An approach to the analysis of textual identity through profiles of evaluative disposition

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Abstract

This paper presents an approach to the analysis and investigation of textual identity or 'persona' using the Appraisal framework, and charts designed to provide profiles of 'evaluative disposition'. The approach is illustrated by the results of a study which uses three sets of texts written by three different identities, and a detailed analysis of the texts focussing on comparative frequencies of Attitude values. The paper also offers a theoretical discussion of how this approach is able to contribute to more finely-grained investigations of identity –as a function of textual style, and as a function of the interactive contexts to which they contribute.

1 Introduction

Interest in the notion of identity has recently been reflected in a number of studies and publications within sociolinguistics in particular, which focus on discourse 'style' (e.g. Eckert & Rickford 2001, de Fina et el 2006, Coupland 2007, Caldas-Coulthard & Iedema in press). These approaches are concerned with issues of how writers, through their linguistic choices, construct for themselves particular textual identities or personas. Analyses of identity under variationism have been based on surveys of speaking styles, but recent work is moving away from simple surveys of speech variation and concentrating on how contexts of interaction afford the development of textual styles and identities as part of that context. One key aspect of such identity/persona development is the way in which writers use attitudinal language and the ways in which they choose to respond to other communicative partners. At a micro level, surveys of the use of resources of evaluation to perform or position oneself in relation to others can be used to compare one speaker/writer's use of such resources with that of another speaker/writer. At the same time, at a macro-level, the deployment of evaluative resources act to frame the arguments within wider generic resources available to participants, and to re-negotiate the those resources in context of specific social settings.

This paper presents an approach to the analysis of textual identity based on a survey of the ways in which evaluative resources are used by three different participants in a particular context of interaction: an electronic mailing list. It demonstrates how profiles of textual identity may be compiled though reference to "evaluative disposition". *Textual identity* in the sense used here is viewed as a function of the linguistic patterns common to a corpus of texts composed by a set of writers/speakers, while the term *evaluative disposition* refers to a subset of textual identity which relies on data derived from appraisal analysis and the findings made available using a corpus of texts and a database. In particular, evaluative disposition relates to the use a writer makes of attitudinal meanings as they convey positive or negative assessments of their targets of evaluation, and in so doing act to position other Addressees, Auditors, and Overhearers (Goffman 1981) as well. The Appraisal framework (White 1998, Martin & Rose 2003, Martin & White 2005) and the resources of Attitude were used to classify evaluative moves in three sets of texts, and the paper reports on this study in which each of three writers—represented by a selected sample of texts—can be differentiated from each other (and from other interlocutors as well – see Don 2007) by means of comparing the frequencies and types of attitude they use, and the types of targets evaluated. Using this approach, each writer can be shown to sustain a different set of ratios of frequencies of values of Appraisal in a representative sample corpus, and this differentiation can be visually mapped with charts illustrating preferences for types of Appraisal. Charts are thus able to provide partial profiles of the textual identity of a writer, through the device of comparing evaluative disposition across a range of contexts.

I propose the use of two types of textual identity: ‘stylistic’, and ‘negotiated’ respectively. In both these perspectives Appraisal analysis provides one means of 'building up' a picture of textual identities. In the case of ‘stylistic’ identity, comparative ratios of types of appraisal, lexical keywords, and orientation to response are the means for building up such pictures. By 'orientation to response' I refer to the way responses are made to the contributions each participant makes to the discussion, (and in the case of email-mediated interaction) the way in which posts sent to the list are responded to (or not), whether a person’s responses take up the content of the contribution they are responding to, and how they support or contradict these messages (e.g. with respect to email-mediated interaction, ratios of preferred text-type style, and features of interactional orientation[1]). Compilation of stylistic identity profiles involves looking at patterns which are common to individuals and groups as a function of their wider social practices, but is confined to certain elements of those practices which can be isolated for analysis. One means of investigating *stylistic identity* relies on cross-comparisons of sets of contributions by specific writers and compiling profiles of their evaluative disposition through Attitude analysis. For this study, a small corpus of between 20 and 40 posts[2] (see Table 1 below) contributed by each of three writers was collected for the purpose of investigating their *stylistic identity* through evaluative disposition, and several profiles of posting behaviour indicated that each writer could be distinguished on these grounds.

With regard to 'negotiated' identity, the focus is on *targets* of evaluation and the ways in which posters/writers act to evaluate sets of ideas, acts and other persons. Through evaluative acts and strategies writers ‘engage’ with their readers who they may project as aligning or disaligning with them. Identity in groups such as the one from which the corpus was derived is partly a function of the ways in which positioning of self and other identities is carried out and 'negotiated' over time. I refer to the results of this approach as *negotiated identity*. The investigation of identity which is negotiated over time relies on a micro-analysis of sequences of interaction rather than just patterns across a corpus of texts, and so what is presented here provides only the first step of an approach for the study of this type of negotiated identity. Therefore results reported below will focus only on one aspect of this approach - the identification of *targets* of appraisal, and how profiles of specific identities may be compiled using this aspect of evaluative disposition.

2 Methodology

2.1 Composition of the corpus

Table 1 below summarises a number of statistics associated with the corpus of texts. The column on the left shows the labels for the sets of corpora used in the main study. The examples discussed in the course of this paper are taken from this background study and the data derived from its analyses.

[1] The corpus was derived from electronic mailing list interaction, and a typology of interactional orientation (or "orientation to response") was also applied to the texts in the study. This typology will not be introduced here, but see Don 2007: 2.3.3 for discussion of features of "responsivity" and "addressivity".

[2] Texts in the corpus were originally 'posted' to an email discussion list, hence in their original form they are called 'posts'.

Table 1: Comparison of main subcorpora used in the study[3]

	words	posts	mean words/ post	lexical types	lexical tokens	lexical density/ tokens	ranking clauses	lexical density/ clause
ALL	53,742	162	330	6,943	21,873	40.7%	--	-
SFT	4,610	24	192					
WVN	4,880	23	212					
TVS	25,350	81	313					
SIMON	8,694	25	347	1,889	3,502	40.2%	961	3.64
STAN	10,830	38	285	2,576	4,839	44.6%	1,308	3.69
SALLY	12,895	22	586	2,294	4,766	36.9%	1,561	3.05

The first named corpus, *ALL*, is comprised of the three next subcorpora, each representing three selected threads, or sustained 'written conversations':

- (SFT) ***Sig File Thread*** from January 1996,
- (WVN) ***Wide Versus Narrow thread*** from November 1997, and
- (TVS) ***Terry Versus Stan thread*** from April to June 1999.

In addition, the corpus *ALL* referred to in Table 1 above, also includes extra posts contributed to list conversation by the three writers in the study, so-called "poster" identities *Simon*, *Stan*, and *Sally*. The threads provide one contextual background against which the collection of writer-focussed corpora can be compared. The posts selected for each of these "poster-identity" corpora were intended to represent a range of these writers' participation on the list—rather than be taken from one more concentrated period of time.

Selection of the set of texts was based on several factors. One of the criteria used to select the three sets of texts comprising the three *threads* (*SFT*, *WVN*, and *TVS*) involved choosing those threads which would provide enough useful material for looking at rhetorical strategies within the texts themselves, i.e. argument staging linked to evaluative positioning. For this reason, threads were chosen which involved some form of continued argumentative discussion on a related topic, and which were comprised of 20 - 30 posts of approximately 500 words each. The fact that the written conversations involved sustained argument also means that the texts were attitudinally dense, i.e. featured high frequencies of evaluation.

The poster identities were chosen for their continued presence on the list for at least one year, as well as a textual style that was felt to show a distinct 'identity' without the use of obviously unconventional formatting or lexis. In addition, each identity needed to have contributed at least one post to at least one of the threads. The aim was to discover distinctive patterns in each writer's use of group conventional resources—resources which were limited to ascii in the case of this particular list. By the term 'group-conventional resources' I refer to abstractions based on common features of the *ALL* corpus, and this provided one means of comparing the set of one writer's contributions against those of a variety of other contributors. This paper will restrict its description to data derived from an Appraisal analysis of the three poster-identities only.

2.2 Analytic tools

The texts were first analysed using an xml[4] editor teamed with an appraisal dtd[5]. This entailed that the tagged texts were converted to a database form, from which occurrences of attitude spans could be calculated as frequency per 500 words per text. The dtd enables an xml editor such as Emilé, XmlSpy,

[3] Clause analysis was only performed on the texts of the three poster identities, so are not shown for all the texts.
[4] Extensible mark-up language
[5] The abbreviation “dtd” stands for *document type definition* and a dtd file is a document type definition file within the *Standard Generalized Markup Language* (SGML) of which html and xml are subsets.

XmetalPro, and others, to operate by tagging spans of the text into 'valid' elements by 'telling' the editor which labelled spans are permissible within each other element or span of text. Using these tools and this method, a model of all analysed texts, as represented and controlled by the dtd, can be re-constructed as analysis proceeds. When xml tagged texts are operated on by further 'transformation' files using a technology known as "extensible style-sheet language transformation" (xslt), the tagged information may be ordered and displayed in a variety of ways[6]. In this case, it enables the display of the average frequencies of Attitude values and targets of Attitude across subcorpora, so that profiles of *evaluative disposition* can be visually compared.

Throughout the paper I rely on a typology of evaluative attitude based on the Appraisal framework, and it is assumed the reader is familiar with this approach to the analysis of evaluation in texts. An introduction to this framework is available at http://www.grammatics.com/appraisal, and more details can be found in Martin and Rose (2003) and Martin and White (2005).

Briefly, within the Appraisal framework, the system of Attitude is concerned to identify all types of evaluative assessments, either negative or positive, which may appear in texts. The framework recognises three sub-types of Attitude: Judgement (concerned with assessments of human behaviour and social norms), Affect (concerned with assessments based on emotional responses), and Appreciation (concerned with assessments of objects, events and artefacts in terms of aesthetic and social value). The framework also makes a distinction between those Attitudes which are *inscribed* or made explicitly, and those which may be *implied*, or *invoked*, i.e. activated in the text by means other than explicitly evaluative lexis[7]. In addition, each sub-type of Attitude recognises a variety of sub-categorisations. Although these were attended to in the analysis, this paper will only briefly report on some comparisons based on sub-categories of Judgement and Affect. The paper does not offer further details regarding these sub-categories – they are used here as one means of characterising the evaluative dispositions of sets of texts.

3. Evaluative disposition by Attitude values

3.1 Comparisons of Attitude frequencies in sets of texts

An initial overview of the type of profiles made available using this approach can be gained by comparing the types of Attitude values 'preferred' by each of the poster-identities, *Simon*, *Stan* and *Sally*. The frequency of Attitude values per 500 words in the sets of representative texts is shown in Chart 1 below. In this chart, frequencies of Attitude values of Judgement, Affect, and Appreciation may be compared across the poster-identity corpora. This chart separates inscribed Judgement (labelled "IJudge" in the chart below) from tokens of Judgement, and shows that for these writers in this context, *evaluative disposition* often involves a high proportion of unspecified and indirect ways of evaluating their targets – i.e. *invoked* appraisal.

In the case of poster-identity *Stan* for example, we note a difference in average frequency of inscribed versus invoked Judgement values per 500 words per post in the order of 7: 15. Such differences in "preference" for invoked over inscribed Judgement values in general, is maintained for each poster identity. On the other hand, differences between writer dispositions begin to emerge when negative versus positive evaluation is compared. While *Sally* for example, evaluates using both positive and negative Judgement tokens at almost equal frequencies, *Stan* is more likely to negatively judge his targets in the set of texts. The chart also makes clear that poster-identity *Simon* is more likely than the other two writers to use the resources of Appreciation for evaluating his targets.

[6] I am grateful to Peter White for performing the necessary transformations.

[7] My approach to the problems of categorisation of Attitude, especially with respect to invoked appraisal is discussed in Don (2005b and 2007).

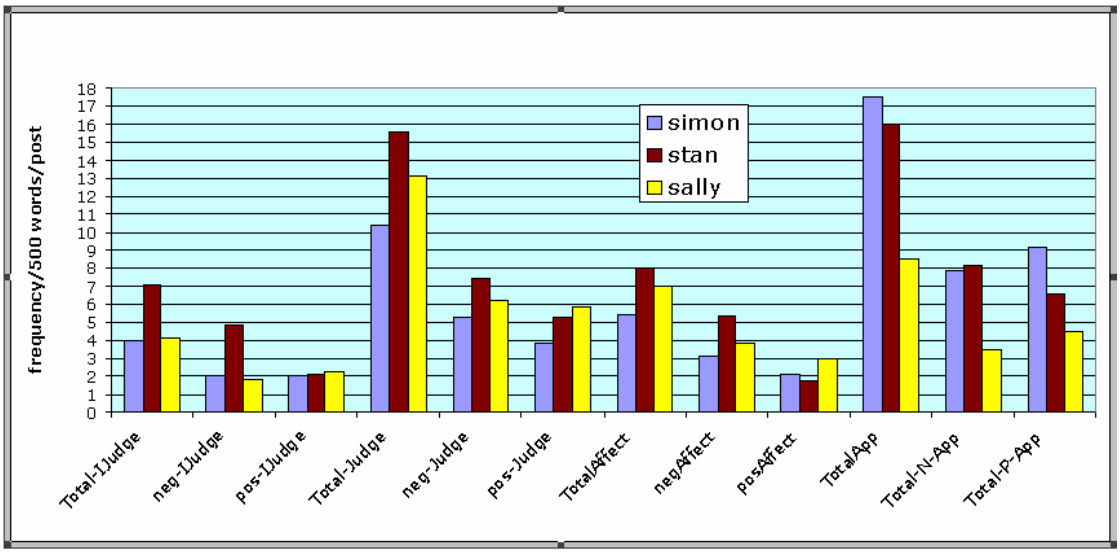

Chart 1: Comparison of attitude values by poster-identity

Further comparisons are made possible by narrowing the focus further and distinguishing between types of Judgement values preferred by each of the poster-identities. In the following Chart (2) for example, each writer's preferences for invoking Judgements of Propriety, Veracity, Tenacity, Capacity and Normality may be compared in this way. Chart 2 shows that these writers have an apparent (relative) preference for evaluating targets under the categories of Propriety and Capacity. Here we can note for example that poster-identity *Sally* evaluates her targets' Propriety and Capacity at an average of 4 times per 500 words per post. In addition, while she is more likely to *negatively* evaluate their activities under **Propriety**, her evaluations of **Capacity** are almost evenly negative and positive – around 2 instances/ 500 words/post, for both negative and positive values of Capacity. This is slightly different to her two colleagues, whose average frequencies for use of negative and positive attitude values differ more obviously – for example the ratio of negative: positive Capacity values in the *Simon* corpus is 2.5 : 0.5. It appears that this identity favours negative assessments of Capacity over positive.

In terms of evaluative disposition, these types of comparison allow the analyst to make descriptions of the type of Attitude favoured by a writer in a particular context. The context used here involves sets of texts that are representative samples of the written contributions of three different members of a discussion group. The thread corpora also provided a context against which such evaluative dispositions could be compared. For example, for each of the threads, *SFT*, *WVN*, and *TVS*, the following frequencies of negative: positive Capacity tokens were observed: 1.8 : 3.1, 3 : 1.2, and 2.6 : 0.9 — or an average of 2.5 : 1.7. We can describe the evaluative disposition of the poster-identity *Simon* as more likely than average to assess his targets using negative rather than positive Capacity. However, *Simon*'s frequency ratio for negative: positive Capacity tokens almost match those of the *TVS* thread (2.6 : 0.9). When threads rather than all over averages are used as context, it is more likely that the texts of poster-identity *Simon* – rather than *Sally* – match the "norms of the list" in this sense. At the same time, it is possible that the texts of *Simon* have actually *set* the norms in these cases, and that if these texts were removed from calculation, much fewer instances of tokens of Capacity would have been found.

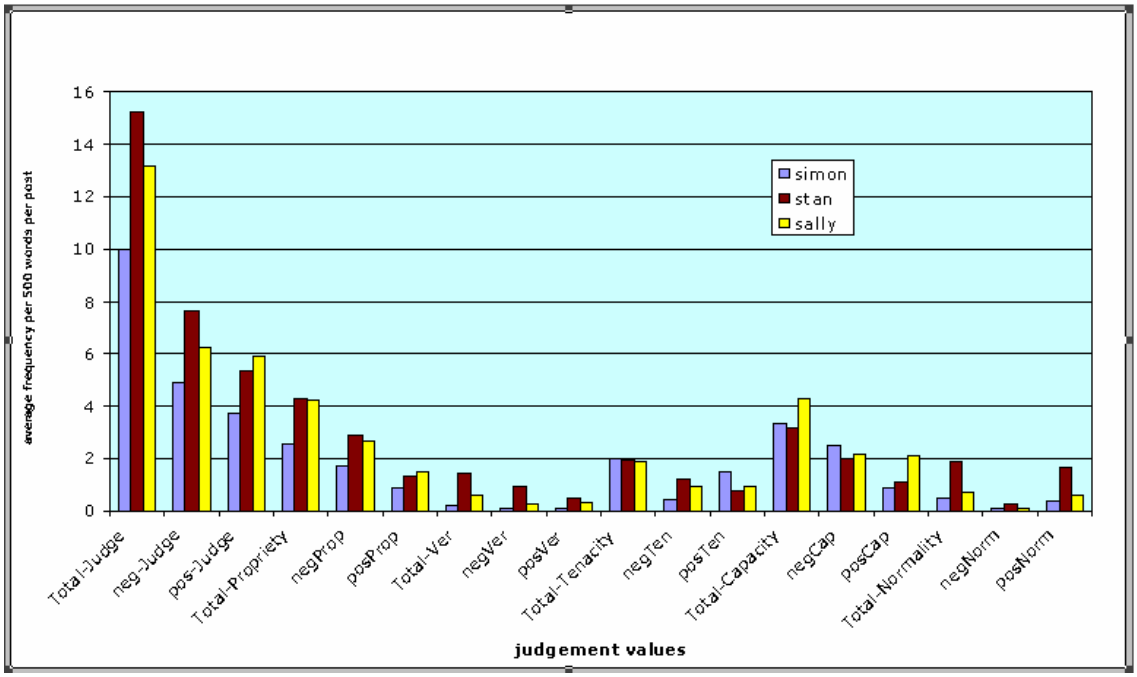

Chart 2: Comparison of Judgement tokens by poster-identity

Comparisons of one writer's evaluative disposition relative to others in the same context is thus the main approach adopted here. So that, in this set of texts for example, the poster-identity *Simon* notably does not use the resources of Judgement to the extent that his colleagues do. However, there are some categories of attitudinal value where *Simon* exceeds the average frequency found in the texts of his two colleagues – in this case, with positive Tenacity, and negative Capacity. Recall that Chart 2 refers to tokens of Judgement, and these typically rely on other node words or trigger words and phrases, as well as intertextual reference in some cases (Don 2007). Instances of invoked Judgement therefore provide avenues for the investigation of textual strategies that writers commonly—or markedly—use in order to evaluate.

In pursuing a description of the evaluative disposition of the writer *Simon* for example, the comparative profiles provided by Chart 2 provide an avenue for investigation of textual identity/persona at the micro level – in contrast to, or rather as complement to the macro level on which this approach is located. At the micro level, the analyst may wish to isolate such instances of tokens of Judgement as a means of focussing on specific "stylistic syndromes" associated with a particular writer. In the case of the poster-identity *Simon*, the following example (1) provides an illustration of one of the strategies he uses in order to evaluate targets by invoking an Attitude of negative Capacity (evaluative node words in *italics*):

Example 1:

if my hypothetical PHD in sociology[target] in the same message demonstrates that he or she[target] *cannot format* an email message, *cannot download and configure* a simple computer program, *does not know* what UNIX is, and considers reading a computer manual akin to menial labor, **then** I am *not going to give much weight to* [what the person has to say about the dynamics of the internet [App target].[judge: capacity: negative (irrealis) entailing [appreciation: value: negative]]

The above excerpt provides one example of how tokens of Judgement may be invoked by means such as use of other types of Attitude, as well as rhetorical strategies such as matching and logical relations (Hoey 1983). In this case, a relation of hypothetical-real is used to negatively Judge "in advance": its strategy is to make an evaluation of a generic group having particular features, and acts to 'warn' anyone falling into such a group that their esteem is not guaranteed. This is a feature of this writer's

evaluative disposition or style, and it avoids directly confronting named individuals (see for example, Don 2007). It also acts to define a type of moral ground on which further Judgements may be made of individuals, doing so through the use of general examples from the material world. In Table 2 below, this evaluative disposition is made clearer through the relative weighting of attitudinal targets in the *Simon* corpus: a relatively large proportion of these are *generic behaviour*, and relatively few of Simon's targets fall into the category which include specific individuals, apart from the target *self*.

In calculating the frequencies of Attitude values in the texts in my study, it was decided that all entailed spans of Attitude of this nature needed to be taken into account so that these types of strategies could then be investigated using the same database. This means that frequencies may appear higher than expected, but it also provides for fine-grained profiles of evaluative disposition.

Similar charts providing visual maps of poster-identity evaluative disposition for *inscribed* Judgement provide further avenues for investigation of differences. Consider Chart 3 below for example. As already noted, and understandably given the above approach to analysis, frequencies are higher for invoked versus inscribed Judgement in these texts. On the other hand, similar patterns are observable with respect to preferences for values of Propriety and Capacity across all three corpora. That is to say, the texts of all three writers investigated favoured the use of Attitudes of Capacity and Propriety over other Judgement values.

The chart below also highlights a comparative difference (c.f. Chart 2 above) in *Stan*'s apparent preference for inscribing **negative Propriety**. While the texts of his two colleagues evidence only an average of <1 value of inscribed negative Propriety /500 words /post, *Stan*'s corpus shows an average of 3>2 /500 words /post for frequency of this Attitude. The *Stan* corpus returns a higher than average frequency for this feature against a range of contexts, as shown by a comparison with the average frequency for inscribed negative Propriety for the threads as a whole—1.14 /500 words /post. This evaluative disposition in the texts of poster-identity *Stan*, in turn contributes to a description of this writer's textual identity or textual persona as one which is more likely than his cohorts to use the resources of negative Judgement to make assessments.

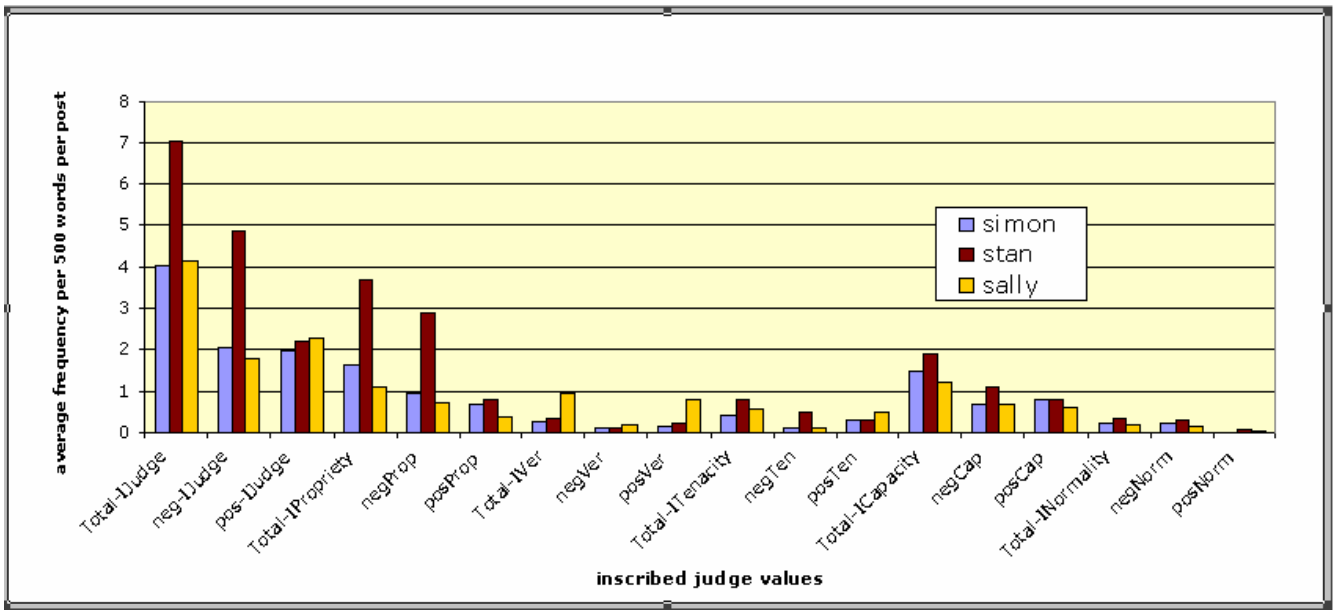

Chart 3: Comparison of inscribed Judgement values by poster-identity

3.2 Writer-specific comparisons of Attitude frequencies

Such charts highlight patterns which can then be investigated in more detail at a micro-level, especially in studies of textual identity. For example, a more detailed picture of use of specific Attitude values across a range of contexts can be provided by producing other forms of comparative chart. The

following chart (4) provides an illustration. Since [judgement: propriety] was found to be common in the texts of all three writers, and the identity *Stan* was shown to use the resources of inscribed (negative) Propriety at higher frequencies than the two other writers investigated, in Chart 4 below, poster-identity *Stan*'s use of inscribed Propriety across the range of his posts becomes the focus.

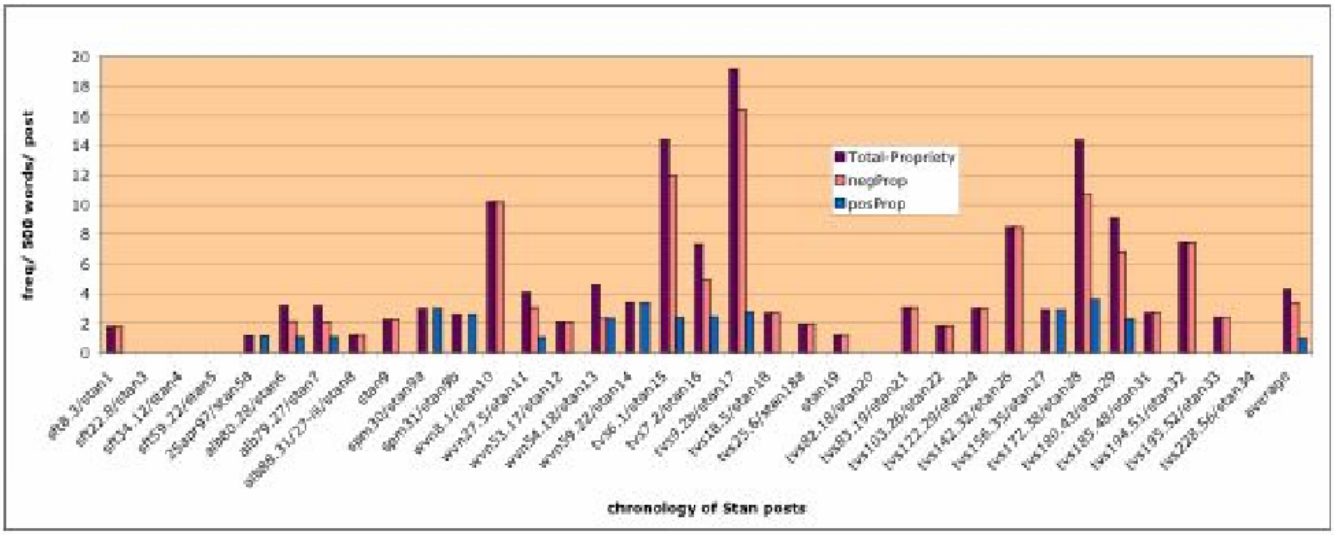

Chart 4: Inscribed Judgement: Propriety in corpus of poster-identity Stan

The above chart is able to highlight the posts where 'spikes' in inscribed Propriety occur in this corpus[8]. At the far right of the chart, the overall average per 500 words per post provides a standard against which such spikes can be compared. For this study a tagging system was developed in which labels for posts first reference the thread to which the post was contributed. So that, the first post where an obvious spike of above average Propriety occurs is [wvn8.1/stan11], and this means that the post was the 8th chronological post during the period in which the *Wide Versus Narrow* (WVN) thread occurred, and the first post made to this specific thread. At the same time, the post was the 11th in the chronological collection of *Stan* texts.

Using this chart, other texts where similar spikes in inscribed Propriety occur can be observed, for example [tvs6.1/stan15] and [tvs9.2b/stan17]. These types of observations are useful for the investigation of both aspects of textual identity, *stylistic* and *negotiated*. In terms of stylistic identity, those posts where high Attitudinal densities of specific types occur may be sites for the examination of the grammatical strategies, lexical node words and targets typically used by a specific writer. However, it is more likely that spikes occur as a function of the interaction that is taking place at the time, and that such posts need to be considered as indicators of *marked* behaviour—either in comparison to that normally evidenced in the specific writer-corpus, or against that typical or conventional to the corpus as whole. This means that, at this level, what such charts help to highlight are those junctures where negotiation over "moral order" become the dominant theme of discussion. Fairclough (2003: 41)—citing Giddens view of how moral order is constituted—remarks that "the 'norms' of interaction as a moral order are oriented to and interpreted differently by different social actors, and these differences are negotiated". Thus, those contributions where spikes in frequency of Attitude occur are likely to provide locations for the negotiation of identity as a function of some assumptions regarding moral order, or even where evaluative positioning of self and other functions as a means for negotiating group-based codes of behaviour or 'norms'. The distinction here rests on whether the positioning enacted is in the service of "norm-citing" or "norm-setting"[9] respectively.

As an example, post [tvs9.2b/stan17], as well as showing an above-average frequency of inscribed negative Propriety values for this corpus, is generally high in "attitudinal density" as well,

[8] Note that some of the posts in the Stan corpus do not appear in this chart, e.g. [~/stan23]

[9] I am grateful to Peter R. White for this distinction

with a frequency of just under 22 /500 words /post for invoked negative Judgement tokens—as against an average per post of 7.6 for invoked negative Judgement in the *Stan* corpus as a whole (c.f. Chart 4 above). It suggests that this contribution represents a juncture in negotiation over list norms – and in fact the means by which this post makes its Judgements are multi-layered and indirect.

In the following short excerpt for example, what is defining of the target *'she'* (in SE7), then becomes the target for the appraisal in the following sentence (SE7a):

Example 2:

7) […] she*[target]* [again signed herself Mars and picked up that swagger again.*[judge: propriety negative]*]*[target]* 7a) Odd and telling.*[judge: normality: negative + judge: ambiguous]*

These types of evaluative move, and others featuring implicit meanings and contractions—such as SE7a's *Odd and telling*—make the text very dense attitudinally, and one which therefore relies heavily on assumed close *contact* for making its meanings. This type of rhetorical strategy in which members of the audience are assumed to understand intertextual references and are not directly evaluated, contributes to a profile of the stylistic identity of a particular set of texts. In turn, the use of such strategies in particular contexts points to the ways in which identities are being constructed or 'negotiated' through their evaluative positioning as implied targets.

The main argument of the post revolved around an answer to a question on the definition of a specific term ("gator") commonly used in discussions in this group. Moreover, its argument centred on how this particular term was used to negatively evaluate other poster-identities and whether the use of this term was justified in a specific instance (as a label for "Mars", the target of evaluation *she* in the excerpt above). In addition, the argument in this post also managed to suggest that the use of the term was sometimes not warranted, and that those using it should themselves be negatively evaluated. Since the poster-identity asking the question had also used the term in negatively evaluating this former list-member, it appeared that *Stan* was also negatively evaluating his interlocutor in this case. Indeed, the rest of the discussion in this thread involved heated discussion regarding posting behaviour on the part of these two interlocutors, and from a synoptic perspective, this post is thus considered to represent a turning point in the thread.

3.2.1 Cross comparisons of frequencies of types of Attitude: Affect

Before turning to focus on *targets* of Attitude in particular, I provide a brief comparison of frequencies of Affect values in the corpus. Those categorised in the analysis were negative and positive values of Security, Happiness, Satisfaction and Inclination. Although Affect may also be invoked though expressions of reaction—notably in email though the use of 'emoticons' (e.g. :-), ^_^, :-0), emphasis markers such as CAPITALISATION, and words representing reactions such as 'wow', 'ugh', 'sigh', 'heh', and so on—in compiling the frequencies discussed below, such 'invoked' versus 'inscribed' values of Affect are not distinguished. In the following chart (5) only a general overview of the frequency of types of Affect value appearing in each of the three poster-identity corpora are provided, that is to say, only instances of the appearance of types of Affect have been calculated without distinguishing their sources, invocations or targets.

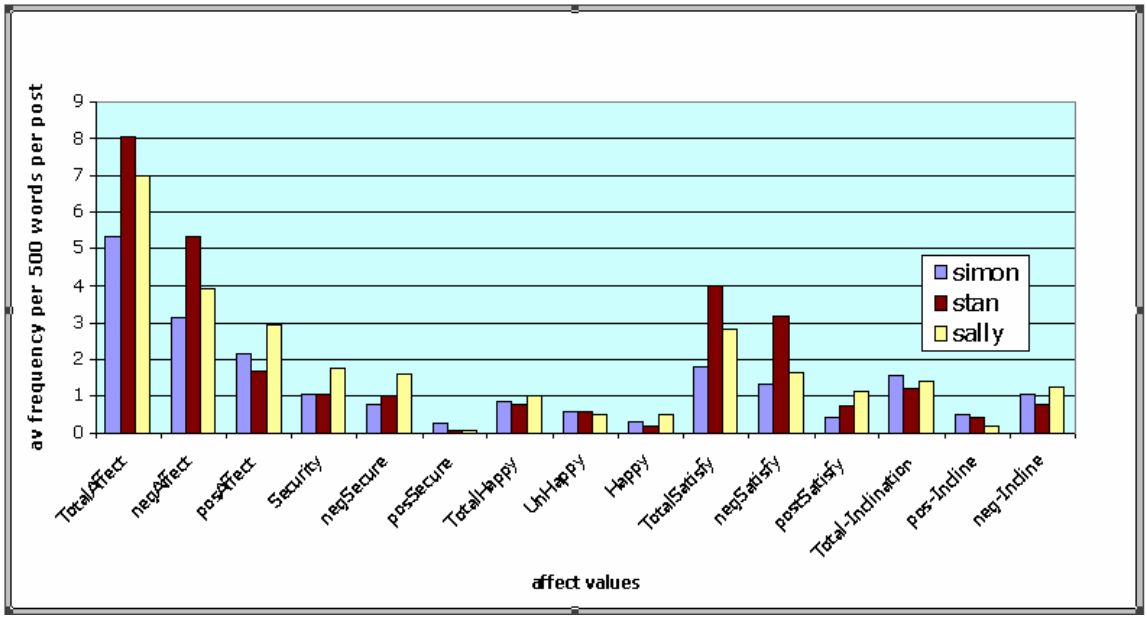

Chart 5: Comparison of Affect values across poster-identities

The first observation that can be made using this chart (5) alone is that the corpus of poster-identity *Stan* evidences a higher proportion of negative **Satisfaction**—both with respect to its other Affect values and with respect to the corpora of his two colleagues. By further comparison, frequencies of use of all inscribed negative Judgement (c.f. Chart 3) in the *Stan* corpus are about equal to that of average negative Affect instances in the same corpus at around 5 /500 words /post. This maintenance of negative Judgement /Affect frequency ratios is not repeated in the corpora of his colleagues, notably in the *Sally* corpus which has a much wider disparity. In this case, while *Sally* uses a lower overall frequency of negative Affect of 3.9 /500 words /post, her corpus shows even fewer instances of inscribed negative Judgement of 1.8 /500 words /post. As noted previously, the corpus of poster-identity *Sally* differs from that of her two colleagues with respect to its distribution of negative versus positive Attitude values. More particularly, whereas the corpora of both *Stan* and *Simon* have higher frequencies of *negative* values of both Judgement and Affect, the *Sally* corpus has a higher frequency of each type of *positive* Judgement values. Such comparisons of frequencies of Attitude types provide a general profile of evaluative disposition on the part of specific writers.

Of course, the relatively high proportion of negative Satisfaction values on the part of one writer also provides an avenue for further investigation, related to questions as to contexts in which these instances occur, and as to what Affectors or *targets* are evaluated. A brief look at how values of [affect: satisfaction] are dispersed across the Stan corpus is provided below in Chart 6.

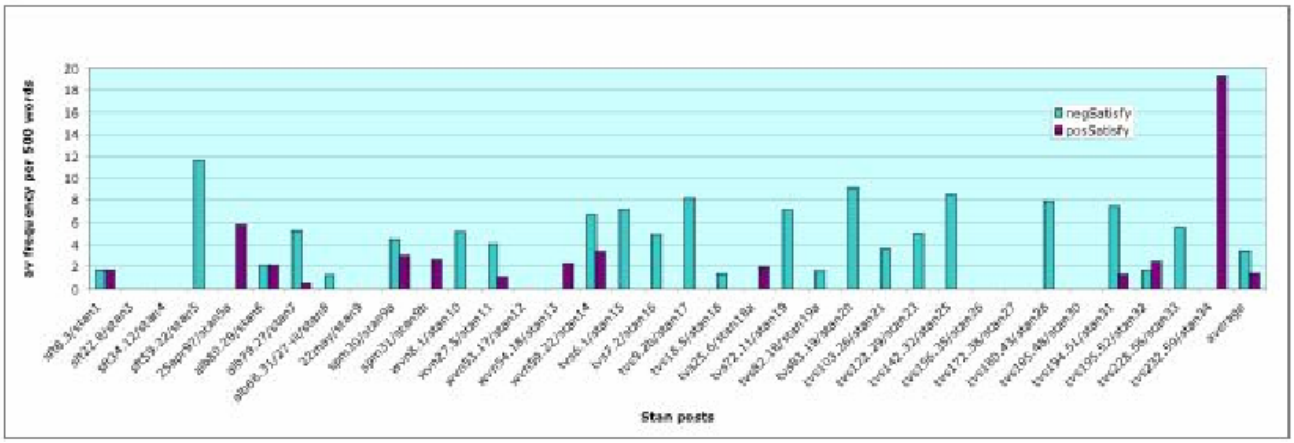

Chart 6: Affect: Satisfaction in the corpus of poster-identity Stan

It is interesting to note that the dispersion of negative Satisfaction is fairly evenly distributed across the corpus while positive Satisfaction is not as common, and indeed the average frequency of positive Satisfaction for the corpus as a whole would be far lower without the influence of the spike apparent in [tvs232.59/stan34]. The chart suggests two features of evaluative disposition as it relates to poster-identity *Stan*. The first observation is that values of [satisfaction: negative] occur regularly across the corpus and that therefore it is a feature of this poster's textual identity, rather than (for example) a function of the heated argument occurring in the final thread (*TVS*). Those posts in which [satisfaction: negative] do not occur are thereby also highlighted for their lack of this Attitude. The second observation is that the spike in the final post of the thread is partly a function of the post's short word-length, but also highlights the highly charged evaluative stance of that contribution – one in which the surface expression of positive Satisfaction contributed to an implication of ambiguous (but likely negative) Attitude and ambiguous target(s), supported by the heavy use of irony. The post is reproduced below as Example 3, with those spans analysed as instances of [satisfaction: positive] underlined:

Example 3:

```
Date: Mon, 7 Jun 1999 18:28:33 -0400
From: stan@EMAIL.COM
Subject:   Re: There goes rhymin Simon...


>What more can I say? Maybe: "Welcome, poet!"

Wow, chicks DO dig it...

>H-, [who's aching jaw is still a problem, but not quite as painful as
yesterday, (my god, it was awful!)]

Funny, I didn't even feel my fist connect.

Stan
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This was the final post in the discussion thread – it marked a juncture in the negotiation over what is appropriate posting to the list, and I interpreted it as signalling frustration on the part of the writer. However, the lack of any overt signals of frustration in the actual text made it difficult to assign this Attitude value, and highlights the fact that it is impossible for an *analyst* to impute Affect on the part of a writer unless it is explicitly signalled in some way, and thus it does not appear in the data. On the other hand, in the role of long time list-member, I have no such qualms in making this interpretation. The post is thus an appropriate illustration of the problems of attitude analysis, and at the same time, also aptly illustrates how this approach to the display of such analyses can highlight areas for further enquiry. This post provides a good example of how writers may be more likely to use strategies of ambiguous evaluation in contexts of high dudgeon.

Targets of Attitude values are the focus of the next section, which changes perspective and looks at the compilation of profiles of evaluative disposition using instead instances of types of *target* favoured in each of the corpora.

4. Evaluative disposition by targets of Attitude

4.1 Relative preferences for target-types in poster-identity corpora

The analysis also tagged **targets** of Attitudes, and these were grouped into categories according to 'target-type' in order to determine what target-types each poster-identity tends to evaluate. The categorisation operated with the following broad classes:

- human individuals or groups: subdivided in turn according to whether the target referred to the writer/self (e.g. *I*; *me*; *Sally*), a specific other person (e.g. *Simon*, *he*, *elfin one*), or a group/institution (e.g. *ND*; *us*; *they*; *this list*; *you* (pl); *these guys*; *the Australian government*; *local telco*). The latter two categories were also more delicately classified according to whether they referred to the listmembers/audience (i.e. Auditors and Overhearers), or alternatively groups/institutions external to the list. Targets were also co-classified so that categorisation could be split along individual - generic lines. For example, the target *addressee(s)* was co-classified according to whether the target was singular or plural (and thus part of the collective target *this-group*).
- targets were further subdivided according to whether they referenced the person/group directly for evaluation, or alternatively referred to an action on their part which was then evaluated. For example, text objects (e.g. *his post*; *your story*; *that book*) were co-classified as "~acts" according to what person or group had been made responsible for them. Other reports of action as the targets of evaluation[10] were also classed in this way.
- There was also a large class of what was called "generic behaviour", instances of which were not attributed to any specific person or group. In terms of their realisation, they were often what was co-classified as "non-finite behave"[11].

The chart (7) below shows comparisons of target-types in the corpus of each poster-identity.

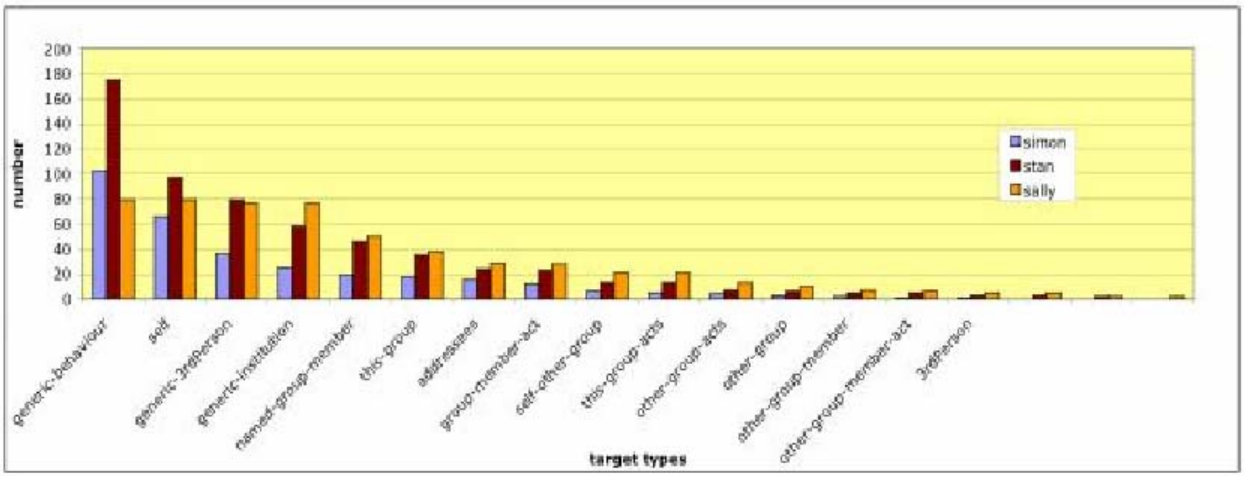

Chart 7: Comparison of target-type instances across poster-identities

For the corpus of each poster-identity, both Chart 7 above and Table 2 below show that the most common target-type overall was that categorised as "generic behaviour". The target-type *generic-behaviour* is commonly realised by nominal groups or by "non-finite behave", e.g. *honesty in communication*, *to be honest*, *giving my real name* [sht4/sally4]; *to be heavy-handed/ confrontational* [sft8.3/stan1]; *to maintain what signposts of reality do exist* [sft9.4/stan2]; *to say well* [sft22.8/stan3], and so on. Notably, however, poster-identity *Sally* targets proportionately fewer of this category, with *Simon* and *Stan* preferring to evaluate this category of target in much greater proportion than they do any of the other types. On the other hand, relative to the other two, *Sally* appears to prefer to evaluate more concrete targets such as her*self* (including "self-act"), *named group members*, and *addressees*.

[10] e.g. *[I] wasn't more careful* [sht4/sally4]; *[my] landing on top of Eileen* [sht4/sally4] (self-act); *Ray was assigning roles* [sht4/sally4]; *he was trying to be honest* [sht4/sally4] (3rd-person-act); *being targeted [with suspicion by this group]* [sht4/sally4]; *our discussion of task* [simon6] (this group-act).

[11] e.g. *to be heavy-handed/ confrontational* [sft8.3/stan1]; *to do a day's work for a day's pay* [sft41.16/simon2]

In order for broader comparisons to be made possible in this way, targets were also further grouped according to a simpler taxonomy. By adding together the percentages for occurrence of related target types, a number of observations may be made.

For example, the target-types *self* and *self-act* are obviously related. The following percentages for each corpus for this target-type-set points to a slight difference in attitudinal orientation and likelihood that the self will be targeted:

- -*Sally*: 17.9%
- -*Simon*: 17.3%
- -*Stan*: 8.1%

In terms of other group members being the target of evaluation, differences turned on whether these group members were evaluated directly, i.e. as *addressees*, or whether they were evaluated in the 3rd person, i.e. as *named-group-member* and *group-member-act*. Further categories were related to group members targeted as members of the audience: *this-group*, and *this-group-acts*. The following table provides a breakdown of these groupings.

Table 2: Proportion as % of targets of Attitude groupings across poster-identities

Target-type-set	Simon	Stan	Sally
self/self-act	17.34	8.06	17.92
generic behaviour	17.90	17.20	9.10
addressees	2.63	2.26	5.78
named group member/ act	5.43	17.31	12.14
group as collective	4.03	1.97	3.01

The table (2) above clearly shows some differences in targeting preferences - so that, relative to *Stan*, poster-identities *Sally* and *Simon* appear more likely to evaluate themselves. On the other hand, unsurprisingly given the confrontational nature of the *TVS* thread from which a large proportion of the *Stan* sample was derived, poster-identity *Stan* is more likely to target 3rd parties in the audience for evaluation. This distinction was important for the negotiation of identity where, in contrast to a direct evaluation of one's interlocutor, evaluating a 3rd person in the audience I consider to have a different meaning. This meaning makes the attitudinal act more "directly" interpersonal in function than the use of evaluative language in general. While the effect of evaluating an audience member in the third person is perhaps not as confrontational as a direct address in the 2nd person, at the same time, it acts to *disconfirm* the status of the named audience member[12] since it positions them as a subject for discussion, as distinct from a participant in that discussion[13].

A further observation related to this interpersonal stance is also provided by the table above. For example, *Sally* appears more likely than the other two to target her *addressees*, and this suggests a more direct or confrontational approach than that used by the other two. *Simon* targets the *group* as a collective in relatively higher proportions than do the others, especially in comparison to *Stan*. Again, this seems to partly reflect his role as list-owner and 'leader' of the group. *Simon* has constructed an identity for this role which is able to assess group activities and products, and who can speak for the group on occasions when 'outsiders' threaten to violate perceived norms.

[12] Watzlawick et al (1967) note that "*disconfirmation* … negates the reality of [a person] as the source of … a definition of self" (p. 86, my italics). They go on to note that "[in the case of disconfirmation] *O* does not disagree with *P*, but ignores or misinterprets *P*'s message" and that such "unresolved discrepancies in the punctuation of communicational sequences can lead directly into interactional impasses in which eventually the mutual charges of madness or badness are proffered" (pp.92-94)

[13] The next step in the investigation is to discover whether such features of group interaction do correlate with types of attitude in response.

4.2 Evaluative disposition by target-types and Attitude-type combined

By converting the data in Table 2 above into chart form, it can also be made more visually readable, and easier to cross-compare. The following charts help make clear some differences between the evaluative dispositions of the three poster-identity corpora based on comparisons of preferred target-types. The first below (Chart 8) concentrates on the target-type *self* and *self-act*, showing how these targets were evaluated by each of the poster-identities.

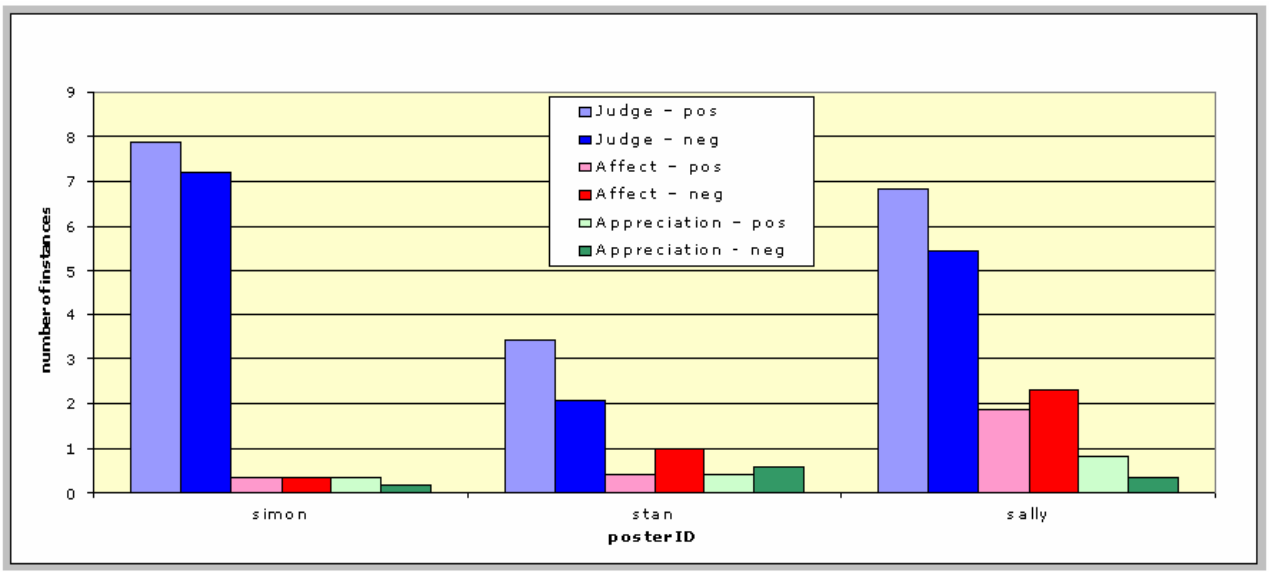

Chart 8: Comparison of target-set self and self-act by poster-identities and Attitude types

The above chart makes it clear that all the poster-identities are more likely to use positive Judgement values when targeting them*selves*, and that naturally enough, Judgement values are predominant with respect to this target-type set. The corpus of poster-identity *Simon* shows the greatest difference in use of Judgement values compared to values of Affect and Appreciation when evaluating him*self* and his own actions. From this alone we can describe the evaluative disposition of the posterID *Simon* as one in which the self and its acts are the target of a large proportion of the Attitudinal spans in the corpus, and that this identity is disposed to use the resources of Judgement both positive and negative to do so.

In contrast, the poster-identity *Sally*, while also targeting herself to a great extent, uses a greater proportion of the resources of both Affect and Appreciation to evaluate either herself or her acts. With respect to values of Affect, it appears that both *Stan* and *Sally* have tended to negatively rather than positively evaluate themselves. In the case of poster-identity *Sally*, the higher proportion of Affect values suggests an evaluative disposition focussed on the *self* as target, but also one where Affect – evaluations based on subjective and emotion-based criteria - are not eschewed in favour of more socially-referenced bases of evaluation. The slightly higher incidence of negative Affect towards the self, despite the prevalence of positive Judgement values, also points to a negotiated textual identity in which the *self* is portrayed as deserving of positive esteem while yet acknowledging personal negative responses to the self and its actions.

As mentioned previously, many Attitude values of both Affect and Appreciation may simultaneously act as tokens of Judgement, and it should be remembered that the approach used here was not focussed merely on the "outer span" Attitudes – which in some instances encompass whole texts – but was designed to take account of all Attitude strategies in the texts. This was conceived as a way of building a picture of how evaluative acts operate and how each writer manages the resources of evaluation. This may mean, for example, that those Attitudes which evaluate the self using Appreciation may also function as tokens of Judgement for the same target. The approach viewed instances of Attitude as multiplicative rather than summative – the whole evaluative span being more than the sum of its parts so to speak.

The following chart (9) now compares instances of the target-set *named group members*, *addressees* and *their acts* for each of the poster-identity corpora, along with the main Attitude values. It was already noted above that the identity *Stan* was more likely (than his two colleagues) to target other members of the group (audience) for evaluation in the texts used, and that this was a function of the type of argumentative conversations chosen for analysis. The chart below provides a visual comparison of the types of Attitude used by each of the identities for this target-set, and furthermore allows a comparison with those Attitude types directed towards the target *self*, as shown above in Chart 9.

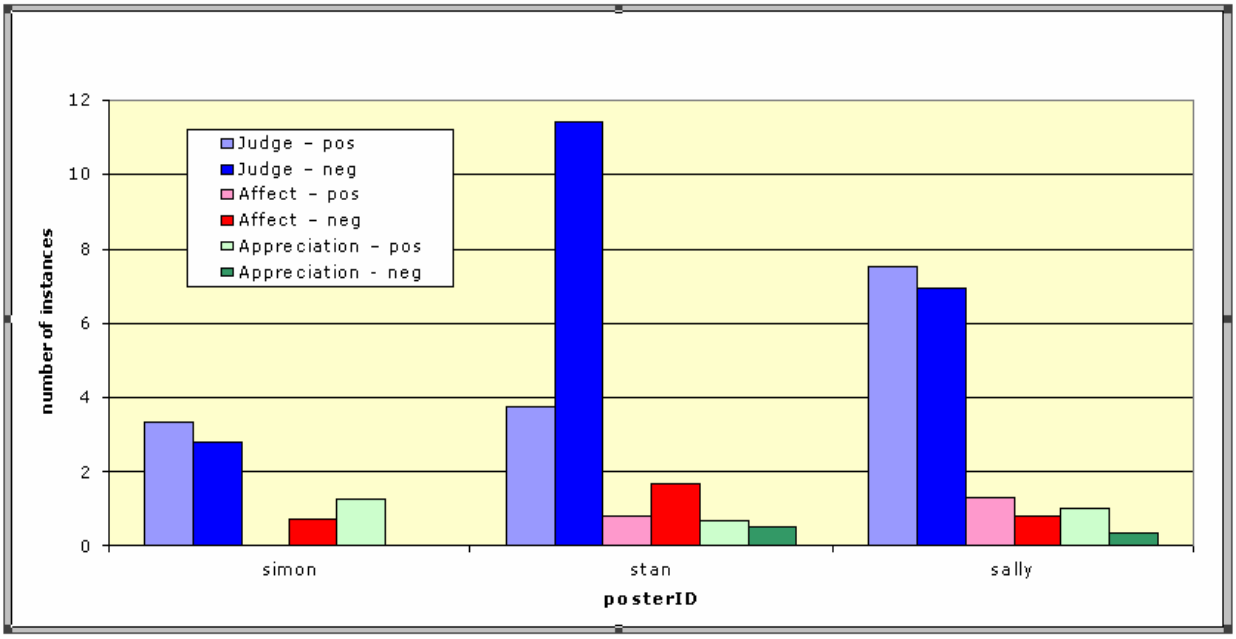

Chart 9: Comparison of target-set named group members, addressees, and their acts by poster-identity and Attitude types

The differences between the corpora are immediately made obvious in the charts. They provide a telling profile of evaluative disposition when relative proportions of instances in the texts are taken into account. We note for example that for this target-set, while Judgement values are similarly 'preferred' over other Attitude values by each of the poster-identities, *Stan* differs from the other two in his higher proportion of negative over positive Judgement values. He also negatively evaluates specific others in his audience using negative Affect – as do his two colleagues. While he and *Sally* offset their negative Affect toward other group members by also expressing positive Affect as well, *Simon* uses no positive Affect for evaluating specific other members of the group. At the same time, *Simon* uses no negative Appreciation of their behaviour either, whereas both *Stan* and *Sally* appear willing to negatively evaluate other list members through this means. *Sally*'s Affect profile is again of interest here – the difference in relative proportion of positive Affect towards her interlocutors compared with a higher proportion of negative Affect towards herself (c.f. Chart 8 above) contributes to an accumulating profile of her evaluative disposition – at least in contrast to the other two identities investigated. In order to appreciate this, recall from Chart 5 that overall, it is poster-identity *Stan* whose average frequency of Affect values is the highest of the three, yet in comparison to that of her colleagues, *Sally*'s texts show a higher number of Affect values which are directed at her*self*.

4.3 Discussion: what this approach can provide

These chart-based profiles of evaluative disposition should be viewed as aids in the description of the dynamics of identity construction or negotiation. They help answer the question of how textual identity is forged in texts, from the perspective of textual 'interaction'. In fact, these texts were derived from a context in which there was also "real" interaction made possible by their technological mediation – a

matter of Mode not fully addressed in this paper[14] . The focus here, rather, is on textual interaction, and how a writer constructs for themselves an audience, along with a *self* who is the addresser of that audience. This stems from the Bakhtinian premise (e.g. 1986) that all text is the result of writer response to what the s/he has already experienced, which at the same time projects a response to come from their imagined audience.

Attitude values then, need to be seen as a function of the context of interaction, and the nature of the thread (conversation), the development of the topic, as well as the argument being sustained in a text. These are some of the contributing factors to the tenor of the phase of the text in which an evaluative act occurs, and the tenor of the corpus as a whole. Such a 'tenor of the corpus', however, cannot be simply described by reference to a set of statistics based on frequencies of Attitude values and targets of those Attitudes. Tenor, as instantiated in actual discourse, is comprised of the interaction between many elements in the text, through which relationships are enacted, and instances of Attitude can be regarded as part of the resources of interpersonal meaning. At the same time, Attitude is often realised through longer spans of discourse incorporating several phases. At each phase of the unfolding discourse the tenor as part of register may 'shift', and the resources of tenor – similar to what Goffman (1981) refers to as "footing" – may signal such a shift. This means that to speak of the 'tenor of the corpus' is to oversimplify the matter of interpersonal key, stance, and textual identity.

Therefore, rather than talk about the "tenor of a corpus", this approach uses frequencies of Attitude values and their targets to provide a very general profile of poster stylistic identity through talking about "evaluative disposition". Evaluative disposition in turn is an amalgam of the use of (certain) evaluative resources in a representative corpus. The Appraisal framework provides the scaffolding for investigating this area of textual identity, and this paper has provided one means of using such analysis to construct profiles and interpretative descriptions of this area of textual identity.

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[14] See, however, rather lengthy discussions of this in Don 2005a

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