

## The functionality of personal pronouns in constructions of communities

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**Abstract:** Within recent research in identity it is a common view that communities and identities connected to these are not given by nature, but are constructed socially between human beings through acts and speech. By way of certain linguistic choices, a variety of communities with different identities are constructed or reproduced. Specific lexical and functional items are used for this purpose, consciously and unconsciously. One such item is the personal pronoun. The aim of this paper is to illustrate how personal pronouns contribute to the construction of communities and attached identities. By way of example, the paper provides a qualitative analysis of data extracts taken from a Danish magazine with the aim of illustrating how this pronoun in interaction with other text elements and the context constructs communities and identities with a particular purpose.

**Keywords:** communities, discourse analysis, identity construction, personal pronouns.

### 1. Introduction

Personal pronouns have referents, but not all forms of personal pronouns are equally simple with respect to their referents. While the reference of the singular first- and second-person pronouns is very simple as the referents are normally the speaker and the addressee, the reference of especially the plural first-person pronouns is more complex. It is a well-known fact that *we* has an inclusive as well as an exclusive use, as seen in (1) and (2) – a difference in reference which is marked linguistically in several languages (see for example Bennett 2002: 67, Benveniste 1971: 201 and Lyons 1968: 277). However, some languages, like English for instance, do not linguistically encode this difference:

- (1) Come on, we are leaving now.
- (2) We are fine. How about you?

Furthermore, there are also examples in which the referent of the plural first-person pronoun, apart from the speaker (and possibly the addressee), includes individuals beyond the situation. This is the case in (3), an example from Danish:

- (3) Det er jo det land, vi danskere har det tætteste bånd til. Det er et helt særligt bånd. Vi føler, at vi kender deres kultur, deres politikere og deres produkter. De er en del af vores hverdag.<sup>1</sup>

*It is the country [USA] to which [we] the Danes are most closely attached. It is an attachment of a very special kind. We feel that we know their culture, their politicians and their products. They are a part of our everyday life.*

Whereas (1) and (2) are purely deictic constructions, this is not the case in (3), as it does not only point to referents in the situation. Instead, this type has as its referent an entire category, *the Danes*, which includes the speaker, the addressee and the rest of the Danes. In (3), the nominal complement

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<sup>1</sup> This example is taken from a Danish news website: <http://nyhederne.tv2.dk/article.php/id-59784531:feststemt-s%F8ren-pind-som-en-god-fodboldkamp.html?rss>. This and other examples in the article are translated from Danish. Some of the examples do not contain a personal pronoun in the English translation. In these cases a personal pronoun in square brackets indicates that there is a personal pronoun in the original Danish example.

constructs the category of Danes in the utterance, the pronoun includes the speaker and the addressee in this referent, and the rest of the sentence ascribes the category identity. While national categories such as *the Danes* are not "new" categories, but reproduced in a context, other categories are constructed on occasion ("those people who..."). The personal pronoun is a discursive device and interacts, as (3) illustrates, with other elements in the co- and context in constructions of communities and identities. Probably, this sometimes happens unconsciously, but other times it seems to be part of a more conscious strategy.

The aim of this article is to illustrate how personal pronouns contribute to the construction of communities and identities and serve a particular purpose in interaction with other elements in context. Obvious examples of communities which are very often reproduced and ascribed particular identities are those of gender, *men* and *women*. By way of example, the article presents a discourse analysis of data extracts taken from the Danish magazine *ALT for damerne* ("All for the ladies"). The analysis centers on the textual level and aims at unfolding the use of personal pronouns in the construction of different female communities.

## 2. Communities and identities

Anderson (1983, 1991) examined the creation and global spread of "imagined communities" of nationality. According to Anderson (1991: 6), "the nation is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". The term "imagined communities" was coined to specifically talk about nationalism, but it is now used more broadly to talk about other communities than nations to refer to the idea of having a common identity, whether this is based on for example nationality, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. The idea of a common identity is not only related to oneself, i.e. identifying oneself with a specific group, but also to other individuals, i.e. constructing identity for other people. It goes without saying that this way of thinking contributes to stereotyping, and as Hall (1997: 258) puts it, "stereotyping facilitates the 'binding' or bonding together of all Us who are 'normal' into one 'imagined community'; and it sends into symbolic exit all Them – the 'Others' – who are in some way different". The ways in which communities and attached identities are represented in society have implications for how individuals are met on different occasions. Fixed images of certain communities maintain people in static roles and contribute to the creation of particular expectations of members of the (imagined) communities. Since language is one of the ways to construct and reproduce communities and identities, it is important to uncover its role. At a general level, this is what discourse analysts do.

Most recent research in sociolinguistics, social psychology and cultural studies is based on a constructionist view on identity: rather than being reflected in discourse, identity is constructed in discourse (see for example De Fina et al. 2006 and Benwell & Stokoe 2006). According to this view, people assume or are imposed different identities on different occasions in alignment with the specific situation (for example as a man, an Englishman, a Muslim, etc.). In this view, identity is not static. This view on identity is in contrast to more traditional views on identity that conceive of it as something fixed which belongs to the individual. This article follows the idea that discursive constructions of identity have a strong impact in society both at a macro level and at a micro level, and it aims at contributing to uncovering their role. The view on identity presented here does not reject the existence of self-identity, such as for example individuals' feeling of belonging to different groups, but as Clark (2013: 7) argues, "Although there is no doubt that each of us is a unique human being with our own thoughts and personal identities, this is only part of the story. Identity is as much a social and cultural phenomenon as an internal and psychological one". And language does not mirror an independent object world but constructs and constitutes it (see Barker & Galasinski 2001: 1).

As De Fina (2006: 351) has observed, we have seen a growing interdisciplinary interest in the

field of formation, negotiation, and development of identities. For discourse analysts and sociolinguists the challenge has been to show not only the centrality of the role of language in the construction and transmission of identities, but also the concrete forms in which and through which language practices index such identities. It goes without saying that the personal pronoun is just one of many discursive devices which contribute to identity construction.

Some social psychologists also consider the relevance of language and discourse in their approach to identity. According to Potter & Wetherell (1987), categorization is an important and pervasive part of people's discourse. For example, many stories in newspapers will concern people who are described, evaluated and understood not in terms of any unique features of their biography but through their category membership (Potter & Wetherell 1987: 116). This is consistent with the point made above that identities are attached to communities, in terms of specific attributes or properties. Another example from social psychology is Davies & Harré (1990) who also emphasized the role of language in the construction of identity when introducing the concept of *positioning* to denote the discursive production of selves.

In Antaki & Widdicombe (1998a), different scholars drawing on ethnomethodology and conversation analysis argue that identities are constructed 'live' in the exchange of talks. Antaki & Widdicombe (1998b: 3) list several points which they find central to an ethnomethodological, and more specifically a conversation-analytic, attitude to analyzing identity, two of them being the following: "for a person to 'have an identity' – whether he or she is the person speaking, being spoken to, or being spoken about – is to be cast into a *category with associated characteristics or features*" and "it [such casting] *makes relevant* the identity to the interactional business going on" [italics in original].

One of the contributions to Antaki & Widdicombe (1998a) is Zimmerman (1998), who marks a distinction between *discourse identities*, *situational identities* and *transportable identities*. Whereas discourse identities are not related to a specific situation or person and can shift turn by turn in an interaction (e.g. the current speaker, listener, questioner and answerer), situated identities come into play within the precincts of particular types of situations (e.g. identities as teacher and student in an educational context). Transportable identities travel with individuals across situations and are potentially relevant in a situation, such as gender or ethnic identities (Zimmerman 1998: 90-95).

To access the specific discourse-linguistic approach further, it is relevant to involve van Dijk (2006) in which he conducts a discourse-analytic study of ideology that provides tools for analyzing more than pure ideology. According to van Dijk (2006: 116), ideologies are belief systems shared by specific groups, typically in relation to other groups, e.g. one political ideology as opposed to another; *ingroups* and *outgroups*. Group members use discursive structures and strategies to express their ideology via positive self-reference as well as negative other-reference (van Dijk 2006: 124-125). A speaker speaks *as* a member of a group, and/or addresses the recipient *as* a group member. One of van Dijk's specific linguistic examples is the personal pronoun *we*, which is typically used to deictically refer to the ingroup of the current speaker. Nevertheless, not all collectivities are ideological. Van Dijk (2006: 120) applies the term *social categories* to such collectivities, examples of which are gender or ethnicity groups. As I will explain, his theory on discursive structures, by, for example, means of the personal pronoun, is also useful in relation to discourses which include these kinds of communities.

Construction of identity in discourse subsumes three possible processes: 1) construction of an entirely new community ("those people who..."), 2) reproduction of an already constructed community (i.e. making the community relevant), or 3) ascription of some specific attributes to a community (typically but not always by reproduction). With regard to gender, for example, the (imagined) communities *men* and *women* are already constructed, and a lot of attributes have been ascribed to both during history.

In the analysis of the personal pronouns in *ALT for damerne* in section 5, I will use the discursive approach to identity presented in this section to show how the use of personal pronouns contributes to constructing different communities based on female identities, how this happens in interaction with other text elements and the context (that is, the text itself, the profile of the magazine in question, and the social context), and uncover the purpose with which the communities and identities are constructed. To this purpose, it is relevant to determine the communication situation.

### 3. The communication situation

I begin by describing the magazine which has provided the textual material that my analysis is based on. *ALT for damerne* is a Danish magazine published by Egmont Magazines. On the website of Egmont Magazines, the chief editor presents the magazine as follows:

ALT for damerne bringer interviews, der går i dybden, og tager de emner op, der angår dig og din hverdag. Viser tendenserne i moden med tøj, du faktisk kan gå i, og giver masser af idéer til din bolig. Vi holder dig opdateret omkring skønhed, sundhed og motion, og giver inspiration til spændende hverdagsmad. De nyeste film, bøger og musiktilbud kan du naturligvis også læse om. Hver eneste uge.<sup>2</sup>

*ALT for damerne includes in-depth interviews about subjects with relevance to you and your everyday life. We present trends in fashion with clothes that you can actually wear and give lots of ideas for your home. We keep you updated on beauty, health and exercise, and give you inspiration for exciting everyday food. You can, of course, also read about the newest films, books and music. Every week.*

The title of the magazine explicitly says that it is directed at women – and this includes all women due to the definite plural form *damerne*. The presentation of the magazine and the title together construct women as a community whose areas of interest include fashion, clothes, homes, health and food, which consequently form part of a female identity.

Every act of communication forms part of a larger context. In this case, the context is primarily the Danish society, but it also includes the international one, seeing that we live in a globalized world today with a lot of influence from different parts of the world. The image of women that *ALT for damerne* reflects is a stereotypical image of women that already exists in society.

The sender of the magazine can be understood in several ways: in a very broad sense as the owner or director of the magazine, as the editorial board/the chief editor, and more concretely the writers of the magazine issue in question. In the article, I use *speaker* to refer to the concrete writer of the magazine. The addressee is the reader, who can be placed in a continuum between the one who buys the magazine every week, and a casual reader (such as for example someone who normally does not buy it, but who reads it at the dentist's or the doctor's). The intended reader is a woman. By its way of explicitly addressing the one gender, the magazine takes as its point of departure an already discursively established difference between the sexes and thereby assumes that their readers identify with this image.

The communicative purpose of the magazine is to maintain or arouse the interest of the addressee with the final aim of reaching as many buyers as possible. This will influence in every part of the magazine, i.e. the organization of the magazine (content, sections, etc.) as well as the way in which the text is written (choice of words, the way of addressing, etc.). This is the point of departure of the content, the language, and the discourse of the magazine. Nevertheless, this article

<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://www.egmontpublishing.dk/Forretningsomrader/Magasiner-og-ugeblade/ALT-for-damerne/>.

concentrates on primarily one linguistic element which contributes to the general aim of the magazine: personal pronouns. Before getting to the analysis of its use in the magazine, it is relevant to go into more detail with this item.

#### 4. Personal pronouns

The speaker and the addressee of a communication situation are often marked linguistically by the first- and second-person pronouns. As already mentioned, the reference of the singular first- and second-person pronouns is very simple as the referents are normally the speaker and the addressee, whereas the reference of especially the plural first-person pronouns is more complex. Conventional typological studies have arranged personal pronouns into tables and used the terms 'first', 'second' and 'third person', and 'singular' and 'plural number'. According to Goddard (1995: 99), it has been long recognized that, from a semantic point of view, the conventional categories leave something to be desired. Referring to Jespersen (1933: 204) and Lyons (1968: 277), Goddard (1995: 99) points to the fact that "the term 'plural' is not used in a clear and consistent way: *you<sub>pl</sub>* may perhaps represent a plurality of *you* s, but *we* does not present a plurality of *I* s". With the intention to provide a semantic description which extends beyond a merely typological description, Goddard (1995) provides a cross-linguistic analysis of pronominal systems from within the Natural Semantic Metalanguage framework (NSM). While I will not provide a detailed description of Goddard's suggestions in terms of NSM, I will highlight some important observations about *we* compared to *I*: The meaning structure of *we* has more complex referential presuppositions than *I*. *I* does not imply that the addressee has to do some work to figure out who is meant; it is a pure index. *We* at least invites the addressee to think of who else than *I* is being talked about (Goddard: 1995: 107). Depending on the context, *we* includes or excludes the addressee, and can refer to two or more persons. Another relevant point of Goddard's (1995: 107), referring to Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990), is that *we* constitutes a metalinguistic act of 'same-saying', by which one applies the same proposition to a set of people one has in mind, one of whom is oneself. In (3)-(5) the set of people are the Danes/women/men, one of whom is the speaker him-/herself. In these examples the set of people – the community constructed and referred to – is marked linguistically by a noun.

- (4) Sp: Han kommer også med 'signaler' om, at han godt kan lide mig, men han gør bare ikke så meget ved det. Jeg synes, at jeg har serveret mig selv, rimelig mange gange, på et sølvfad, og jeg har været lige til at plukke. Men der sker ikke så meget. Sv: Jeg genkender noget der, og noget siger mig, at det er en ret typisk kvindeting dette her med at have 'serveret sig selv på et sølvfad'. Vi kvinder har en tendens til at synes, at vi er meget tydelige i vores kropssprog og vores signaler. Desværre bliver det ikke opfattet helt så tydeligtovre hos det andet køn.<sup>3</sup>

*Q: He has also 'signaled' that he likes me, but he doesn't really act. I believe that I have served myself on a silver platter on a number of occasions, and he could just have picked me. But nothing much happens. A: I recognize something there, and it seems to me that this is a typical women's issue, 'serving oneself on a silver platter'. [We] women seem to think that our body language and signals are very clear. Unfortunately, this is not how it is perceived from the perspective of the opposite sex.*

- (5) Vi mænd er ikke for gode til at forkæle os selv. Vi sætter kærestens, konens, familiens og alle mulige andres behov foran vores egne. Det skal vi have lavet om på! Derfor har vi mænd her på redaktionen fundet 5 gode grunde til at begynde at forkæle os selv.<sup>4</sup>

3 This example is taken from the Danish tabloid newspaper BT: <http://m.bt.dk/f/?article=21804486-Brevkassen-Hvordan-faar-jeg-fat-i-ham>.

4 This example is taken from a website whose stated purpose is to address young people about relevant topics:

*[We] Men are not good at spoiling ourselves. We put the needs of our girlfriend, our wife, our family and everybody else before our own. We have to change that! This is why we [men], at the editorial board, have come up with 5 good reasons for spoiling ourselves.*

Example (4) includes a reply in an agony column to the problem presented in the first part of the example. In this example, the speaker, a woman just like the questioner, makes the category *women* relevant and thus constructs a community to which they both belong. Doing this, she obtains two things: she provides an explanation of the perceived problem by saying that it is due to differences of gender, and she demonstrates comprehension by signaling that she herself knows what it is to be a woman. The construction of a female identity is emphasized by differentiation from the male category, as this is also ascribed a characteristic in the text. The phenomenon can be described within van Dijk's (2006) framework: the speaker speaks as a member of a group, and she addresses the recipient as another member of the same group – this way, she creates an ingroup. She also creates an outgroup: the opposite sex (although in this example not a negative one, just a different one). Example (5) is an introductory text to an advertisement for five products (in the text presented as "5 good reasons"). The phrase *vi mænd* ("we men") also constructs a community to which both the speaker and the addressee belong, and the rest of the sentence and the next one describe this group as one who neglects their own needs, a kind of a sacrifice. In this example, the aim of constructing a community with a common identity is obviously commercial, the aim being to urge men to allow themselves to buy "men's stuff". In this example, an explicit opposition between men and women is not made, but, as they are the only categories of the general category *gender*, it can be inferred that what is said about men specifically is not a characteristic of women.

The inclusive use of the plural first-person pronoun is a widespread phenomenon in different contexts; the context in (5), for example, is a commercial one, as the text is an advertisement. Bennett (2002: 67) points to the fact that politicians are among the many people who use it in an inclusive sense to foster some kind of identification of interest between speakers and addressees. Svennevig et al. (2002: 181) make the same point with reference to the Norwegian king and the Norwegian prime minister, who in their New Year's speeches to the Norwegian people apply *vi* (*we*) with the aim of constructing a feeling of national community and erasing oppositions of interests. According to Lozano Domingo (1995: 243), so-called women's magazines apply different strategies to get close to the reader, and these are primarily based on inclusion and have as their goal making the reader recognize herself in the text. The magazines try to erase the boundaries between the roles of the editor and the reader, and instead insist on the shared quality of womanliness: a shared female identity. One of these strategies is the use of personal pronouns. Not only is the plural first-person used with the aim of getting close to the reader, the singular second-person pronoun is also used with this aim. As pointed out by Svennevig et al. (1995: 182), the direct addressing by means of the singular second-person pronoun in mass communication is adopted from personal face-to-face communication and indicates closeness between the participants.<sup>5</sup>

In many cases, a community referred to by plural first-person is designated by a subsequent noun, as in (3)-(5), but this is not always the case. In (6), an example from Gustafsson (2013: 4) from Spanish, there is no such noun:

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<http://ungunivers.dk/hygge/maend-forkael-jer-selv>.

5 Dillon (2012) analyses the phraseology adopted by so-called women's magazines in Argentina during the 1990s, based on two cases that embody different approaches: a traditional one and a more feminist-oriented approach. The analysis focuses on personal pronouns, among other things, and one result is that there are almost twice as many first- and second-person pronouns in the traditional magazine as in the other one. According to Dillon (2012: 9), this indicates that the traditional magazine is more distant from an objective journalistic style, as first- and second-person pronouns normally do not belong in this style.

- (6) Vaya tarde que pasé ayer. Vi el partido completo en directo, y estuvimos fatales. ¡Pero qué mal jugamos! Con razón perdimos.

*What an afternoon yesterday. I watched the football match live and we played so badly. What a bad performance! We lost for a good reason.*

Despite the omission of the noun, it is easy to grasp that a community is constructed here to which the plural first-person refers. The community is a national (or a more local) one, which the football team represents, and with which the speaker identifies. Gustafsson (2013) suggests the terms *unauthentic deixis* or *parasitic deixis* to refer to the phenomenon that the plural first-person pronoun becomes naturalized as an ontological and not an ideological fact.<sup>6</sup> It is, however, an ideological fact, as the mechanism is not based on a situational *we* (the speaker is not part of the football players despite of the expression *we played*), but on what Gustafsson refers to as *discursive interpellation* (Gustafsson 2013: 3) inspired by Althusser (1971) and Laclau & Mouffe (1985). In the example, the constructed national (or local) community is taken for granted in the discourse, although it is actually produced as a result of the interpellation, and thus, it is not its precondition.<sup>7</sup> In examples without nouns this phenomenon is quite obvious, but in fact the phenomenon occurs regardless of whether or not there is a noun. Although the existence of the biological sexes, for example, cannot be denied, the idea of an identity community is ideological.

The plural second-person pronoun can also be used in order to construct communities with ascribed identities and thereby generalizations:

- (7) Hvorfor skal I kvinder altid fremture med kål og grøntsager her til nytår?<sup>8</sup>

*Why do [you] women always go on about cabbage and greens around New Year?*

The second-person pronoun, however, does not have the same rhetorical effect as the first-person pronoun because the speaker in this case does not belong to the community and as such cannot speak on behalf of it. But it has another effect: it makes the addressee responsible for an act whether or not this specific woman has committed the act, as it is related to a female identity. Thus, it is an othering strategy.

In this section, I offered an overview of personal pronouns and their identity-constructing functions, using illustrative examples from various sources. In the following section, I provide an analysis of the use of personal pronouns in *ALT for damerne* in constructions of different communities which are generally based on the image of women reflected in the presentation of the magazine. I will focus primarily, but not exclusively, on plural first-person pronouns.

## 5. The use of personal pronouns in *ALT for damerne* in construction of female communities

The analyzed examples are from *ALT for damerne*, No. 8, February 2013, and *ALT for damerne*, No. 9, February 2013. The sources of the examples are indicated in parentheses, the first number referring to the issue of the magazine and the second to the page number. The first example is composed by the chief editor:

- (8) Kender du følelsen af, at du egentlig godt gad vide, hvad den pæne dame på vej ud af den

6 In the Spanish example, the subject is implicit. In this case, it is the first person plural suffix that specifies the referential relation.

7 See Gustafsson (2013) for more details on this phenomenon from a philosophical, a linguistic and a sociological perspective.

8 This example is taken from a Danish website with healthy recipes: <http://www.saesonforgodsmag.dk/opskrifter/gr%C3%B8nk%C3%A5lssalat-med-%C3%A6bler>.

smarte butik har i sin indkøbspose? På ALT for damernes redaktion er vi rimeligt enige om, at vi nyder at stikke snuden i andres indkøbsposer. (8, 4)

*Are you familiar with the feeling of wanting to know what the nice-looking lady on her way out from the posh shop is carrying in her shopping bag? On the editorial board of ALT for damerne we pretty much agree that we enjoy poking our noses in other people's shopping bags.*

The example is followed by a report on four renowned designers' purchases featuring the designers' comments in their purchases. In the beginning of the example, the addressee is addressed by the singular second-person pronoun. By way of contrast, *vi* is used to refer to representatives from *ALT for damerne*. The adverbial *På ALT for damernes redaktion* ("On the editorial board of *ALT for damerne*") signals that *vi* is exclusive, as the addressee obviously is not a member of this board. The contrast between the board and the addressee, however, is erased by suggesting that the reader is just like the members of the editorial board, with the same curiosity when it comes to designers' shopping. This is an example of a strategy employed to get close to the reader, based on inclusion. Despite the exclusive *vi*, this strategy is an attempt at making the reader recognize herself in the text. The chief editor constructs a kind of community and invites the reader to be a member. It is presupposed that the editorial board are experts in this context and, by disclosing their own interests, they ask the reader indirectly to align herself with them and do the same and thus identify with the community. Having constructed a community and invited the reader to join it, the editorial board might expect that the reader will find the ensuing content more interesting and relevant. Variants of this phenomenon are seen in the following three examples:

- (9) Plej din hud med lige præcis den ansigtsmaske, der passer til dig – vi har testet dem på egne ansigter! Find skønhedsnyt på [ALTFordamerne.dk/skonhed](http://ALTFordamerne.dk/skonhed). (8, 14)

*Look after your skin with the facial treatment mask that is best suited for your skin type – we have tested all our facial treatment masks on ourselves! Check out the latest beauty news on [ALTFordamerne.dk/skonhed](http://ALTFordamerne.dk/skonhed).*

- (10) "DET SKAL VI SELV HAVE FINGRENE I" På ALT for damernes moderedaktion bombarderes vi jævnligt af nye indtryk fra sæsonens kollektioner, alverdens glittede magasiner, seje bloggere og diverse besøg i designernes showrooms. Men hvad ender vi selv med at købe, når forårskollektionerne rammer butikkerne? Se med her og få alle insidertipsene. (8, 48)

*"WE REALLY WANT TO GET OUR HANDS ON THAT!" [We] The fashion editors of ALT for damerne are constantly filled with new impressions from the season's collections, all kinds of glossy magazines, cool bloggers, and regular visits to the designers' show rooms. But what do we end up buying when the spring collections hit the stores? Look here and get all the insider tips.*

- (11) Vi elsker den hvide skjorte, fordi den passer til næsten alt og kan styles på et utal af måder. Her får du forårets lækreste udgaver af den skønne klassiker. (8, 72)

*We love the white shirt because it goes with nearly everything and you can style it in an infinite number of ways. We present the hottest designs of this fantastic classical shirt this spring.*

In (9) *vi* is also exclusive and refers to representatives of the magazine. The reader is invited to find



a facial treatment mask among several which have been tested by the representatives of the magazine. Again the referents of *vi* represent experts, and the reader (in this case addressed by both the possessive pronoun *din* and the personal pronoun *dig*) is supposed to be interested in following the advice. The referents of *vi* in (10) are the fashion editors, i.e. fashion experts. By showing what they themselves buy and offering insider tips, they invite the reader to be a member of their community – the "fashionable ones". In (11) the reader is invited to be a member of "those who love the white shirt". Again, it is presupposed that it is attractive to belong to the same community as the representatives of the magazine. The example in (12) differs slightly from these examples:

- (12) Hos kosmetologen kan du få nogle meget effektive behandlinger, men har du mod på at gøre arbejdet selv, har vi på næste side samlet en række nye produkter, der kan hjælpe dig til en klarere hud med en mere ensartet pigmentering. (9, 82)

*You can get some very effective treatments at the cosmetologist, but if you feel like doing the work yourself, we present a number of new products that can help even out your skin tone and contribute to an even pigmentation.*

In this example, the referents of the exclusive *vi* do not directly invite the reader to be a member of a community, but the plural of the first-person pronoun and the singular of the second-person pronoun are used to offer expert advices to the reader, and the experts vouch for the products.

Examples (8)-(12) draw on the overall identity already constructed for the magazine: a female identity which includes an interest in fashion, beauty, etc. Within the scope of this identity, to which the representatives of the magazine and the readers belong (according to the set-up), the personal pronouns are used to refer to varying subcommunities. The examples are all followed by photos of products with indications of the specific brand and price, and the rhetoric is supposed to have an advertising function for these products too.

The excerpt in (13) is the magazine's introduction to a personal narrative by a woman who is not otherwise affiliated with the magazine. The narrative concerns experiences with her father-in-law, but the introduction concerns mother-in-laws:

- (13) Svigermor. Jo tak, hende kender vi udmærket. Hun sender misbilligende blikke mod vasketøjet og nullermændene i hjørnet. Hun ryster uforstående på hovedet, når hun ser tegn på, at vi ikke betingelsesløst og uden krav forguder hendes søn (...) Den grove generalisering er måske uretfærdig, men hvis du ikke selv har den stereotype svigermor, så kender du en kvinde, som døjer med hende, eller du har set hende i sin værste form legemliggjort af Jane Fonda i "Svigermonster", eller du husker måske Charlottes svigermor i "Sex and the City"? (8, 23)

*Mother-in-law. My, we know her! She looks in a criticizing manner at the laundry and the fluff in the corners. She shakes her head in lack of understanding when she notices that we do not adore her son unconditionally (...) This broad generalisation may be unfair, but if you do not have such a stereotype for a mother-in-law yourself, you may know a woman who has to put up with one, or perhaps you have seen her incarnated in the worst form by Jane Fonda in "Monster-in-law", or you may remember Charlotte's mother-in-law in "Sex and the City"?*

The entire example builds on the construction of a mother-in-law with some very specific properties based on a stereotypical image of mother-in-laws. The objective of the introduction seems to be to bring the reader into a certain mood, ready to read the narrative and to relate to the experiences described (although this is about a father-in-law), and, consequently, it is important that the reader recognizes the feeling that the text tries to evoke. This feeling will only be evoked if the reader

accepts the idea of this mother-in-law category. The stereotypical narrative concerns the relationship between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law, and the two *vi*'s seem to include the whole woman category and is as such inclusive, given that the target reader is a woman. The example constructs a community between women in general. Anticipating an objection to the generalization, as there might be women who have not experienced the phenomenon, a variant is provided in which the reader, addressed by the singular second-person pronoun, is positioned as belonging to a group that does not have a personal experience, but who knows another woman with the same experience. Even a third possibility is offered: if this is not the case either, the last possibility is that the reader knows this mother-in-law-category from a movie or TV series. In this way, the magazine takes all precautions, leaving the impression that this mother-in-law-category exists for sure.

The last three examples are parts of the same article written by a (female) journalist on *ALT for damerne*. The first part of the article, to which the three examples belong, is an introductory text to an inquiry among the readers of *ALT for damerne*:

- (14) HVOR GODT KENDER DU DIN MAND? (...) Vi har spurgt jer læsere hvad I tror, at mænd ønsker fra os kvinder. (9, 27)

*HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR HUSBAND? (...) We have asked our [you] readers what they [you] think men request from [us] women.*

- (16) Alligevel håber vi, at du kan få aflivet nogle myter og bekræftet nogle forestillinger om manden i dit liv eller mænd generelt. (9, 27)

*Nevertheless, we hope that we can kill some of your myths and confirm some of your ideas of the man of your life or men in general.*

The question in (14) is the headline of the article, and the other part of the example forms part of the lead paragraph. In the beginning of the example, *vi* is exclusive and refers to the representatives of the magazine and is opposed to *du*, the reader. However, the second use of the plural first-person pronoun is inclusive and refers to women in general and as such to the representatives of the magazine as well as to the readers. In this example, the female community is marked directly by the noun *kvinder* and is also directly opposed to the male category. It emerges from (14) that the inquiry is based on the assumption that women believe that men as a category want the same from women. In (15) we see a distributional use of the personal pronoun, as it refers to both women and men, but as two different categories/communities. Subsequently, this pronoun is used inclusively to refer to all members of the female category as opposed to the male category. (16) is the conclusive text of the introductory text to the inquiry. In this example, the magazine returns to the boundary between themselves and the reader. *Vi* is again exclusive, and the function of the example seems to be to present themselves as the experts who offer a relevant inquiry to the readers.

## 6. Conclusion

On its website, *ALT for damerne* presents the profile of the magazine and through this an overall identity for its readers is constructed (or reproduced): a female identity which includes interest in fashion, beauty, etc. It is of course not surprising that *ALT for damerne* presents women in a predictable and stereotypical way. The point is that the magazine, by its way of explicitly addressing the one sex, takes as its point of departure an already discursively established difference between the sexes and thereby assumes that their readers identify with this image. The constructed identity forms the basis for the content of the magazine, the language, the discourse, the way in which it addresses its readers, and is applied as a strategy to reach the aim of the magazine: to keep current buyers and get as many new buyers as possible. Apparently harmless linguistic items, e.g. the

personal pronouns, contribute to construct different shades of this identity.

The analysis has shown that personal pronouns are used in *ALT for damerne* to create different communities within the scope of the constructed female identity. These communities are sometimes the representatives of the magazine as opposed to the readers, and sometimes the entire female category itself, to which the representatives of the magazine as well as the readers belong. In both cases the reference is to women. A considerable discursive interpellation exists which takes a female community for granted. Though the pronoun *vi*, which is used to refer to this community, appears to be of an ontological kind, it is ideologically based.

When the pronoun constructs different communities, the aim, on several occasions, seems to be to create a situation in which the expert women give advice to the non-expert women and invite them to be members of their communities. It seems to be the case that the construction of subcommunities of which the representatives of the magazine themselves form part, is based on some situated identities (in the sense of Zimmerman 1998): the professionals from the magazine, and the readers, who are susceptible to the professional suggestions.

On the other hand, when the pronoun – typically in conjunction with the noun *kvinde/kvinder* – refers to the female category as a whole, the aim seems to be to spur an interest in the reader by making her identify with the group to which she "naturally" belongs. It seems to be a transportable identity (Zimmerman 1998), which it is difficult to escape from. The use of personal pronouns is generally employed as an intimacy strategy based on inclusion – even when the plural first-person pronoun has an exclusive meaning.

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