"Marking a sense of self and politics in interviews on political engagement : Interpretive logics and the metapragmatics of identity"

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the relationship between notions of self and politics in discourse on political engagement. By means of a heuristic inspired by the poststructuralist notion of logic and the pragmatic concept of metapragmatic awareness, the author argues that metapragmatic markers play an important role in communicating interpretive processes that inform preferred and disavowed modes of subjectivity. He relies on an interview conducted with an activist involved in Flemish minority politics in order to show how activists distinguish between preferred and disavowed modes of politics. In dealing with the multiplicity of identities and issues that constitute political debates, activists need to establish and communicate some degree of coherence. Metapragmatic awareness allows interlocutors to establish patterns of coherence that can be described in terms of interpretive logics. The author presents a strong case for taking the reflexive awareness of language users into account when studying society-wide debates.

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Marking a sense of self and politics in interviews on political engagement: interpretive logics and the metapragmatics of identity

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Marking a sense of self and politics in interviews on political engagement: interpretive logics and the metapragmatics of identity

1 Introduction

This paper exemplifies how intellectuals and activists with a Moroccan background mark their subjectivity in relation to the discourse and practices of other actors in society. I will argue that a study of metapragmatic or metalinguistic markers yields significant potential for an analysis of large-scale interpretive logics that are constitutive of a preferred mode of subjectivity and political engagement. As such, I will address some key methodological issues in poststructuralist discourse theory pertaining to agency and subjectivity as marked in discourse. More specifically, I will present a framework for analysing interpretive processes of individual language users based on linguistic pragmatic tools and insights.

The data presented in this paper were collected in the context of a research project on the way intellectuals and activists with a Moroccan background gave meaning to their sense of self and politics in the context of interviews on their social and political engagements (Zienkowski 2011a). Throughout these interviews, I asked about the evolution of their political points of interest, their political engagements, and their political ideas – letting them decide what may or may not be ‘political’. The people I talked to included party politicians, minority activists, intellectuals, and social workers. Almost all of them had a Moroccan background and were living in Flanders (the Dutch speaking region of Belgium). In Flanders, Moroccans currently constitute the biggest non-European ethnic minority group (Hesters 2011, 27-29). Along with Turkish community members, they have been the chief victims of racist discourses in this region for the past few decades (Rea 2006, 190). It should also be noted that during key events in the Flemish minority debates of the past two decades, Moroccan intellectuals, politicians, organisations, and activists were more visible in the public sphere than people with other ethnic backgrounds (Kanmaz 2007, 257).

Many of my respondents can be said to be organic intellectuals in the sense that (part of) their social and political activities constitute a (discursive) challenge to hegemonic representations of disadvantaged social groups and unequal political configurations (Gramsci 2005, 5-10). Anthropological research has shown that intellectuals play a key role in the construction of

1 nations and nationalism. But they play an equally big role in challenging the stereotyped
2 images that are part of this process. Moreover, they perform important functions in various
3 minority social movements and organisations (Boyer and Lomnitz 2005, 110-113).
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7 All of the people I talked to have publicly voiced their opinion(s) on one or more issues
8 central to the Flemish minority debates that revolve around notions such as identity, diversity,
9 gender, Islam, language, norms, values and relationships between so-called autochthons and
10 allochthons (Jacobs and Rea 2006, 21, Yanow and van der Haar forthcoming, 17, see:
11 Blommaert and Verschueren 1998, 47-50, Zienkowski 2011a, 242-245)¹. Most of them have
12 enjoyed a relatively high degree of education. Research shows that respondents of Moroccan
13 decent have generally lower chances of educational success in the Flemish education system.
14 They are more likely to double a year in primary and/or secondary schools. They are also
15 quitting school more often without finishing their degrees and are overrepresented in the
16 vocational educational track. It has also been demonstrated that Belgian schools tend to
17 reproduce socio-economic inequality at the level of educational achievement (Jacobs et al.
18 2009, Hesters 2011, 30). Considering the fact that the vast majority of the people I
19 interviewed finished high school as well as some form of higher education (college or
20 university), my interviewees are part of a minority within a minority. The political relevance
21 of this minority is high, since these people frequently articulate their critical opinions in
22 various media of the Flemish public sphere.
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38 After conducting 39 interviews with 35 people, I was both impressed and disoriented by the
39 myriad of topics raised throughout these interactions. People talked about global and
40 international issues such as the financial crisis of 2007, the Iraq war, and Islamic terrorism.
41 They discussed national and local issues, as well as personal discriminatory and emancipatory
42 experiences. Moreover, I was able to identify about 200 identity labels in most interviews,
43 depending on the length of the interview and on the number topics that was discussed. These
44 labels, identities or subject positions (partially) defined the sense of self as articulated by my
45 respondents in positive and negative ways within the interview context. Even more dazzling
46 was the fact that these complex discourses on politics and identity seemed relatively
47 transparent *in situ*. Things became less transparent as soon as I started my analyses.
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58 A series of theoretical and empirical questions emerged. *How do these individuals manage to*
59 *articulate and to co-construct a more or less coherent sense of self and other(s) in and*
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1 through their language use? Why wasn't I significantly disoriented in spite of the manifold
2 identification processes that were going on in practically every conversational turn of every
3 interview? How do these activists and intellectuals manage to trigger a subjective sense of
4 coherence on my part? And how do they relate their various identities to the utterances about
5 the political debates under discussion? The analysis was further complicated when I realised
6 that my interviewees often used contradicting and different notions of 'culture', 'identity',
7 'politics', 'ethnicity' and 'individuality' (Zienkowski 2011a, 23-63).
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14 The overarching research question can be put as follows: *according to what interpretive*
15 *logics did my interviewees mark their subjectivity in my interviews on political engagement.*
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18 Within the context of this paper, I will focus on this last question by means of a focus on their
19 usage of metapragmatic markers. These linguistic markers are used by speakers to orient, to
20 instruct and to guide each other throughout interpretive processes. They are useful entry-
21 points for an analysis of the interpretive frames (Bednarek 2005, Borah 2011, Benford and
22 Snow 2000), repertoires (Wetherell 1998, Wetherell and Potter 1988) and/or logics (Glynos
23 and Howarth 2007, Laclau 2000b, Zienkowski 2012, 2011a) that are constitutive of the
24 subjectivities and political engagements of my respondents. Such markers are keys to an
25 adequate understanding of the way political awareness functions.
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34 The scale on which an interpretive logic functions, is not easy to determine. Nevertheless, the
35 observation of metapragmatic patterns across a multiplicity of topics and narratives
36 articulated in discourse warrants the usage of such a term. In addition to relatively small-scale
37 processes of interpretation whereby phenomena such as individual speech acts, turns, topics,
38 acquire meaning, it is possible to identify large-scale processes of interpretation that allow
39 individuals to articulate various topics, narratives, identities, and frames to each other.
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47 In order to describe such processes, I will adopt and adapt poststructuralist notion of *logic*.
48 This adaptation is geared towards an understanding of the way individuals establish a sense of
49 coherence with respect to their sense of self as well as with respect to their world-view. For
50 this reason, I will define the notion of interpretive logic as a large-scale interpretive pattern
51 that informs a particular mode of subjectivity. It is a particular configuration of functional
52 relationships between subject positions, statements, practices, (sub)topics, and other aspects
53 of discourse relevant to understanding self and other. Such logics may or may not be marked
54 explicitly in discourse (Zienkowski 2011a, 432, 2012, 2013). In order to arrive at this
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definition, I combined poststructuralist perspectives on discourse (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Glynos and Howarth 2007, Howarth 2000) with linguistic pragmatic perspectives on language use (Verschueren 1999, 2011, Verschueren and Östman 2009, Nerlich and Clarke 1996).

2 Why study interpretive logics

Scientific articles and case studies that explicitly discuss and illustrate *how* poststructuralist notions such as *empty signifiers*, *subject positions*, and *logics*, etc. can be identified are quite rare. Torfing points out that the founders of discourse theory were usually not interested in such issues (Torfing 2005, 25). Nevertheless, such methodological issues are important since studies are all too often restricted to illustrations of pre-established theoretical arguments (see Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis 2000, Laclau 1994a). Arguing against the methodological deficit haunting poststructuralist discourse theory, Torfing deplores the fact that “*discourse theorists have thrown the methodological baby out with the epistemological bathwater*”. People conducting discourse theoretical analyses inspired by poststructuralist frameworks need to make explicit “*what we do in discourse analysis, why we do it, and what the consequences are*” (Torfing 2005, 27-28).

At the same time, it should be noted that critical discourse analysts have started to borrow and adopt notions from poststructuralist discourse theory. Especially concepts such as articulation, empty signifier (Laclau 1994b) or chain of equivalence (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 130, Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 7-11) are becoming more popular among CDA oriented scholars (Fairclough and Chouliaraki 1999, Montessano Montessori 2011). However, some important issues with respect to the role of agency and critical awareness of language users remain unresolved. More specifically, studies that explicitly demonstrate how they take the self-interpretations of individuals (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 157-164) into account when identifying the various social and political logics that structure public discourses, organisations and identities remain rather rare in media-oriented studies that tend to focus on mainstream discourse(s). In this sense, critical studies of discourse that include an ethnographic focus on the way concrete individuals interpret (their relations with) such representations provide useful insights into the way discourse theoretical principles function on an empirical level (Krzyzanowski and Oberhuber 2007, Blommaert and Jie 2010). In the same way, discourse studies focusing on the intra- and interpersonal aspects of positioning in

1 communication may help us to articulate a more fine-grained heuristic for operationalizing
2 discourse theoretical concepts (Harré and Stearns 1995, Harré et al. 2009, Harré and Gillet
3 1994).
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7 Most empirical studies that operationalize poststructuralist notions such as empty signifiers or
8 logics focus on mediatised discourses (Nabers 2009, e.g. Carpentier 2001, Carpentier and De
9 Cleen 2007) and/or on publicly available political documents (Montessano Montessori 2011,
10 e.g. Aggarwal 2008). Such studies are valuable contributions to critical modes of discourse
11 theory and analysis. However, if one restricts one's focus to these genres, this may lead one
12 away from the question how individuals may critically engage themselves with mainstream
13 political discourses on alternative forums in the public sphere. Even though signifiers may
14 seem empty when analysing various media texts, they are not necessarily empty to the people
15 who deploy and interpret these notions.
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25 Linguistic pragmatics includes a framework for investigating the way people mark their
26 metalinguistic awareness in discourse. As such, it offers ways to investigate reflexive agents
27 and language users with a terminology that may enrich poststructuralist discourse theory with
28 a more agency-oriented perspective. On the other hand, linguistic pragmatics can be enriched
29 by a focus on the question how people mark large-scale interpretive logics that provide their
30 sense of self, their sense of politics, and their world-views with a high degree of linguistic
31 cohesion and continuity, allowing for a high degree of interpretive coherence. Put differently,
32 an integration of both frameworks may contribute to a better understanding of the way
33 political awareness functions in relation to discourse.
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45 **3 Interpreting the self in discourse on political engagement**

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48 Concepts such as politics, identity, integration, and emancipation are important signifiers in
49 the Flemish minority debates. They can be described in terms of empty signifiers over which
50 a struggle for hegemony is being waged. An empty signifier is a signifier that has been so
51 over-coded with meanings by different social actors, that it means virtually anything and
52 nothing at the same time (Laclau 1994b, Torfing 1999, 301-303). These signifiers are the
53 topical objects of hegemonic struggle in public debates and in political praxis. They are
54 abstract categories that perform key functions in the value systems of concrete individuals. As
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1 such, they are often intertwined with an individual's preferred sense of self, as well as with
2 his or her preferred mode of politics. (Zienkowski 2011a, 425-426).
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5 The intellectuals and activists I talked to display a high degree of awareness with respect to
6 hegemonic uses of such notions in the Flemish public sphere. This awareness is indexed at
7 various points in their discourse. I will exemplify this with reference to a case study in the
8 chapters below. However, in order to do so, I will first introduce my conceptual and analytical
9 toolbox.
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17 **3.1 On metalinguistic and political awareness**

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19 The utterances and practices of the activists and intellectuals I interviewed are considered to
20 be political to the extent that they challenge and/or rearticulate what my interviewees consider
21 to be hegemonic and/or problematic (discursive) practices in the public sphere. Political
22 engagement can therefore be defined as *a practice of discursively rearticulating social*
23 *patterns in a public sphere by means of imagined collective action* (Zienkowski 2011a, 205).
24 My respondents engaged themselves in a variety of contexts (e.g. political parties, youth
25 organisations, pressure groups, ethnic and cultural organisations) and they deployed different
26 interpretive frameworks, political theories (e.g. Marxist, liberal, Foucaultian), and ideologies,
27 but they have all voiced some kind of critique with respect to minority politics in Flanders on
28 websites, in newspapers, and at public lectures or debates.
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40 In line with the Essex school of discourse theory (Laclau 2000a, x-xi), I favour a view that
41 considers politics as an analytical category that designates those discursive practices,
42 institutions and relations whose contingency is publicly challenged and rearticulated by
43 various stakeholders . Of course, the question remains exactly *how* the contingency of
44 concrete practices and discourses can be highlighted. I will argue that an empirical analysis of
45 the metalinguistic or metapragmatic dimension of political discourse allows for an
46 investigation of the various ways in which preferred modes of self are linked to preferred
47 modes of political engagement. Metapragmatic and metalinguistic markers allow interlocutors
48 to identify patterns of coherence in their subjectivities and in their political discourses. In
49 order to understand this, a few notes on (meta)pragmatics as a field of inquiry need to be
50 made.
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1 It is not my intention to dwell on the historiography and intradisciplinary tensions within the
2 broad field of linguistic pragmatics. I subscribe to the view of pragmatics as a perspective,
3 attitude, or turn within linguistic approaches to communication. This perspective involves a
4 turn towards a functional and interpretive approach to language use that transcends traditional
5 disciplinary boundaries. It is an aggregate concept that designates those ways of
6 conceptualising language use that allow us to highlight the process-based nature of the
7 intersubjective, contextual, functional and interpretive acts we perform when we talk and
8 write (Zienkowski 2011a, 149-152). As such, I subscribe both to the early definition of
9 pragmatics provided by Charles Morris and to the more recent definition provided by Jef
10 Verschueren.

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20 “By ‘pragmatics’ is designated the science of the relation of signs to their interpreters.
21 [...] Since most, if not all, signs have as their interpreters living organisms, it is a sufficiently
22 accurate characterization of pragmatics to say that it deals with the biotic aspects of
23 semiosis, that is, with all the psychological, biological, and sociological phenomena which
24 occur in the functioning of signs”. (Morris 1938 cited in: Verschueren 2009, 3)

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31 “At the most elementary level, pragmatics can be defined as the study of language use,
32 or, to employ a somewhat more complicated phrasing, the study of linguistic phenomena from
33 the point of view of their usage properties and processes.” (Verschueren 1999, 1)

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38 The interdisciplinary view of pragmatics as a perspective has been criticised for being too
39 broad. Even a proponent of this broad view such as Verschueren acknowledges the validity of
40 Davis’ concern that “the problem with this broad view of pragmatics [as defined by Morris] is
41 that it is too inclusive to be of much use” since it “includes almost all human activity, from
42 baseball to the stock market”. The ultimate implication being that “all of the human sciences
43 become part of pragmatics” (Davis 1991 cited in: Verschueren 2009, 14). Nevertheless,
44 Verschueren does offer an alternative to what Mey calls the Scylla and Charybdis of either
45 confining oneself to strict linguistic definitions of pragmatics or developing impossibly vague
46 definitions that basically incorporate “as much social context as possible” thus blurring the
47 boundaries between pragmatic and other (linguistic) disciplines (Mey 1999, 43).

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58 Within pragmatics, context is not conceptualised as a container that surrounds utterances and
59 texts. Rather, context is interactively negotiated. Language users indicate to each other what
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1 aspects of contextual reality should be taken into account in order to achieve a preferred mode
2 of interpretation (Zienkowski 2011a, 182-187, Heritage and Clayman 2010, 21, Gumperz
3 1982, 153). Within such a framework, context is not a vague notion: “*contextual*
4 *interpretations are actively signalled and/or used, and it is this fact that makes them most*
5 *useful in linguistic analysis, because it is what makes them traceable*” (Verschueren 1999,
6 11). The social and the mental worlds get *activated* through choice-making practices
7 (Verschueren 1999, 83-87). We mark relevant aspects of context by means of
8 contextualisation cues that point to spatial, temporal, social and/or (inter)textual coordinates
9 of reality. These indexes may be linguistic or non-linguistic. In either case, they prompt
10 language users to engage in interpretive efforts whereby linguistic and non-linguistic aspects
11 of reality are linked to each other (Blommaert 2005, 251, see also: Bauman and Briggs 1990,
12 68, Verschueren 1999, 77, Zienkowski 2011a, 429).

13 A study of the linguistic strategies used in order to communicate relevant contexts allows for
14 an empirical analysis of interpretive logics that leave traces at the micro-level of language use
15 (Zienkowski 2011b, 7-8). Markers of metapragmatic awareness perform a key function in this
16 respect. These markers are discussed in research on metalinguistics (Jaworski, Coupland, and
17 Galasinski 2004) or metapragmatics (Caffi 1998, Bublitz and Hübler 2007, Verschueren
18 2004). There is no consensus with respect to the delineation of these terms. In this paper, I
19 will follow Blommaert who points out that “*every discourse simultaneously says something in*
20 *itself (e.g. it describes a particular state of affairs ‘out there’) and about itself, about how that*
21 *discourse should be interpreted, situated in relation to context, social relations, and so on.*
22 *Such indexical levels can also be called ‘metalinguistic’ (i.e. about linguistic structure) or*
23 *‘metapragmatic’ (i.e. about forms of usage of language)*” (Blommaert 2005, 253).

24 The notion of metapragmatics can also refer to a theoretical debate on pragmatics defined as a
25 scientific discipline or perspective – irrespective of the specific definition given to this
26 discipline. In addition, it may refer to the conditions that make speaker’s language use
27 possible and effective. Thirdly, Caffi points out that metapragmatics also refers to ‘*the know-*
28 *how’ regarding the control and planning of, as well as feedback on, the ongoing interaction*”
29 displayed by ordinary language users (Caffi 1998, 581). This implies that the interpretations
30 of actors need to be *part and parcel of what needs to be described and explained*” in
31 pragmatic modes of discourse analysis (Verschueren 2004, 444-445). Metapragmatics may be
32 described as follows “*the systematic study of the metalevel, where indicators of reflexive*
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1 awareness are to be found in the actual choice-making that constitutes language use, is the
2 proper domain of what is usually called metapragmatics” (Verschueren 1999, 188).
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5 Like any other reflexive process related to language use, metalinguistic awareness may or
6 may not be marked explicitly in discourse. Metapragmatic markers are basically discursive
7 (linguistic or non-linguistic) items that mark mental awareness of the way an aspect of
8 discourse is (or should be) used (Zienkowski 2011a, 432). As such, they are empirically
9 observable indicators of discourse strategies, frames, repertoires, and large-scale interpretive
10 logics deployed by language users. They indicate reflexive awareness and subjectivity in
11 discourse. These markers are functional entities. There is a metapragmatic dimension to all
12 language use, but potential indicators include “*all of Jakobson’s ‘shifters’, Gumperz’s*
13 *‘contextualization cues’ (such as instances of code switching), anything ever discussed under*
14 *the labels ‘discourse markers / particles’ or ‘pragmatic markers / particles’ (such as anyway,*
15 *actually, undoubtedly, I guess, you know, etc.), ‘sentence adverbs’ (such as frankly,*
16 *regrettably), hedges (such as sort of, in a sense), instances of ‘mention’ vs ‘use’ (again as*
17 *already suggested in Jakobson), as well as direct quotations, reported speech, and more*
18 *implicitly embedded ‘voices’*” (Verschueren 2004, 446).
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32 Metapragmatic awareness may be marked explicitly or may be left largely implicit in
33 discourse (Hübler and Bublitz 2007). Nevertheless, it is impossible to achieve either full
34 explicitness or full implicitness (Verschueren 1999, 26-36). Metapragmatic acts also serve as
35 a means of commenting on and interfering with ongoing discourse or text (Hübler and Bublitz
36 2007, 6). Such acts are fundamental to the articulation of social and textual critique. Even
37 though we have no direct access to our own awareness or to the awareness of others, we do
38 have access to a language that may indicate relevant aspects of our own awareness of the
39 discursive processes we are involved in, as well as one’s subjective stance towards a
40 multiplicity of social and discursive phenomena articulated in discourse.
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51 A pragmatic approach to the self, to politics and to subjectivity allows for an investigation of
52 the way subjects relate themselves to the socio-political dimensions of their contextual
53 realities. Since metapragmatic or metalinguistic awareness involves an awareness of the way
54 people use language, it is a precondition for the discursive articulation of socio-political
55 critique. Moreover, metapragmatic awareness allows language users to identify (in)coherent
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1 patterns in the subjectivities and discourses of self and other as perceived in the public sphere
2 (Zienkowski 2011a, 429).
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5 However one may define subjectivity, it involves at least some degree of awareness with
6 respect to oneself and with respect to the multiplicity of voices and meanings that may
7 potentially be inferred from texts and discourses. Analysing subjectivities involves analyzing
8 a multiplicity of potentially contradicting identities and meanings within more or less
9 coherent individuals, groups, and discourses. The notion of subjectivity allows one to think of
10 the self in terms of an exercise in balancing on the edge between coherence and a multiple
11 personality disorder. As such, Donald E. Hall points out that “*We may have numerous*
12 *discrete identities of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc ... and a subjectivity that is*
13 *comprised of all of those facets, as well as our own imperfect awareness of our selves*” (Hall
14 2004, 134).
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25 Whenever I will talk about the self in the remainder of this article, I will consider the self in
26 terms of a reification of the various processes that allow an individual to reflectively position
27 the self as a more or less coherent whole with respect to the various spatial, temporal, social,
28 and (inter)textual co-ordinates of contextual reality (Zienkowski 2011a, 434). Such a concept
29 of selfhood can only be established when it is possible to identify large-scale interpretive
30 logics that structure one’s metapragmatic awareness of the various contexts through which
31 one moves.
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40 This notion of selfhood allows one to link up with empirical research into the dynamics of
41 identity construction as explored in positioning theory and in other approaches that focus on
42 the (co-) constructed dimension of selfhood. Moreover, it links up nicely with the pragmatist
43 view that “*a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and*
44 *that carry an image of him in their minds*” (James 1961 cited in: Holstein and Gubrium 2000,
45 23). As Goffman pointed out, the self can therefore be viewed as a dramatic effect established
46 in and through an awareness of the multiplicity of roles performed in various social contexts
47 (Elliott 2009, 39).
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56 **4 Large-scale interpretive logics constitutive for the self**

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58 Changes in prosody, hedges, boosters, contextualisation cues, and other markers of
59 metapragmatic awareness may sensitise us to the various voices to which an individual orients
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1 his or her subjectivity while talking about politics. But if we are to study the selves of
2 interviewees and if we are to move beyond a study of highly contextualised identities, we
3 need to answer the question how large-scale interpretations can be marked in discourse.
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7 Notions such as frame, narrative, or interpretive repertoire may do the trick, but within the
8 context of this article, I prefer to build upon the concept of logic as developed by Glynos and
9 Howarth². Howarth and Glynos argue that one might describe the ‘logic of the market’
10 through a description of a set of subject positions (e.g. buyers and sellers); objects (e.g.
11 commodities and means of exchange), and a system of relations that articulates objects and
12 subjects with one another (e.g. a well functioning legal system). Their notion of logic captures
13 the conditions that make the continued operation of these practices, discourses, and subject
14 positions possible (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 136).
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23 My preference for the concept of *logic* is informed by a project that seeks to counter the
24 poststructuralist methodological deficit by linking this type of theory to linguistic pragmatic
25 modes of analysis. However, I also seek to elaborate on the notion of logic proposed by
26 Howarth and Glynos. I argue that one needs to distinguish between the interpretive logics
27 externalised and criticised by individuals, groups and/or researchers on the one hand, and
28 those interpretations that inform a preferred sense of self and subjectivity on the other hand.
29 Put differently, I want to operationalise the abstract notion of logic proposed by Glynos and
30 Howarth by linking it to a metapragmatic notion of subjectivity (Zienkowski 2012, 501-519,
31 2011a, 332-354).
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42 Some caveats need to be made. Researchers are not the only subjects analysing the logics of
43 their socio-political contexts. For instance, interviewer and interviewee co-construct a
44 discourse through which they may articulate a critical stance towards socio-political processes
45 and entities. Respondents may use various metapragmatic strategies in order to distinguish
46 between what they consider to be legitimate and illegitimate discourses, subjectivities,
47 organisations, and practices. This implies that one may criticise the logic of the capitalist
48 system but that one cannot claim that this person deploys a capitalist logic. We need to
49 distinguish between the logics externalised and criticised by actors on the one hand, and the
50 logics that make up their preferred sense of self and subjectivity on the other hand.
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1 It is quite difficult to distinguish between the self-interpretations of individuals and the social
2 logics they may observe in reality. I therefore prefer to focus on the interpretive logics that
3 positively or negatively define the sense of self and the sense of others (re)articulated by my
4 respondents. Such interpretive logics also structure preferred and disavowed modes of politics
5 within the context of my interviews. The identification of processes in large-scale socio-
6 political debates thus boils down to the question how an individual may articulate his or her
7 sense of self in relation to the public debate. I will define the concept of logic as follows:
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14 *Logics are large-scale interpretive patterns informing a preferred mode of*
15 *subjectivity. They are particular interpretive configurations of functional relationships*
16 *between subject positions, statements, practices, (sub)topics, or any other aspects relevant to*
17 *an understanding of self and other. In order to identify and name such logics, one needs to go*
18 *through the self-interpretations of subjects which are marked metapragmatically in discourse.*
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20 (Zienkowski 2011a, 333)
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27 In order to demonstrate how such large-scale interpretive logics may be identified and
28 operate, I will refer to the case of Nadia Babazia (Zienkowski 2011a, 371-377, 383-384).
29 Almost all of my interviewees implicitly or explicitly framed the development of their
30 political awareness or engagement in terms of a reaction against interpellations and
31 interactions that did not conform to their preferred sense of self and/or politics. This involves
32 a metapragmatic interpretation of specific speech events, speech acts, and language games
33 (Zienkowski 2011a, 369).
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42 It should also be noted that feelings of misrecognition often occur where contextual
43 frameworks clash. Individuals switch between subject positions as they highlight different
44 aspects of contextual reality. As such, they may identify themselves with particular ethnic,
45 cultural, religious and /or political subject positions when discussing a particular topic.
46 However, if interlocutors misrecognise subject positions relevant to the utterance of particular
47 statements, this often triggers an emotional response. Interlocutors who are able to frame
48 these responses by means of a metapragmatic analysis of the speech event, are able to
49 politicise the interaction itself (Zienkowski 2011a, 369). This is what happens in my interview
50 with Nadia Babazia.
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1 Some remarks with respect to the transcription procedure need to be made. First of all, the
2 interviews were all conducted and transcribed in Dutch. Nevertheless, the analyses were
3 conducted by means of English concepts. Both the data and the analyses are presented in
4 English in the context of this article. Since the translation of data is “*not merely a question of*
5 *‘adopting’ or ‘following’ a ‘transcription technique’, but rather includes a range of practical*
6 *and ideological questions concerning the level of detail chosen in the transcription, and of the*
7 *way in which the translations are physically presented in print*” (Nikander 2008), some
8 remarks about the presentation of my data should be made.
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16 Both the transcriptions and the analyses presented below have been shown to the respondent
17 in question. She agreed to the analysis in spite of the fact that she considered it to be rather
18 strange to be objectified in this manner. The usage of double quotes indicates reported speech
19 that was marked by contextualisation cues such as rises in intonation, tempo, and other
20 metalinguistic markers. The specific dynamics of this process have been rendered invisible
21 for purposes of readability by means of double quotation marks. I also inserted punctuation
22 marks for purposes of accessibility. On a lexical level, the translation is rather literal.
23 Metaphors have been translated in such a way that their conceptual structure remained intact.
24 This was important since an identification of interpretive *logics* requires a passage through the
25 self-understandings of respondents as marked in discourse. Bold emphasis has been added to
26 direct the attention of the reader to aspects of the excerpt discussed in the analyses.
27 Nevertheless, I will have to ask my readers for a certain degree of faith in my ability to
28 translate the original Dutch excerpts adequately. The original excerpts can be consulted
29 elsewhere (see: Zienkowski 2011a, 505-507). It should also be noted that I do not consider the
30 interview data presented below to constitute a representation of my respondent’s complete
31 personality. Rather, we are dealing with a co-articulated identity (Holstein and Gubrium
32 2000) in which what is personal and what is public is continually negotiated and specified.
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50 **4.1 Being a bridge for others: a logic of rapprochement**

51 At the time of our interview, Nadia was involved in an organisation called SAMV (Support
52 Center for Allochthon Girls and Women). On a practical level, SAMV organised workshops,
53 protest actions, and debates. The organisation sought to inform women of their rights and
54 possibilities in society. After a while, SAMV also started to work with allochthon youngsters,
55 including boys, in 2004. It developed educative games about sexuality, role patterns and
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relationships. Another interesting project involved a play based on women's stories about sexuality, forced marriages, divorce, virginity, and Islam. As such, the organisation aimed to stimulate what it calls "*the internal debate*" within the so-called allochthon communities. This debate involves a discussion of topics such as partner choice, marital migration, inter-religious relationships, and homosexuality. Later on, the organisation would change its name to *Ella*, a name change that was informed by the following considerations:

"Whereas during the first five years, SAMV focused mostly on individual empowerment of allochthon women by means of various methods and courses, from 2006 on, SAMV developed a new track. Because, with respect to sensitive gender issues, 'taboo themes', and traditions that obstruct or hinder individual emancipation, the individual and communal levels are fundamentally intertwined. It is difficult to break certain taboos on your own, if there is no support within the community. We therefore never suggest only one solution or model. Rather, we want to stimulate people to think independently, to be critical with respect to common opinions / convictions within one's own community, and to make their own choices." (Bouzarmat 2010)

Within the context of our interview, Nadia Babazia discussed her "job" at SAMV in terms of an "engagement" with and within "the internal debate". As such, SAMV constituted one of three different "worlds" through which she travels. In addition to SAMV, these worlds include a "Flemish", "Belgian", "white" "environment" and an "environment" provided by her "family". These spatial metaphors are used in order to distinguish metapragmatically between three types of interpellations that are characteristic of three sets of speech events in which other interpretive logics are deployed.

At the very end of our interview, Nadia remarked that she thought the interview was "kind of interesting" and that she did not know "what to expect" when we made our appointment. At the time, I restricted my self to a rather vague explanation that our interview would be about her social and political engagements, ideas, and sources of inspiration. Since she experienced the interview to be atypical, I asked her what she did expect. She explained that she and her SAMV colleagues are frequently invited to interviews of all sorts.

NB: all sorts, yes, and sometimes it's rather ... well yes ... sometimes, sometimes you do **get tired** of always explaining this. And I liked it like right now, that it wasn't just about this aspect. Well, **it went a**

step further, like well, “Why do you engage yourself?”, so you don’t have to talk that much, well, you do have to talk about yourself of course, but not ... well, I don’t know, the **basics**, the **basic identity** ...

JZ: What do you consider to be **basic**?

NB: well, ... I don’t know, like “Do you feel Moroccan or Belgian?”, and “How about you being a Muslim”, you know And you can really get quite **exhausted** after such a conversation. It’s like “shit, yes, uhm how does this work again”, and you think like “shit, that’s not what I am working on at all”, or “this is what I am working on”, and that’s so, ... well, sometimes, **very exhausting**, and then you’re like ... “should I still do this sort of thing?”

excerpt 1 – 11/06/2008

The excerpt above shows that Nadia prefers interviews in which the “basic” “identity” questions do not have to be answered. She explains how questions asked by interviewers such as ““Do you feel Moroccan or Belgian”” are “exhausting” to her. She was interested by the fact that I “went a step further” by asking her ““Why do you engage yourself?””. This still meant that she “had to talk about” herself but presuppositions with respect to what she considered to be the “basics” of “identity” formation were left to function in the background of our interview. In order to understand this preference, we need to take a look at the interpretive logics that Nadia deploys in making sense of her socio-political engagement.

Nadia’s preferred mode of subjectivity can be described in terms of a *spatial logic of rapprochement*. She uses a lot of spatial metaphors to distinguish between the various contexts or “worlds” in which she moves. This logic allows her to switch between the environments of SAMV, of her family, and of the Flemish public sphere while maintaining a high degree of interpretive coherence. Spatial metaphors perform an important function in this respect. Nadia explains how she would like to be a “bridge for others”, connecting the interactional settings that make up her social reality. She also emphasised the difficulty of drawing “a line” between her self and her job. Moreover, she looks for a “road” between a “Moroccan” and a “Belgian” way of being. The interpretations associated with her usage of these metaphors inform her preferred mode of “engagement” as well as her description of her three “worlds”.

Nadia characterises the three “worlds” or environments in which she moves with reference to three types of language games and with reference to different definitions “emancipation” - a

1 key concept constitutive of her preferred mode of political engagement. First of all, there is
2 the SAMV environment. Nadia explained to me that she grew up in a provincial town in
3 Flanders which she considered to constitute “a very Belgian environment”, her family being
4 “practically the only Moroccan family over there”. At the age of “fifteen” and “sixteen” her
5 friends started going out. At that point, “all sorts” of normative “differences” emerged with
6 respect to a differential treatment of “boys” and “girls”. In order to come up with
7 “arguments” for the “conversations” she had with her “father”, she started reading authors
8 such as “Fatima Mernissi”, a well-known Islamic feminist sociologist³. After having
9 explained this, she explains why her job is so important to her.

NB: [...] And I still feel this today, in my job, that you ... you're very much involved, also because **it's about yourself** Well, we work with allochthon women, and it's about emancipation and that sort of stuff, but Well, partly it's also about ourselves, and sometimes it's rather **difficult to draw the line** like “this is just my job” It's **very close to uhm ... one another**. But that's also what's so nice about it, I don't want something that's simply ..., well without **engagement**, or about a theme that does not really uhm ...

JZ: **touch you**

NB: No, [...]

excerpt 2 – 11/06/2008

11 In the excerpt above, Nadia explains that it is “rather difficult to draw” a “line” between her
12 “job” and her self. Even though the focus of SAMV is oriented towards the “emancipation” of
13 “allochthon women”, the job and Nadia's sense of self are closely intertwined. Her
14 “engagement” for this emancipatory organisation is framed as a project that relates to her self.
15 The themes that are being dealt with within SAMV are “close” to her skin. Her “job” and her
16 self are “very close” “to one another”. This is why the border between her sense of self and
17 the activities she is involved in is hard to draw.

18 Nadia explained that she recently did an apprenticeship for the Flemish soap opera called
19 “Thuis” (English: Home) broadcasted by the Flemish public broadcasting company called
20 VRT. Within this “white environment”, Nadia is “again confronted with questions” that
21 neither confirm to her preferred mode of “engagement”, nor with her preferred sense of self.
22 The excerpt below clarifies the fact that SAMV has “passed this stage”. Even though this

1 organisation focuses on emancipation, questions about “girls”, “the headscarf”, and the
2 “Ramadan” are not asked “for days”. These are the “basic identity questions” that exhaust
3 Nadia so much. Note that Nadia sighs when discussing these questions. Her “personal
4 engagement” within the “white environment” of the VRT “was not deep enough” to accept
5 the “full-time” job she was offered there after her apprenticeship. Her “themes” - which are
6 the themes being dealt with by SAMV – the issues related to the “internal debate” – required
7 more attention.
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14 NB: [...] I was at Thuis, ... the soap, and yes, that was a lot of fun, but still, within this **white**
15 **environment**, you are once again **confronted with all these questions (sighs)**, “Well, what about this
16 Ramadan?”, and “Girls?”, and “Did you ever have to wear a headscarf?”. So you get all **these**
17 **questions** once again. And well, within the Support Center, we have really **passed this stage**. Well, we
18 simply do our jobs, **I don’t get this sort of questions for days** and yes, It implied a lot less
19 **engagement** with respect to content, it was kind of, I did like it, ... but that **personal engagement was**
20 **not deep enough** in order to I was offered a full-time, but (sighs), I was like, “I am not ready at the
21 Support Center yet, I still want to ... work about these themes”. And I still would like to work in the
22 media, but yes, ... on my themes, not merely,
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28 **excerpt 3 – 11/06/2008**
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31 In addition to the SAMV and “Flemish” environments, Nadia discussed her family
32 “environment”. The “little world” of “the Support Center” sometimes “clashes” with the
33 realities of her “community” and family contexts. Note that at SAMV there is agreement on
34 the importance of “emancipation”. Nevertheless, the “clash” with other contexts, forces Nadia
35 to ask her self “how to give meaning to” her “emancipation” “on a personal level”. As we will
36 see, different ideas concerning the meaning of “emancipation” are among the most
37 distinguishing features between these environments that “sometimes” “clash” metaphorically.
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46 NB: **At the Support Center** we are like “yes, we have to stimulate the **internal debate** about role
47 patterns, we have to stimulate it, men and women, and”, well, you know the theoretical ideas about that
48 But **in the evening you go home**, and, and, I have a husband at home (laughs), and, and it’s not ...
49 well, it **clashes** at times. Sometimes you can, well, **you are within your own little world**, and then you
50 are confronted sometimes, often, with well, “**what is it really like in the community**” You know
51 what I mean? Sometimes we can go on a weekend with the entire general assembly of the Support
52 Center, and then we are all like “we want this and that, and this and that”, after that, everyone comes
53 home, ... and, and **you too, have to manage, how to give meaning to your emancipation**.
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60 JZ: On a **personal level**?
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1 NB: On a **personal level, yes**, And sometimes, ... well, sometimes, this is how I, **with respect to**
2 **my environment** eh, how I deal with it I don't know if this is a complete answer to

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6 JZ: yes yes, but

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9 NB: yeah, sometimes **it can kind of clash**.

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11 **excerpt 4 – 11/06/2008**

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14 At the beginning of this analysis, I pointed out that Nadia's preferred sense of self is
15 frequently articulated by means of spatial metaphors as well. This can be exemplified with
16 reference to the excerpt below. She explains that she wants to be "a bridge to others". She
17 does not want "to separate" from her "community" even though her social "trajectory went
18 reasonably well". She values the "connection" she can make between the different "worlds"
19 in which she moves.
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27 NB: [...] it's fun to work on ... on such themes uhm Because I feel like it's not because I ... **my**
28 **trajectory went reasonably well**, that I don't want to be ... **a bridge to others** or, I don't know. Well,
29 somehow, I consider this to be my responsibility ...
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33 JZ: And where do you think this comes from?

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36 NB: Well, I don't know, it's, it's, well, ... it's a feeling, I don't know, It's a feeling I have, like ... "**it is**
37 **sort of my community ... I don't want to separate from it**", or something. I do want to be able to do
38 my own thing. And, ... probably, ... I don't know what the Moroccan community, ... well, some will
39 agree with some things and others won't, but I, ... **I do think it's important to ... have a connection**
40 **with it**, and if possible, to bring a positive energy, ...
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45 JZ: in it

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48 NB into it (laughs), yes, and especially with regard to youngsters.
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50 **excerpt 5 – 11/06/2008**

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53 The operation of a spatial logic of rapprochement should be clear at this point. It informs
54 Nadia's preferred mode of engagement as well as her preferred mode of subjectivity.
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57 Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that there are other logics to be identified as well.
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4.2 Logics of enunciation

A closer analysis of the SAMV “environment”, the family “environment” that is partially located in the “internal debate”, and the “white”, “Flemish”, and “Belgian” “environment”, shows that these “worlds” are characterized by different *enunciative* logics according to which the notion of “emancipation” gathers very different meanings. One might claim that all the logics identified in this paper involve an enunciative dimension. Nevertheless, I will use the notion of enunciative logic in order to highlight how an individual may link various modes of speech and/or writing to each other by means of (meta)linguistic categorisations and metaphors.

NB: [...] But I do think that uhm, ... because I have been raised in **a very Flemish environment** ... and uhm ... well for instance, **my physician** can really say to me like, ... because I still go to my physician in Wuustwezel, ... like uhm “well, I really think it’s nice what you’re doing, **you can play a very important role within your community**”, but ... in such a **paternalistic, mothering** way Whereas I don’t want to, well, **I do want to play a role** for my community, **but not in the way she means it** She has like this image of women like “those women are being repressed”, and yes, ... you know, as if you ... as if you are liberating them or something, whereas I Well, I do not consider this to be my role. I do not want to deal with my community in this way, **They give another meaning to it**

JZ: Yes

NB: I think they may all be quite enthusiastic about uhm, about what I’m doing eh, but I think **they give it another meaning**

excerpt 6 – 11/06/2008

The excerpt above indicates that people in Nadia Babazia’s “Flemish environment” tend to give another meaning to her engagement in SAMV than the one she prefers. Even though people such as her “physician” in Wuustwezel may be “enthusiastic” about the “role” she plays with respect to her “community”, Nadia suspects they interpret this “role” in a rather “paternalistic” or “mothering” way. She does not consider it to be her “role” to liberate “women” in this particular way. Her preferred mode of engagement and emancipation is informed by a refusal to define these notions for others. Even within her own family context, she wonders “how to give meaning” to her “emancipation”.

1 One might say that there are two different interpretive logics informing the discourse of her
2 “white” and “Flemish” world on the one hand, and the logic of SAMV on the other. There is a
3 *polysemic enunciative logic* that is part of her preferred mode of “engagement”. Nadia refuses
4 to define “emancipation” and “participation” on behalf of others. It should be noted that these
5 logics are not simply individual concepts. For instance, this polysemic logic can also be
6 observed in the speech given at the name change from SAMV to Ella: “*It is difficult to break*
7 *certain taboos on your own, if there is no support within the community. We therefore never*
8 *suggest only one solution or model. Rather, we want to stimulate people to think*
9 *independently, to be critical with respect to common opinions / convictions within one’s own*
10 *community, and to make their own choices.*” (Bouzarmat 2010).
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20 Elsewhere, she argues that SAMV and the “younger generation” of “feminists” refuse to do
21 so as well. The logic informing her approach to minority and gender related themes is quite
22 different from the logic informing the discourse of her physician and her co-workers at the
23 VRT. The physician’s “paternalistic” and “mothering” comments about Nadia’s engagement,
24 and the “questions” asked at the VRT involve rather narrow definitions of concepts such as
25 “engagement”, “emancipation”, and “participation”. One might say that questions and
26 statements about Nadia’s identity and engagement in “white” and “Flemish” environments are
27 characterised by a *monosemic logic of enunciation*.
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36 The enunciative logic informing the dominant mode of discourse in a particular context also
37 informs the prevailing interpellations and forms of address. An individual’s ability to identify
38 large-scale enunciative strategies by means of metapragmatic language use correlates with his
39 or her awareness of a preferred mode of interaction, politics, and self. Nadia Babazia is quite
40 aware of the fact that the political tensions between individuals and organisations in the public
41 sphere are to a large extent informed by different interpretations of the categories that give
42 meaning to her preferred mode of engagement and subjectivity.
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52 **5 Conclusions: interpretive logics and the metapragmatics of** 53 **identity** 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65

1 Faced with complex discourses on social and political engagement one needs to distinguish
2 between the interpretations externalised and criticised by actors on the one hand, and those
3 interpretations that make up their preferred sense of self and subjectivity on the other hand.
4 The notion of interpretive logics that are marked metapragmatically in discourse allows us to
5 do this.
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8 The subjective sense of coherence one experiences in many large-scale interactions such as
9 extended conversations or in-depth interviews emerges through manifold markers which are
10 linked through a set of family resemblances. For instance, the many spatial metaphors
11 deployed by Nadia Babazia were used in order to characterise a whole set of discourses and
12 voices in the public sphere that are to be distinguished from her preferred mode of self and
13 engagement. Every socio-political discourse is characterised by a set of interpretive logics.
14 For purposes of exemplification, I have restricted myself to an illustration of how these logics
15 may be identified. Two logics positively define Nadia's preferred mode of subjectivity: a
16 polysemic logic of enunciation and a spatial logic of rapprochement. Both logics are
17 negatively defined by a monosemic enunciative logic deployed by various actors in
18 mainstream Flemish society when they discuss the integration and emancipation of minorities.
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31 Some of Nadia's personal values figure as empty signifiers in mainstream political discourse
32 (e.g. "emancipation" or "community"). However, by putting these notions in new interpretive
33 and functional relationships to each other, she is able to articulate a more or less coherent
34 world-view and critique. Depending on their usage, categories such as "emancipation" may
35 function as personal values as well as objects of criticism. By metapragmatically highlighting
36 the different usages of such notions, people are able to highlight the contingency of these
37 concepts and the associated practices. As such, a politicisation of hegemonic discourses is
38 enabled. A recognition of the fact that people deploy differential logics in the public debate
39 when they use ethnic, cultural, religious, and other abstract categories may be the best
40 antidote to counter processes of misrecognition among minorities and majorities in the public
41 sphere.
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4 Christian Knöpler and Miguel Souza, 85-112. Berlin: Transcript.
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6 Notes

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10 ¹ The binary pair allochthons - autochthons is a peculiarity of Dutch discourses on migration in Flanders and in
11 the Netherlands. In mainstream political discourse, the notion of autochthony refers to supposedly ethnic
12 Flemish or Netherland citizens who speak Dutch. The word 'allochthon' derives from the Greek words 'allos'
13 (i.e. other) and 'chthon' (i.e. country, land or earth). In practice, this latter notion is mainly used to designate
14 lower class, ethnic and cultural minorities, mostly Moroccan and Turkish Muslims who migrated to Belgium or
15 to the Neatherlands. The allochthony – autochthony opposition is contested by most minority activist since the
16 label of autochthony refers to the second and third generation of migrants as well as to the first.

17 ² It should be noted that Howarth and Glynos distinguish between three types of logics. On the one hand, they
18 adopt the political logics of equivalence and difference as conceptualised by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.
19 A logic of equivalence can be found in every political discourse. It makes political identities equivalent to each
20 other and allows for political alliances. At the same time there is also a logic of differentiation involved that
21 explains processes of othering and antagonism. To Laclau and Mouffe, political logics structure all hegemonic
22 struggles and processes of identity formation. Howarth and Glynos add the concept of a fantasmatic logic. This
23 logic points to the various discursive processes through which we forget or background the contingency of our
24 identities and political projects. Lastly, they introduce the concept of social logic that accounts for particular
25 societal conjunctures and events. Glynos and Howarth give some examples of social logics that have informed
26 recent reforms in European higher education such as a neoliberal logic or a logic of commodification.
27 Unfortunately, they do not provide us with a concrete heuristic for identifying such social, fantasmatic, or
28 political logics.
29

30 ³ Fatima Mernissi is a Moroccan sociologist. She is also a well-known Islamic feminist who argues that the
31 Koran does not justify an unequal treatment of men and women. Her publications can be found at the website:
32 <http://www.mernissi.net/> .
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Dear Sir / Madam,

When JLANPOL approved my paper titled '*marking a sense of self and politics in interviews on political engagement: interpretive logics and the metapragmatics of identity*' with minor revisions, you asked me to provide a list of changes and rebuttals made in response to the reviews you sent me.

You can find an overview of the changes I made to the document below. As you can see, I tried to address all of the critiques and remarks made by both reviewers. However, since these remarks were often calls for elaboration and specification, I was forced to lengthen my paper somewhat. I hope you are pleased with the result. Please extend my thanks to both reviewers.

With kind regards,

The author

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1. Reviewer n°1: The author refers to CDA studies (p.3-4). He claims that 'studies that systematically take the self-interpretations of individuals into account when identifying the various social and political logics that structure public discourses, organizations and identities remain extremely rare?' (p.3-4). A brief reference to DHA/CDA, such as: Wodak, 2011; Krzyzanowski, 2010; Oberhuber & Krzyzanowski, 2007 may be relevant here.
 2. Reviewer n°2 recommended a reference to positioning theory.

Response to reviewer 1: I may have exaggerated the rarity of studies that take the self-interpretations of individuals into account. As the reviewer pointed out, the book (Un)Doing Europe by Oberhuber & Krzyzanowski is a nice case of a critical discourse study that uses ethnographic insights (taking the reflexivity of actors into account) within the context of a CDA / DHA study. Also, after reading into literature on positioning theory, I have to admit that my previous formulation was too strong.

Response to reviewer 2: In the revised edition, I briefly touch upon positioning theory as suggested by this reviewer. I would like to thank the reviewer for pointing this literature out to me. I was not familiar with it, but I enjoyed reading 'Recent advances in positioning theory' by Harré et al. . Even though I did not elaborate a lot on this perspective, the perspective certainly rhymes with what I tried to do in my own research.

Revision:

More specifically, studies that explicitly demonstrate how they take the self-interpretations of individuals (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 157-164) into account when identifying the various social and political logics that structure public discourses, organisations and identities remain rather rare in media-oriented studies that tend to focus on mainstream discourse(s). In this sense, critical studies of discourse that include an ethnographic focus on the way concrete individuals interpret (their relations with) such representations provide useful insights into the way discourse theoretical

principles function on an empirical level (Krzyzanowski and Oberhuber 2007, Blommaert and Jie 2010). In the same way, empirical discourse studies focusing on the intra- and interpersonal aspects of positioning in communication may help us to articulate a more fine-grained heuristic for operationalizing discourse theoretical concepts (Harré and Stearns 1995, Harré et al. 2009, Harré and Gillet 1994).

3. The following few paragraphs have been reworked in order to accommodate to the following remarks:
 - a. Reviewer n°1 asked me to specify how I defined intellectuals in the context of my paper.
 - b. Reviewer n°2 wanted me to specify why I choose to focus on public figures with a Moroccan background in my research.
 - c. Reviewer n°2 also asked me to specify the exact number of interviews conducted.

Revision:

Many of my respondents can be said to be organic intellectuals in the sense that (part of) their social and political activities constitute a (discursive) challenge to hegemonic representations of disadvantaged social groups and unequal political configurations (Gramsci 2005, 5-10). Anthropological research has shown that intellectuals play a key role in the construction of nations and nationalism. But they play an equally big role in challenging the stereotyped images that are part of this process. Moreover, they perform important functions in various minority social movements and organisations (Boyer and Lomnitz 2005, 110-113).

All of the people I talked to have publicly voiced their opinion(s) on one or more issues central to the Flemish minority debates that revolve around notions such as identity, diversity, gender, Islam, language, norms, values and relationships between so-called autochthons and allochthons (Jacobs and Rea 2006, 21, Yanow and van der Haar forthcoming, 17, see: Blommaert and Verschueren 1998, 47-50, Zienkowski 2011a, 242-245)¹. Most of them have enjoyed a relatively high degree of education. Research shows that respondents of Moroccan decent have generally lower chances of educational success in the Flemish education system. They are more likely to double a year in primary and/or secondary schools. They are also quitting school more often without finishing their degrees and are overrepresented in the vocational educational track. It has also been demonstrated that Belgian schools tend to reproduce socio-economic inequality at the level of educational achievement (Jacobs et al. 2009, Hesters 2011, 30). Considering the fact that the vast majority of the people I interviewed finished high school as well as some form of higher education (college or university), my interviewees are part of a minority within a minority. The political relevance of this minority is high, since these people frequently articulate their critical opinions in various media of the Flemish public sphere.

After conducting 39 interviews with 35 people, I was both impressed and disoriented by the myriad of topics raised throughout these interactions.

4. Reviewer n°2 wrote that “the notion of perception of profession and self calls for reference to Goffman’s classic discussion of role and identity”. I fully agree that Goffman’s work, as well as the writings on the self by people such as James, Cooley, and Mead is very compatible with the views expressed in this paper. Within the context of my PhD, I have devoted considerable attention to these authors. I have tried to make this link a bit more explicit in the revised version of my paper without diverting attention too much from the general line of argumentation.

Revision:

Whenever I will talk about the self in the remainder of this article, I will consider the self in terms of a reification of the various processes that allow an individual to reflectively position the self as a more or less coherent whole with respect to the various spatial, temporal, social, and (inter)textual co-ordinates of contextual reality (Zienkowski 2011a, 434). Such a concept of selfhood can only be established when it is possible to identify large-scale interpretive logics that structure one’s metapragmatic awareness of the various contexts through which one moves.

This notion of selfhood allows one to link up with empirical research into the dynamics of identity construction as explored in positioning theory and in other approaches that focus on the (co-) constructed dimension of selfhood. Moreover, it links up nicely with the pragmatist view that “a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and that carry an image of him in their minds” (James 1961 cited in: Holstein and Gubrium 2000, 23). As Goffman pointed out, the self can therefore be viewed as a dramatic effect established in and through an awareness of the multiplicity of roles performed in various social contexts (Elliott 2009, 39).

5. Reviewer n°2 asked for specifications on transcription and translation issues. I have specified some of my decisions and ideas in the following paragraphs:

Revision:

Some remarks with respect to the transcription procedure need to be made. First of all, the interviews were all conducted and transcribed in Dutch. Nevertheless, the analyses were conducted by means of English concepts. Both the data and the analyses are presented in English in the context of this article. Since the translation of data is “not merely a question of ‘adopting’ or ‘following’ a ‘transcription technique’, but rather includes a range of practical and ideological questions concerning the level of detail chosen in the transcription, and of the way in which the translations are physically presented in print” (Nikander 2008), some remarks about the presentation of my data should be made.

Both the transcriptions and the analyses presented below have been shown to the respondent in question. She agreed to the analysis in spite of the fact that she considered it to be rather strange to be objectified in this manner. The usage of double quotes indicates reported speech that was marked by contextualisation cues such as rises in intonation, tempo, and other metalinguistic markers. The specific dynamics of this process have been rendered invisible for purposes of readability. I also inserted punctuation marks for purposes of accessibility. On a lexical level, the translation is

rather literal. Metaphors have been translated in such a way that their conceptual structure remained intact. This was important since an identification of interpretive logics requires a passage through the self-understandings of respondents as marked in discourse. Nevertheless, I will have to ask my readers for a certain degree of faith in my ability to translate the original Dutch excerpts adequately. The original excerpts can be consulted elsewhere (see: Zienkowski 2011a, 505-507). It should also be noted that I do not consider the interview data presented below to constitute a representation of my respondent's complete personality. Rather, we are dealing with a co-articulated identity (Holstein and Gubrium 2000) in which what is personal and what is public is continually negotiated and specified.

6. Reviewer n°2 asked me to state how the interview setting was explained to the respondents (remark 6). I agree, with the reviewer's remark that the fact that Nadia did not know what to expect was also partly due to my rather vague explanation of the way the speech event of the interview would unfold.

Revision:

At the very end of our interview, Nadia remarked that she thought the interview was "kind of interesting" and that she did not know "what to expect" when we made our appointment. At the time, I restricted my self to a rather vague explanation that our interview would be about her social and political engagements, ideas, and sources of inspiration. Since she experienced the interview to be atypical, I asked her what she did expect.

7. Reviewer n°2 pointed out that my wording "on a personal level" in excerpt 4 clearly influenced Nadia's discourse. (S)he is absolutely right about this. However, in order not to disturb the line of argumentation here, I decided not to make this aspect explicit. On the other hand, I fully agree that the meanings generated in this interview can certainly not always be attributed to Nadia alone. I hope that this becomes sufficiently clear in paragraphs I inserted elsewhere in the text:

Revision:

Some caveats need to be made. Researchers are not the only subjects analysing the logics of their socio-political contexts. For instance, interviewer and interviewee co-construct a discourse through which they may articulate a critical stance towards socio-political processes and entities.

It should also be noted that I do not consider the interview data presented below to constitute a representation of my respondent's complete personality. Rather, we are dealing with a co-articulated identity (Holstein and Gubrium 2000) in which what is personal and what is public is continually negotiated and specified.

8. In response to a remark made by reviewer n°2, I added a definition of 'empty signifiers':

Revision:

Concepts such as politics, identity, integration, and emancipation are important signifiers in the Flemish minority debates. They can be described in terms of empty signifiers over which a struggle for hegemony is being waged. An empty signifier is a signifier that has been so over-coded with meanings by different social actors, that it means virtually anything and nothing at the same time (Laclau 1994b, Torfing 1999, 301-303). These signifiers are the topical objects of hegemonic struggle in public debates and in political praxis. They are abstract categories that perform key functions in the value systems of concrete individuals. As such, they are often intertwined with an individual's preferred sense of self, as well as with his or her preferred mode of politics. (Zienkowski 2011a, 425-426).

9. Following a suggestion of reviewer n° 2, I marked key concepts articulated by Nadia Babazia and myself within the context of the interview excerpts in bold. This was done in order to make it easier for the reader to follow the argumentation.
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10. Lastly, reviewer n°2 suggested that the title 'Marking a sense of self and politics in interviews on political engagement: interpretive logics and the metapragmatics of identity' was somewhat misleading. He argued that this may lead a reader to think that the paper aims at analyzing the discourse genre of political interviews.

Response: Even though I can see the point made by reviewer 2, I am not convinced that readers will necessarily interpret this title in this way. I prefer to keep the title as it is, since the reference to interviews makes clear that this study focuses on individualised utterances. As such, I think this title conveys the idea that this study focuses on some reflexive aspects of empirically observable discourse, something that is not that common in Essex oriented analyses of discourse. This is a type of study that is quite rare in poststructuralist modes of discourse theory. I therefore hope that I can retain the title in its current form.

¹ The binary pair allochthons - autochthons is a peculiarity of Dutch discourses on migration in Flanders and in the Netherlands. In mainstream political discourse, the notion of autochthony refers to supposedly ethnic Flemish or Netherland citizens who speak Dutch. The word 'allochthon' derives from the Greek words 'allos' (i.e. other) and 'chton' (i.e. country, land or earth). In practice, this latter notion is mainly used to designate lower class, ethnic and cultural minorities, mostly Moroccan and Turkish Muslims who migrated to Belgium or to the Neatherlands. The allochthony – autochthony opposition is contested by most minority activist since the label of autochthony refers to the second and third generation of migrants as well as to the first.