CHAPTER 5

Affiliation

The aim of this chapter is to theorise a social semiotic model that can account for the interaction of couplings and laughter in convivial conversational humour. This thesis is particularly concerned with how friends in conversation identify with each other and co-construe communities, and this chapter will describe a social process of “affiliation” that captures these negotiations. Affiliation is a social semiotic theory that describes how we discursively identify as members of communities, variously negotiating complex values.

There are many reasons why we might laugh together when we get together with friends for a chat. Affiliation is a significant factor because, as members of a culture who have a number of different affiliations, we have a complex sociality that may come into conflict and tension as we negotiate who we are through talk. At the same time, we attempt to reinforce an ongoing solidarity with our interlocutors and to bond together as friends despite those associations that may differentiate us. Following from the discussions in Chapters 3 and 4, it is clear that values of communities are a key concern of the conversational talk under focus and that interactants negotiate these values in the form of couplings. By presenting attitude + ideation couplings as we talk, we construct communities of values that connect us as members of a culture. However, what exactly are these values and how can we represent them, and the communities they construe, in our linguistic theory? To answer this question, this chapter will take laughter in conversation as its starting point for investigating affiliation.

Laughter offers a “way in” to this social process of affiliation. First, as was demonstrated in Chapter 4, laughter indicates that speakers are presenting couplings in conversation that hearers cannot accept straightforwardly for communing together. Secondly, it shows that couplings, and bonding, are actually negotiable and that there is some tension caused in the interlocutors’ social negotiation of values. Finally, it will be demonstrated in this
chapter that laughter is an affiliative strategy for negotiating differences and reinforcing similarities in the communal identities of the participants at talk. As an entry point for the study of affiliation, laughter will reveal the social process that is responsible for tensions in convivial conversational humour; affiliation will then be explored, followed by an outline of the relations of community involved in affiliation that are modelled on the individuation cline.

The chapter begins by describing the social process of affiliation in Section 5.1, exploring the notion of social “bonds” and how they represent identity in affiliation, along with the different strategies by which conversational participants negotiate communities together in ongoing talk. While in the previous chapter the notion of couplings of APPRAISAL and IDEATION described the way that linguistic meanings bind together in the conversational humorous text, this chapter describes how social persons bond together in the social world as a matter of affiliation. Community relations involved in affiliating are then expounded, and the affiliation perspective on the cline of individuation is developed within the theoretical framework of SFL in Section 5.2.

5.1 The social process of affiliation

“…negotiating community is a dynamic process, played out as texts unfold in the myriad of discourses materializing the communion of everyday and institutional life.”

(Martin, 2004b, p. 337)

Affiliation is the technical term that will be used hereafter to describe the social process of negotiating shared values in text to construct and co-identify in communities. How social persons bond together in the social world through couplings in discourse is a matter of affiliation, and the affiliation process is informed by the study of convivial conversational humour. Affiliation accounts for how speakers can present couplings that are at times discordant as a text unfolds and manage the tension to maintain the talk and the solidarity that they are achieving together. Specifically, it concerns how we identify as co-members of different communities of a culture (or of different cultures). This identifying involves the negotiation of things, experiences, ideas and persons that matter to, or are valued by, particular communities. The process of affiliating occurs in the
logogenesis of a text as speakers constantly negotiate couplings in relation to their varying affiliations as community members. In every instance that a coupling is negotiated (e.g. laughed at), we can interpret the affiliative process carried out by the interactants, and we can also perceive the different communities at risk based on the value systems constructed. This section will thus present affiliation as a social process that occurs when friends come together to “have a laugh” in conversation\(^1\), concentrating on the ways that this process is manifested and how it affects our notions of identity and community.

Because this thesis takes a social semiotic perspective, the relations of values and the way that interactants variously negotiate them in social semiotic terms will be described through the concept of “bonds”. Bonds are social semiotic units encapsulating the values we subscribe to as community members in the social context of affiliation and are manifested in text through attitude + ideation couplings. They serve as a way to capture identity semiotically in affiliative negotiations. The concept of bonds further distinguishes affiliation from the theory of bonding described in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2.2.2 (Martin, 2004b; Stenglin, 2004), since bonding theory conflates the coupling of ATTITUDE and IDEATION in text with the coming together of social persons in the social sphere (distinguished here as bonds). It was also argued in Chapter 4 that laughter indicates that couplings can be variously negotiated and are not only motivated by communing in a community (which is the focus of bonding theory), but also by laughing off values around which participants cannot commune in a single community. Therefore, in order to avoid confusion with traditional terminology and to make it clear that this thesis models the bonding process differently than Stenglin and Martin (that is, it is modelled here as an expanded set of strategies that goes beyond communing together within a community\(^2\)), this expanded process (and its relations) will hereafter be referred to as affiliation. In introducing the social process of affiliation, it is important to describe how identities are

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\(^1\) That is not to say that affiliation is the only function of conversation (or humour), but that it is one purpose that is particularly salient in conversational humour and featured in ongoing talk. Along with the realisation of metafunctional meanings and other functions of conversation, speakers need to ongoingly negotiate bonds through the progression of discourse because identities and affiliations are so complex (John Knox, 2008, personal communication).

\(^2\) Bonding as it has been described thus far is reinterpreted as “communing affiliation”, one of three strategies for negotiating affiliation, in this thesis. Affiliation thus attempts to account for the way that conversational participants not only come together and commune through couplings but how they variously negotiate their community memberships as they present different couplings in text. In this way, affiliation builds on the foundations offered by bonding theory but also expands on it in response to the study of conversational humour.
conceptualised through bonds because this informs what type of model affiliation is and what relations it accounts for when it is negotiated in talk. Taking a social semiotic perspective on communities and identities, affiliation will be described as a process of co-identification between conversational participants who construe their identities instance by instance in the linguistic text.

This section describes how conversational participants identify in communities through bonds, and it demonstrates the social process of affiliation in terms of the various strategies that conversational participants employ to negotiate bonds. Section 5.1.1 introduces the notion of bonds and discusses how they are conceptualised as cultural patterns in an affiliation perspective. The issue of how bonds impact upon the perspective taken on identity in affiliation is then more fully explored in Section 5.1.2, providing a background for viewing affiliation as a social semiotic model of how we identify in communities. Three different strategies for negotiating affiliation are then put forward in Section 5.1.3. While laughter serves as the way in to this social process, it is not the only affiliative strategy.

5.1.1 Negotiating bonds as social patterns

When conversational participants negotiate affiliation, such as in humour, couplings construe social bonds that connect them together in the social sphere (see Figure 5.1).
Bonds are the social semiotic units by which affiliation is negotiated in the social environment. When we discuss the values of communities, then, we can conceive of these values as **bonds** that are constantly negotiated in text in the form of couplings. Attitude + ideation couplings are the linguistic evidence for the cause of laughter in humour, and bonds are the social semiotic (value/experience) units that couplings construe in the social context of affiliation. A bond is the smallest social unit that can be negotiated discursively (communed around, laughed at or rejected, as will be discussed in Section 5.1.3). Bonds involve time and are constantly negotiated and shifted across conversations, while we can only **see** the bonds through an instance of text, in the form of couplings.

Fortunately, laughter offers a concrete signal that couplings are creating some tension in the community belonging being construed. As interactants present couplings for affiliating together into shared value systems, these value systems also provide an underlying meaning which is brought into tension when a speaker presents a discordant coupling (the humorous surface meaning) in text. The participants’ laughter signals this tension and shows that the participants cannot share a bond that the coupling construes together but must laugh it off; we can thus interpret the belonging process through bonds (as the social units that they are construing and laughing at in humour). What is going on
in convivial conversational humour is a complex affiliative process whereby interactants not only bond together but also co-identify as members of communities, with laughter used to manage differential memberships. Tensions may occur in conversation, because participants are complex social persons constantly negotiating different and sometimes contrasting community memberships. At the same time, the tension is not serious but is laughed off in convivial conversational humour. The conversational participants are able to maintain their ongoing bonding through the laughter, as was described in Chapter 4, Section 4.1.3, and this suggests that the discrepancy between the community values presented by the participants does not pose a serious threat to their friendship. The tension is a non-threatening one, since rather than violating the participants’ core values, it is more of a social wrinkle to be ironed out between close friends through laughter.

A “wrinkle”\textsuperscript{3} is defined as the social tension that is created when a coupling construes a potential bond that cannot be shared by the conversational participants and which contrasts in a laughable way with an implicated bond that they share together. In other words, when we present couplings to construe bonds in instantiation, wrinkles occur in the interaction between a bond that is construed as laughable and a bond that we share. Wrinkles are non-serious tensions that are mendable, and convivial conversational humour offers a kind of smoothing of the wrinkles, or “social lubrication” (Fine & deSoucey, 2005, p. 9; see also Apte, 1985, p. 261), whereby the interactants maintain solidarity, and avoid a potential conflict of values, through laughter. Friends in conversation who laugh together show that they interpret the tension created by a coupling they cannot share as a humorous one, as one that they can iron out as an acceptable deviation from their shared communities. According to Viktoroff (1953), “laughter is always the laughter of a particular social group” (p. 14), and in convivial conversational humour interactants laugh off\textsuperscript{4} wrinkles in order to negotiate their shared relations to social groups.

The following excerpt, in which one speaker pretends to deny his participation in the conversation recording, demonstrates how participants negotiate tensions between bonds

\textsuperscript{3} Martin and White (2005, p. 90n) cite Suzanne Eggins as using this term to describe how laughter is usually provoked by wrinkles in the interaction rather than happiness. I have taken on this term in this thesis to define it and broaden it for my own purposes.

\textsuperscript{4} “Laugh off” is introduced here as a technical term to describe what action is taken in the process of affiliation (i.e. laughing affiliation).
as humorous wrinkles that would otherwise prevent them from bonding together. When B makes the false statement that he did not agree to the pre-authorisation of the recording, he presents a coupling of negative appreciation with signing the recording release that creates a wrinkle with the bond established by CO and N. In the examples in this chapter, the discordant coupling is represented by red font (concordant couplings in black); the bonds that are construed is represented in the right-hand column with the potential bond in red; and the wrinkle between the bonds is represented by a red explosion symbol:

| CO: Get people to stop talking and once you record you have to start recording I already signed | Ethical Consent |
| N: I already signed. | positive t-appreciation + recording |
| B: Okay. | positive t-appreciation + recording |
| I didn’t sign nuthin; … | negative t-appreciation + recording |
| N: (L) Don’t (LV) say that! |

Example 5.1: Wrinkle with Ethical Consent bond laughed off in humour (from Table 3.1 in Appendix A).

Although the speakers have attempted to commune together within a research community whereby they can all share in common positive bonds around research activities such as recording discourse, B creates a wrinkle by presenting a contrasting (and potentially threatening) coupling. In terms of bonds, the bond of Ethical Consent has been established by all of the speakers at the beginning of the talk, then B construes a potential (laughable) bond of Unwilling Participation with his negative appreciation coupling, and the wrinkle occurs between these two affiliative possibilities. However, because N laughs it off, she indicates that the tension is only a wrinkle and that they can share the Ethical Consent bond (since B has in actuality given his written permission) underlying the talk instead to continue affiliating. If the coupling was negotiated otherwise, it would perhaps have forced N to shut down the recording process because the tension that it poses is potentially threatening (it violates ethical values in the research community). However, because N and B share the underlying bond (of Ethical Consent) by which she could interpret this coupling as creating a non-serious wrinkle, she is able to mend it with laughter and maintain her collegial relations with B. B performs a kind of teasing here

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5 Names of bonds are given with initial capitals.
where the joking “disaffiliation” in the coupling he presents affirms the underlying affiliation between the participants (Geyer, 2008, p. 103). The bonds may be visualised as in Figure 5.2, with the potential bond represented by a sphere with a fuzzy border and the implicated bond represented as a solid sphere, both incorporating the coupling.

**Figure 5.2:** Both a potential bond and an implicated bond underlying the talk are construed by this coupling in humour; the wrinkle between them is represented by a red explosion symbol. The solid line of the arrow pointing to the potential bond shows that this bond is more easily identified by the coupling in text (the “surface” meaning in humour) than the underlying implicated bond.

Henceforth, a “wrinkle” is the humorous tension of concern in this thesis. The affiliation model introduced in this chapter describes how laughter provides a method for managing complex affiliations through bonds, particularly differential (i.e. potential) bonds that create wrinkles as conversational participants negotiate their shared affiliations. Accordingly, the social process that occurs is theorised as a model of affiliation in this thesis. The model accounts for both the negotiation of community values as a social process and the social semiotic representation of values, communities and the culture that
are involved in this negotiation represented on the cline of individuation. Affiliation is a process that we negotiate through bonds, manifested by couplings in text. It provides a second perspective on text: how experience bound with attitude (coupling) represents us as community members in relation to one another.

In other words, bonds can be distinguished from couplings according to where they are located in the semiotic framework. A coupling is a matter of instantiation—what we instantiate in text; a bond is a matter of affiliation, or what we construe with our couplings in the social environment of community. Instantiation and affiliation are two different dimensions of the linguistic theory. Linguistic meanings can only be bound up in particular ways according to the community of bonds, and specifically, which bonds we choose to negotiate as members of them. Laughter indicates that this is so, since a coupling is found funny in relation to the bonds that it constructs as in tension with each other (for instance, a negative appreciation bound with the recording of the conversation is funny in Example 5.1 only because it construes the potential bond in relation to one they have already agreed to share together).

Moreover, the laughter shows that participant identity, and specifically the communal identity of the negotiating participants, is at stake in affiliation. By laughing, participants simultaneously identify themselves as co-members of one community of bonds and not another. So, in affiliative terms, social persons are who they are based on what bonds they share with others. The concept of bonds, as considered through humour in conversation, therefore demands a particular view on identity that is conducive to a social semiotic perspective. Both bonding and identity construction are a matter of the interaction. The next section explores the perspective taken on identity in affiliation theory.

5.1.2 Affiliation and identity

Since bonds are conceptualised as the social semiotic unit in affiliation by which speakers construe their community memberships and are manifested in couplings in texts, it is clear that this thesis takes a broadly social constructionist view of identity. To be precise, identities are not pre-determined or fixed, but socially constructed, multiple and variable
(Benwell & Stokoe, 2007, p. 68), and identification occurs in affiliating with available beliefs and values in the social context. Identities are discursively constructed in affiliation through couplings, and interactants identify themselves through their memberships to communities of values based on the bonds shared between them. Moreover, conversational participants orient to identifying bonds and make these evident most especially in convivial conversational humour through laughter. Thus, identities can be interpreted in the ongoing conversation as speakers constantly negotiate couplings as bonds in their social sphere. Just as “constructionist researchers locate identity in the public realms of discourse and semiotic systems” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2007, p. 50), affiliation represents the semiotic system of communities in the culture in which persons can be located through bonds. We discursively negotiate our identities as community members through bonds that we can share, and these bonds make up the value sets of our communities and culture.

But affiliation is not only about bonding together around similarities; it also concerns how interactants identify together as co-members of particular communities of the culture through difference (from bonds that they cannot share). Convivial conversational humour demonstrates the process that occurs: participants laugh off wrinkles caused by unshared bonds in order to commune together around bonds that they do share, identifying themselves as “us”, and those who present the unshared bond as some degree of “other” (see Section 5.1.3.2). Following Boxer and Cortès-Conde (1997), the relation between bonding and identity is characteristic of conversational humour, whereby conversational participants negotiate “a relational identity with others and through others,” (p. 282) leading to a sense of group membership and an effect of bonding. Especially amongst friends, “maximum” relational identity display can be accomplished through humour that bonds (Boxer & Cortès-Conde, 1997, p. 293). Thus, a relational identity is negotiated through humour as speakers constantly introduce and handle social bonds that differentiate them, creating wrinkles laughed off in favour of their similarities—their “communal identity”. In Cléirigh’s (forthcoming) terms, “[b]onding through shared values and attentions of specific construals of experience reinforces group identity and social identity of individuals in that group”, and ultimately, “[i]t provides group cohesion

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6 For an interesting sociolinguistic view on the discursive construction of identity, see Omoniyi & White (2006).
7 For discussion, see Chapter 2, Section 2.1.2.2.
and cooperation, creating a community of ‘us’ as an integrated ‘self’”. For affiliation, the “integrated self” is the minimal possible representation of identity, because a bond represents how speakers co-identify and requires minimally two social persons interacting through text. Affiliation requires interaction.

The concept of a communal identity in social semiotic bonds moves away from the notion of the single “individual” in a number of ways. First, as was mentioned above, the bond requires minimally two persons in order to form and initiate an affiliative negotiation in the social sphere. A coupling that is not recognised as such, and not reacted to in a particular way by another interactant, does not construe a bond. Therefore, it does not commence the social process of affiliation whereby the interactants manage their communal identity together through the negotiation of the bond. Similarly to Ivanič (1998), this thesis finds that people are not isolated individuals, but align with particular values and subject positions in “person-by-person processes” (p. 332) that indicate their discoursal construction of identity.

Secondly, social persons in a semiotic affiliation perspective are not considered as “embodied” individuals, but identified in their construal through bonds in discursive interactions with others. Communities are also populated by bonds, connecting them together as social semiotic systems that we can interpret as interactants construe each bond in interaction. Martin et al. (to appear) warns against considering social persons and communities as embodied entities in a social semiotic perspective on language:

One thing we have to guard against here as functional linguists is a neuro/biological interpretation of individuals and communities instead of a social semiotic one. As Firth warns, it is not psycho-biological entities we are exploring, but rather the bundles of personae embodied in such entities and how these personae engender speech fellowships. We're not, in other words, looking at individuals interacting in groups but rather at persons and personalities communing in discourse.

(Martin et al., to appear)

So, rather than to conceive of community and identity as embodied individuals populating groups, they are instead interpreted as enacting semiotic systems with bonds as their meaning potential. A person is thus instantiated in text by couplings construed by interlocutors as bonds. Because bonds connect to the linguistic text through couplings,
“[w]ho we are to each other, then, is accomplished, disputed, ascribed, resisted, managed and negotiated in discourse” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2007, p. 4).

Finally, affiliation is not concerned with how an individual displays his or her public image or “face”. That is to say that relations of politeness or “face-work” as outlined by Brown and Levinson (1987) (and since problematised and re-defined in sociolinguistic studies, cf. Eelen, 2001a, 2001b; Geyer, 2008; Locher & Watts, 2005; Watts, 2003) do not entirely inform us about how conversational participants come together and manage tensions as community members through humour. Despite a body of linguistic studies of humour that have employed “positive politeness” to describe humour as a strategy for saving face (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1.2.1), there remains a need for a systematic model describing the collegial relations behind the kind of conversational humour that is found between friends (cf. Kotthoff, 1996). Although the description of positive politeness, for instance, seems to include notions of group identity and solidarity building, its focus on face-saving does not account for the way that friends in conversation will use humour even aggressively to achieve affiliation. As Norrick (1993a) explains, the shared underlying private bond between close friends and family members avoids the need for politeness conventions, allowing for aggressive types of humour to function for rapport (see also Holmes (2000a, p.174) on “jocular abuse” and Archakis & Tsakona (2005) on “in-group targeting”). Notions of face, then, seem to fundamentally concern the individual and how an individual identity is affected by strategies of politeness, while affiliation concerns how social persons co-identify and manage social bonds between them through affiliative strategies.\(^8\)

Bonds, furthermore, capture how participants’ identities are multiple and conflictual (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998) and ongoingly negotiated through the logogenesis of text. The text provides a window on the social relations of affiliation, and we are informed about what the conversational participants can co-identify with based on what is happening in the actual interaction (such as if they are laughing together, for instance). Bonds in this sense may be usefully compared to notions of “membership categorization

\(^8\) That is not to say that the individual does not exist, but rather that affiliation concerns how we set aside individuality in various ways to commune as persons that connect a culture. Of course, individuals do not define themselves entirely in terms of community memberships but also have sense of selves that can be defined by differences from others (Ivanič, 1998, p. 14). This aspect of identity is a matter of the “allocation” perspective on individuation in SFL (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1.3), and has also been theorised for instance by Ivanič (1998) and Don (2007).
analysis” (MCA) (discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3.3.3), which was introduced by Sacks (1992) and reformulated in Schegloff’s (2007a) and in Housley and Fitzgerald’s (2002) terms. In this model, speakers can be distinguished by a particular social categorization based on relevant aspects of the linguistic text that are “consequential to the interactional business” (Schegloff, 2007a, p. 474), such as “category-bound” activities, attributes, and predicates, which signal particular social categories and collections of categories (i.e., membership categorisation devices, or MCDs). Tann (2010) has shown the complementarity of the MCA and SFL approaches, proposing that SFL “can perhaps provide identity research with a detailed framework for analysing actual language use” (p. 169). Thus, linguistic couplings of ATTITUDE with IDEATION provide more delicate descriptions of “predicates”9 (cf. Housley & Fitzgerald, 2002, p. 69), or associations, attributes and activities tied to a particular category (bond), and are systematically related to the affiliation framework. In affiliation, to interpret communal identities being negotiated in talk, we concentrate on couplings that are occasioned in text (cf. Housley & Fitzgerald, 2002) and signals such as laughter that reveal them. Through couplings, speakers make relevant which bonds are in play and thus which communities they are constructing together.

Additionally, Housley and Fitzgerald (2002) recognise “how local configurations of categorization may also involve a recognisable appeal to wider social process, concerns and factors as part and parcel of the inferential work of members’ everyday affairs” (p. 78). As was shown in Example 5.1 in Section 5.1.1, even hierarchical roles and institutions (such as the research community) may be brought into, and made relevant in, humorous conversations. Thus, identities in affiliation are also considered in relation to the social structure and how they are brought into the text by speakers as “salient topics for members” (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2002, p. 80). Though the text informs us about which bonds (as identity categories) are important to the interactants, their relation to the overarching structure of power relations must be acknowledged since they are so pervasive in conversational talk (cf. Eggins & Slade, 1997). Therefore, knowledge of social categories is brought in when analysing text in order to properly interpret how interactants identify in humorous, and non-humorous, affiliative negotiations in conversation. Stokoe and Smithson (2001) argue that “analysts are also members and

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9 These are most similar to “moral imperative-bound predicates” (Jayyusi, 1984).
bring to bear their common-sense knowledge in the process of analysis” of identity categorization in conversation (p. 226), so that couplings presented in text are perceived with regard to how they relate to bonds of particularly ideologically-based communities (such as gender, age, class, etc.) and are informed by these assumptions.

In sum, identities are considered in affiliation to be discursive, relational, and ongoingly negotiated. Social persons are represented semiotically as bonds, which reflect the identities at stake in affiliative negotiations as communal ones, and the bonds are managed through such strategies as laughter. Moreover, the co-identification of conversational participants is multi-levelled since they negotiate community bonds that also bring in ideological memberships to the social structure. In humour, participants can manage potential conflicts between memberships through laughter, offering a strategy with which we can come together and at the same time exhibit what differentiates us from others. Affiliation is therefore a social process because it involves the constant logogenetic negotiation of bonds through couplings in text; when participants share a bond, they enter an affiliative practice in which they co-identify into communities. It necessarily involves both speakers and hearers because bonds require minimally two persons and can be recognised when attitude + ideation couplings are reacted to in a particular way. Conversational participants variously negotiate bonds as “communable” or not depending on the community memberships that they include in their social identities. They achieve affiliation by diverting those bonds that do not align between them and communing around those bonds that do.

The negotiation aspect of affiliation further distinguishes not only how participants “rally…around communal ideals” (Martin & Stenglin, 2006, p. 217), but how they differentially align by laughing off and rejecting unshared values as well. In fact, a bond can be further defined as the social semiotic unit by which we discursively negotiate our communal identities by deferring, communing around, or rejecting them through discourse in the form of couplings. Three different strategies of affiliation will be explored in the following section.
5.1.3 Strategies of affiliation

Bonds may be presented and reacted to in different ways or through different strategies in talk. Laughter signals that the social process of affiliation is going on in an unfolding text, but laughing is only one strategy for affiliating. Conversational participants not only laugh off the wrinkles that create tension but also commune around bonds that they can share and reject bonds that create such a serious tension that it is considered a violation to the shared bond sensitivities of the participants. Thus, affiliation includes three strategies, characterised by different types of discourse: “communing affiliation”, “laughing affiliation” and “condemning affiliation” (see Table 5.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>COMMUNING</th>
<th>LAUGHING</th>
<th>CONDEMNING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic “action” towards bond</td>
<td>Sharing a bond or rallying around a bonding icon (Stenglin, 2004)</td>
<td>Deferring an unshared potential bond; commuting around an implicated bond</td>
<td>Rejecting an unshareable potential bond to commune around a shared bond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of tension</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>“wrinkle”</td>
<td>“violation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic discourse</td>
<td>Rallying/Epideictic</td>
<td>Humour</td>
<td>Gossip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Affiliation strategies.

As the table shows under “communing”, participants share a bond (or rally around a bondicon) straightforwardly, in order to commune in the same community without creating tension. This strategy of affiliation is characteristic of epideictic or rallying discourses, where participants come together to celebrate a shared bond (e.g. the Olympics, see Stenglin, 2004). In “laughing affiliation” and “condemning affiliation”, on the other hand, a tension is created when the speaker presents a discordant coupling. Depending on the nature of the tension caused by introducing the coupling, the potential bond that it construes is either deferred (as an unshared bond) or rejected (as an unshareable bond) in order for the participants to commune around an alternative bond.
The discursive action taken is determined based on the seriousness of the tension along with the actual participants at talk and their own sociality. Speakers negotiate between the similarities and differences in their sociality through bonds, and affiliation involves how participants go about negotiating these bonds, including those that are shared and unshared along with those that are unshareable. Affiliation thus involves “Sometimes…getting ‘it’, sometimes it involves rejecting ‘it’, and sometimes it involves laughing in recognition of ‘it’” (Queen, 2005, p. 254).

The next section will describe the communing strategy of affiliation first through a simplified conversational text in which humour does not occur. Then, the laughing strategy of affiliation that is the principal focus in the analysis of convivial conversational humour is presented in Section 5.1.3.2. The section includes a description of the kinds of humorous variation speakers draw on to play with bonds, as well as the space for identity negotiation that this strategy allows. Finally, the strategy of condemning affiliation is introduced in Section 5.1.3.3.

5.1.3.1 Communing: straightforward affiliating

The basic strategy for affiliating in talk is communing affiliation, in which conversational participants share a bond (a core value of a community) or a bonding icon/bondicon (Stenglin, 2004) (a core value that has been attitudinally charged and iconized over time, cf. Martin 2008c; see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2.2.2) within a community. They do so by presenting an attitude + ideation coupling that construes a single bond around which they can commune. Core bonds differ from bondicons in terms of their negotiability and stability in communities, but both would seem to feature in communing affiliation. As bondicons are “emblems or powerfully evocative symbols of social belonging which have a strong potential for rallying” (Stenglin, 2004, p. 406), they are less negotiable, well-institutionalised (across instances of texts) bonds of communities that are more powerful and significant to these communities than core bonds.

10 This is similar to Veatch’s (1998) three-level scale of violations of the “moral order” in a situation. The scale ranges from no violation, to funny violation, to threatening violation based on the perceiver’s level of emotional commitment to what they believe to be “normal” in the situation. It differs from this theory in part because “no violation” in affiliation terms does not mean that the coupling is unremarkable but that it construes a shared bond, and also because affiliation concerns all of the range of attitudes beyond propriety.
Core bonds feature in communing affiliation discourses because they still require constant negotiation as conversational participants continuously reinforce how they are similar as members of communities. Communing affiliation reformulates the process of bonding as described by Stenglin (2004) and Martin (2004b) as one strategy of affiliation, and it importantly differs from the other two affiliation strategies in that speakers only negotiate one bond. Example 5.2 shows the communing strategy used for a bond that is renegotiated by the participants so that they can affiliate together as friends. The three conversational participants commune around a bond realised by a coupling of intensified positive appreciation for a pie party that they regularly participate in together.

Example 5.2: Communing around a core bond; arrows and reinforced border on sphere show the repeated construal of the Fun Pie Party bond (from Table 2.12 in Appendix A).

In Chapter 4, Section 4.1.2, this example was given to exhibit how the prosody of positive attitudes towards the pie party connected the interactants in straightforward bonding. Re-describing the process in affiliation terms, these couplings construe a bond of “Fun Pie Party”, and the participants commune around it as members of a friendship community by accepting it and building on C’s coupling. The pie party bond is a core bond that represents their friendship community, so that they are able to commune together within it to reinforce their shared belonging to that community and their continued affiliation with the same bonds. As the speakers do not present any coupling that is discordant with the bond, they do not create a tension to be laughed off or rejected. Instead, they construct a shared community of values together directly without introducing or acknowledging any outside tension. Communing affiliation allows interactants to negotiate who they are based on what bonds they share and can commune around. F, N, and C are friends based on the Fun Pie Party bond that forms the core of their community. By communing around it, the speakers demonstrate a straightforward affiliative negotiation of shared identity.
Figure 5.3 exhibits how the pie party bond connects these participants as members of the community of bonds.

![Figure 5.3: Couplings construe a Fun Pie Party bond that connects a community of friends. Connections between bonds (of which examples have been given) into bond networks are described in Section 5.2.1.4 below.](image)

Though core bonds can be crucial to the communities that they construe, they do not rest and remain consistent over time but are constantly negotiated in relation to other bonds in which they come into contact. So, when core bonds do not harmonise with other bonds in these negotiations, they may become part of humorous discourses (see Example 5.11 in Section 5.2.1.3 for illustration).

To summarise communing affiliation, conversational participants present a coupling in conversation that construes a bond, and they commune together around that shared bond to reinforce their belonging together within a community. As complex social persons, however, we do not only negotiate who we are within communities, but we also have to negotiate our differences. Conversational laughter works as a concrete signal of the tensions that occur when we affiliate through discourse. Laughter will be identified in the following section as a strategy for manoeuvring around these tensions.
5.1.3.2 Laughing: deferring bonds

Laughing affiliation concerns the way that interactants laugh off wrinkles, and thereby defer an intruding potential bond, in order to affiliate around an implicated bond with their interlocutors. Ivanič (1998) describes the “multiple, jostling subjectivities” of writers in academic contexts, whose positions are “not fixed or consistent, but jostle against each other in a constant process of negotiation” (p. 322). The constant process of negotiation holds for constructed identities in spoken discourse as well because participants negotiate their subjectivities based on aspects of their communities that are (or are not) shared by their discourse partners. Because social persons are complex and affiliate with many different communities of values, when we interact with friends in discourse we must negotiate these differences as well. The laughing affiliation strategy and the condemning affiliation strategy (detailed in the following section) differ from communing affiliation in that a coupling construes two bonds in tension, a potential one and an implicated one, and the participants must remove the tension in order to share the implicated bond and affiliate together. In other words, friends continually negotiate the inevitable tensions that occur in the “dialectic process” of friendship to strike a balance between what bonds them and what differentiates them (Bubel, 2006, pp. 13–14).

In convivial conversational humour, a speaker presents a coupling that construes a potential bond to share with hearers, but this bond creates a laughable wrinkle with an implicated bond underlying the humour (one that the interlocutors can in fact commune around together). Through the laughing affiliation strategy, interactants may laugh off the wrinkle together and defer the potential bond that the coupling construes in favour of the implicated bond with which they can identify in a shared community. Laughing affiliation is about deferring, both in terms of how speakers defer the laughable potential bond and how they defer to the implicated bond. This strategy is demonstrated in Example 5.3, in which two interactants who are residence dons (supervisors) at university discuss their boss’ extreme behaviour in sending the speaker a late-night page (on the residence pager). P presents a wrinkle in the ongoing affiliation between her and G by introducing the

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11 Both bonds are construed by the coupling simultaneously in laughing affiliation. The label “potential bond” attempts to capture its indeterminate status in relation to the “implicated bond” which has a more certain status in the sense that it is something the participants share in a community together.
coupling of negative appreciation for late-night paging since her boss, Shannon, had presented this to her the previous night. Note also the combination that these couplings make with choices in the system of GRADUATION (as noted in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3.3.3):

Example 5.3: Laughing affiliation (from Table 6.2 in Appendix A).

Because Shannon’s coupling construes a potential bond that wrinkles with the speakers’ preference for daytime contact (which is also preferred by their other boss, Tobi), they react to it with laughter, marking it as unshared between them. P and G laugh off the wrinkle together to defer the potential bond of Late Summons that Shannon has construed and at the same time reinforce the implicated bond (of Daytime Contact) that they can share together as residence dons. Both interactants identify as dons rather than don managers in this case and can commune together around those bonds that make up the dons community. Instead of simply presenting the Daytime Contact bond to commune around, as in communing affiliation, P presents the wrinkle that she has previously been unable to laugh off with Shannon in order to laugh now (and affiliate) with G. In this way, she can negotiate her similarity with G as a residence don and their shared differences with Shannon as a don manager (see Figure 5.4):
Figure 5.4: Laughing off a wrinkle caused by an unshared potential bond; arrow shows how the potential bond is deferred once the wrinkle is laughed off, while the implicated bond is shared between the participants.

Wrinkles are laughed off because they intrude in the communing between conversational participants, in a way similar to how tickling presents a tension that intrudes upon our physical selves. As was discussed in Chapter 3, tickling is a strongly interpersonal, social act, and laughter may have evolved as a defence from external, non-threatening intrusions. In conversation, unshared potential bonds (manifested in couplings) intrude into the communal identities that we negotiate ongoingly as a matter of affiliation, and laughter serves as a way to defer these intruding bonds (and dissolve the tension they create). As Partington (2006) notes, “People laugh at what they find surprising but then adjudge to be non-threatening” (p. 227).13 The tension created in laughing affiliation discourses is a wrinkle because it is non-threatening and can be easily ironed out by friends who laugh together; their laughter signals that despite the differences between

13 Partington describes a threat in terms of “face-threatening acts” along politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), but in affiliation terms, the potential threat (i.e. tension) occurs in the communal identity between the participants (since it concerns not the individual public image but the co-identification of at least two social persons).
bonds, it does not present any danger to their friendship. Laughing affiliation is thus a strategy that allows friends to negotiate similarities while deferring differences.

5.1.3.2.1 Making vs. acknowledging wrinkles

The non-threatening wrinkle that is caused by intruding potential bonds in humour can be acknowledged or created by the speaker in the conversation. That is to say that in convivial conversational humour, participants may come together by laughing off wrinkles caused by those outside and inside of the conversation and general tensions in daily situations, or by making wrinkles to be laughed off together. Example 5.3 exhibited how the participants, G and P, affiliated together when P acknowledged a wrinkle made by their boss, and together they deferred Shannon’s potential bond as something they would have to put up with during their working hours. Acknowledging a wrinkle may also involve pointing out tensions in daily life as a coping mechanism, such as in the following example. Two female speakers laugh about the extreme winter weather conditions of the Canadian province of Quebec as they walk through the streets of the city of Toronto (located in the neighbouring province of Ontario).

Example 5.4: Acknowledging a wrinkle between appreciated weather conditions (from Table 1.2 in Appendix A).

Because P hails from Quebec, she has spent time there with family during her holidays, and now returning to Toronto she acknowledges the wrinkle that she had to put up with during her time there. Specifically, despite her intensified negative appreciation for

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14 The physiological effects of laughter also facilitate friendship and conviviality, since heightened social and psychological “animation” persists following laughter and “[a]n elevated level of mental and emotional interactiveness develops between people who have been laughing together” (Fry, 1994, p. 115).
Quebec’s cold weather, she had to endure it but can now laugh it off with G as a laughable tension. They can also share their underlying positive appreciation for Toronto’s weather as mild and, by acknowledging the wrinkle they identify together as members of a Torontonian community, deferring the cold weather bonds of the Quebec community. The negotiation allows them to cope and to affiliate at the same time.

Acknowledging a wrinkle by another member of a shared community with whom the interlocutors are interacting is also a method for managing differences that could potentially divide them. In the following instance, speaker CO acknowledges the wrinkle that he perceives when his friend S admits to positively appreciating a “light” beer. By implicating that S is no longer a “man” for drinking light beer, CO acknowledges the wrinkle created between men’s and women’s bonds in this all-male conversational context and laughs off the wrinkle together with his male interlocutors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W:</th>
<th>(Let’s have) more beer</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J:</td>
<td>Do you want another one? … Can’t turn down a good beer</td>
<td>(positive affect -want) positive appreciation + (full-strength) beer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:</td>
<td>I drink Coors Light now man</td>
<td>positive t-appreciation + Coors Light beer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO:</td>
<td>== Whoa</td>
<td>(negative attitude15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W:</td>
<td>== I’ve been drinking light beer a lot in the summertime</td>
<td>(grad) positive t-appreciation + light beer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO:</td>
<td>I thought you were a man this whole time (SL)</td>
<td>(grad) negative t-judgement + S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S:</td>
<td>Come on (LA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 5.5: Acknowledging a wrinkle made by a conversational insider (from Table 10.1 in Appendix A).

By acknowledging a speaker’s wrinkle, or “targeting insider behaviour”, humour is also used here also as a covert correction mechanism for in-group behaviour (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005, p. 43). However, because the bond of Refreshing Light Beer, identified by CO as a “women’s” bond16, is simply deferred, the participants can still affiliate while allowing S to positively appreciate light beer in other contexts. The participants reinforce
the implicated “men’s” bond of full-strength beer and they are able to manage S’s divergence from this bond as a laughable wrinkle. These examples exhibit how issues that occur in daily encounters can be acknowledged and negotiated by interlocutors as laughable wrinkles.

Furthermore, speakers themselves may create wrinkles by presenting themselves as deviating from the bonds they implicate as shared between them and their interlocutors. In Example 5.6 presented below, the first speaker admits to the wrinkle she has created in the current conversation with her young female friends by positively appreciating eating too much over the holidays, and the hearers include themselves in this behaviour to laugh it off together:

Example 5.6: Conversational participants laughing off their own wrinkle (from Table 1.1 in Appendix A).

By participating in the wrinkle that their over-eating has created for them (causing them to diet), these participants are able to defer the bond around eating well during the holidays (shared by their family communities) as something they do not commune around now. Instead, and at the same time, they commune together around an implicated bond of being thin and beautiful (in their young female students’ community) that makes their over-eating funny. Laughing affiliation provides for these participants to open up a space in which they can allow there to be various bonds by which to identify themselves

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17 Note that the Beautiful Thinness bond is actually deferred here as well (the interlocutors laugh) in favour of a different Healthy Eating bond. However, because this example focuses on their talk about eating too much in which “Beautiful Thinness” is first the underlying implicated bond, the laughter has been left out here (see Table 1.1 in Appendix A for full analysis).

18 That these interactants are negotiating a female identity is supported by David et al.’s (2006, p. 82) finding that topics such as their own appearance and food/diet were commonly shared between females but not males in their conversational humour data.

19 The laughing expressions also indicate that these participants can share in all of the communities construed—both communable and laughable—because it grows from U’s single, quiet, breathy burst into a high volume, open “roar” that is shared by all (cf. Knight, forthcoming a).
and affiliate around. While they can commune around a Happy Fatness bond with their families during the holidays, they can also commune around a Beautiful Thinness bond with their fellow female students when they return to university. Because they can laugh off the wrinkle of the Happy Fatness bond together, they both defer it and acknowledge that they might otherwise affiliate with this bond (commune around it) on other occasions. By making wrinkles, speakers can invite others to join in deferring bonds that they may have communed around in other contexts and can make their “deviation” acceptable as they negotiate affiliation together.

Humour allows conversational participants to express and manage roles and affiliations with numerous social networks that may not otherwise be accepted into their relationships with interlocutors. This is because laughing affiliation is a strategy that opens up the space between those who are “in” and those who are “out” and instead offers a way to defer the bonds that might otherwise be construed within these strict categorisations. The next section describes how affiliation incorporates an identity “space” for conversational negotiations.

5.1.3.2.2 Negotiating an identity space

According to Benwell and Stokoe (2006), “[i]n terms of identity, places and boundaries are constructed in order to channel human activity and produce spaces of inclusion and exclusion” (p. 240). However, convivial conversational humour reveals to us that the space between inclusion and exclusion is not separate and that the space is flexible. Specifically, interactants can resist exclusion to belong, and they do so by negotiating bonds in the space between in-groups and out-groups. Thus, rather than focusing on the strict distinction between “in-groups” and “out-groups” and on humour as a strategy strictly functioning for “the construction of solidarity and in-group identity” (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005, p. 42, italics added), affiliation demonstrates that there is an identity space between these boundaries that is negotiated by interactants through humour. Humour is used most often in friendship groups ultimately in the service of “constructing and maintaining good relationships” (Holmes & Marra, 2002, p. 69), and interactants must allow flexibility in their co-identification. Bonds are mediated at varying degrees as acceptable or not, and the communal identity of the interactants as members of a
community is strengthened when they are able to laugh off their potential differences together.

Flexibility is vital since interactants have complex identities and many possibilities for belonging to the multitude of communities made relevant in affiliative negotiations. The constant laughter throughout conversations between friends suggests that they utilize a flexible space of belonging to incorporate these many interacting communities. Because they continue to talk and affiliate together through the laughter, it is clearly not a simple matter of “laughing with” or “laughing at”, affiliation or “disaffiliation” (Glenn, 2003a, p. 31). Even in such types of humour as teasing, interactants are not simply sharing an in-group, nor placing the hearer in an out-group, but rather are negotiating the differences of what they can share between them and laughing them off together (cf. Habib, 2008). For instance, Queen (2005) showed formulaic jokes and teasing to be a way for her subjects to “balance the competing and complex demands of an orientation to social similarity and social differentiation” (p. 239) in what she calls an ongoing process of “schismogenesis” (an interactive process of creating and solidifying social distinctions) and “equigenesis” (an interactive process of creating, recognising and solidifying similarity). In conversational humour, a balance is achieved between how we differ and how we are the same because participants can defer bonds and laugh off the wrinkles that they cause. Conversational humour enables interactants to “negotiate attitudes and alignments, and… degrees of ‘otherness’ and ‘in-ness’” (Eggins & Slade, 1997, p. 155, italics added), and they negotiate these aspects in relation to one another, coming together and belonging to certain communities while identifying who, or what bonds, can more or less belong with them.

Whereas the identity space is enabled by humour, the other affiliative strategies promote distinctions of inclusion and exclusion. The communing affiliation strategy promotes affiliating together in a community or in-group, and condemning affiliation promotes affiliating by rejecting another community, acknowledging it as an out-group; but laughing affiliation situates the interactants’ co-construed identities as a mixture of interacting bonds open for negotiation. Bonds are simply “deferred” for other possible interactions and identified as acceptable by the negotiating interactants.

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20 Based on Gal and Irvine’s (1999) model.
Furthermore, the three strategies of affiliation illustrate how conversational participants differentially identify themselves together. Shared bonds, around which participants *commune*, represent self/us; laughable unshared bonds, which participants *defer* with laughter, represent those we might otherwise affiliate with (in different interactions and circumstances) and including those we are *forced* to affiliate with; unshareable bonds, which participants *reject* entirely, represent the other. These categorizations align with Cléirigh’s (forthcoming) conceptualisation of the distinction between self and other in communities of users as a continuum:

The self-other distinction is itself a continuum rather than a binary opposition: a scale that extends from ‘first person us’ to ‘second person you’ (those we talk to) to ‘third person them’ (those we talk about).

We allow those whose bonds we defer to be affiliated with us at other times.

Laughter therefore provides a mechanism by which interactants can negotiate degrees of who they are together, allowing for a space between those bonds that represent *self/us* and those that represent *other* (see Figure 5.5).

![Figure 5.5: A space for identity negotiation.](image)

It is perhaps due to the disjunction created by a distinct “us” and “them” categorisation that friends in conversation use laughter as a means for dissolving tension, and making light of situations that might otherwise be too serious for ongoing conversation. Particularly when dealing with shared values, it is important for friends not to create offence against those values that may differ between them and to offer acceptance to

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21 Still, deferring has its boundaries, in that if a speaker jokingly presents a bond of prejudice in conversation, for instance, it may be laughed off but interactants will often show their distaste for it as being unfunny and in fact condemnable (e.g. by saying “ooh” or shaking their heads while laughing). This indicates that there can be a fine line between laughing and condemning in affiliative negotiations.
friends with whom they interact on a frequent and intimate basis. The balance that they achieve with humour and laughter allows participants to successfully maintain their “bond security” (Fearon, 2004, p. 156).

There are a number of reasons why interactants use laughing affiliation with friends in conversation and negotiate the space between who they are and who they are not. In many cases, they create humour to cope with bonds of communities that are in some way forced upon them, and they also defer bonds that are a possibility or eventuality in their future. For instance, the speaker in Example 5.7 laughs off a wrinkle made by his teaching supervisor to cope with his forced role as a subordinate to her in the institutional hierarchy of English teaching.

Example 5.7: Deferring forced bonds to cope (from Table 4.1 in Appendix A).

CO points out the wrinkle caused by the supervisor when she distracts the students, laughing it off and deferring her bonds with his interlocutors since he cannot reject them (or else find himself unemployed) (see also Table 6.2 in Appendix A).

When the interactants in Example 5.6 (repeated here) defer the heavy eating bond that they all shared with family members during the holidays, they allow themselves the possibility of affiliating around this bond again in other future occasions.
Example 5.6: Deferring bonds to allow for affiliation possibilities (from Table 1.1 in Appendix A).

And in the next example, the speakers acknowledge the probability that at least one of them will affiliate again with the community of chic Toronto restaurant, Sassafraz, and so defer the bond of open indoor smoking (recently banned in the city) that Sassafraz has presented.

Example 5.8: Deferring bonds that are likely to be shared in the future (“Open Smoking” and “Regular Patronage” are both bonds of a Sassafraz community) (from Table 1.4 in Appendix A).22

From these instances it is apparent that conversational participants negotiate bonds as laughable to cope with forced affiliations and to allow themselves a margin for identifying with these bonds as a possibility at other times.

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22 See Appendix B for full transcribed text of this example, and Appendix C for the sound clip.
In summary, it is in the strategy of laughing affiliation that interactants negotiate the identity space between that of “who they are” and “who they are not”, mediating these extremes through humour. It is a method for managing differences and potential conflicts that occur when other bonds come into contact with those shared in the conversation, and it offers flexibility in terms of how we identify ourselves across communities together. This is because the tension created is only a minor wrinkle between bonds to be ironed out by laughter, allowing intruding bonds to remain a funny but possible aspect of our identities. To laugh off a wrinkle is to accept the bond as an acceptable difference. When an intruding bond cannot be deferred by laughter, however, the tension that it causes is shown to violate—rather than wrinkle—what the interactants share. Violating tensions are a matter of the condemning strategy of affiliation, which will be explained in the next section.

5.1.3.3 Condemning: rejecting bonds

“I think you could say that a dead parrot sketch is funnier than a dead baby sketch.”

(John Cleese, 2006)

Condemning affiliation is characteristic of gossip discourses (cf. Eggins & Slade, 1997, pp. 273–310), where a conversational participant presents a coupling that creates a serious tension between bonds, one that violates the shared bonds of the interlocutors. In order to continue affiliating and commune around their shared bonds, interactants must reject the violating bond and eradicate the tension it has caused. Condemning affiliation usually functions to align the participants around serious values, and it is based on those values that the participants can recognise a particular bond that has been presented by some projected other (often in the past) as creating a violation (a kind of “bond threat” (Fearon, 2004, p. 157)). Because the tension is a serious violation to their bond sensitivities and clashes in a serious way with the participants’ commutable bonds, the violating bond cannot be deferred but is rejected entirely. By rejecting it, interactants condemn the violation for momentarily preventing their ongoing affiliation and reinforce the shared bond to commune and identify as members of a shared community of values.

The condemning affiliation strategy is demonstrated in the following example. The speaker makes apparent that a bond presented by her stage manager conflicts with the
bonds shared between her and her theatre staff. The social process starts with K presenting a coupling of negative appreciation for the criticism that has been given by an outside participant, her stage manager, and then juxtaposing it with a coupling that construes a bond of Motivating Encouragement shared by her and her staff.

Example 5.9: Condemning affiliation (violation represented by red X).

In retelling the event, speaker K recounts how her stage manager would use a lot of criticizing in managing, whereas the rest of the participants would evaluate criticism negatively by coupling positive appreciation with “keeping positive”. Because the stage manager presents a negativity that is so contradictory to the positive environment that K and her staff attempt to maintain, it creates a serious violation that prevents them from communing together, so she is condemned in the conversation. The coupling (“act + negative”) has construed an offensive bond that contrasts with and violates the participants’ own shared bonds, and they reject the offensive bond to commune together now (K shares the story to commune with G around Motivating Encouragement).

In negotiating condemning affiliation, then, interactants bring violating bonds into the conversation so that they can reject them together to reinforce strongly held bonds of their shared communities. Since gossip seems to necessitate judgement of social sanction and is used to implicitly assert appropriate behaviour and maintain group values (cf. Eggins & Slade, 1997, p. 276), the condemning strategy is not about allowing room for difference as in laughing affiliation. As Norrick and Spitz (2008, p. 1682) acknowledge, the effectiveness of humour depends in large part on the seriousness of the conflict. To reinforce social structures and norms, conversational participants need to reject those behaviours that threaten them, since the tension that is created between the bonds is a
socially threatening one—a violation that cannot be repaired or simply deferred as with wrinkles.

Interactants negotiate who they are based on who they are not and would not otherwise be or affiliate with in the condemning strategy of affiliation. They construe a shared self that is “defined by the affiliations it avoids” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 230). In discourse, the participants reject bonds that are unshareable in favour of bonds that are shared between them within a community. There is a tension that is presented here between two bonds, but because the tension is presented as serious enough to be rejected, there is no laughter reaction. It is not a matter of a humorous incongruity between bonds, but rather bonds in conflict. Bonds in conflict offer less flexibility for affiliative negotiation because if the interlocutors do not recognise the violation, they do not share the core underlying bond and may be condemned themselves. Condemning affiliation also exhibits why laughter is such a crucial tool for the maintenance of friendships and close relationships, since it allows for a space for identifying whereby interactants can reinforce existing bonds while incorporating differences at the same time.

5.1.4 Summary of affiliation as a social process

This section has functioned to develop affiliation as a social process by introducing two significant aspects: the social semiotic unit of the bond in affiliation, with which conversational participants negotiate their sociality and identify communally, and three different strategies used between speakers and hearers to variously manage their communal identities. Bonds connect attitude + ideation couplings in the linguistic text with the social context of affiliation, and they are important units in defining who we are as we come together in different conversational contexts. They are used to construe communities, and in particular represent community values, which aids in the development of a model of communities in the systemic functional linguistic framework. In addition, strategies of affiliation exhibit how bonds come into contact through the unfolding of discourse, as speakers present couplings to commune, to laugh together, or to condemn others. These strategies thus show that there are degrees of togetherness by

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23 This is exemplified in the binary and disjunctive positions set up in the history texts explored in Tann (2010), by which readers are required, and given no option but, to choose one position or the other.
which interactants can co-identify through their bonds as community members, in terms of who they are, who they are not, and who they might otherwise be or affiliate with. These aspects of affiliation specify more precisely what it is that conversational participants are laughing at, since wrinkles occur when different bonds create a non-serious tension. They also present the reason behind the laughter as a matter of affiliating with interlocutors while allowing for a space to identify differentially from one another.

Affiliation therefore accounts for the social process that occurs in convivial conversational humour and was expanded in this section to encompass different types of affiliative negotiations as well. Furthermore, the aspects outlined in the previous sections have made it clear that affiliation as a social process involves connections between bonds and communities of the culture, and these demand theorising in an affiliative model as well. To locate affiliation within the framework of systemic functional linguistics involves building the levels of community and identity that are relevant as social persons negotiate the affiliative process and providing a detailed description of these relations. Hence, to properly represent and illustrate what is being accomplished socially in these interactions, the cline of individuation offers a framework for representing these levels of connections. The following section explores the relevant levels of community for an affiliation perspective on the individuation cline.

5.2 Levels of community: an affiliation perspective on the cline of individuation

The primary aims of this section are to present a social semiotic model of the community relations at stake in negotiations of affiliation and to represent and situate affiliation within the theoretical framework of SFL. How this thesis theorises the role of affiliation as a perspective on the individuation cline in SFL will be discussed, with individuation represented in this view as a cline of relations that connects bonds to communities or networks of bonds and the culture. As these areas are explored, phases of the convivial conversational humorous texts will provide evidence of them.
Since affiliation combines the interpersonal with the ideational, locating the social relations found in conversational humour outside of a single metafunctional domain, it cannot be represented on the realisation hierarchy. By considering couplings through instantiation, it is clear that the additional hierarchy of individuation aids in interpreting the social processes that are occurring when meanings come together in text. Individuation has been concerned with how speakers identify and are identified differentially by the meanings that are allocated to them in a culture (involving the individual repertoire), but a systematic model of communities and a comprehensive description of how we align and affiliate as community members have not yet been built into the theory. This thesis thus develops the individuation cline in terms of the affiliation perspective, providing a background for discussing communities in SFL theory and for describing how it is that we negotiate who we are together in conversational text.

Section 5.2.1 explores how affiliation is modelled on the cline of individuation, proposing features for the cline that are informed by this perspective. The affiliation perspective on the individuation cline is introduced with its population of features as different levels of community construed through bonds, and the strategies of affiliation are presented to explore how they may be visualised through the levels of the cline. The sections then move in a bottom-up direction to describe each feature of the cline, beginning with bonds as the minimal social unit through to communities represented as clusters of bonds differentiated as personal and ideological “bond networks” and culture represented as a system of bonds. The chapter concludes by summarising the model of affiliation as a social process and as a perspective on communities on the individuation cline.

5.2.1 Theorising affiliation

Turning from an allocation perspective on individuation to an affiliation perspective requires a reformulation of the features that populate the cline. While in previous studies of individuation researchers have concerned themselves with what choices in the overall system of language of the culture are distributed to the repertoire of an individual through instances of talk, this thesis orientes to an alternative bottom-up focus on how the construal of the person reveals communities of the culture. In other words, allocation in
individuation focuses on *difference* in terms of how semantic styles or variation show how a person differs (ontogenetically) from the community; affiliation, on the other hand, focuses on communal values and associations with communities in the logogenesis of the text (i.e. sheds light on *similarities* between speakers). Affiliation does not include the “individual” in its theorisation, but rather the “bond”, which is a social semiotic construct of identity—of social persons as members of culture that can be identified in the *interaction*. Through the concept of the bond, affiliation concerns minimally two persons in interaction and is specifically manifested by attitude + ideation couplings in linguistic text. So, while Martin et al. (to appear) include the labels “persona”, “sub-culture”, “master identity” and “culture” on the cline (see Figure 2.9 in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1.3) from an allocation perspective, in this chapter, the cline is populated from an affiliation perspective with bonds as its point of departure and primary social unit. Hence, in relation to the hierarchies of SFL, this thesis develops the individuation cline alongside instantiation and realisation as a matter of affiliation, and it does so in response to the interaction of couplings and laughter in convivial conversational humour.

The social process of affiliation can thus be visualised as a movement that connects bonds on the cline to their construction in social networks and the broader system of the culture at different levels. By representing these relations on a cline, this thesis takes a systems perspective on sociality (see Knight, 2010), and through this perspective we may be able to consider the process of affiliation as a negotiation of identities connected at different degrees of generality, or perhaps density in Milroy’s (1987) terms (see Section 5.2.1.4.1). The individuation cline from an affiliation perspective will be presented and described in the following section.

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24 This may be expanded upon in future work, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.2.1.
25 It is unclear at this stage of theorising what principle may be behind the relations of bonds to communities and communities to culture, but the clinal representation aids in visualising and interpreting these levels. See Chapter 6, Section 6.2.1 for discussion.
5.2.1.1 Levels of affiliation on the individuation cline

The affiliation perspective concerns how we connect, and how dense these connections are in terms of bonds. The individuation cline in an affiliation perspective is represented in Figure 5.6.

![Figure 5.6: Levels of affiliation on the individuation cline.](image)

As Figure 5.6 illustrates, bonds can be seen to cluster into communities of bonds, and then to more generalised ideological divisions of community.

A bond is the minimal social unit on the cline and is manifested by a coupling in affiliative negotiations in text. It is represented in the diagram at the bottom of the cline as a sphere enclosing a coupling. The bond is connected to a particular community as it is
construed, and this process is indicated by a broken line. Communities are perceived in this thesis as social semiotic systems, constructed by the speakers who bring them to light in discourse and based on the connections between bonds made that constitute them. Hence, communities of values are described as *bond networks*. In Figure 5.6, solid lines between bonds in these bond networks show the clustering of shared bonds into community value sets, as the bonds are reinforced in connection with one another. These bond networks include and are connected to bonds of “master” ideological networks (which are themselves less *dense* (Milroy, 1987) than say, friendship networks because they are distinguished by major bond oppositions such as “male” and “female” bonds). The broken line between the bonds at these levels indicates that ideological networks tend to be construed in the laughing strategy of affiliation through personal bond networks. Culture is represented as a system of bonds, i.e. the potential that members have to commune. Since the system of bonds (the whole communing potential of a culture) is, like the system of language (the entire meaning potential of a culture), “a fiction, something we cannot hope to describe” (Halliday, 1994b, p. 24), it is represented here as vast, immeasurable connections between clusters of bonds.

Each level on the cline will now be discussed in detail, beginning with a description of how different affiliative strategies are visualised as a process along this cline, using examples of conversation between friends.

### 5.2.1.2 Visualising the affiliation process through the individuation cline

In order to conceive of how affiliation as a social process works, or is employed, the different strategies of affiliation presented above are exemplified and represented visually in this section. By first demonstrating how all of the affiliative strategies operate through the cline, the following sections will then utilize examples of convivial conversational humour specifically to define each clinal level.

At the most basic level, once a coupling is instantiated and reacted to in the logogenesis of text, it construes a bond (or two) in the individuation cline. The bond, in turn,
participates in networks of bonds in which the interactants identify themselves together. This process is represented along the individuation cline in Figure 5.7:

Figure 5.7: Process of affiliation through the cline of individuation.

When interactants use the strategy of communing affiliation, they commune around a bond that participates in a bond network. This is illustrated in the following text, in which the speakers construct a bond network of “Napoleon Dynamite movie fans” by communing around bonds that can be identified in the discourse through unfolding couplings. The three female participants present and share couplings about parts and characters in the movie, *Napoleon Dynamite*, to construe bonds and commune around them as members of a Napoleon Dynamite movie fans bond network. The bonds cluster and connect together as they unfold through couplings in the text. This is a layered example of affiliating since what they are communing around is a comedic movie, but laughter has been removed from this episode since it is the communing that is being concentrated on for illustrative purposes. First, they establish their love for the movie, communing around a bond of “Entertaining Movie”:

26 To be precise, there are two layers to this example: the laughing affiliation that occurs when the participants laugh off the wrinkles presented by characters in the actual movie, and which they are reinvoking in this talk; and the communing affiliation that they are negotiating now within the single “fans”
Then, they present funny lines from parts of the movie they like, construing a bond of “Funny Script”:

Then they reinforce their bond of Entertaining Movie again:

And they name characters in relationships together that they like, construing a bond of “Quirky Relationships”:

bond network. It is a complex example, because they are here communing around what they find most laughable.

27 I have not coded for couplings in the quoted speech since I have removed the layer of laughing affiliation that is involved in the reinvoking of this movie, as explained in note 25.

28 See Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3.3.3 for discussion of naming as a resource for invoking couplings.
As they refer to aspects of the movie, often with presuming realisations of IDENTIFICATION (Martin & Rose, 2007, Chapter 5) such as “the store”, “the dance”, “that guy’s girlfriend”, “that movie”, etc., the speakers also continue to couple positive attitude with these aspects, showing that they are construing bonds of the same bond network that they can all identify and commune within. They construe communable bonds to reinforce their belonging together to the network that this bond participates in (along with other bonds). When the couplings are reacted to as shared bonds (e.g. “I love it so much”), the interactants enter the affiliative negotiation and negotiate the bonds through the individuation cline. Along this cline, the connection between the bonds and bond network is exhibited in Figure 5.8.

Figure 5.8: Communing affiliation along the individuation cline with Funny Script bond connecting to other bonds in the Napoleon Dynamite movie fans bond network.
The broken lines show how bonds relate to bond networks, offering a sense of the social process that occurs as the coupling construes the bond, which participates in the bond network. The clustering of bonds together that form the bond network (and are negotiated at different times or in different conversations) may also connect to different networks based on a particular bond. For instance, a bond such as “Funny Script” could also connect speakers in a bond network of a different comedic television show, which would be identified by its own differing bonds as well. In communing affiliation, however, a bond network is constructed through shared bonds that connect it together.

In laughing and condemning affiliation, on the other hand, more than one bond network is negotiated in an instance because bonds come into conflict due to the complex sociality of the participants. Recall that interactants who use these strategies construe a potential bond that either wrinkles with or violates an implicated bond around which they might commune. Thus, there are two bonds involved, and so two bond networks of which they are a part that are at odds with each other. For instance, the following text features one conversational participant using humour to construe wrinkling bonds about fast food to laugh off with her interlocutors:

| AD: == but you go up to the counter, and you're like "I'm gonna have the big fat triple decker burger..., And then you say “Can I have a fruit cup instead of fries, they be like “I'm sorry that's a dollar extra” and y'like “Alright I'll just take the fries for free and gimme* a MASSIVE ASS TOO | graduation + negative t-appreciation + burger | pos t-apprec + fruit cup; negative t-apprec + fries | (neg affect), negative t-apprec + fruit cup | positive t-apprec + fries | graduation + negative t-appreciation + ass |
| Healthy Eating |
| Affordable Fatty Foods |

Example 5.10: Construing two bonds in tension across different bond networks (laughing affiliation) (from Table 9.1 in Appendix A).

When the extra expense of the fruit cup forces the speaker (in her imagined transaction) to eat (and positively appreciate the cost of) the unhealthy fast food option, she presents the bond it construes as creating a wrinkle with the bond she shares with her interlocutors—that is, a bond of Healthy Eating. Her couplings of negative appreciation

29 Bonds of bond networks may also connect to ideological bonds, which will be discussed in Section 5.2.1.4.
for the fruit cup (as expensive) and positive appreciation for the fries (as cheap) construe a potential bond that she is then forced to accept—one of Affordable Fatty Foods (leading to her humorously extreme weight gain). She uses laughing affiliation in order to manage the tension caused by her ideals and lack of expendable cash. The participants laugh off the wrinkle together and defer the bond while they simultaneously reinforce their shared bond network around a Healthy Eating bond. The two bond networks in which each bond, potential and implicated, participates are in tension in this example, and the conversational participants defer the wrinkling bond in order to align together as health-conscious persons while allowing for affiliations with the alterative network when the situation “forces” it. Figure 5.9 presents this social process of laughing affiliation as the interactants negotiate bonds of networks in tension.

Figure 5.9: Laughing affiliation along the individuation cline; coupling is shown here to construe two bonds in tension that participate in different bond networks in tension.
As Figure 5.9 shows, the coupling of “positive appreciation + fries” construes a potential bond of Affordable Fatty Foods that wrinkles with the implicated bond of Healthy Eating shared by these participants in a health-conscious bond network. The communities or networks to which these bonds connect, too, are in tension in humour, since the bonds that wrinkle between them separate them. The red wavy line in between the bonds, and in between the bond networks, represents the wrinkle. The figure shows connections to ideological networks, and in this example it is possible to imagine how these connections may be brought out in the unfolding text. For instance, certain bonds of the health-conscious network may be specifically connected with the bonds of the female gender (see for example Table 1.1 in Appendix A), while bonds of the fast food network may be related to bonds that are differentiated on a class basis (and this seems evident in that the speaker is forced to share a bond in her story due to her lack of funds). By showing the coupling, the bonds, and the bond networks, it is possible to visualise the affiliative process occurring as participants construe bonds and connect together into and across networks of the culture in ongoing talk. A clash of values also represents a disjunction between who we identify with as community members, but the laughing affiliation strategy allows the wrinkling bond network to remain in the identity space of the participants as a possible alternative affiliation.

In contrast, condemning affiliation does not allow for conflicting bonds and bond network associations to remain in a space for communally identifying. Instead, the bond that causes a serious tension for the conversational participants (for their shared bonds) is rejected by the speakers. Two bonds, and two bond networks, are again involved in this strategy and can be visualised along the individuation cline. Condemning affiliation was exemplified in Section 5.1.3.3, and is repeated here to exhibit the social process in light of how the bonds interact on the individuation cline. In this text, the interactants reject a bond of “Destructive Criticism” that was given by K’s theatre stage manager and commune together around a bond of “Motivating Encouragement” that they share in their bond network. Recall:

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30 Bourdieu’s (1984) correlation between consumption trends and social class in terms of “capital” also supports the connection: these participants, while trying to maintain the “ethic of sobriety for the sake of slimness…most recognised at the highest levels of the social hierarchy” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 179), were forced to take on the bond of Affordable Fatty Foods associated with “lower” classes.
K: It was the way she would act sometimes would be very... kinda negative.

[pause 2 secs]
And we'd we'd try like to keep a positive environment... (at the tech), you can be motivating but it's not very motivating to have someone yelling at you for stuff, and

G: Yeah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>negative appreciation + criticism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pos apprc + keeping positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive apprc + motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative f-appreciation + yelling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 5.9: A contrast between bonds of different bond networks is condemned as a violation (from Table 9.1 in Appendix A).

The couplings that K presents construe bonds so contrasting that they create a serious tension between K's stage manager and her theatre group, and K re-presents these bonds here in order to negotiate them with G. When G reacts by agreeing with K (“Mm hm”), they reject the bond that the stage manager has initiated and share the bond that unites them into their particular theatre group bond network. This affiliative negotiation and the relations between bonds and bond networks that are involved in it are represented in Figure 5.10.
Figure 5.10: Condemning affiliation along the individuation cline; couplings presented in text shown here to each construe a bond of bond networks that conflict.

Whereas a wavy line represents a wrinkle in laughing affiliation, a crossed line here (X) represents a violation in between bonds and the networks that they construe. In this example, the bond of Destructive Criticism, because it goes against the positive values of Motivating Encouragement shared by these participants, is rejected and the stage manager condemned as someone these participants would not want to affiliate with.\(^{31}\) The bond is interpreted as a violating one in relation to the alternative bond of Motivating Encouragement that K also brings out in the text through couplings. They are both available in the affiliation process, but one is reacted to with condemnation (rather than laughter). The bond networks that these bonds participate in are not made fully explicit by the text, but it is clear that the participants co-identify as non-members of the network.

\(^{31}\) However, later in the conversation K laughs off the bonds presented by the stage manager, indicating that she may attempt to put up with her due to their professional relationship.
that includes a bond of Destructive Criticism, and this is because they share a communal belonging to a network of contrary kinds of theatre values.

By representing bonds and the networks of bonds that they construe in the cultural system, it is possible to visualise the process of affiliation occurring and to identify what happens when speakers use different affiliative strategies. Each of the levels will now be explored in turn, beginning with a close consideration of how bonds are conceptualised in affiliation on the cline of individuation.

5.2.1.3 Bonds as minimal social unit

Bonds were introduced in Section 5.1.1; it was explained that a bond is a social semiotic unit that is negotiated through discourse in the form of couplings. This section expands upon the introduction by situating bonds specifically on the individuation cline, and it discusses how bonds interact as social semiotic units that can be visualised on the cline. Figure 5.11 illustrates a bond on the cline of individuation in its relation to the instantiation cline. In order to interpret affiliation, we look to the couplings that are instantiated as a text unfolds logogenetically, centring on the “text” end of the instantiation cline, since it is through the logogenetic unfolding of couplings that bonds are negotiated.
Figure 5.11: Bond on cline of individuation construed by coupling in instantiated text (instantiation cline adapted from Martin & White, 2005, p. 25; cf. Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1.3).

A bond in affiliation is a social semiotic representation of the person, and a way to identify a social person not as an embodied individual, but as a social semiotic meaner (cf. Halliday, 2004b; see Section 5.1.2). In these terms, a bond is the minimal social unit on the individuation cline because interactants cannot enter affiliative negotiations without first construing a bond between them in the interaction (by recognising a coupling in relation to their own shared sociality). By reacting to a coupling in text in a particular way (for instance, by laughing at it), interlocutors can construe a bond that connects them as co-members of a bond network. A coupling that is not recognised as such does not construe a bond between interlocutors, and so they do not enter an affiliative negotiation. Therefore, the bond is located at the bottom of the cline as the primary unit that we consider in an affiliative negotiation and from which we can consider how bond networks of the culture are discursively constructed. Here, we can imagine the point of entry into the process of affiliation, when speakers construe a bond
and begin to negotiate their identities from the “bottom-up”. This is also the point closest to where the *instance* would rest on the instantiation cline.

So, connecting instantiation with affiliation, couplings instantiated in text that are reacted to by interlocutors construe bonds, and bonds are the entry point to affiliating. Since bonds are negotiated in the logogenetic unfolding of the text, and they are manifested in linguistic couplings, affiliations with communities (bond networks) are considered bond by bond. Thus, in discourse, we present ourselves bond by bond, attracting or repelling other bonds as we negotiate a shared community identity with our interlocutors. The representation of a bond as a circle enclosing a coupling captures the point at which conversational participants enter a negotiation of affiliation—that is, when they construe a bond.

In addition, time is a significant factor in representing bonds and their interactions with communities of the culture (cf. Zhao & Knight, 2009). Taking time into consideration, bonds exist at different levels or stages of negotiability. For instance, in Example 5.11, the speakers construe a bond that was once shared between them as a less negotiable, core bond of their theatre play group and which has changed over time to be highly negotiable for them. To set the context for this example, there are three speakers, C, F and N, and while they shared in a “Streetcar Play” bond network in the past, the bond network has ended by the time of this conversation (since the play had long since passed). Now, C and F only are involved in what will be referred to as a “C & F Play” bond network. The interactants construe how at one time they shared a bond between them in the Streetcar Play bond network that was not very negotiable (they could only commune around it), but it is made more negotiable in this text when they laugh at it and at the same time negotiate it in relation to their underlying friendship community. First, C explains how the non-present members of the C & F Play bond network could not appreciate the *coin game*, which is coupled with positive appreciation for her, N and F (flagged by N’s high volume, see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3.2.1) as a game they used to play in their Streetcar Play bond network:
Example 5.11: Participants construe bond at different stages of negotiability (from Table 2.1 in Appendix A). The affiliative strategies that are employed with this bond are shown as the text unfolds and the dark border around the bond exhibits how many times it is construed in this single text.

For the C & F Play bond network, the Coin Game bond is negotiated as laughable, and it becomes clear in this text that it is laughable in relation to a Streetcar Play bond network in which this bond was negotiated as well-loved (as a positively-charged core bond). At the same time, C and N laugh at how much they used to love it (graduating their coupling in “I remember playing that game for like forty minutes!”), demonstrating that the Streetcar Play bond network has changed the negotiability of the bond to being more negotiable. They can now laugh it off together for being so extreme in relation to underlying bonds they share between them as friends. Figure 5.12 depicts the interaction of the bonds of communities and their negotiation over time.
Figure 5.12: Coin Game bond negotiated differently over time and across bond networks (negotiability indicated by opacity of bond). Coin Game bond is illustrated as at different times communable and laughable (and rejected by the C & F Play bond network).

So, the way that bonds are negotiated exhibits the stage of the bond network and the negotiability of the bond. In this case, the Streetcar Play bond network is no longer constructed around a core, less negotiable bond of the Coin Game, but instead it is laughed off based on this bond that has now become highly negotiable, revealing that the bond network is an older one. At the same time, the fact that these participants can defer this bond together signals that there are underlying bonds and communities with which they are affiliating (and in relation to which the extreme Coin Game bond is found funny), including the newer C & F Play bond network and the friendship group they are reinforcing. Bonds therefore vary in negotiability and inform us about the stability of bond networks.

Casual conversation offers an ideal location for rapid construction of community, since the participants are face to face and can immediately react to presented couplings and negotiate them as bonds. In casual conversation, the negotiation of bond networks is condensed as the hearers constantly react to what is given in the unfolding discourse and negotiate it, for instance, through laughter. In this way, we can interpret how bond networks are developing and changing in the culture and how conversational participants
are identifying themselves through text. Conversation allows us to see the process of affiliation happening and to recognise that it is about a negotiation of many communities at one time in relation to one another (especially with the signal of laughter). The construction and modification of communities in other genres or registers, such as for instance mail-based fan clubs, would be more gradual in comparison (Zhao & Knight, 2009). In affiliation, communities are interpreted through bonds, and conversation provides the interaction necessary for interpreting this ongoing construal through discourse.

The aspects of bonds that have been discussed in this section indicate that though bonds are considered to be social semiotic units on the individuation cline with which we discursively construe community identities, membership in communities is not stable and fixed. Rather, bonds are constantly negotiated in the linguistic text through couplings, and these couplings are determined through analysis of the unfolding text (for instance, by laughter following speech as a signal of recognition of a coupling). Participants construct bond networks rapidly, as couplings are presented constantly in the conversational text and various networks of bonds are therefore constantly changing according to how they are negotiated. A construed bond is always connected to bond networks and the culture. These networks of bonds will be explored in the following section.

5.2.1.4 Communities as bond networks

Communities of a culture are represented as bond networks at midpoints along the individuation cline in an affiliation perspective, between the bond and the system of bonds available in the culture.

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32 See also Zappavigna’s (2009) discussion of how internet users employ the microblogging service, Twitter, to create an ambient affiliation with other users by making their couplings “searchable”. In this way, the process of affiliation can occur more rapidly than in other modes of internet discourse with the aid of tools such as metadata that can be added to “tweets”.
As Figure 5.13 shows, there are two levels of bond networks in affiliation: personal, lower level bond networks and higher level, ideological bond networks. Personal bond networks are those communities most often featured in convivial conversational humour, including friendship groups, mutual interest groups, and other such groups that are populated by a variety of bonds at various levels of negotiability. Conversely, ideological networks are those communities that are separated by ideological values and their bonds are often not as negotiable, so they feature less prominently as laughable in conversational talk. These bond networks are constantly present in our bond negotiations as “over-arching” aspects of our identities. This section explores both levels of bond networks.

Personal bond networks may be aligned with aspects of Tracy’s (2002) description of “interactional” and “relational” identities. Combining these types, bonds as part of personal bond networks act as both the “specific roles that people take on in a communicative context with regard to specific other people” and “the kind of relationship that a person enacts with a particular conversational partner in a specific situation” (Tracy, 2002, pp. 18–19). These aspects of identity are constructed with regard to the kinds of personal bond networks that the specific interactants in the conversational situation can interpret and construe so that the kinds of bonds presented in each discourse will be “highly variable” (Tracy, 2002, p. 19). Convivial conversational humour in particular involves bonds that are highly flexible and negotiable, bonds that connect...
personal, flexible bond networks. This is because “[l]aughter and jokes, since they attack classification and hierarchy, are obviously apt symbols for expressing community in this sense of unhierarchized, undifferentiated social relations” (Douglas, 1968, p. 370). Networks at this level have been exhibited through the convivial conversational humour examples in this thesis, including for instance the following excerpt in which the participants negotiate their membership to a jobless bond network through a core “Desirable Money” bond:

At the same time, according to Douglas (1968), we cannot identify joke patterns without considering the total social situation, and by decoding the humorous metaphor we decode the meaning structure of the social system in which it is embedded. Thus, the negotiation of bonds of personal bond networks is complemented by the ideological positions that intrude in our affiliative negotiations. Ideology is a significant aspect of affiliation because “beliefs, attitudes, and values are at the heart of ideology” (Poynton, 1985, p. 10), and participants who negotiate bonds are always ideologically positioned members of a culture. Ideological social divisions mediate affiliation, and broader, less negotiable ideological bonds are constantly present in the negotiation of personal, lower level bonds in affiliation. These can be aligned with Tracy’s (2002) “master” identities, and they include networks of gender, age, ethnicity, capacity, and class (as outlined by Martin & White, 2005, p. 29), religion, expertise and sexual orientation (cf. Livia & Hall, 1997). Personal bond networks, or interactional and relational identities, are “distinct from master identities but are not independent of them” (Tracy, 2002, p. 18). By bringing

33 However, other groups with varying tenor relations may differ in terms of whether the bonds they negotiate construe more or less hierarchised social groupings. For instance, Adler and Adler (1996) detail findings that “…teenagers categorize clusters of people according to their social type…in a stratification system…” and “…adolescents stratify these clusters hierarchically in terms of popularity and prestige…” (p. 111–112). Along these lines, humour may differ in terms of which level of bond networks are most commonly negotiated—that is, which are most commonly creating tension for the discourse participants.

34 This seems to align with Martin et al.’s (to appear) level of “master identity” in the allocation perspective on individuation. This is likely due to the fact that ideologies, or coding orientations, have been shown to affect the distribution of meanings in a culture in studies of individuation.
otherwise non-negotiable positioning into the humorous text, participants can be seen to make intruding hierarchically based roles *negotiable*, rather than “slipping out of the non-hierarchic relations of the casual context and into the hierarchic patterns of formal, public contexts” to construe power relations as proposed by Eggins and Slade (1997, p. 167). These identities are always discursively available (as subject positions provided by discourse, cf. Harré & van Langenhove, 1991, p. 395), and when taken up in convivial conversational humour, power relations can be laughed off rather than acted out as in more formal contexts. Thus, through these levels of the cline, conversational participants use humour to construe affiliation as members of a culture by variously negotiating their friendships along with their ideological positionings and cultural subgroupings.

The difference between these levels can be seen in the population of bonds in personal and ideological bond networks. While personal bond networks are a clustering of interconnecting, negotiable bonds, ideological networks (as master identities) are constituted by major bond oppositions (such as “male” and “female” bonds in the gender network), and in fact the bonds are less negotiable as well. In this way, ideological bond networks are, in Milroy’s (1987) terms, less *dense* than personal networks (this will be elaborated upon in the next section). As Poynton (1985, p. 10) explains, ideology deals in evaluation, probably always in relation to binary oppositions such as female/male, capitalism/socialism, war/peace. In MCA, these may be described as bonds in “standardized relational pairs” (cf. Sacks, 1992). An instance of an ideological bond opposition is given in the following text:
Example 5.12: Ideological bond networks construed by bonds in opposition.

As opposed to personal bond networks, which bring social persons together on an equalised basis, ideological networks are hierarchically structured. These bonds may be “stacked” in their connection, with the bonds organised according to the historically dominant member of the category. For instance, in the gender network, male bonds are likely to be perceived as more dominant than female ones in a traditionally patriarchal culture. However, due to the nature of bonds, even ideological bonds can change their level of negotiability over time through talk, and they are constantly negotiated in conversation.

How both personal and ideological bond networks are negotiated and can be distinguished in convivial conversational humour is demonstrated in the following text. Four female interactants discuss a friendship group of C’s, in particular the male friends and how they interact, naming the ideological gender networks at stake as they talk. Specifically in this text, ideological gender roles are not played out but negotiated and contested through humour about the speaker’s personal bond networks, and these levels are distinguished as the conversation moves from one to the other:
Example 5.13: Negotiating personal and ideological networks in affiliation (from Table 8.2 in Appendix A); bond networks identified in right-hand column, APPRAISAL coded only for couplings that construe these bonds.

Gender networks in particular are made relevant in this text, and the interactants laugh off the tension created when males take on a “female” bond. C names the female gender category (girls) as a quality now associated with the alternate gender category of “boys” and construes gossip as a bond typically associated with a female social network that her male friends take on but that she herself dissociates with (“I don’t care”). By first establishing C’s male friends as a personal bond network, C then moves the negotiation into the level of ideology by calling them “girly”, accessing bonds around gossip through which she can begin to negotiate the gender ideological network with her interlocutors. She is able to negotiate this network because she and the others then construe themselves as part of a “non-girly” personal bond network, rather than simply aligning together as females against C’s male friends. This is presented as a visualisation on the individuation cline in Figure 5.14.

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35 The lexical items ellipted here are rendered in square brackets for clarity.
Figure 5.14: Laughing off bonds associated with the female gender ideological network. Bond of Girly Gossip connects a “non-girly” bond network and the bond of Salacious Rumours shared by C’s male friends connects their bond network. Both bonds are connected to a female gender bond marked in green.

As Figure 5.14 indicates, the bond around “Salacious Rumours” that brings together the males in C’s group also connects to the female gender bond network, as these speakers establish known valued attributes and activities that are part of this category. At the same time, these interactants negotiate themselves as ones who do not share the bond, so that physical associations with the female sex do not prevent these women from co-constructing their own “non-girly” identities (showing that gender in this case is discursively constructed (Butler, 1993) and is accomplished through an affiliative negotiation of bonds). Tracy (2002) argues that master identities, such as this ideological network of gender, are frequently conceived of as “contrastive sets” (p. 18), so that “gossip” is defined by being a non-male bond. However, not only do these speakers acknowledge the tension created when males take on the non-male bond, but they make it
negotiable as something shared by *girly* females and not necessarily other females such as them.\(^{36}\) The unfolding of this humorous phase thus demonstrates the negotiation of bond networks at different levels.

It is the highly negotiable bonds of personal bond networks in particular that allow friends to use humour in negotiating affiliation and that feature in conversational humour as the ones that most often come into contact and conflict through our conversations. Since humour provides a space for identifying across different community memberships, it is particularly in humour that participants manage their own complex webs of networks of bonds. As we manage our personal bond networks, ideological bonds also come into play because they are always over-arching master identities, but it is through the negotiation of personal, lower-level bonds (ones that can be laughable) that we enable the negotiation of ideological bonds. Every affiliative negotiation, then, must be considered in terms of both levels of bond networks and the way that these differentially cluster may be considered through the concept of social networks.

**5.2.1.4.1 Diagramming bond networks as social networks**

Returning to the representation of bond networks on the cline, we can visualise how these networks are constructed through bonds that connect as they are negotiated through text. Just as bonds remove us from a focus on the individual and instead represent persons semiotically based on discursive interaction, bond networks emphasize the social semiotic view of communities taken in this thesis. Rather than considering communities as groups of individuals, bond networks allow us to focus on how we come together, belong and commune as connected co-members of a culture. As bonds are construed they cluster, or connect, together as the value systems of a particular community and also connect or differentiate from other value (bond) systems. In Figure 5.14, solid lines between bonds in bond networks show the clustering of shared bonds into community value sets. The representation of bond networks relates to Milroy’s (1987) social network diagrams (see

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\(^{36}\) In addition, since these speakers discussed “gossip”, they also engaged in meta-affiliative talk about how social networks differ in the way that they interact in affiliation. In the case of C’s group of male friends, they are depicted as committing the strategy of condemning affiliation together often, while the current female conversational interactants laugh together and indicate their distaste for gossip, constructing themselves in a bond network that prefers a laughing affiliation strategy.
Figure 5.15, where the nodes are bonds and the lines between them are connections made through discourse.

![Figure 5.15: Milroy’s social networks; nodes here represented by letters (from Milroy & Milroy, 1985, p. 365).](image)

Milroy (1987) describes each node as a person, and each person is “a focus from which lines radiate to ‘points’ (persons with whom he is in contact)” (p. 46). By replacing nodes as persons with bonds, affiliation supports a social semiotic view of identities and communities. Social networks are particularly useful in mapping bond networks since they represent the “pattern[s] of informal relationships people are involved in on a regular basis” (Holmes, 1992, p. 202).

The different levels of bond networks and the ways that bonds are negotiated (e.g. as laughable, rejectable, etc.) are associated with how bond networks may vary in terms of their levels of “density” (how many bonds are connected in the bond network) and “plexity” (how many bonds are connected with other networks). For instance, a bond that is linked to two or more different networks (such as the “Funny Script” bond participating in the Napoleon Dynamite fan network and another comedic television show network) exhibits its multiplexity, and within a network, a bond that has many connections to other bonds (e.g. “Healthy Eating” may link to many nutrition bonds and fitness bonds in a health-conscious bond network) creates a high density bond network. Ideological bond networks would also be multiplex, but low density, networks in that they are connected to many personal bond networks as over-arching “master identities” but are populated by
just a few, ideologically-charged bonds (see Figure 5.16). So, notions of social networking inform the representation of bond networks on individuation cline.\textsuperscript{37}

Figure 5.16: Varying density and plexity between ideological bond networks and personal bond networks on the cline of individuation.

To name bond networks that are formed in conversational talk, affiliation is informed by the actual bonds made relevant in talk and by the analysis of identity categories. While it is difficult without a substantial body of conversational texts to fully map the valeur of bonds that constitute a whole network, bond networks are represented on the cline of individuation according to each bond that is construed (through couplings) in an ongoing text, considered on a bond-by-bond basis. That is to say, each bond construed through the ongoing text aids in identifying the bond networks on the individuation cline, and these are constantly building and changing as are the bonds that construct them. Bonds are, in

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\textsuperscript{37} Social networks have also been effectively utilized in representing particular situational registers in SFL theory, in terms of system networks (see, for instance, Butt & Moore, n.d.; Hasan, 1999; Butt, 2003; Lukin, forthcoming).
turn, identified through couplings in text, supporting a discursive theory of identity categorization.

5.2.1.4.2 Labelling bond networks

In order to capture the kinds of networks at play and to label these bond networks, this thesis draws once again on the mechanism of membership categorization analysis (MCA) (as introduced in Section 5.1.2), and specifically on the notion of membership categorization devices (MCDs) (cf. Sacks, 1992). Bond networks are similar to MCDs, or collections of membership categories derived from the sequential interaction in discourse by which a person is identified. These categorizations are made through indicators in the unfolding discourse, focusing on what speakers make consequential to the unfolding interaction. Similar to the practice of MCA, bonds are labelled through their manifestation as couplings in text, and bonds are then related to bond networks as their organised “collections of categories” (Schegloff, 2007, p. 467). Identifying bond networks is ultimately a matter of the meanings that unfold in a text, either by their explicit naming or by a process of “reflexive co-determination” (Schegloff, 2007a, p. 473), whereby knowledge of the bond and the coupling in the surrounding unfolding text informs inferencing. In this way, the bond network is relevant whether it is explicitly mentioned or not.

For instance, the laughter in Example 5.14 following the utterance “Next year in Jerusalem” signals that two interactants are laughing this phrase off as a coupling construing a potential unshared bond (since they have previously established that they are in a “pie party” situation). By considering the text that unfolds following their laughing affiliation when F explains the meaning behind the humour to one speaker who does not “get it”, the bond is made clear due to its connection with the other couplings expressed. So, in turn, is the bond network made evident:
Example 5.14: Bonds construed and bond network named in discourse (from Table 2.12 in Appendix A).

As was explained in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3.3.3, in MCA terms when speakers explicitly name a community in talk, they reference meanings, such as couplings, relevant to that membership, and in this example speaker F affords positive attitudinal couplings by naming the “Jewish” community:

F: == It's it's a Jewish thing y-ye-at the end of every Passover you say “next year in Jerusalem” in Hebrew.

Thus, the phrase about “Sacred Jerusalem”, which occurs in the “Ritual Passover” in the “Hebrew language” are bonds, and by his explicit mention in the conversation, the bond network can be identified as a “Jewish bond network”. In addition, since two bonds and two bond networks are always present in convivial conversational humour, we can also name the second bond network that is made relevant in this humorous text. In the previous unfolding text, the participants coupled positive appreciations with their pie party to facilitate bonding, and so their previously established meanings inform the bond of “Fun Pie Party”. As a core, communable bond between them, we can then infer that it constitutes the bond network that they are constructing—the pie party friends bond network—and that it underlies the humour when F utters the Jewish Passover phrase. In this way, the labelling of bonds and bond networks derives from the linguistic text, with couplings informing the process of affiliation as it is occurring.

38 These are highlighted in blue as tokens of appreciation and circled to mark the coupling.
39 See Example 5.2 above for communing affiliation talk that precedes this example of laughing affiliation.
It is important, however, to maintain the notion that bond networks are not simply “collections of categories” but networks of relations between meanings that identify people together, ongoingly through discursive interaction. In modelling bond networks as social networks connected by bonds, we can maintain a focus on how each bond is construed through the text by attitude + ideation couplings and how they are variously connected in convivial conversational humour. We are able to move further away from the notion of communities as groups of individuals and shift our concentration to the values that represent them. Bond networks do not bring people together around a “mutual engagement in an endeavour” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 464) or communal activity per se as in communities of practice (CoPs) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and “social affiliations” (Gee, 2000, 2005) (as employed by Humphrey (2008, forthcoming) in SFL theory). Nor do they “separate people into occupational or specialty-interest groups” (Swales, 1990, p. 24) as in discourse communities, but instead they incorporate different levels of negotiable networks based on ongoingly negotiated bonds. Bond networks are distinguished from these types of communities in that they bring people together through values towards experiences that are constantly negotiated, and affiliation provides a social semiotic representation of community through bonds.

Humour, in particular, also exposes different focal points in the consideration of communities of values—that we are not only concerned with what communities are being construed but also how many are being negotiated and how negotiable they are. The size of negotiated bond networks ranges, and their location on the cline of individuation indicates how closely related the networks are to bonds conveying the social structure. Because ideological concerns are included in affiliation, these can be accounted for through a close consideration of bonds, including a focus, not only on what communities are being negotiated, but also how many and how negotiable they are. Moreover, bond networks are always situated within a culture, which organises the bonds of communities and provides the potential available to interactants in the process of affiliation. Networks at the ideological and personal levels are subpotentials of the communing potential of the culture as a system of bonds. Bonds at the cultural level are therefore pervasive in conversational talk and are accounted for on the individuation cline in the following section.
5.2.1.5 Culture as a system of bonds

The final level on the individuation cline in an affiliation perspective to be discussed is the level of culture, which is represented as a system of bonds.

![Diagram of culture as a system of bonds](image)

**Figure 5.17:** Culture as a system of bonds on the cline of individuation. Bonds represented as smaller circles within larger circles representing subcultures making up the whole cultural potential.

The potential that social persons have to construe bonds as members of communities is provided by the bonds available in a culture. In negotiations of affiliation, culture is the (dynamic) system of bonds, mediated by bond networks and presented bond by bond through couplings in text. Speakers make references to culture as well as subcultural groupings in their negotiation of bonds, co-identifying themselves as members of a particular culture, such as by national and regional origins (Tracy, 2002, p. 18). The system of bonds is the whole potential of value sets that speakers can present as “appropriate” or aligned with the culture, that is, their “communing potential”. Since affiliation is about negotiating communities and identifying communal memberships, participants commit the affiliative process to commune together as social persons with

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40 This thesis thus proposes that there is a systemic potential from which bonds are presented in discourse, but does not conceptualise the system of bonds as an absolute set of cultural values. Rather, bonds of the system are constantly shifting in relation to one another over time.
similar bonds. In each strategy of affiliation, they commune either by sharing a bond (in communing affiliation), or by eradicating tensions imposed by intruding bonds in order to commune with alternative ones (as in laughing and condemning affiliation). So, the entire system of bonds available in the culture presents conversational participants with their full potential to commune together as members of that culture, through meanings accessed in mediating bond networks.

Culture is therefore not conceptualised in affiliation as the potential genres/registers of linguistic meaning available to individuals (as has been described in the allocation view of individuation, see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1.3), but as the constrained bonds of value with experience that constitute a culture’s value system. Specifically, in affiliation terms, culture constrains possible open choices from the language system presumably into a system of bonds, combining meanings that are even more particular to communities of that culture (bond networks), and conversational participants affiliate a communing potential around these bonds, one or two at a time. The bonds that connect their communities and culture control the couplings that interactants can present in language. Further, interactants play with these routine combinations (Martin, 2008b, p. 42) across communities in humour based on the fact that their selection is constrained by the particular participants at talk, who themselves are members of different communities. Through couplings, then, instantiation offers a perspective on the manifestation of constrained meaning potential as culture (Martin, 2008b), and affiliation attempts to model culture through communities of bonds.

Culture, or the communing potential of cultural members, is organised into networks of bonds at the ideological and personal levels. So, when conversational participants construe themselves as co-members of a culture it means construing bonds through the social networks that organise them. They can assert cultural identities as well, bonding together around broader bonds of the culture such as, for instance, hockey as a particularly “Canadian” sport. In the following text, for instance, as the four male speakers commune around bonds of beer, they name different regions in Canada, specifying that they are appreciating Canadian beers and sharing in a Canadian cultural identity.
Example 5.15: Negotiating culture through bonds of Canadian beers participating in personal bond networks (from Table 10.1 in Appendix A).

In their discussion of good beers, the origin of the beer labels ties them together as members of the Canadian culture while they negotiate personal bond networks as beer drinkers. For the Full-strength Beer bonds (see Table 10.1 in Appendix A) that they are construing, the speakers choose from the potential of those appreciated beers that are consumed in the country and mediated by different beer drinkers’ bond networks at the level of communities. Hence, as they commune around beer bonds, the names of Canadian provinces that they make consequential to the interaction reveal the underlying cultural membership to Canada that they are simultaneously belonging to together. The system of bonds and the way that they are organised by a culture is made especially salient when speakers name them in text (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3.3.3 for discussion on naming).

Because the data set in the current thesis involves Canadian participants, bonds that connect to a Canadian cultural system are the most prominent, but identities are negotiated in relation to a number of other cultures as well. Bhasin (2008), for instance, describes how conversational participants used language to connect with an imagined collective ethos (values) of Americans to thereby reinforce an “Indian” identity. In this type of negotiation, interactants identify themselves as co-members of a culture by identifying bonds that do not align with those organised by their cultural system. Example 5.16 demonstrates an affiliative negotiation of the female gender bond network (at the ideological level) that is in tension across the Canadian and Thai cultural systems.
Specifically, after the speakers (two males and two females) commune around a shared bond of gender equality, one male speaker presents a coupling of positive appreciation for sewing given by his friend’s Thai girlfriend, creating a tension with the gender network in the Canadian perspective.

**Example 5.16: Laughing off wrinkle between different cultural bonds that participate in ideological bond networks (from Table 11.10 in Appendix A).**

These participants react to the tension created when “Jess’ girlfriend”, a Thai woman, asserts that her identity (and positive judgement) as a woman entails her appreciation for sewing. In affiliation terms, the coupling of positive appreciation for sewing that she gives construes a bond that ties to the Female bond network in Thailand, indicating that she and all Thai females might share this as a distinctly “Womanly Duty” (rather than just a preferred gender-neutral activity). The female participants in particular laugh together when CO identifies where Jess’ girlfriend is located—the circumstance of location “in Thailand”—because they can interpret the bond as a difference across cultures rather than an inappropriate comment from a member of the female bond network that they share (and one that could be potentially violating). Instead, they laugh the wrinkle off as a matter of the differential distribution of bonds in the Thai system and commune together around the way that they are organised for females and males in the Canadian cultural system of bonds (i.e. around bonds of equality, at least for these participants). Rather than
to reject these bonds as creating a violation with their ideals of equality, the participants can defer them as distinctly “Thai” female bonds in this text, employing “interculturality for affiliative positioning” through humour (Higgins, 2007, p. 49).

Cultural identities, therefore, can be negotiated through any and all of the affiliation strategies and are made relevant through the discursive construction of lower level networks, both personal (e.g. “beer-drinkers”) and ideological (e.g. “female”). Through the logogenetic process of affiliation, discrete meaning choices in the language system are amalgamated into combined meanings particular to communities. When conversational participants discuss their communal identities, they do so by choosing from the communing potential available to them in their culture and distributed through the communities that are constructed ongoingly in text. Culture, too, like bonds and bond networks, is not static but dynamic and changing. It is a “dynamic open system” (Lemke, 1984, 1995), like language (Halliday, 2003 [1987], p. 125), that is constantly changing and renewing itself through interactions with the environment. In affiliation, these interactions consist of the bond-by-bond negotiation of communal identities between conversational participants through strategies that bring them together by sharing, condemning and laughing off that which defines them.

5.3 Summary of Chapter Five

This chapter has presented a social model of affiliation to account for the relations at stake in convivial conversational humour. Affiliation involves the social process of negotiating communal identities through social semiotic bonds, and it has been developed in this thesis as a perspective taken on the individuation cline. Thus, this chapter presented the levels of affiliation that are at risk during these ongoing negotiations on the cline. From a social semiotic perspective, participant “identities” were modelled as bonds that connect minimally two persons in an affiliative negotiation and were linked systematically to attitude + ideation couplings in linguistic text. Participants employ three strategies to manage bonds in their communal identification with interlocutors, including a communing affiliation strategy in which they share and commune around a single community bond; a laughing affiliation strategy in which they defer the bond creating a
winkle with a shared community bond; and a condemning affiliation strategy in which they reject a bond creating a violation with a shared community bond. In each of these strategies, the participants achieve affiliation by communing together with shared bonds and manage their complex sociality together. Conversational participants accomplish these negotiations as they present and react to couplings of ATTITUDE with IDEATION in the linguistic text, construing the higher-order bonds that connect them together in the social sphere of communities. Affiliation thus also models communities and culture, providing a new perspective on the cline of individuation by populating it with bonds constructing bond networks at personal and ideological levels, and a system of bonds as culture.

Convivial conversational humour and laughter have provided a window into affiliation, as laughter is a clear signal that these social relations are going on and that participants not only commune together within communities but variously negotiate these communities in relation to one another. It is when bonds of different communities come into contact and create tension that participants use humour to manage the tension, or “iron out the wrinkle”, thereby affiliating together around what they can share in relation to it. Participants at talk therefore find discordant couplings funny because they construe unshared potential bonds that create laughable tensions, or wrinkles, with their bonds as shared community members. Convivial conversational humour is an effective resource for managing relationships that are highly complex and for maintaining collegiality and solidarity despite differences. Though the model of affiliation in this thesis explains the social relations behind instances of conversational humour between friends, it provides only an initial attempt to capture the multitude of relations that are negotiated constantly and differentially through laughter across cultures and time.