” or not).

The latter part of chapter 4 discussed the linguistic representation of self and others as a form of theoretical agency in relation to other semiotic modes. Such patterns of theorization in the data ranged from more particular and concrete objects (e.g., one’s in instrumentally measurable centimeters; the length of one’s hair in relation to cultural stereotypes, see example 4.15a) towards more general, abstract, and reflective ones (e.g., ideologies concerning ideal romantic relationships; observed changes in mental tendencies amongst the whole of humanity, see example 4.5). It was found that one of the most characteristic patterns in the data were taxonomies that organize theorizations of the writer’s attributes, habitual behaviors, objects of desire, and chronotopic imagery into structured hierarchies of preference. As was later discussed in section 5.6, such patterns can be regarded as a genre-specific, textually distributed form of stancetaking, in which reality becomes organized in relation to both the writers’ own values and their anticipations of others’ values.

Other textual patterns that were examined included narratives, fictive personae, and recontextualizations of discursive artifacts, such as pseudonyms, mottos, and slogans. Narratives and fictive personae were relatively rare in the data, but they proved all the more interesting for the ways in which they illuminate the nature of online dating advertisements as a form of discourse. The infrequency of narrativity can perhaps be understood with respect to the more general nature of indexical anchoring in online dating advertisements. If the prototypic usage of narrative is to recount actual, particular and past events, then it should be no surprise that it is not a natural fit in a context in which the tendency is to communicate whatever is habitual and continuously representative of a person by using selected, generalized, and anonymized imagery in a future-oriented manner. As was noted in chapter 4, there are only a handful of preterite tenses in the entire

advertisement text data. Past happenings are treated more as accumulated, possession-like objects and as indices of ongoing patterns of life (cf. with naturalized stances in section 5.2). Persons exist in online dating advertisements more in a type-like than a token-like manner. Because of the anonymity of the context, a sufficient level of generality and non-recognizability has to be maintained – and is usually enforced by the dating services too. Persons, then, have a sort of ghost-like or shadow-like existence in online dating advertisements. The semiotic object mediated by them is not sharp or localized enough to be linked directly with some embodied individual. The imagery is meant to function as a sieve that only lets those respondents who fulfill the required criteria through to the next phase of sieving (such as e-mail correspondence). The final phase of online dating processes, such as an embodied contact, then, is even further down the line in some $n+x^{th}$ event.

The lack of narratives and the prominence of ahistorical taxonomies in online dating advertisements clarify non-narrative modes of coherence of personhood and selfhood. They show that *biography* needs to be separated conceptually from (hi)stories or narratives, which are merely particular ways of organizing discursive biography. When relying on a narrative coherence of personhood, stories are used, as Linde (1993: 21) crystallizes, to convey the point that "I am such and such a kind of person, since I acted in such and such a way." When relying on a taxonomic coherence of personhood, however, one is such and such a kind of person, since one has hierarchies of such and such accumulated characteristics and stances. For reasons explained in chapter 3, the analyses in this study focused mainly on the free text sections of the dating profiles. It would, however, be interesting to explore further the interplay between the free text sections and the lists of (usually optional) standard questions and fields offered by the interfaces of the dating services. These different kinds of fixed profile forms certainly do explicitly regiment the form that personhood can take in such profiles (and limit individual flexibility). In fact, it is even possible that such standard questions – and the more general proliferation of forms and templates both in online and offline worlds – may function as models for taxonomic and list-like organization of free texts as well.

The analysis of fictive personae (4.4.4) clarified the relative similarities and differences between "fictive" and "ideal" personae. The question might be approached by further dividing icons of personhood into images, diagrams, and metaphors (see Peirce 1955: 105). When someone recognizibly inhabits a "fictive" persona (such as a swearing hedgehog), a metaphoric interpretation of the denotational text is almost inevitably required. That is, the mapping of the figure ("hedgehog") to the person ("man") requires a particular kind of inferential and abductive process. Or to put it differently, the figure's imagistic and diagrammatic characteristics have to be translated into the person's imagistic and diagrammatic characteristics. In other respects, however, the interpretation of "fictive" and "ideal" personae hardly

differs. Both, in any case, involve a complex inferential and abductive process that links symbolic representations to anticipatable residential consequences. “Ideal” denotational texts too *can*, then, be read more or less metaphorically. What is, in fact, implied by much of the cultural metadiscourse is that, instead of trustfully taking “ideal” representations as simple images or diagrams of other semiotic modes, they *should* always be interpreted in a more metaphorical manner (i.e., some specific conceptual framework, such as a cultural understanding of idealized self-presentation, is needed to appropriately and effectively map symbol-mediated icons to persons).

The analysis of the replication and recontextualization of discursive artifacts, such as pseudonyms, mottos, and slogans, in section 4.4.5 drew attention to the fact that the line between replications and representations (or the habitual and the emergent) is fluid and frame-specific. There were cases throughout the data in which the interactants oriented to self-presentational forms as patterns of speech *per se* without an explicit stance towards their appropriateness and effectiveness as representational interpretants. For instance, when a writer presents a characteristic as others’ speech about her (see example 4.34 in 4.4.5), she treats such a characteristic merely as a replicated token of others’ speech habits without explicitly committing to its truth (or predicating it about herself) and thereby distributing accountability to those others. Similarly, the writers’ own self-presentational repertoires rely on habitualized patterns that have been internalized on biographic scales (see e.g. sections 5.2 and 7.2.2). Representational interpretants become attached to individuals as *speech chain indexicals* much in the same way as proper names do. Consequently, such interpretants may become suspected or evaluated by others as being by degrees “out of sync” with the actual present (see e.g. example 7.15 in 7.2.2). Finally, a different kind of indexical life of representational interpretants is at stake in the case of the things one “wishes” to or “must” say about oneself (see e.g. section 5.2.1 and example 7.19 in 7.2.2). In such cases, it is the value of the sign itself that makes it relevant as an interpretant of the self or others. For example, the indexical link between that sign and various metadiscourses of personhood may give it a prestige status. The performance of the valued sign may effectively open doors to new worlds for individuals, even if in subsequent events those signs may turn out to be regarded by others as, for example, “faked” or “exaggerated.” The essential question, then, is whether one can appropriately pull off such a performance.

Chapter 5 examined evaluative stancetaking and its role in online dating advertisements and in the idealization of personhood. Many of the patterns examined in chapter 4 and later in chapter 6 (such as “ideological” reflective representations in 4.4.1; taxonomies and hierarchies of disclosure in 4.4.2; selective address in 6.3; *jos* “if” clauses of cross-modal iconicity in 6.4) reflect and embody evaluative processes and can be seen as forms of genre-specific stancetaking (see also section 5.6). The specific focus of chapter 5 was on the kinds of stances that make the writer’s evaluative processes maximally

emblematic in interactional events and in relation to others' stances. The chapter built on a contrast between two patterns that both address value to others and make the self accountable for that value in two quite distinct ways. The first pattern consists of CTPs that explicitly denote some mode of commitment (e.g., desiring, liking, appreciating) towards some object in the world. That is, they explicitly theorize the self or the other as a value-directed entity and as a source of evaluation. Such patterns also point to, and sometimes reason further about, some evaluative technique (e.g., an affective unfolding, an ideological commitment, or any stereotype or prototype of personhood). The second pattern of stancetaking examined in chapter 5 was based on lexical symbols with stereotypic evaluative connotations. In such "naturalized" stances value is projected onto some object on a public stage as if the value was its inherent quality. That is, the agent whose perspective, values, and evaluative techniques the entextualized stance embodies is left relatively implicit, and often such stances are embedded in other actions rather than asserted individually. Cases like this, then, are not so much *about* someone's values as they are grounded in them. It was found that, when it comes to CTP-based stances, the "promotional" persona is entitled to be highly explicit and direct about his or her desires and need not necessarily relate them to concerns of the actual world or actual others. However, claiming naturalized attributes was more problematic. This kind of pattern, first of all, easily implies that only one perspective can apply at a time, a kind of "unidimensional" social space. Naturalized evaluative stancetaking easily leads to a rivalry between selves for the symbolic representation of the world (i.e., whose values should the formulation of the object conform with). To further tease out the differences between these patterns from the standpoint of personhood, in the "naturalized" cases the writer appears as an accumulation of possession-like characteristics that one holds onto and taxonomizes on a public stage. In the CTP-based cases, the writer appears as the locus of intentional propensities such as appreciation, wishes, or desires. That is, such constructions commit writers to an aspiration towards particular kinds of future selves and worlds. The two patterns, then, focus on quite different phases of evaluative processes.

The aim of chapter 5 was also to understand such reflexive models that regiment explicit evaluative stancetaking and shape the writer's performances. Matters of evaluative polarity, in particular, were in focus. It was, first of all, reminded in 5.2.1 that even stereotypic or conventional polarities are relative to one's interests and positions on maps of the social world. (One can, for instance, be stigmaphilic as well as stigmaphobic.) As was seen on more than one occasion, "positivity" in online dating advertisements seems to come in two forms. There is "uniqueness" (i.e., the value of some self as singular and different from others) and "normality" (i.e., the value of some self as abiding by norms and generalized others). In "promotional" self-presentation, the tendency seems to be towards maximal "uniqueness," but without risking "normality." A tendency towards

*unipolarity* was seen both on the level of actual discursive behavior and on the level of cultural metadiscourse. In a unipolar model of evaluation, one is entitled to present oneself entirely in a "positive" light. Even "redundant" (5.2.1) positive stances may be important for the general tone expected from "promotional" discourse. However, the writers' implicit stances towards their own performances or their anticipations of others' stances towards those performances showed that unipolarity is regarded as problematic by many. Both in the writers' own performances in section 5.2.2 and very explicitly in the external metadiscourses in chapter 7, there was suspicion of self-initiated "positivity" and a concern for its relation to metasemiotic norms such as "honesty" or "modesty." Moreover, in order to clarify one's ideals, in online dating advertisements one is allowed to use negative stancetaking towards non-ideal others and non-ideal forms of personhood. That is, there is a specific asymmetrical distribution of metastance relations in the texts. As was seen in chapter 7, a combination of a high degree of positivity towards the self and a high degree of selectivity and negativity in relation to others is something that cultural metadiscourses often tap into. They may evaluate such patterns of evaluative stancetaking as (in)appropriate or (in)effective in specific ways (e.g., as "self-assured," "embellishing," "unreliable," or even "pathological"). Consequently, in various performances of "human(e)ness," some writers feel the need to take an explicitly or implicitly relativizing stance towards the promotional persona and contextualize it in relation to other aspects of the person. That is, they momentarily phase out of the idealized persona to indicate that it is merely the part one has to play here. Such schisms and conflicts between different norms and ontologies as well as the solutions participants come up with, then, are all part of the "promotional" persona as a distinct mode of personhood.

Chapter 6 examined patterns of addressivity and the fragmentation of respondent roles. The goal was to see how the figures of personhood discussed in chapters 4 and 5 are mapped onto frames of participation, i.e., how writers select for addressees and attempt to control the ensuing interaction. The advertisement texts in the data differed in terms of the tightness of the overlap between two different personae, the ideal other and the addressee. That is, the sieving of others into "ideal" and "non-ideal" persons may be differently calibrated with the sieving of others into "ideal" and "non-ideal" respondents. The analysis of "I"-"you" relations showed a continuum of approaches that enabled the writers to emphasize and focus on different aspects of social reality. As was previously shown in passing (see e.g. sections 4.4.3 and 5.1.2), the ideal other may be oriented to more as a type of person (i.e., as types of kinds and indices) or as a (fictive) particular individual. This distinction is relevant for different techniques of addressivity. Textual patterns such as descriptions of selves or others may, first of all, be addressed to others without picking them out as direct addressees with 2SG indexicals (i.e., taking a third-person approach to respondents). When addressees are picked out, they may be picked out more

or less selectively (i.e., any actual respondent versus only those of a particular kind). The specific degree and mode of selectivity of the address includes or excludes respondents from the group of people that can plausibly inhabit the role of addressee. That is, the semiotic co-text of 2SG deictics projects more particularized types of addressees. Since certain processes (e.g., strong desires, highly specific knowledge, burdening commands), cannot easily be understood as directed at (whoever) actual, unknown respondent, they become interpretable as indices of ideal forms of personhood. Some writers explicitly do acknowledge each and any respondent regardless of their degree of "ideality." In that case, the process of sieving is dealt with more openly as an intersubjective and interpersonal achievement (i.e., a dialogue about the mutual compatibility of the writer and the respondent). Other writers, in contrast, only address ideal respondents (i.e., those who fulfill the criteria of ideal personhood). That is, as the text advances and criteria accumulate, respondents are gradually sieved into two categories: those who can and those who cannot inhabit the role of addressee. The "non-ideal" are effaced from the group of those participants whose presence in the event is explicitly recognized (as an object of attention and a target of words). Some writers even seem to orient to an entirely fictive addressee. Actual respondents then become onlookers and evaluators of a simulated dialogue between the writer and an ideal individual. One can sketch a continuum of depersonification of non-desired others and a reverse continuum of personification of one's desires and ideals.

Furthermore, chapter 6 explored *jos* ("if") clauses in which writers model ideal responses from others (affective interpretants, such as feelings of kinship, similarity, or desire) and link them to ideal interactional consequences (energetic interpretants, such as writing a reply). That is, such patterns sieve respondents into "ideal" and "non-ideal" based on their responses to and evaluations of the writer's performance. This kind of sieving, then, complements those kinds of sieving that are based on the respondents' personal characteristics. Simultaneously, such patterns embody ontologies of intersubjective contacts and interpersonal compatibility, as they make explicit the writers' understandings of what the specific nature of the semiotic encounter is like and how the writer and the readers should ideally relate to one another. That is, these kinds of patterns formulate understandings of cross-modal and intersubjective iconicities in which the self's and the other's processes correspond to one another in some relevant manner. As was seen in section 6.5, the writers may also model further interactional phases (e.g., replying, first dates, or the rest of one's life) of the semiotic chains that follow from the advertisement. Such virtual models may both commit the writer to particular behaviors (e.g., which modes of interaction they will or will not participate in) and regiment others' behaviors (e.g., how others should or should not reply).

As was seen in both chapters 6 and 7, the writers' authoritative virtual models have important social and moral implications. For instance,

"disobedient" repliers (i.e., those who do not comply with the model formulated by the writer in the advertisement text) can be treated in light of different moral norms than "obedient" ones. Cultural norms and the limits of appropriateness are constantly present in the writers' perfomances and various "backstage" discourses. Social media, the Internet, and online dating, then, are not the moral wasteland they are sometimes depicted as in popular opinion. Choices of self-presentational practices, patterns of address, degrees of selectivity and control are crucial from the standpoint of intersubjective experience and, therefore, inherently moral questions (see also Eronen 2015). As was seen throughout this study, they are also seen as such by many interactants. How does one specify clearly one's individual criteria without appearing excessively negative towards other forms of personhood? How does one appear desirable and shield oneself from adverse, or too many, contacts by being selective, but at the same time treat others respectfully? Balancing between different ontologies and interests is a challenge each writer must take a stand on.

Chapter 7 cast a different kind of light on the discursive patterns examined in chapters 4, 5, and 6. It examined how the mediation of personhood and social relations via online dating advertisements is theorized and evaluated in various cultural metadiscourses. Online dating advertisements are an interesting form of interaction in the sense that others' interpretants of the self's indices are hardly ever directly accessible to the writers, although the indices are specifically performed for the purpose of appealing to a targeted segment of the audience. Even eventual replies are more or less processed and removed from direct responses and may be equally "promotional" in terms of their interests (and as was seen in chapter 7, they may not explicitly deal with the original advertisement to any great extent). That is, one has to be oneself without feedback from others, although one naturally cares very much about others' reactions. This curiosity for feedback might in part explain the nature and the large quantity of external metadiscourses. Pieces of such metadiscourse were scanned in chapter 7 for various ontological assumptions in order to illustrate the range of and contrasts between different patterns of interpretation that are not visible in the advertisement data or the questionnaire data (or possibly anywhere else but in such "backstage" discussions). The analyses revealed various overlapping stereotypes concerning (1) what kinds of linguistic signs are of particular importance in online dating advertisements and what they reveal about their animators, (2) how language use in online dating advertisements relates to the "truth," and (3) what kind of intersubjective contact is mediated by the advertisements. Such discourses *about* online dating advertisements as interaction, then, are metapractices that selectively tap into features of the object-practice. It is noteworthy that different metadiscourses seemed to focus largely on the same infrastructural and interactional features, such as the spatiotemporal displacedness of signers, signs, and interpreters; the non-presence of the other's body; the anonymity of the encounters; the

detachedness of personae from semiotic chains and metastance relations; the strong reliance on writing-based performances; the presumed tendency towards positive evaluation of the self and high selectivity in relation to others. However, they interpreted such features quite differently.

The metadiscourses differed, first of all, in terms of their attitudes towards writing-based performances (or their indexical orders of different metasemiotic models). One dimension of such attitudes is whether they place more relative weight on individual or type-specific "uniqueness" versus abidance by collective "normality." A second, interlocking dimension is related to the range of linguistic signs that is regarded as appropriate and effective for "unique" self-presentation. Some agents would accept even a high degree of indexical styling of one's textual and graphemic patterns into signs of individual personhood, whereas others would be more prone to limit the exhibition of one's uniqueness to the level of denotational contents (although there, too, within the confines of normality; cf. also sections 4.4.5, 5.2.1, 6.4, and 7.1.1). It was noted, for instance, that many actual texts in the advertisement data – such as (4.6) that also received positive interpretations in the questionnaire data – would hardly appear ideal or even acceptable judging from at least two of the three guidebooks in the data.

The stereotypic stigmatization of the online dating advertisement genre, which was first discussed in section 5.5 in light of the orientations of actual advertisement writers, was revisited in 7.1.1 from a complementing perspective. The latter examination was based on the metadiscourse data, and it revealed more intricacies in the ways in which particular interactional practices and forms of personhood become stereotypically linked. It illuminated (along with sections 7.2. and 7.3), for instance, the interplay of more "trusting" and more "exposing" modes of interpretation of indices of personhood in online dating advertisements. A particularly salient type of ontological assumption that came up throughout the external metadiscourse concerned the intentions of the writers and the reliability of their representations and stances. A recurring strategy in the metadiscourse was to translate simulated pieces of online dating advertisement into non-promotional discourse (i.e., to show what it "really" means) (see e.g. section 7.2). That is, by filling in missing metastances (i.e., more representative or truthful counter-stances), such metadiscourses purport to expose the communicative intentions behind such promotional representations and to represent more reliably the actual consequences a respondent should expect. The guidebooks in the data were usually relatively diplomatic in that they humorously exaggerated and parodied advertisement discourse in order to draw attention to the possibility of "embellishing" and the fact that a specific mode of interpretation is needed to avoid unrealistic expectations. The Internet discussions, however, were more straightforward and even discussed "pathological" forms of self-presentation.

Both chapters 6 and 7 dealt with different kinds of understandings concerning the nature of online dating advertisements as a semiotic

encounter and an intersubjective contact. Such understandings differ in terms of which constituents of persons, specifically, are in contact in such encounters and what the interactional possibilities and consequences of such contacts are. The advertisements themselves modeled ideal cross-modal and intersubjective iconicities in which the self's and the other's processes in different semiotic modes correspond to one another in relevant ways (e.g., the workings of the writer's and the reader's "souls" match one another; the respondent's feeling matches the writer's representation in the text-artifact). Such views became more elaborately articulated in the external metadiscourse. A common belief among the interactants was that online dating advertisements (or other writing-based artifacts) are not suitable for "real" or "authentic" contacts. However, strictly opposite views were found too. For some, a writing-based first encounter has definite advantages, as it offers a more direct contact to "thoughts" and "personality" by temporarily effacing the misleading "carnal" aspects of personhood. Ideologies of linguistic interaction, then, are linked to and motivated by wider cultural ideologies and practices.

In all, the stereotypic views disseminated by the metadiscourse data were often doubtful about and distrustful of the persons behind promotional personae in terms of their social normality, the truthfulness of their representations, or the representativeness of their performances. Or to put it differently, they fostered a distrust of others' signs when mediated by a particular kind of interactional infrastructure. In part, of course, there is a clear bias in the analyses in chapter 7 towards negative ontologies. The reason is clear. The negative theorizing in the external metadiscourse data was almost systematically more accurate and more concretely linked to actual textual patterns than positive views.

In the analyses of this study, the genre of online dating advertisements has appeared as layered, fragmented, and socially distributed. Rather than one model, it is a loosely coherent ensemble of community-specific and ontology-specific interactional practices. The "promotional persona," too, can be interpreted in more ways than one. We might sketch two maximally contrasting summary interpretations of the analyses above. In one kind of nutshell the promotional persona might be seen as the one who has the right to desire and to naturalize or personify one's desires, to claim unipolarly, unilaterally, and unidimensionally evaluated attributes on a cultural stage, to strictly control and organize one's constituents into atemporal taxonomies and hierarchies, and to criticize and depersonify non-ideal others – but who also faces prejudices of inauthenticity and unreliability from others. On the other hand, one might also crystallize the promotional persona as the one who has the right to envision and to commit to ideal futures with ideal others, to propose shared interactions and activities to others, to rationally and empathically negotiate compatibility with others, to appreciate others even if they prove non-compatible, to employ descriptions that others have agreed on, to perform rather than describe, to exercise self-criticism, to

relativize one's identity performances and selectivities, and to contact other minds in profound, thought-out, and concise encounters. It is noteworthy that the circulating stereotypes of online dating advertisements and "self-promotion" only tend to capture – and uphold – the first line of interpretation and particularly its most salient aspects (such as explicit unipolar stancetaking).

## 8.2 FURTHER IMPLICATIONS

The promotional persona of the online dating advertisement genre is marked by a tension between flexibility and accountability. It lures writers with the temptation of a self-defined existence, as it seemingly offers one the power to choose the signs by which one is known to others. It provides one with the possibility to control one's name, characteristics, and story (or lack thereof). No existence, however, is worth much without the recognition of others. And others' interpretants can be whimsical. Online dating advertisements are particularly challenging in this respect, since there is no "real time" feedback. The text-artifact has to be shaped into a sieve efficient enough to be able to stand on its own. Writers anticipate possible interpretations and structure their own personhood so that the text-artifact can successfully divide others into the ideal and the non-ideal. The text-artifact comes to embody the writer's desires and beliefs on many levels. The overall organization of the text in many ways serves both the desirability of the self to respondents and the desirability of repliers to the self. The text-artifact as a sieve, then, becomes a relatively independent, public, and displaced prosthetic extension of the writer's mind and self – also producing the kinds of effects the writer cannot foresee or will never be aware of (cf. Kockelman 2013b: 48). Although such text-artifacts are in many ways quite *portable* across contexts (see Kockelman & Bernstein 2012; Kockelman 2013a: 56, 80–81), their verifiability (i.e., how they correspond to the person as perceived in other semiotic modes), however, remains crucial to their ultimate effectiveness in the eyes of others.

What is particularly interesting about the kind of promotional persona examined in this study is its high dependence on theoretical agency. Such "theoretical personae" and the complex virtual models of social reality they produce illustrate the fact that humans are highly theoretical beings both in their private realms and publicly in interactions with others. In online dating advertisements, one exists by theorizing one's existence. As an entirely opposite point of comparison one might cite the Western Apache culture, in which acts of silence were prominently used both in courtship and in encounters with strangers (Basso 1990). That is, in such acts, the reliable way of "getting to know" others and their intentions is entirely without public theoretical representations of the participants or the ongoing event.

It also seems that the online dating advertisement genre as an instrument contributes to particular kinds of upgradings and downgradings of semiotic processes and to the objectification of statuses and values (see Kockelman 2010: 6–7; 2013a: 56, 102–103, 106–107). Interpreters tend to take the writers' performances as more purposeful, intentional, and reified than they perhaps would in other contexts. For instance, the processes of action or role easily become upgraded towards the process of identity. That is, linguistic actions become interpreted as indices of value rather than as indices of purpose or status. Writers, in fact, rely on such upgraded patterns of interpretation in, for example, taxonomies that cite individual characteristics or chronotopic formulations. Such acts of representation are to be interpreted as maximally representative of the writers' identity (e.g., their lifestyle, preferences, or "essence"). Textual coherence sometimes relies on a shared understanding of such patterns of entextualization (see e.g. example 4.24). Indices are taken as more emblematic than they would be in other contexts. This may lead to an objectification of such lesser or merely potential statuses or values in the online dating advertisement context that otherwise might be ignored or passed over. That is, relatively "fleeting" or "invisible" objects may become more enclosed (e.g., more evident, present, and intersubjectively recognized; subject to higher degrees of agency and accountability) (cf. e.g. the analysis of intentions in section 4.2.3 or the regimentation of orthography in section 7.1.2).

In contrast, there is a downgrading of epistemic and relational emblematicity of signs of the self in terms of transparency or reliability (see also Kockelman 2006b: 99 and sources) or, phrased differently, an increased sensitivity to forms of incoherence between the object mediated by the online dating advertisements and its other modes of existence. According to a considerable segment of the generalized others whose views are disseminated by mass-mediated cultural metadiscourses, the signs of an online dater should always be scanned for hidden intentions, inauthenticities, and incoherences. Such suspicions may be heightened by parasitic phenomena, such as fake profiles on dating sites and fake personae on the Internet more generally (that are either animated by someone for commercial purposes or generated automatically).[123] They may lead to a heightened sense of being an

[123] For instance, in the external metadiscourse one interactant reveals that she had once placed two advertisements: an "authentic" one and a "decoy" (Vauva Mar 23, 2012). The point of the latter advertisement was to compare whether the same respondents would reply to both advertisements and thus be able to sieve off "spammers" (i.e., persons who will send the same non-personalized reply to everyone). Also, it is conceivable that at least one of the 111 advertisements in the data might be a "fake" in the sense that it is not about an actual person and is not written with the purpose of actually finding a partner or getting a date. Yet, it is hardly a "fake" in the sense of an actual scam or spam meant to profit the writer or harm the reader. In more neutral terms, that text might be characterized as a parody or a social commentary of online dating advertisements or a creative experimentation with aspects of personhood (e.g., to see if someone would take this kind of person seriously and what kinds

"authentic" person(a), a representative mediation of oneself, distinguishable from the masses of real and fake others. We see, then, that representations of self are always interpreted in light of residential processes and that online dating advertisements incorporate a specific mode of interpretation of persons and their lives.

### 8.2.1 BIOGRAPHIC CONTENTS, MODES, AND COHERENCES

The analyses in chapters 4–7 brought out a range of processes that relate interactionally and semiotically emerging personae to actual persons in different ways. The different ways in which particular forms of personhood or biographic contents relate to the person in question might be called *biographic modes*. The analyses showed that (more) "real" versus (more) "ideal" modes can be distinguished in a variety of more specific ways on different levels. We saw, for instance, that a single writer may be split into a number of "views of subjectivity" and denoted figures of personhood (chapter 4) as well as into animator, co-author, and principals (chapter 5). Respondents become regrouped into different kinds of addressees and non-addressees (chapter 6) and addressors into more selective and less selective. Each of such fractions of personhood may have a different relation to the "ideal" or the "real." "Real" and "ideal," then, are useful only as umbrella terms for a range of more specific biographic modes. Each mode projects different kinds of residential conditions and consequences. For instance, strictly selective patterns of address and or strict controlling of interactional consequences (see sections 6.3.2, 6.3.4, 6.4–6.5) embody a "directive-like" mode. The formulations are interpreted as something that *should* "transubstantiate" into a perceivable actuality in some later event (see Urban 2001: 145–180). That is, the success of the entextualized model of personhood is interpreted in terms of whether others' behaviors eventually actualize the model (or become cross-modally iconic with it).

Chapter 7, which explored ontologies related to the interpretation of signs of the self in online dating advertisements, showed that the genre itself stereotypically entails particular biographic modes. For example, there is a tendency to think that language in dating advertisements requires specific inferential modes of interpretation (e.g., ones that convert "what is said" to "what it really means"). Such a setting might be compared to Turner's (1982: 32, 40–42, 82–84) notion of the "subjunctive mood" of culture, found, for example, in rituals of passage, or in modern art. In contrast to the "indicative

---

of replies they would write). In fact, one might go as far as to regard cases like these as marginal but "conventional" secondary usages of the genre. Such usages are related to April Fools and similar pranks (such as Facebook worms and other, more serious forms of "clickjacking") that are based on the interactants' differential acuities for indices that separate the "authentic" from the "inauthentic" and their (lack of) self-control to resist their curiosity and hold off their response long enough to consider various likelihoods and risks. (See also Visakko & Voutilainen 2012; Kockelman 2013b.)

mood" of quotidian life, the "subjunctive mood" provides a metastructural space in which normal social order can be critically reflected upon or creatively played with, inverted or even subverted. The liminal phase of a ritual, for instance, constitutes a mode of life with rules and orders altogether different from those of everyday life. In such phases, persons are reflexively remodeled and re-enculturized into new statuses, which then become gradually actualized once the persons have been reintegrated into everyday practices. Whether language use in online dating advertisements is evaluated by particular communities positively as "creative" or negatively as "inauthentic" (or somewhere in between as "embellished"), there is an orientation to a sort of "subjunctive." That is, language and the objects it mediates are seen as being in an event-specific, subjective-flexible relation to what generally speaking would be considered "reality." Such a mode is not entirely unbound by the "indicative" yardstick of truth, but it allows for wishful reinvention, idealization, and experimentation. Instead of simple tests of truth-conditionality, assessing models of personhood set in such "subjunctive" biographic modes involves complex intersubjective negotiations that may require a long period of lived experience with the person in question.

As was preliminarily discussed in chapter 2 and empirically seen in chapters 4–7, biographic modes can be framed in a variety of ways in terms of, for example, the self's or the others' affective interpretants or attitudes (e.g., "desired" versus "feared" selves; or "serious" or "authentic" versus "cynical" or "ironic" performances), habituality of occurrence (e.g., "representative" versus "sporadic" or "contingent" behaviors), public or official recognition (e.g., "confirmed" or "official" versus "wannabe" or "fake" identities), or community-specificity (e.g., "ingroup" versus "outgroup" statuses). Such modes may reflexively combine in many ways. One can "fear" or "desire" any form of personhood, whether "real," "ironic," or purely "fictive." The distributed nature of semiosis and the fractional non-congruence of sign-interpretant relations between different communities means that the same interpretant of personhood may be "real" to some but not all. Furthermore, persons are usually to some degree reflexively aware of others' contradicting interpretations (e.g., one may know that what one considers "real" and "ideal" may be "inauthentic" and "non-ideal" to some others; cf. e.g. section 5.2.1).

The question of "real" selves and persons is often seen as particularly relevant in the context of the Internet and anonymous interaction. For instance, building on Turkle's (1995) argument that the Internet constitutes a unique opportunity for self-expression, Bargh et. al (2002: 34) conclude that under relatively anonymous circumstances, outside of one's usual social sphere:

> [W]e would expect a person to use [the Internet] first and foremost to express those aspects of self that he or she has the strongest need to express – namely, the 'true self':

> those identity-important and phenomenally real aspects of self not often or easily expressed to others.

They conclude that the Internet "facilitates the expression and effective communication of one's true self to new acquaintances" and the "projection onto the partner of idealized qualities," which are seen as critical for the formation of close relationships (ibid., p. 45). While these observations are undoubtedly valid for many kinds of Internet communication (see also Gerlander & Takala 1997), including online dating advertisements to a certain degree, and lend empirical support to the idea that digital text-artifacts and face-to-face conversations are quite different infrastructures for the mediation of personhood and selfhood, a few remarks are in order.

Firstly, the Internet can hardly be treated as a homogeneous entity from the standpoint of communication or interaction (see also Whitty 2008). In fact, one might regard "the Internet" as a relatively useless parameter altogether. Rather, it is the more specific effects of the infrastructure on entextualization, contextualization, and text-artifacts (e.g., the displacement of signs from bodies, the temporal dynamics of text production and design, strong reliance on symbolic representations and theoretical agency, pre-selection of respondents) that give rise to the actual differences. Secondly and relatedly, we need to take into account the role of reflexive models and ontologies (e.g., genres, registers, stereotypes and prototypes of personhood, generalized others), their fragmentation between communities, and the fact that such ontologies are differentially activated in different Internet contexts and sometimes in mutually contradicting ways. This study has shown that even within one specific genre there is considerable variation in undertakings and understandings. In the terminology introduced in chapter 2 and in light of the empirical analyses in chapters 4–7, genres might be seen as loose, distributed ensembles of more specific semiotic ontologies (concerning, e.g., social roles and relations; intentions and appropriate actions to fulfill them; presupposed beliefs about the world; ways of perceiving and evaluating the world) that complement and incorporate one another, creating relatively distinguishable complex types of interactional practices with more or less intersubjective variation or even incoherence (cf. also Bakhtin 1986: 61–62; Hanks 1996: 242–246). Furthermore, it is somewhat implausible to treat the Internet as an entirely "anonymous" realm completely separate from face-to-face encounters. As has been seen in this study, personae are often performed and interpreted precisely in relation to an anticipated process of gradual de-anonymization and an eventual face-to-face encounter.

In fact, it seems just as plausible as a hypothesis that when a person is, to a relative degree, liberated from usual environmental pressures, he or she might as well hide and mask those "identity-important and phenomenally real" aspects of self that he or she has the strongest need to hide and mask. Moreover, metadiscourses about online dating advertisements suggest some interactants' hidden anxieties concerning felt external pressures to be, say,

"unique" or "interesting" in particular ways. For some participants the fact that the genre allows, encourages, or even forces one to find and publicly formulate a "positive" perspective on oneself according to cultural stereotypes of what counts as "positive" personhood can be a "therapeutic" experience. However, if one's self-conceptions fall short of one's internalized ego ideals or those ideals projected by the activity type, the task of writing an online dating advertisement may, in contrast, be unpleasant and a variety of classical symptoms, such as feelings of shame, inadequacy, or fear of abandonment, may follow (see Piers & Singer 1971 [1953]; also Goffman 1990 [1963]: 18). The point here is to emphasize that many processes – the "ideal" (what one feels one should be), the "desired" (what one wishes one could be), the "real" (what one would be for various others) – are simultaneously at stake and may clash or harmonize with each another in a variety of ways. That is, the Internet does not liberate one from cultural ideals or generalized others. In addition to the "needs of expression," there is a variety of internalized obligations and habits of expression.

The tension and interplay between more private and more public actualities, such as what feels "true" to self versus what a group of others projects on self as "real," can be analyzed into a number of different dimensions. There are interpretants of personhood that (a) correspond to the person's own mental states (e.g., beliefs, feelings, or inner discourses) and ones that (b) have been recognized and ratified by others in previous interactional events or that can be logically inferred from other ratified interpretants. The two may or may not co-incide. From the standpoint of credible self-presentation, a key factor is a person's ability to anticipate and commit to particular responses or resistances from others to particular interpretants. Such anticipations are linked to the interactional histories and social lives of both that interpretant and the participants. "Realness," then, does not relate to forms of personhood *per se* but to relations between contents and modes, or signs and interpretants, distributed over interactional relations between selves and others. Such relations are effectively and flexibly described in terms of various forms of coherence (Kockelman 2013a: 107–109, 140–143, 173–175). That is, the kinds of interpretive processes examined in this study can be usefully viewed from the standpoint of *residential coherence* (e.g., whether different residential constituents, such as instruments, actions, or roles confirm or co-project the biographic content), *semiocognitive coherence* (e.g., whether a biographic content has logical inferential relations to other related representations and causal relations to residential constituents), *intrasubjective coherence* (e.g., whether a person privately believes what she publicly says), *intersubjective coherence* (e.g., whether others share a person's stance or hold similar beliefs), *distributed coherence* (e.g., whether what a person says or thinks about himself is caused by or justified by what others say or think about him), and *reflexive coherence* (e.g., whether a biographic content fits in with

the other constituents of the particular self that is accountable for that content).

Such modes of coherence of distributed semiosis clarify the problems related to “ideal” and “real” forms of personhood. “Ideal” selves may be very real as objects of, say, intrasubjective desires and aspirations but not necessarily “real” in the sense of being intersubjectively recognized. In light of the data of this study, a common concern among interactants seems to be that the contents presented by a promotional persona merely reflect a wished-for (“ideal”) world and are neither semiocognitively nor residentially coherent with the actual constituents of the person (e.g., her perceivable kinds or actions) and would not intersubjectively or distributedly cohere with the interpretations of those others who have independent access to that person. From another standpoint, the concern is often that the writer’s relatively self-controlled and displaced intentional roles undertaken via the advertisement (i.e., linguistic assertions of beliefs, intentions, or affects, or any other indices that project an intentional status) would not cohere with the writer’s less self-controlled, more habitual and embodied intentional roles, nor with the reader’s responses (or intentional attitudes), in face-to-face settings in “real” life. Another kind of worry voiced or implied by some writers is that the kinds of (“ideal”) biographic contents one is expected to co-author and commit to in the online dating advertisement are not reflexively coherent with one’s self-conceptions or intrasubjectively coherent with one’s affects or beliefs about oneself. Whether one chooses to comply with such expectations or to breach them, either way, there will be residential incoherence of either a more private or a more public kind.

### 8.2.2 IDENTITIES, STANCES, AND EVALUATIVE PROCESSES

This final section presents a few concluding remarks on the approach taken in this study towards evaluation, stancetaking, identity, and biography. Identity has been understood as the process in which patterns of life become organized by selves in coherent ways and in terms of relative desirability or value. Evaluation refers to those interpretive processes that produce value in light of various evaluative techniques (such as affects, practical utility functions, habits or traditions, cultural and experience-based stereotypes and prototypes, ideals and ideologies). Stance refers to those semiotic processes that make evaluation emblematic in interaction. Biography has been here understood broadly as all kinds of interpretations of particular persons and their lives, although the focus has been on written biography. Different kinds of biographies differ in terms of a number of more specific dimensions. There is, first of all, the dimension of artifactual “recording.” That is, biography both embodies and carries forward traces of past events and processes. The type of “recording” used determines the degree of emblematicity of biographic signs and the enclosedness of their objects (e.g., writing typically has a high degree of intersubjective perceivability and material durability),

which in turn has an effect on the dissemination, regimentation, and transformation of such biographies in social interaction. Secondly, there is the textual organization of biographic contents in patterns and modes of representation that give rise to particular kinds of interactional effects (e.g., online dating advertisements consist of a set of linguistic representations shaped into coherent textual patterns in light of reflexive models and addressed to displaced, anonymous respondents with a highly limited possibility for reciprocity in order to sieve them into "ideal" and "non-ideal"). Thirdly, the dimension of evaluation is inseparable from the organization of biography. The selection, formulation, and patterning of contents for the sake of particular kinds of interactional effects are inherently evaluative processes. Denotationally explicit evaluative stancetaking towards persons and lives, however, is a special case with particular functions and consequences. That is, biography is always organized by values, but it can also create and communicate value. Biography, then, is an instrument of identity.

Consequently, the following five perspectives were incorporated into the analysis of the evaluation of personhood in this study. Firstly, explicit evaluative stancetaking was understood as a form of cultural theorization and dissemination of value with specific interactional functions and motivations. That is, evaluative processes are made emblematic only in particular contexts with specific purposes. Secondly, the inherent reflexivity of semiotic behavior was taken into account by tracing such reflexive models that regiment evaluative stancetaking and specify when evaluative processes are appropriately and effectively made emblematic (phenomenologically, epistemically, deontically, or relationally). Such reflexive models were looked for both in the actual stancetaking practices and the metapractices that represent and evaluate actual stancetaking practices. Thirdly, evaluative stancetaking was approached in terms of textual distribution and text-level indexicality (or performances) in addition to more localized clause-level phenomena. Fourthly, different types of discursive agency – describable in terms of statuses such as animators, authors, and principals or acts such as control, composition, and commitment – were seen as essential for a fine-grained understanding of evaluative stancetaking. Fifthly, the notion of web-like metastance relations and the various forms of coherence (elaborated in section 8.2.1) provided a solid theoretical and empirical basis for the study of the interactionally and infrastructurally distributed life of evaluative stances. For instance, the unipolarity, unidimensionality, and unilaterality, which were all understood to characterize the stereotype of evaluative stancetaking in online dating advertisements (see chapters 5 and 7), are only accurately understood in terms of metastance relations (or the distribution of stances and metastances between types of events and interactants).

Different genres of biography also have different ontological scopes of evaluative stancetaking. That is, they differ in terms of the kinds of objects that can be evaluated (e.g., human individuals versus human kinds;

individuals versus interpersonal relations; particular individuals or kinds versus types of individuals or types of kinds; self versus other). There may be specialized practices for different kinds of objects. In online dating advertisements, taxonomies (4.4.2), for instance, are specialized in the organization of the characteristics of the writer, whereas *jos* ("if") clauses (6.4) are specialized in the evaluation of interpersonal relations and intersubjective contacts. Different types of biographic events also differ in terms of appropriate evaluative techniques (e.g., personal histories of desire, transmitted traditions of ideality, stereotypes of compatibility, or prototypes of ideal others) and the degree to which such underlying techniques are made emblematic and reasoned about (or conversely, naturalized or objectivized). Finally, different types of biographic events differ in terms of reciprocity and regimentation (e.g., whether others' stances can be openly contested). As was discussed at length, in online dating advertisements such possibilities are distributed temporally (advertisement event versus later events) and infrastructurally ("stage" versus "backstage").

Such approaches are useful particularly if one is interested in identity and biography as long-term metaprocesses and from the standpoint of interactional habits and habit-change. Denotationally explicit and highly emblematic forms of evaluative stancetaking are a form of work that is needed in particular types of events and may not be needed in other types of events (e.g., when the value of something can be presumed as shared or self-evident). Active evaluative stancetaking is often necessary when one wishes to change something, to resist something, or to defend something from falling into decay. In any social reality, there is both *ontological inertia*, or the tendency for objects to resist transformation or to cohere without some agent's active effort (caused by, for example, habit, consensus, or laziness) and *ontological entropy*, or the tendency for objects to transform or to incohere without active effort (caused by, for example, serendipitous mutation or variation, spontaneous troping, or oblivion) (see also Kockelman 2013b; Urban 2001). Language (e.g., denotational stereotypes, genres, registers), other cultural processes (e.g., models of personhood, ideologies, regimentation by force), and habits (e.g., beliefs, self-conceptions, ego ideals, generalized others, interactional routines) themselves constitute forms of ontological inertia (but are also susceptible to gradual entropy). One needs to work hardest when resisting or going against them. "Self-promotion," too, can be framed from the standpoint of biographic inertia and entropy. Biographic control, for instance, is a battle against evaluative entropy. It is an attempt to impose self-controlled order onto metastance relations by accelerating the dissemination of ideal biographic contents and decelerating the dissemination of others thereby forcing evaluative stances towards the "positive" side. Such forms of biographic inertia that "self-promotional" agents may have to work against include, for example, accumulated (negative) self-conceptions, anticipated (negative) responses from generalized others, and acquired habits of (negative) self-presentation (cf.

e.g. the discussion of speech chain indexicals in section 4.4.5 and the discussion of “normality” in 5.2.1, 6.4, and 7.1.1). In fact, the marked performances of many writers (see e.g. 5.2.2) hinted at a friction between different inert processes (e.g., contradictions between self-conceptions or habits of self-presentation and models of “promotional” stancetaking; but also contradicting norms of evaluative stancetaking).

Finally, the characteristics and limitations of the method used in this study have already been discussed along the way (see e.g. section 4.2.4), but a few additional comments are in order. Since the method of this study developed gradually alongside the theoretical framework, it is easy, in retrospect, to point out ways of improving it. Also, as clarified in chapter 3, the main goal of this study was an overview of the semiotic and discursive organization of the idealization of personhood in the context of online dating advertisements. The empirical focus, therefore, has been on general outlines and relevant points of contrast. A more systematic look at empirical details would certainly reveal numerous regularities of linguistic features that have remained outside the analyses of this study. Although the features that were chosen for analysis were examined systematically and sometimes contrasted with possible alternatives, undoubtedly a large number of discursive phenomena has fallen outside the focus of this study. Another researcher with different ontologies and interests would have emphasized other phenomena. One of the areas that could be further explored are the quantitative relations between different discursive patterns and linguistic features. That is, they could be analyzed into hierarchies of representativeness that specify how frequent a particular feature is in relation to others. If one is more interested in linguistic inventories and frequencies, a different selection of analyzed features and the ways of locating them in the data would be more useful. To illustrate, one might have, for instance, charted all the CTPs and their usages in the data and counted their relative frequencies, instead of focusing on contrasts between the intuitively most salient ones, which was the strategy in this study (see chapter 5). There is, then, a certain trade-off between the systematicity of the study of particular sign patterns and the comprehensiveness of the study of patterns of interpretation.

In some sense, this study has been more concerned with the theoretical and methodological challenge of approaching language as a form of human behavior embedded in other social, cultural, and cognitive processes. The methodological question that this study has attempted to solve is how to deal with the fact that linguistic meaning, as one kind of semiotic process, is perspectival, reflexively organized (i.e., not reducible to simple, one-dimensional “facts”), socially fragmented, and dependent on ensembles of ontologies and values that are rarely fully shared but have a sociological pattern of distribution. This study has shown that a semiotic and an anthropological framework can help in locating language and discourse within semiosis and in building more reflexive research designs. The

methodological approach of this study could be taken further into any number of directions. For example, the contrastive analysis of discursive practices (chapters 4–6) and reflexive metapractices that evaluate and re-interpret them (section 4.2, chapter 7) proved highly interesting. As the combination of solicited and "naturally" occurring metadiscourses seemed to work well, this approach could be extended and elaborated. Questionnaires could involve more versatile and more specifically segmented groups of people, and they could be used to solicit more varied and specific responses (e.g., focusing on specific discursive patterns or linguistic features, instead of a selection of maximally different texts). The different sets of data could also be causally and sequentially calibrated more carefully in relation to one another. In particular, some of the naturally occurring metadiscourses could well be calibrated more tightly than the ones in this study (e.g., trying to get a hold of actual replies and replies to them and so on). Reconstructing and analyzing more complete semiotic chains of signification and interpretation would contribute to a more specific understanding of the relations between practices and metapractices in terms of, for example, their actual effects, their circulation, and the sociological characteristics of the participants. Another interesting direction would be to trace historical transformations in promotional self-presentation and the underlying ontologies (and their effects) with diachronically organized sets of data to see what, if anything, really changes in such processes of personhood, selfhood, and value.

Each genred interactional event that gives rise to value with some logic (e.g., by sieving persons into "normal" or "stigmatized," "ideal" or "non-ideal," "desirable" or "undesirable") simultaneously accelerates or decelerates evaluative inertias and entropies in particular ways on different time scales. From the standpoint of individuals, some such events might even turn out to be the kinds of landmark events discussed in 2.3.3 that gradually but radically transform persons and their trajectories through personspacetime or social terrains (e.g., various "baptismal" events, or "therapeutically" or "legally" revelatory events). Such unfoldings are at the heart of, for example, human well-being and harmony but present a challenge for empirical study. For instance, to sharpen the picture painted in this study of the role of "self-promotion" in such biographic processes, a more versatile set of data would be needed (e.g., earlier biographic accounts of the same writers, earlier drafts of online dating advertisements, interviews with writers, actual replies and e-mail correspondence, observation of first dates and unfolding relationships, later biographic accounts, etc.). Value also has distinct phenomenological qualities and shapes individual experiences (cf. e.g. affective vs. rational "positivity"). Value, then, has natural, cultural, and personal histories. To delve deeper into such distributed roots and fruits of value in terms of personal experiences, metastance relations, (in)coherences, transformations, inertias and entropies, a longitudinal, chain-like data in as ethnographically rich forms as possible would no doubt prove useful. Hopefully, this study has accelerated the circulation of useful theoretical instruments and also

empirically demonstrated some ways in which selves on the Internet can better care for the processes they are involved in and for the others who are co-involved in those processes.

# DATA SOURCES

Online dating advertisements:

111 advertisements in different categories (in terms of age, sex, type of relationship, etc.) from *Deitti.net* and the Finnish *Match.com* collected in 2007 (see section 3.2 for details).

Questionnaire:

Based on three different kinds of online dating advertisements and answered by 27 university students in 2014 (see section 3.2 and Appendix 2 for details).

Online dating guidebooks:

ND = *Nettideitit – Uusi onni verkosta?* ("Net dates – A new happiness from the web?"). Minni Niemelä & Pasi Malmi 2011. Helsinki: Tammi.
NE = *Nettideittailijan eloonjäämisopus* ("An online dater's survival guide"). Timo Peltonen & Pirjo Werkle 2006. Vantaa: Magentum.
SK = *Sinkkunaisen käsikirja* ("Guidebook for a single woman"). Viivi Avellan 2006. Helsinki: Tammi.

Internet forum discussions and articles with comment discussions:

IS (Oct 12, 2012) = "Keskustele, millaisia kokemuksia sinulla on nettitreffeistä?" (Discuss your experiences of online dates?).
[Short online article meant to stir discussion + readers' comments]
http://www.iltasanomat.fi/seksi-parisuhde/art-1288507119081.html [Sep, 2012]

IS (Oct 19, 2012) = "Lukija nettitreffeistä: 'Vastaan tulee tasan kahdenlaisia naisia' – Lue kokemukset!" (Reader on net dates: "You'll meet precisely two types of women" – Read about their experiences!')
[A report on a tv channel's questionnaire concerning online dating + online readers' comments]
http://www.iltasanomat.fi/seksi-parisuhde/art-1288508874773.html [Nov 5, 2013.]

IT (Oct 13, 2006) = "Viivin luokittelemaa" by Henry Laasanen in the blog *Ihmissuhteet ja tasa-arvo* (Human relations and equality). Oct. 13, 2006 [Blog entry + readers' comments.]
http://ihmissuhteet.blogspot.fi/2006/10/viivin-luokittelemaa.html [Sep 6, 2012.]

IS (Sep 22, 2006) = "Viivi lokeroi miehet" by Antti Hämäläinen in the national newspaper *Ilta-Sanomat*. [Newspaper article + online readers' comments]
http://www.iltasanomat.fi/viihde/art-1288338959172.html. [Sep. 6, 2012.]

KSS (Jun 23, 2012) = "Deitti-ilmoitus II" (Dating ad II) written by Janne Tammensalo in the Facebook group *Kielletyt sanat ja sanonnat* (Forbidden words and expressions) [A post in a Facebook group + members' comments]
https://www.facebook.com/groups/kielletytsanat/ [Sep, 2012.]

Plaza (Sep 9, 2008) = "match.com?" [A short forum discussion about the *Match.com* dating site, from which part of the advertisement text data was gathered]
http://keskustelu.plaza.fi/sinkut/loysin-hanet-netista/1730934/match-com/ [Sep, 2012] http://keskustelu.ellit.fi/threads/match-com.1730934/ [Oct 16, 2014.]

S24 (Jul 17, 2002) = "Deitti-ilmoitukset" [A discussion thread on the *Suomi24* forum in the "Relations/Singles" category about dating advertisements and the replies people have got]
http://keskustelu.suomi24.fi/node/221425 [Sep 13, 2013]

S24 (Jul 28, 2011) = "Miestyypit" (Types of men) [A discussion thread on the *Suomi24* forum in the "Relations/Singles" category about the categorization of men in the dating guidebook *Sinkkunaisen käsikirja* (SK)]
http://keskustelu.suomi24.fi/node/10019351 [Sep. 6, 2012.]

Vauva (Mar 23, 2013) = "Onko Suomi24 Treffit -palstalla ihan täysijärkisiä miehiä (30-40v)?" (Are there completely sane men (30–40 years old) on the Suomi24 dating site?) [A discussion thread on the forum of the *Vauva* magazine about the dating section of the *Suomi24* forum]
http://www.vauva.fi/keskustelu/1587997/ketju/onko_suomi24_treffit_pals talla_ihan_taysijarkisia_ [Sep, 2012.]

Television program:

*Parittomat* ("The Pairless"). YLE TV1, Oct 28, 2013. (YLE Kulttuuri ja viihde. Scriptwriter-directors: Kaisa Alenius, Lulu Salmi; Producer: Jouko Salokorpi.)

# REFERENCES


Agha, Asif 1995: Process and personality. *Semiotica* 107: 125–146.

Agha, Asif 1996: Schema and superposition in spatial deixis. *Anthropological Linguistics* 38 (4): 643–682.

Agha, Asif 1997a: Tropic aggression in the Clinton-Dole presidential debate. *Pragmatics* 7 (4): 643–682.

Agha, Asif 1997b: 'Concept' and 'communication' in evolutionary terms. *Semiotica* 116 (2): 189–215.

Agha, Asif 2005: Voice, footing, enregisterment. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15(1): 38–59.

Agha, Asif 2007a: *Language and social relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Agha, Asif 2007b: Recombinant selves in mass mediated spacetime. *Language & Communication* 27: 320–335.

Agha, Asif 2007c: The object called "language" and the subject of linguistics. *Journal of English Linguistics* 35 (3): 217–235.

Agha, Asif 2010: Recycling mediatized personae across participation frameworks. *Pragmatics and Society* 1(2): 311–319.

Agha, Asif 2011a: Commodity registers. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 21(1): 22–53.

Agha, Asif 2011b: Meet mediatization. *Language & Communication* 31: 163–170.

Agha, Asif 2011c: Large and small scale forms of personhood. *Language & Communication* 31: 171–180.

Agha, Asif 2012: Mediatized projects at State peripheries. *Language & Communication* 32: 98–101.

Alford, Richard 1988: *Naming and identity: a cross-cultural study of personal naming practices*. New Haven: HRAF Press.

Anderson, Douglas R. 2009: Peirce and Cartesian rationalism. In John R. Shook & Joseph Margolis (eds.) *A companion to pragmatism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Atkin, Albert 2010: Peirce's theory of signs. In Edward N. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 edition). http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/peirce-semiotics/.

Bakhtin, M. M. 1986: *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. (Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Translated by Vern W. McGee.) Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bamberg, Michael: Stories: Big or small. Why do we care? *Narrative Inquiry* 16 (1): 139–147.

Bargh, John & Katelyn McKenna & Grainne Fitzsimons 2002: Can you see the real me? Activation and expression of the "true self" on the Internet. *Journal of Social Issues* 58 (1): 33–48.

Basso, Keith 1990: To give up on words: Silence in Western Apache culture. In Donal Carbaugh (ed.) *Cultural communication and intercultural contact*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bauman, Richard 1983: *Let your words be few. Symbolism of speaking and silence among seventeenth-century Quakers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bauman, Richard 2000: Genre. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9(1–2): 84–87.

Bauman, Richard 2004: *A world of others' words. Cross-cultural perspectives on intertextuality*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Bauman, Richard & Charles Briggs 1990: Poetics and performance as critical perspectives on language and social life. *Annual review of anthropology* 19: 59–88.

Bauman, Richard & Charles Briggs 2003: *Voices of modernity. Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Benveniste, Émile 1971: *Problems in general linguistics*. Coral Gables: University of Miami Press.

Ben-Ze'ev, Aaron 2004: *Love Online. Emotions on the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bex, Tony 1996: *Variety in written English*. London: Routledge.

Bhatia, Vijay 2004: *Worlds of written discourse*. London: Continuum.

Blommaert, Jan 2007: Applied ethnopoetics. In Michael Bamberg (ed.) *Narrative – State of the art*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Brandom, Robert 1994: *Making it explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Briggs, Charles & Richard Bauman 1992: Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2 (2):131-172.

Bruner, Edward M. 1986: Experience and Its Expressions. In E. Bruner & V. Turner (eds.) *The Anthropology of experience*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Burke, Thomas F. 2013: *What pragmatism was*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Carlson, Lauri 1993: Dialogue Games with Finnish Clitics. In *SKY - Yearbook of the Linguistic Association of Finland 1993*. Turku: SKY.

Carr, E. Summerson 2010: Enactments of Expertise. *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 39: 17–32.

Carrithers, Michael 1985: An alternative social history of the self. In Michael Carrithers & Steven Collins & Steven Lukes (eds.) *The category of the person. Anthropology, philosophy, history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Catenaccio, Paola 2008: Press releases as a hybrid genre: Addressing the informative/promotional conundrum. *Pragmatics* 18: 9–31.

Colapietro, Vincent 1989: *Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Comrie, Bernard 1976: *Aspect*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cooley, Charles H. 1956 [1902]: *Human Nature and the Social Order*. (In: The Two Major Works of Charles H. Cooley.) Glencoe: The Free Press.

Cortazzi, Martin & Lixian Jin 1999: Evaluating Evaluation in Narrative. In Geoff Thompson & Susan Hunston (eds.) *Evaluation in Text. Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Coupland, Justine 1996: Dating advertisements: discourses of the commodified self. *Discourse & Society* 7: 187–207.

Coupland, Nikolas 2009: Dialect style, social class and metacultural performance: The pantomime Dame. In Nikolas Coupland & Adam Jaworski (eds.) *The New Sociolinguistics Reader*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

CP = *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. 1931–1958. Edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

De Fina, Anna & Alexandra Georgakopoulou 2008: Introduction: Narrative analysis in the shift from texts to practices. *Text & Talk* 28 (3): 275–281.

De Waal, Cornelis 2013: *Peirce. A guide for the perplexed*. London: Bloomsbury.

Damasio, Antonio 1999: *The Feeling of What Happens. Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. New York: Harcourt.

Daniel, Valentine E. 1984: *Fluid Signs. Being a Person the Tamil Way*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Daniel, Valentine E. 1989: The semeiosis of suicide in Sri Lanka. In Benjamin Lee & Greg Urban (eds.) *Semiotics, Self and Society*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Danziger, Kurt 2012: Historical psychology of persons: Categories and practice. In Jack Martin & Mark H. Bickhard (eds.) *The psychology of personhood: Philosophical, historical, social-developmental and narrative perspectives*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Deacon, Terrence W. 1997: *The Symbolic Species. The Co-evolution of Language and the Brain*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Deely, John 1990: *Basics of semiotics*. (Chapter 6: Physiosemiosis and phytosemiosis.) Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Devitt, Amy 2004: *Writing Genres*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dewey, John 1946: Peirce’s theory of linguistic signs, thought and meaning. *The Journal of Philosophy* XLIII (4): 85–95.

Dewey, John 2005 [1934]: *Art as Experience*. New York: Penguin Group.

Dumont, Louis 1986: *Essays on Individualism. Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Duranti, Alessandro 2010: Husserl, intersubjectivity and anthropology. *Anthropological Theory* 10 (1): 1–20.

Dutton, Edward 2009: *The Finnuit. Finnish Culture and the Religion of Uniqueness*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Enfield, Nick 2013: *Relationship thinking: Agency, enchrony, and human sociality*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Esposito, Joseph L. 1979: On the origins and foundations of Peirce’s semiotic. *Peirce Studies* 1: 19–24.

EP = *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Eronen, Maria 2015: *Rhetoric of Self-Expressions in Online Celebrity Gossip*. Vaasa: University of Vaasa.

Fairclough, Norman 2003: *Analysing Discourse. Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.

Foucault, Michel 2001: *Dits et écrits II*. Paris: Gallimard.

Frazer, James George 1998 [1890]: *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gell, Alfred 1998: *Art and agency. An anthropological theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Georgakopoulou, Alexandra 2003: Plotting the "right place" and the "right time": Place and time as interactional resources in narratives. *Narrative Inquiry* 13 (2): 413–432.

Georgakopoulou, Alexandra 2006: Small and large identities in narrative (inter)action. In Anna De Fina, Deborah Schiffrin & Michael Bamberg (eds.) *Discourse and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gerlander, Maija & Eeva Takala 1997: Relating electronically: Interpersonality in the net. *Nordicom Review* 18 (2): 77–81.

Giddens, Anthony 1991: *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Givón, Talmy 1980: The binding hierarchy and the typology of complements. *Studies in Language* 4 (3): 333–377.

Goodwin, Charles 1981: *Conversational Organization: Interaction Between Speakers and Hearers*. New York: Academic Press.

Goodwin, Charles 2003: Pointing as Situated Practice. In Sotaro Kita (ed.) *Pointing: Where Language, Culture and Cognition Meet*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Goffman, Erving 1981: *Forms of talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Goffman, Erving 1983: The interaction order. *American Sociological Review* 48 (1): 1–17.

Goffman, Erving 1990 [1959]: *The Presentation of self in everyday life*. London: Penguin Books.

Goffman, Erving 1990 [1963]: *Stigma. Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. London: Penguin Books.

Haakana, Markku & Laura Visapää 2005: Tuttu tv:stä – Fakta homman äänet keskustelun keinona. [The voices of the TV series "Fakta homma" as a resource in conversation.] In Markku Haakana & Jyrki Kalliokoski (eds.) *Referointi ja moniäänisyys*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

Hakulinen, Auli 1976: Liitepartikkelin *-han/-hän* syntaksia ja pragmatiikkaa. [On the syntax and pragmatics of the clitic particle *-han/-hän*.] In *Reports on Text Linguistics: Suomen kielen generatiivista lauseoppia 2*. Turku: Åbo Akademi Forskningsinstitut.

Hall, Stuart 1992: The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power. In Stuart Hall & Bram Gieben (eds.) *Formations of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Halliday, M.A.K. & Matthiessen, Christian 2004: *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Arnold.

Halmari, Helena & Tuija Virtanen 2005: Towards understanding modern persuasion. In Helena Halmari & Tuija Virtanen (eds.) *Persuasion across genres*. John Benjamins, Amsterdam.

Hanks, William F. 1992: The indexical ground of deictic reference. In Alessandro Duranti & Charles Goodwin (eds.) *Rethinking context. Language as an interactive phenomenon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hanks, William F. 1996: *Language and Communicative Practices*. Boulder: Westview Press, Inc.

Hanson, Rick & Richard Mendius 2009: *Buddha's Brain. The practical neuroscience of happiness, love & wisdom*. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.

Hanson, Rick 2013: *Hardwiring happiness: The practical science of reshaping your brain – and your life*. London: Rider.

Hardey, Michael 2002: Life beyond the screen: embodiment and identity through the Internet. *Sociological Review* 50: 570–585.

Hasan, Ruqaiya 1985: Part B. In M. A. K. Halliday & Ruqaiya Hasan: *Language, context and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective,* p. 50–116. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haviland, John B. 1996: Text from Talk in Tzotzil. In Michael Silverstein & Greg Urban (eds.) *Natural Histories of Discourse*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Haviland, John B. 2005: "Whorish Old Man" and "One (Animal) Gentleman": The Intertextual Construction of Enemies and Selves. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15(1): 81–94.

Heikkinen, Vesa 1999: *Ideologinen merkitys kriittisen tekstintutkimuksen teoriassa ja käytännössä*. [Ideological meaning in the theory and practice of critical discourse analysis.] Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

Heikkinen, Vesa & Mikko Lounela 2009: Uudenvuodenpuheen minä. [The "I" of presidential New Year's speeches.] In Vesa Heikkinen (ed.) *Kielen piirteet ja tekstilajit*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

Helasvuo, Marja-Liisa 2008: Minä ja muut. Puhujaviitteisyys ja kontekstuaalinen tulkinta. [I and others. Speaker-referentiality and contextual interpretation.] *Virittäjä* 112 (2): 186–206.

Heritage, John 2012: Epistemics in Action: Action Formation and Territories of Knowledge. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45 (1): 1–29.

Heritage, John 2013: Epistemics in Conversation. In Jack Sidnell & Tanya Stivers (eds.) *The Handbook of Conversation Analysis*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Higgins, Edward 1987: Self-discrepancy theory. *Psychological Review* 94 (3): 1120–1134.

Hill, Jane 2008: *The Everyday language of white racism*. Malden: Blackwell-Wiley.

Hoey, Michael 1983: *On the surface of discourse*. Nottingham: Department of English Studies University of Nottingham.

Hoey, Michael 2001: *Textual interaction. An Introduction to Written Discourse Analysis*. New York: Routledge.

Holappa, Anne 2011: Kulttuurisen skeema-analyysin mahdollisuudet digirakkauden tutkimisessa. [The possibilities of cultural scheme analysis in the study of digital love.] In Ulla Heinonen, Petri Saarikoski & Riikka Turtiainen (eds.) *Digirakkaus 2.0*. Turku: University of Turku.

Holappa, Anne 2014: Muodokas vai maitovalas? Ei-hoikka ruumiinrakenne suomalaisissa Internetin deittipalveluilmoituksissa. [Non-slender physique in Finnish online dating advertisements.] *J@rgonia* 12: 16–34.

Holmes, Janet 2004: Workplace narratives, professional identity and relational practice. In Anna De Fina, Deborah Schiffrin & Michael Bamberg (eds.) *Discourse and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hookaway, Christopher 2004: Truth, reality and convergence. In Cheryl Misak (ed.) *The Cambridge companion to Peirce*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hymes, Dell 1972: Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Life. In John Gumperz & Dell Hymes (eds.) *Directions in Sociolinguistics. The Ethnography of Communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.

Hämäläinen, Lasse 2012: Rekisteröityneiden käyttäjien nimet verkkopeliyhteisö Aapelissa. [The names of registered users in the online gaming community Aapeli.] Master's thesis. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Irvine, Judith 1989: When Talk Isn't Cheap: Language and Political Economy. *American Ethnologist* 16 (2): 248–267.

Irvine, Judith 1996: Shadow Conversations: The Indeterminancy of Participant Roles. In Michael Silverstein & Greg Urban (eds.) *Natural Histories of Discourse*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jakobson, Roman 1990 [1957]: Shifters and Verbal Categories. In Linda Waugh & Monique Monville-Burston (eds.) *On Language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

James, William 1950 [1890]: *The Principles of Psychology*. Vol. 1. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.

Jamieson, Kathleen 1975: Antecedent genre as rhetorical constraint. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (4): 406–415.

Kandel, Eric 1998: A New Intellectual Framework for Psychiatry. *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 155 (4): 457–469.

Kangasniemi, Heikki 1991: *Modal expressions in Finnish*. Studia Fennica Linguistica 2. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

Kauppinen, Anneli 1998: *Puhekuviot, tilanteen ja rakenteen liitto. Tutkimus kielen omaksumisesta ja suomen konditionaalista*. [A study of language acquisition and the Finnish conditional.] Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

Keane, Webb 2002: 'Sincerity, 'Modernity,' and the Protestants. *Cultural Anthropology* 17: 65–92.

Kerr, Elaine & Starr Hiltz 1982: *Computer mediated communication systems: Status and evaluation*. New York: Academic Press.

Kinnunen, Taina 2013: *Vahvat yksin, heikot sylityksin. Otteita suomalaisesta kosketuskulttuurista*. [Excerpts from the Finnish culture of touch.] Helsinki: Kirjapaja.

Kockelman, Paul 2004: Stance and subjectivity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 14 (2): 127–150.

Kockelman, Paul 2005: The semiotic stance. *Semiotica* 157 (1): 233–304.

Kockelman, Paul 2006a: Agent, person, subject, self. *Semiotica* 162 (1): 1–18.

Kockelman, Paul 2006b: Representations of the world: Memories, perceptions, beliefs, intentions, and plans. *Semiotica* 162 (1): 73–125.

Kockelman, Paul 2010: *Language, culture, and mind. Natural constructions and social kinds*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kockelman, Paul 2013a: *Agent, person, subject, self. A theory of ontology, interaction, and infrastructure*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kockelman, Paul 2013b: The anthropology of an equation. Sieves, spam filters, agentive algorithms, and ontologies of transformation. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3 (3): 33–61.

Kockelman, Paul & Anya Bernstein 2012: Semiotic technologies, temporal reckoning, and the portability of meaning. Or: Modern modes of temporality – just how abstract are they? *Anthropological Theory* 12 (3): 320–348.

Korobov, Neill & Justin Laplante 2013: Using Improprieties to Pursue Intimacy in Speed-dating Interactions. *Studies in Media and Communication* 1 (1): 15–33.

Labov, William & Joshua Waletzky 1967: Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. In June Helm (ed.) *Essays on the verbal and visual arts*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Labov, William 1997: Some Further Steps in Narrative Analysis. *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7 (1–4).

Laitinen, Lea 2006: Zero person in Finnish. A grammatical resource for construing human evidence. In Marja-Liisa Helasvuo & Lyle Campbell (eds.) *Grammar from the Human Perspective. Case, space and person in Finnish*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Larjavaara, Matti 2007: *Pragmasemantiikka*. [Pragma-semantics.] Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

Lawson, Helene M. & Kira Leck 2006: Dynamics of Internet dating. *Social Science Computer Review* 24 (2): 189-208.

Leaf, Murray J. 1989: Singer, Kant, and the semiotic self. In Benjamin Lee & Greg Urban (eds.) *Semiotics, Self and Society*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

LeDoux, Joseph 2003: *Synaptic Self: How Our Brains Become Who We Are*. New York: Penguin Putnam.

Lee, Benjamin 1997a: Metalanguages and subjectivities. In John Lucy (ed.) *Reflexive language. Reported speech and metapragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lee, Benjamin 1997b: *Talking heads. Language, metalanguage, and the semiotics of subjectivity*. London: Duke University Press.

Leech, Geoffrey & Michael Short 1981: *Style in fiction*. London: Longman.

Lehtonen, Heini 2015: *Tyylitellen. Nuorten kielelliset resurssit ja kielen sosiaalinen indeksisyys monietnisessä Helsingissä*. [The linguistic resources of adolescents and the social indexicality of language in multiethnic Helsinki.] Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Levinson, Stephen 1992 [1979]: Activity types and language. In Paul Drew & John Heritage (eds.) *Talk at work: Interaction in institutional settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Levinson, Stephen 1988: Putting linguistics on a proper footing: Explorations in Goffman's participation framework. In P. Drew & A. Wootton (eds.) *Goffman: Exploring the interaction order*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Linde, Charlotte 1993: *Life Stories. The Creation of Coherence*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lindström, Anna & Marja-Leena Sorjonen 2013: Affiliation in Conversation. In Jack Sidnell & Tanya Stivers (eds.) *The Handbook of Conversation Analysis*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Markus, Hazel & Paula Nurius 1986: Possible Selves. *American Psychologist* 41(9): 954–969.

Marshall, David P. 2010: The promotion and presentation of the self: celebrity as marker of presentational media. *Celebrity Studies* 1(1): 35–48.

Mauss, Marcel 1973 [1935]: Techniques of the Body. *Economy and Society* 2: 70–88.

Mauss, Marcel 1985 [1938]: A category of the human mind. In Michael Carrithers & Steven Collins & Steven Lukes (eds.) *The category of the person. Anthropology, philosophy, history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mead, George Herbert 1934: *Mind, Self, & Society. From the standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Edited by Charles W. Morris. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Mehan, Hugh 1996: The Construction of an LD Student: A Case Study in the Politics of Representation. In Michael Silverstein & Greg Urban (eds.) *Natural Histories of Discourse*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mertz, Elisabeth 2007: Semiotic Anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 36: 337–353.

Miller, Carolyn 1984: Genre as social action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70: 151–167.

Misak, Cheryl 2004: Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914). In Cheryl Misak (ed.) *The Cambridge companion to Peirce*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mishler, Elliot G. 2006: Narrative and identity: the double arrow of time. In Anna De Fina, Deborah Schiffrin & Michael Bamberg (eds.) *Discourse and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Muikku-Werner, Pirkko 2009: *Tositarkoituksella. Näkökulmia kontakti-ilmoituksiin*. [Perspectives on dating advertisements.] Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

Mäntynen, Anne & Susanna Shore 2014: What is meant by hybridity? An investigation of hybridity and related terms in genre studies. *Text & Talk* 34 (6): 737–758.

Määttä, Urho 2000: Kielitieteen emergenttinen metateoria. [Emergent metatheory in linguistics.] *Virittäjä* 104 (4): 498–517. English summary: http://www.kotikielenseura.fi/virittaja/hakemistot/jutut/1sum4_2000.html [Oct 14, 2014].

Nieminen, Tommi 2010: *Lajien synty: tekstilaji kielitieteen semioottisessa metateoriassa*. [Genre in the semiotic metatheory of linguistics.] Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

Ochs, Elinor & Lisa Capps 2001: *Living Narrative. Creating Lives in Everyday Storytelling*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Paavola, Sami & Kai Hakkarainen 2008: Pragmatistinen välittyneisyys uuden luomisen perustana. [Pragmatist mediation as the basis for invention.] In Erkki Kilpinen & Osmo Kivinen & Sami Pihlström (eds.) *Pragmatismi filosofiassa ja yhteiskuntatieteissä* [Pragmatism in philosophy and social sciences]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

Pallaskallio, Ritva 2013: Kertova tempus. Finiittiverbin aikamuodon valinta suomenkielisissä katastrofiuutisteksteissä 1860–2004. [Narrative usage of tense in Finnish disaster news texts 1860–2004.] Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Parmentier, Richard J. 1985a: Signs' place in medias res: Peirce's concept of semiotic mediation. In Elisabeth Mertz & Richard J. Parmentier (eds.) *Semiotic Mediation. Sociocultural and psychological perspectives*. Orlando: Academic Press.

Parmentier, Richard J. 1985b: Semiotic mediation: Ancestral genealogy and final interpretant. In Elisabeth Mertz & Richard J. Parmentier (eds.)

*Semiotic Mediation. Sociocultural and psychological perspectives*. Orlando: Academic Press.

Parmentier, Richard J. 1994: *Signs in society. Studies in semiotic anthropology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Peirce, Charles 1955: *Philosophical writings of Peirce*. Edited by Justus Buchler. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.

Peirce, Charles 1977: *Semiotics and Significs*. Edited by Charles Hardwick. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Peltola, Rea 2014: Subordination in purpose clauses. Variation of verb moods in Finnish and French. In Laura Visapää & Jyrki Kalliokoski & Helena Sorva (eds.) *Contexts of Subordination*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Perelman, Chaïm 2002: *L'empire rhétorique. Rhétorique et argumentation*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin.

Piers, Gerhart & Milton Singer 1971 [1953]: *Shame and guilt. A psychoanalytic and a cultural study*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Piippo, Irina 2012: *Viewing norms dialogically. An action-oriented approach to sociolinguistic metatheory*. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Popper, Karl 1972: *Objective knowledge: An evolutionary approach*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Pressman, Jon F. 1994: Pragmatics in the late twentieth century: Countering recent historiographic neglect. *Pragmatics* 4 (4): 461–489.

Putnam, Hilary 1975: The meaning of 'meaning'. In *Mind, Language and Reality. Philosophical Papers, vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Raevaara, Liisa 2015: Hyvä päivä olla *minä*, *mä* ja *meitsi* – minän vaihtelevat asemat ja identiteetit helsinkiläisnuorten puheessa. [A good day to be *minä* ("I"), *mä* ("I") and *meitsi* ("I") – The changing positions and identities of the self in the speech of adolescents from Helsinki]. In Marja-Leena Sorjonen, Anu Rouhikoski & Heini Lehtonen (eds.) *Helsingissä puhuttavat suomet. Kielen indeksisyys ja sosiaaliset identiteetit*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

Ransdell, Joseph 1986: On Peirce's Conception of the Iconic Sign. In Paul Bouissac & Michael Herzfeld & Roland Posner (eds.) *Iconicity: Essays on the Nature of Culture*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg verlag.

Ricoeur, Paul 1980: Narrative Time. *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1): 169–190.

Rogers, Carl 1951: *Client-centered therapy*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Rosaldo, Michelle 1982: The things we do with words: Ilongot speech acts and speech act theory in philosophy. *Language in Society* 11: 203–237.

Rosenthal, Sandra 2004: Peirce's pragmatic account of perception. In Cheryl Misak (ed.) *The Cambridge companion to Peirce*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sacks, Harvey & Emanuel Schegloff & Gail Jefferson 1974: A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language* 50(4): 696–735.

Sacks, Harvey 1985: On doing "being ordinary." In J. Maxwell Atkinson (ed.) *Structures of social action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sapir, Edward 1985 [1927]: Speech as a personality trait. In David Mandelbaum (ed.) *Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sapir, Edward 1985 [1927]: The unconscious patterning of behavior in society. In David Mandelbaum (ed.) *Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sapir, Edward 1985 [1931]: Custom. In David Mandelbaum (ed.) *Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sapir, Edward 1985 [1944]: Grading: A study in semantics. In David Mandelbaum (ed.) *Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Schegloff, Emanuel 1972: Notes on a Conversational Practice: Formulating Place. In Pier Paolo Giglioli (ed.) *Language and Social Context*. Hammondsworth: Penguin.

Schiffrin, Deborah 2006: From linguistic reference to social identity. In Anna De Fina, Deborah Schiffrin & Michael Bamberg (eds.) *Discourse and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schryer, Catherine 1999: Genre Time/Space: Chronotopic Strategies in the Experimental Article. *JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory* 19 (1): 81–89.

Schutz, Alfred 1967: *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Schwartz, Jeffrey 2003: *The Mind & The Brain. Neuroplasticity and the Power of Mental Force*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Scollon, Ron 1997: Handbills, tissues, and condoms: A site of engagement for the construction of identity in public discourse. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 1(1): 39–61.

Sebeok, Thomas A. 1988: *The sign & its masters*. Lanham: University Press of America.

Sebeok, Thomas A. 1989: Preface. In Benjamin Lee & Greg Urban (eds.) *Semiotics, Self and Society*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Semino, Elena 2007: Mind style twenty five years on. *Style* 41 (2): 135–173.

Shaw, Philip 2006: Evaluative language in evaluative and promotional genres. In G. Del Lungo et al. (eds.) *Variation in Business and Economics Discourse*. Rome: Officina Edizioni.

Shoaps, Robin 2002: 'Pray Earnestly': The Textual Construction of Personal Involvement in Pentecostal Prayer and Song". *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 12: 34–71.

Silverstein, Michael 1979: Language structure and linguistic ideology. In *The Elements: A parasession on linguistic units and levels*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.

Silverstein, Michael 1993: Metapragmatic discourse and metapragmatic function. In John Lucy (ed.) *Reflexive language. Reported speech and metapragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Silverstein, Michael 2000: Whorfianism and the linguistic imagination of nationality. In Paul Kroskrity (ed.) *Regimes of language*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Silverstein, Michael 2001: The limits of awareness. In Alessandro Duranti (ed.) *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*. Malden: Blackwell.

Silverstein, Michael 2003: Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life. *Language & Communication* 23: 193–229.

Silverstein, Michael 2005: Axes of Evals: Token versus Type Interdiscursivity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15 (1): 6–22.

Silverstein, Michael & Greg Urban (eds.) 1996: *Natural Histories of Discourse*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Singer, Milton 1984: *Man's glassy essence. Explorations in semiotic anthropology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Sjöblom, Paula 2004: *Toiminimen toimenkuva. Suomalaisen yritysnimistön rakenne ja funktiot*. [The structure and functions of Finnish company names.] Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

Skagestad, Peter 1999: Peirce's inkstand as an external embodiment of mind. *Transactions of the Charles Peirce Society* XXXV (3): 551–561.

Skagestad, Peter 2004: Peirce's semeiotic model of the mind. In Cheryl Misak (ed.) *The Cambridge companion to Peirce*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Solin, Anna 2006: Genre ja intertekstuaalisuus. [Genre and intertextuality.] In Anne Mäntynen, Susanna Shore & Anna Solin (eds.) *Genre – tekstilaji*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

Solin, Anna 2009: Kirjoittava minä yliopistojen opetusportfolioissa. [The writing "I" in academic teaching portfolios.] In Vesa Heikkinen (ed.) *Kielen piirteet ja tekstilajit*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

Stivers, Tanya & Nick Enfield & Stephen Levinson 2007: Person Reference in Interaction. In N. Enfield & T. Stivers (eds.) *Person Reference in Interaction: Linguistic, Cultural, and Social Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stivers, Tanya & Federico Rossano 2010: Mobilizing response. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 43 (1): 3–31.

Swales, John 1990: *Genre Analysis. English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swales, John 1998: *Other Floors, Other Voices: A Textography of a Small University Building*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Taylor, Charles 1989: *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thompson, Evan & Francisco Varela 2001: Radical embodiment: neural dynamics and consciousness. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 5 (10): 418–425.

Thompson, Geoff & Susan Hunston 1999: An Introduction. In Geoff Thompson & Susan Hunston (eds.) *Evaluation in Text. Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thurlow, Crispin 2007: Fabricating Youth: New-Media Discourse and the Technologization of Young People. In S. Johnson & E. Ensslin (eds.) *Language in the Media: Representations, Identities, Ideologies*. London: Continuum.

Trilling, Lionel 1972: *Sincerity and authenticity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Turkle, Sherry 1995: *Life on the screen: Identity in the age of the Internet*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Turner, Victor 1982: *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: PAJ Publications.

Urban, Greg 1989: The "I" of Discourse. In Benjamin Lee & Greg Urban (eds.) *Semiotics, Self and Society*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Urban, Greg 1991: *A Discourse-Centered Approach to Culture. Native South American Myths and Rituals*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Urban, Greg 2001: *Metaculture. How culture moves through the world*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Urban, Greg & Benjamin Lee 1989: Introduction. In Benjamin Lee & Greg Urban (eds.) *Semiotics, Self and Society*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Urciuoli, Bonnie 2008: Skills and selves in the new workplace. *American Ethnologist* 35(2): 211–228.

Vaish, Amrisha & Tobias Grossmann & Amanda Woodward 2008: Not All Emotions Are Created Equal: The Negativity Bias in Social-Emotional Development. *Psychological Bulletin* 134 (3): 383–403.

Vatanen, Anna 2014: *Responding in overlap. Agency, epistemicity and social action in conversation*. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Verhagen, Arie 2010: Construal and Perspectivization. In *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vilkuna, Maria 1984: Voiko *kin*-partikkelia ymmärtää? [Can the particle *kin* be understood?] *Virittäjä* 88 (4): 393–408.

Visakko, Tomi & Eero Voutilainen 2012: Aprillipila tekstilajina. [April Fools as a genre.] In Vesa Heikkinen, Petri Lauerma, Mikko Lounela, Ulla Tiililä & Eero Voutilainen (eds.) *Genreanalyysi: tekstilajitutkimuksen käytäntöä*. Helsinki: Kotimaisten kielten keskus.

Visapää, Laura & Jyrki Kalliokoski & Helena Sorva (eds.) 2014: *Contexts of Subordination*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

VISK = Auli Hakulinen & Maria Vilkuna & Riitta Korhonen & Vesa Koivisto & Tarja Riitta Heinonen & Irja Alho 2004: *Iso suomen kielioppi* [An extensive descriptive grammar of Finnish]. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (SKS). Online edition: scripta.kotus.fi/visk/

W3 = *The Writings of Charles S. Peirce*. Volume 3. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Wallace, Anthony & Raymond Fogelson 1965: The Identity Struggle. In I. Boszormenyi-Nagy & J. Framo (eds.) *Intensive Family Therapy*. Hagerstown, MD: Harper & Row.

Wernick, Andrew 1991: *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression*. London: Sage.

Wertsch, James V. 1985: The semiotic mediation of mental life: L. S. Vygotsky and M. M. Bakhtin. In Elisabeth Mertz & Richard J. Parmentier (eds.) *Semiotic Mediation. Sociocultural and psychological perspectives*. Orlando: Academic Press.

Whitty, Monica 2008: Revealing the ‘real’ me, searching for the ‘actual’ you: Presentations of self on an Internet dating site. *Computers in Human Behavior* 24 (4): 1707–1723.

Wilce, James M. (ed.) 2003: *Social and Cultural Lives of Immune Systems*. Theory and Practice in Medical Anthropology and International Health. New York: Routledge.

Wilce, James M. 2009a: *Language and Emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wilce, James M. 2009b: *Crying Shame. Metaculture, Modernity and the Exaggerated Death of Lament*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Wogan, Peter 2004: *Magical writing in Salasaca. Literacy and power in highland Ecuador*. Westview case studies in anthropology. Boulder: Westview Press.

Wortham, Stanton 2005: Socialization beyond the Speech Event. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15 (1): 95–112.

Wortham, Stanton & Vivian Gadsden 2006: Urban fathers positioning themselves through narrative: an approach to narrative self-construction. In Anna De Fina, Deborah Schiffrin & Michael Bamberg (eds.) *Discourse and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ylikoski, Petri 2001: *Understanding Interests and Causal Explanation*. Academic dissertation. Department of Moral and Social Philosophy. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Östman, Jan-Ola 1999: Coherence through Understanding through Discourse Patterns: Focus on News Reports. In Wolfram Bublitz, Uta Lenk & Eija Ventola (eds.) *Coherence in Spoken and Written Discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Östman, Jan-Ola 2005: Persuasion as implicit anchoring. In Helena Halmari & Tuija Virtanen (eds.) *Persuasion across genres*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

# APPENDIX 1: GLOSSING ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

Glossing

| | |
|---|---|
| = | clitic boundary |
| 1SG, 1PL | 1st person singular, 1st person plural, etc. |
| ABBR | abbreviation |
| ABL | ablative case |
| ACC | accusative case |
| ADE | adessive case |
| ADV | adverb(ial) |
| ARCH | archaic sounding |
| CTP | complement-taking predicate |
| COLL | colloquial variant |
| COND | conditional mood |
| COMP | comparative |
| ELA | elative case |
| FEM | feminine gender |
| FREQ | frequentative |
| GEN | genitive case |
| ILL | illative case |
| IND | indicative mood |
| INE | inessive case |
| INF | infinitive |
| IMP | imperative mood |
| LAT | lative |
| NEG | negative verb; connegative form |
| NOM | nominative case |
| NP | noun phrase |
| PASS | passive voice (or “fourth person,” impersonal) |
| PASS(1PL) | passive morphosyntax used as 1PL |
| PEJ | pejorative |
| PERF | perfect tense |
| POSS | possessive suffix |
| PP | past participle |
| PRF | perfective aspect |
| PROG | progressive aspect |
| PRS | present tense |
| PST | past tense |
| PTCL | particle |
| PTCP | participle |
| PTV | partitive case |
| Q | interrogative clitic particle; question |

| | |
|---|---|
| REL | relative pronoun |
| VP | verb phrase |

Transcription

| | |
|---|---|
| . | falling intonation |
| , | level intonation |
| ↑ | rise in pitch |
| ↓ | fall in pitch |
| sp<u>e</u>ak | emphasis |
| spea:k | sound lengthening |
| #speak# | creaky voice |
| [ | beginning of overlap |
| ] | end of overlap |
| (.) | micropause (less than 0.2 seconds) |
| + | point of gaze or gesture |

# APPENDIX 2: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Original Finnish version [The layout has been compressed here]

Kyselyn tarkoituksena on selvittää, millaisia vaikutelmia tekstit herättävät kirjoittajan mielenliikkeistä. Millainen tunnelma tekstistä välittyy? Miten tekstin eri piirteet mielestäsi ilmentävät esimerkiksi kirjoittajan ajattelun kulkua tai tunnetiloja?

Luettavana on kolme deitti-ilmoitusta. (1) Lue kukin teksti niin kuin lukisit sen vastaavassa aidossa tilanteessa. (2) Nimeä sen jälkeen korkeintaan kolme selkeintä tekstin synnyttämää vaikutelmaa, ja arvioi kunkin vaikutelman voimakkuus. Yritä nimetä vaikutelmat ytimekkäästi tavalla, joka vastaa mahdollisimman hyvin omaa subjektiivista kokemustasi. Nimitysten ei tarvitse olla millään muulla tavalla täsmällisiä tai korrekteja. Kirjaa vain todelliset vaikutelmasi, jos sellaisia syntyy. Ei siis tarvitse keksimällä keksiä! Myös neutraalit vaikutelmat ovat todellisia vaikutelmia. (3) Perustele lopuksi tiiviisti, mihin tulkintasi perustuu. Tarkoitus ei ole ryhtyä analysoimaan tekstejä sinänsä vaan kuvailla intuitiiviset vaikutelmat ja kytkeä ne konkreettisesti tekstiin.

Vastaajan **taustatiedot**: mies / nainen Ikä:______

Teksti 3.

Kaikkea ei pidä kokeilla, mutta monia asioita kyllä:) [nainen etsii miestä, nimim. mape1975]
Nää kerro itestäs jutut on aina vaikeita,,,ainakaan valokuvissa en tykkää olla yksin, jos ollenkaan. Tuokin kuva on muutaman vuoden takaa kun kaveri sai jotenkin puhuttua ittellensä meikkimalliks valmistuessaan maskeeraajaks, joten maskaran määrä on siks aika suuri:) Avoeron olen kokenut tuossa vuosi sitten ja nyt vaan alkaa sosiaalinen elämä kiinnostaa uudelleen,,,aattelin kokeilla sit tällastakin kun ei tule niin usein tuolla baareissa pyörittyä. Kavereitten kanssa tykkään kyllä iltaa viettää ” syöpötellen ja juopotellen”:). Kotisohva ei myöskään oo pöllömpi tapa viettää aikaa ja siinä kai tulee töitten jälkeen ihan mukavasti aikaa vietettyäkin, vaikka virtapiikkejäkin tulee ja pidän kuntoilustakin kävellen, rullaluistellen jne. olen avoin kaikelle liikunnalle. Murteesta huomaa että itä-suomen kasvatteja oon, vaikka oon ollu sieltä pois 10 vuotta, asustellu Tampesterissä, Kreikassakin käyny pyörähtämässä (ei,,,ei Jorgoksen perässä, töitten:) ja nyt sitten 4 vuotta täälä Helsingissä. Mie tykkään nauramisesta,,,saatan heittää aika hurttiakin huumoria, vähän sellanen räväkänpuoleinen varmaan,,,joten ehkä se on parempi että toinenkaan osapuoli ei ainakaan hirrrvn ujo ole ( vaikka sekin voi olla söpöä) huumorintaju ja itseironismi on aina plussaa! Mie osaan kyllä ujostellakkin, varsinkin sillon kun jostakin kiinnostun, se on aika persiistä:) Jos kiinnostuit ja olet suhteelllisen normaali kaikin puolin, eli olet muuttanut kotoa pois ja työpaikallekkin on raahauduttava, otappa yhteyksiä:) Vaikeeta sanoo jotain fiksua ja kiinnostavaa tähän loppuun, joten mie sanon vaan Hellurei!

| 1. Nimeä vaikutelma | Mitkä kielelliset tai kontekstuaaliset seikat tukevat tulkintaasi? Merkitse ne tekstiin suoralla viivalla ja perustele tähän omin sanoin. |
|---|---|
| | |

Arvioi vaikutelman vahvuus: [heikko] 1 2 3 4 5 [vahva]

| 2. Nimeä vaikutelma | Mitkä kielelliset tai kontekstuaaliset seikat tukevat tulkintaasi? Merkitse ne tekstiin aaltoviivalla ja perustele tähän omin sanoin. |
|---|---|
| | |

Arvioi vaikutelman vahvuus: [heikko] 1 2 3 4 5 [vahva]

| 3. Nimeä vaikutelma | Mitkä kielelliset tai kontekstuaaliset seikat tukevat tulkintaasi? Merkitse ne tekstiin katkoviivalla ja perustele tähän omin sanoin. |
|---|---|
| | |

Arvioi vaikutelman vahvuus: [heikko] 1 2 3 4 5 [vahva]

English translation [The layout has been compressed here]

The aim of the questionnaire is to find out what kinds of impressions of the writer's frame of mind the texts raise. What kind of mood is conveyed by the text? How do different features of the text in your opinion manifest, for example, the writer's train of thought or emotional states?

You have three dating advertisements to read. (1) Read each text like you would in a similar actual situation. (2) After that, name at most three of the clearest impressions that the text gives rise to and rate the strength of each impression. Try to name the impressions concisely in a way that corresponds best with your own subjective experience. The expressions need not be precise or correct in any other way. Only write down your real impressions, if any arise. No need to make up any! Neutral impressions are real impressions too. (3) Finally, explain compactly what your interpretation is based on. The purpose is not to analyze the texts as such but to describe your intuitive impressions and to link them concretely to the text.

**Background information** about the respondent: male / female Age:______

| 1. Name the impression | Which linguistic or contextual factors support your interpretation? Mark them in the text with a straight line and give your reasons here in your own words. |
|---|---|
| | |

Rate the strength of the impression: [weak] 1 2 3 4 5 [strong]

| 2. Name the impression | Which linguistic or contextual factors support your interpretation? Mark them in the text with a wavy line and give your reasons here in your own words. |
| --- | --- |
| | |

Rate the strength of the impression: [weak] 1 2 3 4 5 [strong]

| Name the impression | Which linguistic or contextual factors support your interpretation? Mark them in the text with a dash line and give your reasons here in your own words. |
| --- | --- |
| | |

Rate the strength of the impression: [weak] 1 2 3 4 5 [strong]