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Borders, Norms, and the Dialogic Construction of Self

Abstract: Borders define norms of belonging, regulating who is to be considered a legitimate member of a given socio-political space. In addition to their myriad physical manifestations, borders are also internalized by individuals, structuring the ways in which people understand the world around them and their position within it. This chapter consider how internalized borders are navigated in interaction. Integrating the tools of sociolinguistic analysis with theories of dialogical selfhood developed in psychology, the chapter discusses how subjective conflicts are broached and negotiated through talk, leading to a multidimensional presentation of self that seeks to manage subjective conflict. Arguments are based on a case study of a gay man in Greece and the strategies he deploys to minimize a perceived incompatibility between gayness and dominant discourses of Greek nationalism. The ultimate aim of the chapter is to illustrate the importance of theorizing selfhood within sociolinguistic research and the crucial role played by internalized borders in discursive enactments of self.

Keywords: Borders, Bordering, Dialogic selfhood, Subjective conflict, Laughter, Sexuality, Nation

1 Introduction

Sto diaolo i ikoyenia, sto diaolo ki i patris, Elada na pethanis na zisume emis! ("To hell family, to hell homeland, let Greece die so we can live!") This slogan was the rallying cry of a protest that took place on 2 October 2018 in Syntagma Square in Athens, in front of the Greek Parliament. A few days prior, on 21 September 2018, a young man had entered a jewellery shop on Gladstonos Street, a busy pedestrian thoroughfare of Athens, even though the shop owner was not present. It is unclear why the man had entered the shop, but once he did he became trapped in the shop's security mechanism, leading him to attempt to break out of the shop's front door with a fire extinguisher. As he was doing so, a crowd, which included the shop owner, began to gather outside. When the man finally exited the shop by crawling through a broken window, the shop owner and another man began to kick him repeatedly in the head. Nine police officers subsequently arrived and proceeded to violently apprehend the man, who was already seri-

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ously injured, pinning him to the ground and beating him further. By the time he was taken, handcuffed, to the hospital, the young man was confirmed dead. According to the forensic report, he died from the multiple injuries he had sustained.[1]

Initial media reports about the incident mobilized various category labels to refer to the young man in question. Headlines referred to him as a "robber", a "junkie" or a "drug addict", and later as a "faggot" or an "LGBTQ activist". The young man was Zak Kostopoulos, also known as Zackie Oh, a 33-year-old Greek queer activist and drag performer. Discussions in the mainstream Greek media in the aftermath of the incident focused on whether the use of force by the shop owner and the police had been excessive or whether the shop owner was justified in protecting his business. Within Greek queer communities, in contrast, the incident was described as a "lynching", and taken as an additional example of the lived experience of exclusion and (in)securitization (Levon, 2020; Rampton & Charalambous, 2020) among people whose embodiments of gender and sexuality do not conform to hegemonic societal norms (see also Canakis, 2017). This is the context in which to interpret the slogan cited above: *Greece* must die so that *we* can live. The slogan is a discursive manifestation of the perceived incompatibility between Greek national belonging and queer subjectivities (i.e., the *us* to which the slogan refers), an incompatibility that can result in experiences of oppression, marginalization, and, in the case of Kostopoulos, death. In this chapter, we examine how individuals navigate the perceived incompatibility between "Greekness" and "queerness" in interaction. Specifically, we identify the linguistic and other symbolic strategies individuals use to create an interactional presentation of self that attempts to reconcile this tension.

To do this, we approach incidents like Kostopoulos' murder as an (admittedly extreme) example of *bordering*, or the everyday acts through which belonging (to a nation, to a group, to a given social space) is policed and adjudicated (van Houtum et al., 2005; Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). In particular, we investigate how borders are internalized by individuals and how the constant and dynamic construction and negotiation of borders is manifested in everyday social practice. We begin in the next section with a brief overview of our understanding of borders and bordering, and outline a framework for examining how (internal) borders are navigated in talk. We then illustrate how this framework can be applied to an analysis of an interview with two Greek gay men. Our overall goal is to demonstrate the importance of bordering as a heuristic in sociolinguistic research and to highlight

1 In May 2022, the two men who beat Kostopoulos when he exited the shop were found guilty of inflicting fatal bodily harm and sentenced to ten years in prison. The four police officers who had also faced charges for their involvement in Kostopoulos' death were found not guilty.

the ways that individuals use language to negotiate, and even overcome, the constraints that such bordering imposes. While the study of borders as liminal spaces has a long history in sociolinguistics (e.g., Hidalgo, 1995; Taeldeman et al., 2000; Omoniyi, 2004; Carvalho, 2014; Watt et al., 2014), our aim is to extend a bordering perspective outside of specific "borderlands" in order to more fully consider the role that borders play in the sociolinguistics of everyday life.

2 Bordering, Positioning, and Exclusion

The conceptual move within sociology and security studies from analysing borders as *objects* to analysing bordering as *process* was initially brought about the increased insourcing of official border controls from the margins of national territories to the centre of everyday social life (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019; Lems, 2020). As Balibar (2004) famously claimed, "borders . . . are dispersed a little everywhere." In Switzerland, for example, to register as a student at the university, you must present a valid residence permit to the university admissions office, attesting to your right to remain within the borders of the national territory. If a registered student then wants to get a job at the university, they must again present a valid residence permit to the university's Human Resources department, once more attesting to their right to reside (and work) in Switzerland. In this way, the burden of policing who is permitted to enter and remain within the national borders of Switzerland (and the many other countries that have adopted similar policies) has shifted from official agents of the state at external checkpoints (e.g., border crossing points at airports and train stations) to employees of local universities, not to mention a range of other unofficial social actors (e.g., employers, landlords, medical professionals, etc.). It is this change in the frequency and format of border control that has prompted a shift from a focus on borders to one on bordering, a shift in which scholars work to expose the quotidian and seemingly mundane practices through which border controls are enacted.

Yet while the specific spatial technologies of border control may have changed, the underlying motivations and resulting social effects of these activities have remained largely the same: to "delineate who is allowed in and who is to be kept out" (Lems, 2020, p. 117) of a given socio-political space. Importantly, such bordering activities have never only concerned official markers of *status*, such as whether an individual possesses a qualifying passport or residence permit. They have also always targeted the *habitus* (Isin, 2008) normatively associated with belonging in a particular location, or the "unarticulated and often inaccessible conventions . . . [that] get recruited to produce hardening distinctions between who is 'us' and who

is constructed as (irrevocably) 'them'" (Stoler, 2018, p. 2). In other words, in addition to semi-official "status checks" by employers, doctors, and others, everyday bordering activities also include the different acts of mundane surveillance to which we are all subjected: moments in which our ways of eating, dressing, and using language, among many other activities, are attended to and judged for how "appropriate" they are in a given cultural and national context (see, e.g., Jones, 2017; Eley & Rampton, 2020). Everyday bordering activities are thus one of the principal ways in which a particular *politics of belonging* (Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2011) is assembled, circulated, and enforced.

The enforcement of these "unarticulated" norms of belonging is not done solely by others. We ourselves internalize the various normative expectations that circulate in society, resulting in various forms of ideological self-control, ways in which we "bridle [our] own passions and control [our] own instincts" (Rose, 1999, p. 3) so as to conform to society's (often unspoken) rules (Foucault, 1991, 2009). For some, such processes of self-government require adapting or suppressing specific identifications (e.g., gay male sexuality) that conflict with broader societal norms (e.g., normative understandings of Greekness), generating plural and multi-layered conceptualizations of self. In these situations, internalized borders become *internal* borders (Balibar, 1994), divisions within the self-concept between those aspects of self that are normatively permissible and those that are not. Research has documented that individuals have different strategies for managing these subjective incompatibilities, ranging from disidentifying with the normatively precluded aspect of self (Phellas, 2005; Yip, 2007; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010) to redefining what subjective orientation means so as to reconcile internal conflicts (Yip, 2002; Halbertal & Koren, 2006) to embracing conflict and maintaining a fragmented and plural sense of self (Anzaldúa, 1987; Hill, 1995; Levon, 2016). Our goal in this chapter is to examine how individuals enact this kind of subjective negotiation interactionally, using the tools of linguistic analysis to identify the strategies individuals adopt for navigating subjective conflict (cf. Rampton, 2016).

To do this, we draw on Dialogical Self Theory (DST; Hermans et al., 1992; Hermans, 2001) to model the relationships between different constitutive aspects of the self. DST was initially developed in an effort to unite two disparate models of selfhood that have predominated in the psychology and sociology literature. The first is what Hall (1996) describes as a *sociological* model of the self, as initially formulated in the work of James (1890) and Mead (1934). In a sociological model of selfhood, there exists a coherent and integrated core of being, an "I-as-knower" (as James, 1890 describes it), that provides continuity to the self. While sociological models recognise that selves can have multiple aspects or faces, the central focus is on the idea of a coherent and sovereign self. The second model of self-

hood is what has been described as the *late-modern* self, as elaborated by scholars such as Giddens (1991) and Bauman (2000). In late-modern selfhood, there is no sovereign centre, no all-knowing "I". Instead, the self is seen as multiple and dynamic and distributed across a temporal plane, such that the self that is presented and experienced depends on the dialectics of the local social context. DST attempts to preserve the contextual specificity, the dynamism, of late-modern models while nevertheless recognising that we do experience the phenomenal continuity that is the focus on sociological models, i.e., that even when we are different in different contexts, we are still "me".

DST does this by contracting the temporal differentiation of late-modern selfhood (i.e., the different understandings of presentations of self that are animated in distinct contextualized moments) into a set of spatial oppositions that are experienced simultaneously. Within DST, these different aspects of self are termed "*I*-positions", semi-autonomous locations for the "*I*" to inhabit, each associated with its own history, values, and practices. These positions can be compatible with one another, or they can conflict, with no necessary integration assumed across positions. Instead, DST posits that all of our *I*-positions are organised within a position repertoire, which provides an overall structural topography to the self. The position repertoire is understood as hierarchical, such that some positions are more prominent than others or bunched more closely together than others. But the position repertoire nevertheless contains all of the different positions we inhabit. Finally, and most importantly, DST argues that *I*-positions are constantly in dialogue. Inspired by Bakhtin's (1981) framework of heteroglossia, the idea is that *I*-positions are endowed with individual voices, and that what governs our self-concept is an ongoing dialogue between the different *I*-positions we maintain. The notion of dialogue is thus what allows DST to model changes in our self-concept across time and situations while nevertheless preserving a sense of overall continuity of the position repertoire.

It is this in-built duality in the basic architecture of the self developed in DST that, we believe, provides us with a way of capturing the kinds of discursive negotiations of belonging required by internal(ized) borders. Concretely, we draw on a central principle of the DST framework, which asserts that experience of self as an integrated whole is an outcome of situated social practice, not some transcendental or *a priori* state (Raggatt, 2012). Rather, negotiating conflict between *I*-positions is something that people do in and through talk in particular interactional contexts. According to Raggatt (2010), one way in which people can do this is via the establishment of a relationship between three positions. We first have the two *I*-positions that are perceived as in conflict, an *I* as Greek and an *I* as gay, for example. What individuals can do is marshal some third symbolic object, in the form of an external figure or event, that possess qualities of the two conflict-

ing positions. Raggatt (2010) terms this external object an *ambiguous third*. The argument is that by bringing this ambiguous third into dialogue with the two conflicting I-positions, individuals can establish a triadic structure that helps to mediate the conflict, and create an understanding of self that is integrated while nevertheless structured by an internal dissonance.

In the analyses below, we explore how a Greek gay man, whom we call Dimitris, interactionally establishes a dialogical triad in an interview with Stamatina as a way of navigating the subjective tension he experiences between his positioning as Greek and his positioning as gay. We focus in particular on how Dimitris deploys specific membership categories and category-bound attributes to discursively enact the *I*-positions in question, before turning to examine how he uses laughter and other non-serious speech to interactionally refine the categories he has previously positioned. Yet before presenting the analyses themselves, additional background information about the social context of sexuality in Greece is required.

3 Sexuality and Greek Narratives of Belonging

The hegemonic ideal of Greek nationalism can be summarized by the popular slogan *patris, thriskia, ikoyenia* ("homeland, religion, family", see Gazi, 2011). The slogan encapsulates the three dimensions that are commonly taken to be the very essence of "Greekness", an imagined trait that involves deeply rooted normative ideas about gender and sexuality (Canakis, 2013; Katsiveli, 2021b). At the centre of this normative discourse stands Greek Orthodox Christianity, acting as the iconic representative of the moral order that links *ikoyenia* ("family") and *patrida* ("homeland") via the image of the *Holy Family* (*Ayia Ikoyenia*) as the ultimate manifestation of Greek identity. Because of this, traditional (i.e., Greek Orthodox) notions of kinship and family operate as definitional criteria for determining what it means to be a "good Greek" (Kantsa, 2014; Papanikolaou, 2018). This has important consequences for how gender and sexuality are imagined. According to Loizos and Papataxiarchis (1991), religious ideals of kinship support a so-called "domestic" model of gender, in which womanhood is defined by the roles "mother" and "wife" and manhood by the roles "householder" and "father" (see also Kantsa, 2014). This results in heteronormativity being inextricably linked to discourses of national belonging, operating as what Athanasiou (2006) describes as a "timeless structure of cultural intelligibility". Individuals who do not conform to heteronormative ideals are thus, by definition, not "Greek", symbolically excluding gendered and sexual nonconformity from normative definitions of national belonging.

At the same time, there exists a certain ambivalence with respect to the primacy of the Church in Greek national discourse and a desire to orient to "Western" ideals of modernity and liberalism (Kalivas, 2015). This desire has undergirded the gradual recognition of LGBTQ+ rights in Greece over the past 20 years, including the passing of laws forbidding discrimination on the basis of sexuality (in 2005) and gender identity (in 2010), the recognition of same-sex civil partnerships (in 2015), the right for trans individuals to legally change their gender without surgical intervention (in 2018), and the right to same-sex marriage and adoption (in 2024). These high-level legal changes have been accompanied by the development of a vibrant culture of grassroots LGBTQ+ activism and the emergence of a visible LGBTQ+ "scene", particularly in Athens and Thessaloniki, which both host annual pride parades and feature a number of venues catering to a specifically LGBTQ+ clientele. Yet despite these important advances, scholars have argued that these recent developments have only provided a veneer of progress, with narratives of a liberal inclusivity implicitly reproducing the ideology of "homeland, religion, family" rather than destabilizing underlying discourses of gendered and sexual normativity (Katsiveli, 2021b; see also Seidman, 2002; Levon, 2010).

Taken together then, the positioning of non-normative genders and sexualities in contemporary Greece reproduces an ambivalence that is central to contemporary Greek understandings of the nation as balanced between the West and the East and between modernity and tradition (e.g., Herzfeld, 1995). The preservation of pre-defined gender and sexual roles as regulated by Greek Orthodoxy and, by extension, the "holy Greek family" is contrasted to social inclusion of a gendered/sexual Other in agreement with Western models of progress. In this context, the contrast between modernity and tradition materialises in a direct juxtaposition between LGBTQ+ identities and the "traditional" nation. It is this contrast that underlies LGBTQ+ counter-discourses that target patriotism and national unity as dangerous values, as in the protest chant with which we began this chapter. It is this contrast that invokes the need for a symbolic "death" of Greece for an LGBTQ+ "us" to survive. Examining how Dimitris negotiates this contrast and the subjective tension it creates is the focus on the remainder of our discussion.

4 Negotiating Non-Normative Sexuality in Talk

As noted above, we illustrate our arguments regarding DST's potential for modelling the discursive negotiation of subjective conflict through an analysis of the speech of Dimitris, a gay Greek man in his early 50s. Dimitris was interviewed along with his partner, Fotis, by Stamatina in December 2018 (i.e., a few months

after Zak Kostopoulos' death) in their home in Athens. The interview was part of a larger project investigating how people who identify as lesbian or gay in Greece negotiate a perceived incompatibility between lesbian/gay identity and normative articulations of Greek identity (Katsiveli, 2021a). At the time of the interview, Dimitris and Fotis were in their early 50s and had been living together as a couple for about 10 years. Both men work in public service jobs, Dimitris as a secondary school teacher and Fotis as an officer in the Greek military. Through their work, the men are regularly confronted by normative definitions of Greek identity, definitions grounded in the discourse of "homeland, religion, family" that excludes gayness as a legitimate positioning with Greek society. The interview was the first (and only) time that Stamatina met the couple, and the men approached the interaction as a "teaching moment", one through which community "insiders" (Dimitris and Fotis) could explain what it means to be Greek and gay to a community "outsider" (Stamatina). In a conversation lasting over three hours, the two men covered a wide range of topics including their own personal histories, discussions of different queer communities in Greece, the men's own political beliefs, and comparisons between life in Greece and in other countries. In the interest of space, we touch on only a few of these topics in the current chapter and we focus our discussion primarily on Dimitris.

4.1 Establishing Positions

We begin by examining the specific membership categories and category-bound attributes that Dimitris makes relevant in the course of the interview (Schegloff, 2007; Stokoe, 2010, 2012). Identifying these categories and their associated attributes illustrates the different *I*-positions that Dimitris invokes and the specific dialogical triad he creates to mediate between them. Extract 1 provides an initial example of Dimitris enacting his *I*-position as Greek, in response to Stamatina's question about whether he has ever lived in a country other than Greece and whether he thinks there are differences in queer life in different countries (transcription conventions are based on Jefferson, 2004). Stamatina posed the question after a lengthy discussion among the three of them about differences between life in Athens and elsewhere in Greece (both Dimitris and Fotis have lived in numerous places in Greece). Her question can therefore be seen as a continuation of the previous topic but with a change of scale, moving from regional differences to international differences. Dimitris first responds to Stamatina's question with an emphatic statement that differences exist (line 4: *of course, of course*), though he immediately qualifies this by stating that it depends on the country and the extent to which having a vibrant gay scene is part of the country's own perception of

itself (line 7: *this is their heavy industry. That's what people advertise*). Dimitris goes on to relativize his earlier claim further, pivoting to a position that any differences that exist are, in fact, minor. Dimitris frames his comments with explicit markers of personal epistemic authority (Mondada, 2013) through which he constructs his account as irrefutable (line 5: *I know that because I went and saw this*, line 9: *when I went there I didn't see anything special*).

Dimitris reinforces the point in response to Stamatina's next question about whether he is happy in Greece (line 12). After replying explicitly in the affirmative, Dimitris offers a small story (Georgakopoulou, 2007) about a Greek friend of his who had visited London and upon his return bemoaned the lack of a "gay life" in Greece. The story provides Dimitris with an additional opportunity to display his knowledge of gay life around the world (line 23: *because I've been abroad and I know*) and so reaffirm his contention that Greece is just like anywhere else in Europe. Because Dimitris only explicitly references Athens in his response, his comments could be taken to describe the difference between Athens and the rest of Greece, rather than Greece and the rest of the world. We do not think this is the case for two reasons. First is the explicit framing of this portion of the conversation as focusing on a comparison between Greece and other countries. Prior to (1), Dimitris had already commented on regional differences in Greece. It therefore seems safe to assume that his use of small story in this instance is being used for a different purpose. Second, it is important to consider Dimitris use of the deictic *here* in the story of his friend's complaint (line 16: *came over here and was like oh how can we live here?*). To argue against his friend's (reported) claim, Dimitris offers to show his friend (who lives in Trikala, a city in central Greece) around Athens as a way of demonstrating that Greece (i.e., *here*) offers everything that London does. Dimitris' negation of his friend's statement only makes sense if *here* represents Greece, not just Trikala. Thus while he uses Athens as a synecdoche for Greece more generally, we argue that the point he is making is about the nature of queer life through the country. While implicit, we therefore take Dimitris' comments in (1) as a means for aligning with an "Greek" *I*-position and for defining what that membership category entails.

(1)

1 Sta E: e ales chores echete zisi ektos eladas?
Uhm have you lived in countries other than Greece?
2 Dim Ochi. (.) ochi.=
No. (.) no.=
3 Sta =Theorite oti iparchun diafores? sti LOATKI zoi?
=Do you think there are differences? in LGBTQI life?

4 Dim Ne ↑fisika fisika. Edaksi eksartate gia pia chora milame. (.) Sto Amsterdam
Yes ↑of course. of course. Okay, it depends on which country we're
5 ksero oti- >epidi piga ke ta ida,< ne. ne. °Iparchun diafores. Ine poli pio
talking about. (.) In Amsterdam I know that- >because I went and saw
6 anichta ta pragmata, poli pio elefthera, .h (.) Vevea ine ke i varia
this,< yes. yes. °There are differences. Things are much more open, much
7 viomichania tus.=afto diafimizun i anthropi [etsi?]
freer. .h (.) Of course, this is their heavy industry. That's what people advertise [right?]
8 Sta [Etsi] etsi
[right] right
9 Dim E:: (.) <sti Galia pu piga:> (.) den ida tipota idietero.=diladi o, ti echi
U::hm (.) <in France, when I went the:re> I didn't see anything special.=I
10 ke i Athina. sto Parisi. .hh Ke to Amsterdam to idio. Den echi tipota
mean, it's the same as Athens. Paris. .hh And Amsterdam is the same too.
11 perisotero=ta idia echi. Aplos eki ine pio:: elefthera ta pragmata.
It's nothing more.=the same. It's just that there things a::re freer.

((12 lines omitted))

12 Sta tora <afirimeni erotisi. eiste- niothete> efcharistimenos stin Elada
Now <an abstract question. Are you- do you feel> happy in Greece and
13 ke stin Athina?
in Athens?
14 Dim ne ↑para poli. ne den:- den vlepo kamia diafora den:- to elega ke se ena
Yes ↑very much so. Yes I do:n't- I don't see any difference I do:n't-
15 se ena filo mu pu iche pai sto Londino ke ezise ti gay [eng] zoi ke
I was saying this to a friend of mine who had been to London and lived

16 irthe edo pera ke lei a >pos zume edo ke ta lipa kai tu leo-< ↓apo ta
the gay life and came over here and was like >oh how can we live here
17 Trikala aftos tora, etsi? lipon: tu leo echis kikloforisi stin Athina?
etcetera and I tell him-< ↓He's from Trikala, right? So: I tell him, have
18 ochi lei. ↑Ela leo na se pao.
you been around Athens? He says no. ↑Come, I say, I'll give you a tour.
19 Sta ne ne pragmatika. ((gelontas……))
Yes yes indeed. ((laughing……))
20 Dim ke epathe: politismiko sok. lei pu ine afta ki ego den ta ksero. ((gelontas……..))
And he go:t a culture shock. He says where has all this been, I had no idea. ((laughing……))
21 Sta $tromero e$
$Incredible.$
22 Dim tu leo oriste. ta idia. (.) afta. ne de- den diaferi se tipota=>epidi
I'm like here you are. The same. (.) That's all. yes it's- It's not
23 echo pai k esto eksoteriko, ksero.<
different in anything=>because I've been abroad and I know.<

Dimitris' claim to epistemic authority over defining Greekness is further illustrated in Extract 2, where he and Fotis disagree over the extent to which the Greek Orthodox Church determines Greek identity. In line 4, Dimitris categorically rejects Stamatina's suggestion that the Church plays an important role in defining Greekness, instead orienting to a nostalgic discourse (e.g., Elgenius & Rydgren, 2022) of Ancient Greek authenticity (*neither Socrates was a Christian, nor Plato, nor Aristotle*). When challenged on this point by Fotis (in line 8), Dimitris describes the influence of the Church as a recent "bastardization" (line 11), thus again claiming the epistemic authority to define what being Greek means and so interactionally positioning an implicit affiliation with the category label.

(2)

1 Sta genikotera ara tha- tha simfonusame oti i eklisia ine akoma: .h <stichio>
in general, so would we agree that the church is sti:ll .h <an element> of

2 tis elinikis tafto- i thriskia telos padon i orthodoksi ine stichio <tis
Greek ident- is Orthodox religion an element
3 elinikotitas?>
<of Greekness?>
4 Dim Ochi. den to dechome. den to dechome me tipota. ute o Sokratis itan
No. I don't accept it. I don't accept it at all. Neither Socrates was a
5 christianos, ute o Platonas, ute o Aristotelis. (.) Den to dechome me
Christian, nor Plato, nor Aristotle. (.) I don't accept it at all.
6 tipota. ochi.
No.
7 (1.5)
8 Fot ma ine. (.) omos.
But it is. (.) though.
9 Dim i[ne-]
It [is-]
10 Fot [den] mas aresi ala ine.
[We] don't like it but it is.
11 Dim tis elinikotitas? [Ine afto to bastardo idos pu ine i adilipsi oti echi-]
Of Greekness? [it's this bastard kind that we think it has-]
12 Fot [distichos ine sinifasmenes. enies.]
[Unfortunately they are intertwined concepts.]
13 Dim ti- (.) pio more, i orthodoksia ke i elinikotita?
What man, Orthodoxy and Greekness?
14 Fot ↑ne=disti↑chos.
↑Yes=↑unfortunately.

When it comes to Dimitris' orientation to an *I*-position as gay, the situation is somewhat more fraught and the theme of a tension between gay and Greek categories arises, albeit somewhat implicitly. The extract in (3) features what Dimitris describes as his "turning point" narrative (i.e., his coming-out story) and it appeared in the interview immediately after Fotis offered his own story. In a pattern reminiscent of many coming-out stories (see, e.g., Levon, 2015), Dimitris begins his narrative by describing his discovery of sexuality as arising by happenstance, a chance discovery in a sauna in Budapest that sexual desire between "good-looking men" is possible. His description of this as a surprise (line 5: *suddenly the world opened up*) serves as an implicit admission of a tension that Dimitris had felt between his ideal

of masculinity and his beliefs about gayness. In response to Stamatina's question (in line 14), Dimitris confirms that this tension was grounded in an understanding of gayness as linked to femininity. Dimitris assigns responsibility for this category/attribute association to the Greek media, describing it as the only representation that was available in Greek films (line 10) and television (line 29). In doing so, Dimitris implicitly positions (stereotypical) gayness as incompatible with dominant Greek discourses, thus giving rise to the subjective tension that he experiences prior to his "discovery" in Budapest. Dimitris describes this experience – of feeling "gay" but not being "one of them" – as one of hybridity that he did not know how to embody until he saw the men in the sauna. For Dimitris, the men in Budapest represent a "third way" that enables him to reconcile the tension he narrates (line 41: *I understand who I am now. I saw my mirror opposite me*).

(3)

1 Dim thimithika ki ego ti diki mu mera turning point. imun stin ilikia su. kati
I also remembered my own turning point day. I was your age. (.) I was
2 imuna ikosieksi- °°ikosiefta eki pera. .hh ke: pigena me tin (.)
twenty six- °°twenty seven something like that. .hh a:nd I was going with
3 aravoniastikia mu sto Monacho, .hh ala mechri na pao Monacho emina ke
my fiancée to Munich, .hh but before arriving to Munich, I also stayed in
4 Vudapesti. gia na alakso to aeroplano,=ke ipa as mino dio meres. .h ke eki
Budapest. I had to change planes,=so I thought I'd stay for two days. .h
5 pera, (.) .hh anikse o kosmos. ksafnika, anakalipsa oti ne, iparchun ke
And there, (.) the world opened up. Suddenly, I found out that yes, there
6 adres- >orei adres pu pigenun me adres.< (.) >giati vrethika se mia sauna
are also men- >good-looking men who have sex with men.< (.) >Because I found myself in a sauna

7 kati tetio,< .hhh (.) e: ↑epatha: sok. de to perimena afto. diladi den perimena
something like that,< .hhh (.) uhm ↑I wa:s shocked. I didn't expect that. I mean, I didn't expect that these men I
8 afti i andres pu evlepa ke thavmaza, oti tha pigenune me adres. >de to pe-
was watching and admiring, that they have sex with men. >I didn't-
9 =icha sto nu mu to stereotipo to:- (…) afta pu vlepame stis elinikes
=I had in mind the stereotype the:- (…) what we would watch in Greek
10 tenies.< lipo:n- ((gelaei))
movies.< So:- ((laughs))
11 Fot ki ego den to perimena. <afto.>
I didn't expect <that> either.
12 Dim ke eki otan to ida leo (.) <zuses piso apo ton kosmo. ise ektos topu ke
And there when I saw it I say (.) <you were living behind the world.
13 chronu.> ise edelos- >e: afto.<=
You're out of time and place.> You're completely- >uh:m that.<=
14 Sta =diladi ichate to stereotipo tu gay: tu: thiliprepu:s ktl?
=So you had the stereotype of the gay:, the: effemina:te man etc.?
15 Dim ne ne ne ne.
Yes, yes, yes, yes.
16 Fot <akrivos.> akrivos. ki ego den to perimena.
<Exactly.> I didn't expect it either.
((10 lines omitted)
27 Dim ne ke itan ke ena berdema tote.=diladi .h to enenida pu mu sinevi emena ki
Yeah, and it was all messed up at the time.=I mean, in '90 when this
28 afto,- enenidaena, to enenidaena, .hh (.) fadasu oti ipirchan dio kanalia
happened to me, '91. In '91, .hh (.) Imagine there were two channels on
29 stin tileorasi. (.) dio. (.) kratika. tipote alo. (.) .h e:: ((gelai)) gia
television. (.) two. (.) state-owned. Nothing else. (.) .h u:hm ((laughs))
30 internet ute logos, den ipirche san concept kan, .hh ute kan o
Internet was not even a concept, .hh we didn't even have computers. So::

31 ipologistis. Lipon: ke: otan:- ke elega oti .hh ime gay ala <↑den ime san
a:nd whe:n- I was- and I was telling myself that .hh I am gay but <↑I'm
32 aftus.> evlepa diladi ti diafora.
not like them.> So like I could see the difference.
33 Fot $ne akrivos$ ((gelai))
$Yeah, exactly.$ ((laughs))
34 Dim $opote kati alo ime ke ↑den ksero ti ine. den to echo anakalipsi.$
$So I'm something else and ↑I don't know what it is. I haven't discovered it.$
35 Fot $ne les (.) mipos ime kati alo?$ ((gelai))
$Yes, you're like am I something else?$ ((laughs))
36 Sta ((gelai))
((laughs))
37 Dim ↑ne. (.) ke: mechri tote nomiza oti imuna: ena: (.) .h $ena <ivridio,>$
↑Yes. (.) a:nd until then I thought I wa:s (.) .h a <hybrid,>
38 Fot [((gelai……)]
[((laughs……))]
39 Sta [$ne ne ne.$] (.) $ivridio$
[$Yes yes yes.$] (.) $hybrid$
40 Dim ((gelai)) $pu den echi akoma: onoma.$ sti vudapesti edaksi. katalava pios
((laughs)) $that doesn't ha:ve a name yet.$ In Budapest, all right. I
41 ime pleon. ida: ton kathrefti mu apenadi. (.) ke edaksi. apo eki ke pera i
understood who I am now. I saw: my mirror opposite me. (.) And okay. from
42 ekseliksis itan ragdees.
then on, things developed rapidly.

Taken together, Extracts (1–3) demonstrate how Dimitris positions and orients to two membership categories, Greek and gay, primarily through specific claims to epistemic rights. We see, in Extract (3), a discussion of how these two positions are in tension, through mention of an implicit orientation to Greek gender norms (*what we would watch in Greek movies*) and a rejection of popular stereotypes of gayness in Greece. Importantly, the way that Dimitris narrates his realisation of how to resolve this tension (i.e., his "turning point") is via the story of seeing the

men in the sauna in Budapest, men who shared aspects of both of the positions he affiliates with: normative Greek masculinity (*good-looking men*) and same-sex desire (*having sex with other men*). Interactionally, Dimitris uses the figure of the men in the sauna in Budapest to establish a dialogical triad between an *I*-position as Greek, an *I*-position as gay, and the ambiguous third (Raggatt, 2010) that the men in the sauna represent. It is this entire triad that provides Dimitris with the subjective (and interactional) structure for integrating his Greek and gay positionings, not by resolving the tension between them but by embracing it and creating a new ambivalent sense of self that encompasses it.

This dialogical linking between Greekness, gayness, and an ambiguous third is a generative process, giving rise to a new *I*-position that elsewhere in the interview Dimitris labels as "bear". The bear community is a well-known gay male subculture that originally developed in San Francisco in the 1980s and that has since spread around the world (McCann, 1997; Barrett, 2017; McGlynn, 2021). Originally, bear identity was set in opposition to more traditional gay male subcultures, including a more effeminized "queen" or "twink" subculture and a more polished, hypermasculine "circuit" culture. In distinction from these two, the driving force of bear identity is what Barrett (2017) describes as an ideology of "natural" or "authentic" masculinity, a promotion of "regular" guys doing "regular" guy things (see also Hennen, 2005). In reality, bear culture is highly codified and associated with specific social, bodily, and aesthetic practices that draw on dominant tropes of hegemonic masculinity and, in many locations, stereotypes of working-class communities. But the veneer of unforced masculinity remains central to bear conceptualizations of self. It is this bear norm of "regular" masculinity that Dimitris aligns with dominant discourses of gender in Greece. By naming the *I*-position that results from the dialogical triad as "bear", Dimitris draws on a category label to interactionally instantiate a link between gayness and normative articulations of Greekness.

The first mention of bears in the interview comes from Fotis in his own "turning point" narrative, which he offered immediately prior to Dimitris' narrative in (3). Fotis recounts having hosted a friend of his for a weekend at his house and experiencing a strong sexual attraction to this man. Though nothing sexual happened that weekend between the two of them, Fotis describes this as the moment when he realized that he needs to *turn where he needs to turn* and find an outlet for his homosexual desire (see extract 4):

(4)

1 Fot e:: me to pu efige, (.) leo. (0.7) e itane to turning point.=leo. <afto,>
Uh::m as soon as he left, (.) I say. (0.7) uhm it was the turning point.=I
2 to pragma stamatao na to kano ston eafto mu. Apo do ke pera, (.) elefthera,
say. <this thing,> I'll stop doing it to myself. From now on, (.) I'm free,
3 (.) ke tha strafo eki pu prepi na strafo. (0.6) Ke: itane: (.) pragmatika
(.) and I'm going to turn where I need to turn. (0.6) A:nd it really wa:s a
4 itan turning point ekino to simio- diladi itan toso- apo ti mia itan i
turning point- I mean it was so- on the one hand it was
5 seksualiki entasi i opia den ektonothike, apo merus mu,- (.) e: vevea
the sexual tension which had not been released on my part,- (.) u: hm of course
6 irthan para pola sto mialo mu pu ichan proigithi ta: proigumena chronia,
too much came to my mind that had preceded it in the: previous years,
7 ↑ke ipa <apo do ke pera, strefome alu.> (0.7) Ke- (.) itan i proti for a
↑and I said <from now on I turn elsewhere.> (0.7) And- (.) it was the first time
8 pu- >epsaksa sto diadiktio katefthian me to pu efige,< na vro efarmogi pu
>I went online right after he left,< to find an app
9 bori na bi sto kinito i ston ipologisti ke na psachto: e idika sto komati
that could be put on the phone or computer and loo:k specifically for the part
10 pu me aforuse me tus adres. Giati >den tha epsachna na vro ena opiodipote
that concerned me with men. Because >I wouldn't just look for any

11 kikloma gay,< eprepe na psakso na do katarchin ti ine afto pu mu aresi. Mu
gay circuit,< I had to find what it is that I like.
12 aresun afta ta sigkekrimena charaktiristika se enan andra. Pu tha ta vro
I like those particular characteristics in a man. Where do I find
13 afta?=sto:- stus bears. A leo legode bears.=den iksera kan pos legode.
that?=I:n- in bears. I'm like oh they're called bears. I didn't even know what they were called.
14 Sta **((laughs))**
15 Fot Lipon ke- (.) afti i mera gia mena itan charaktiristiki.
Well and- (.) this day for me was special.

In (4), Fotis reports his "discovery" of bears (line 12: *oh they're called bears*) as the category that enables him to live out his gay desire, the *part that concerns [him] . . .* not just *any gay circuit* but *what it is I like*. Dimitris' discussion of his "turning point" in the sauna in Budapest (extract 3) directly follows Fotis' introduction of this label, and so can be taken as an indication of his acceptance of this term and its relevance for his own story. This interpretation is confirmed by Fotis continuation of Dimitris' sauna narrative, extracted in (5).

(5)

40 Dim ((gelai)) $pu den echi akoma: onoma.$ sti vudapesti edaksi. katalava pios
((laughs)) $that doesn't ha:ve a name yet.$ In Budapest, all right. I understood who I am now.
41 ime pleon. ida: ton kathrefti mu apenadi. (.) ke edaksi. apo eki ke pera i
I saw: my mirror opposite me. (.) And okay. from then on,
42 ekseliksis itan ragdees.
things developed rapidly.
43 Fot Ke de to pistevis oti iparchi stin ↑elada.=giati ego:- bori na icha di sto
And you can't believe it exists ↑in Greece.=Because I: may have seen in the
44 parelthon, ipirche ena periodiko, (.) dekaetia tu 90, kikloforuse ke stin

past- there was a magazine, (.) in the 90s, it was circulating in Greece but

45 elada ala to icha di mono se eksofila:- >se periptero tis thesaloni<u>k</u>is to

I had only seen it on the covers: >I saw it in a kiosk in Thessaloniki

46 ‘cha di ke icha pathi plaka.< to bear magazine. To bear magazine, se

and I was amazed.< The bear magazine.

47 periptero, sti thessaloniki: 2003? E:: (.) klasika ap’ ekso iche ton: Jack

I saw it in a kiosk in Thessaloniki, in 2003? Uh:m it showed Jack Radcliff, classic,

48 Radcliff, enan gnosto pornostar bear omos, me dermatina ke ta lipa, ke

who is a well-known porn star, but bear, with leather and all,

49 thimame icha kathisi sto:: (.) sto periptero, prospathodas na min

and I remember I stayed a lot, trying not to stare, pretending

50 ksekarfotho, oti kitazo ki ala, ↑ke leo- t- iparchi afto to pra<u>g</u>ma? ↑in’

to look at other things, too. ↑And I’m like, what? This thing exists? ↑It’s

51 alithia i<u>p</u>archi.=I:: ali anafora pu icha di se tenia=sti megali ton batson

<u>true</u> it exists. The:: other reference I’d seen in a movie= the Police Academy,

52 scholi to:: bar galazia limni. De thimame-

was it the blue lagoon bar? I don’t remember what it’s called-

53 Dim $Galazia si<u>k</u>ia legotane.$

$It was called the blue fig tree.$

54 Sta $sikia$ ((gelai))

$Fig tree$ ((laughs))

55 Fot ((gelai)) ne. ke itan mesa adres, me dermatina, me genia, katholu

((laughs)) Yes. And there were men inside, with leather, with beards, not

56 thiliprepis, androprepis, .h ki elega- <afto, ↑<u>den</u> pisteva oti iparchi- par’

feminine at all, masculine, .h and I was like- <↑I didn’t believe that

57 <u>o</u>lo pu to ‘vlepa se tenies.

existed- Even though I saw it in movies.

58 Sta stin elada i genikos?
in Greece or in general?

59 Fot Genikotera de to pisteva. Diavasa vevea ke ida oti ipirche sto San Francisco
In general I didn't believe it. I read of course and saw that there was in San Francisco

60 stin Ameriki, olokliri kinotita, ala >den pisteva oti iparchi kati tetio
in America a whole community like that, but >I didn't think there was anything like that

61 stin elada.<
in Greece.<

After Dimitris concludes his story about the sauna in Budapest by claiming that he *understood who I am now . . . I saw my mirror opposite me* (line 41), Fotis latches on with the comment that *you can't believe it exists in Greece* (line 42). Fotis' use of *it* here is telling, as it serves to maintain deictic reference between what Dimitris "understood" about himself and the category "bear" that Fotis goes on to describe. Fotis' small story about seeing a bear magazine in Thessaloniki (lines 43–49) is presented as a parallel discovery narrative, reinforcing the idea that discovering the existence of bears – *men . . . with leather and beards, not feminine at all, masculine* (line 55) – is ultimately what enabled he and Dimitris both to orient to the category "gay". Importantly, this orientation is described as necessarily positioned within Greece. Fotis remarks having known about the existence of bear communities elsewhere (lines 59–60: *there was in San Francisco in America a whole community like that*). But the end of his story – the resolution of the conflict that he and Dimitris experienced between Greekness and gayness – is about realizing that bears exist in Greece (line 61: *I didn't think there was anything like that in Greece*), so illustrating how the men use bears as the third element in a dialogical triad linking gayness and Greekness.

4.2 Refining Categories

Having established Greek, gay, and bear categories and the dialogical triad that unites them, Dimitris spends the much of the rest of the interview refining what these membership categories mean for him and the bound attributes they are associated with. He accomplishes this by strategically deploying laughter and other forms of non-seriousness in talk (Glenn, 2003; Holt, 2013). We know from decades

of research on talk-in-interaction that nonseriousness does not necessarily have to do with humour and that, instead, talk involving laughter can be used to accomplish serious interactional tasks (Drew, 1987). We know, moreover, that laughter functions as an indexical, taken to be referring to something and so leading to the interactional construction of its referent as "laughable" (Jefferson, 1984). In doing so, shared laughter among participants in an interaction can serve to build in-group solidarity and affiliation (what Jefferson, 1984 described as *laughing with*) while simultaneously excluding the laughable target (so-called *laughing at*) (see also Glenn, 1995; Billig, 2005). And, as Liebscher and Dailey-O'Cain (2013) have argued, laughter, and particularly solo laughter, can also allow speakers to mark certain categories as ambiguous, enabling them to treat a formulated membership category as conflicted while still allowing the speaker to claim affiliation with it. In the remainder of the chapter, we therefore examine how Dimitris uses both shared and solo laughter to refine the self that he presents. Specifically, we investigate how Dimitris initiates shared laughter about emblematic figures associated with different categories as a way of redefining the contours of what a given membership category entails.

Throughout the interview, Dimitris uses the figure of an old friend of his, Lia, as a way to represent and evaluate normative Greekness, and in particular the role that the Church plays in Greek society (for more on the role of the Church in Greece, see Levon & Katsiveli, forthcoming). In Extract (6), Dimitris offers a story about Lia as part of a longer conversation about "typical" Greek behaviour. The story begins with Dimitris describing Lia as never have been homophobic or, alternatively, always having been homophobic but never before expressing it publicly (lines 1–2). What caused this to change was Lia's more regular attendance at Church and hence the emergence for her of a "contradiction", presumably between her religious beliefs and her love for her friend (lines 4–5). Dimitris uses this narrative orientation (Labov & Waletzky, 1967) to contextualize two brief stories in sequence, one about Lia recommending gay conversion therapy (lines 5–10) and one about her maladroitly referring to Dimitris and his friends as "irregular" men (lines 11–15). Both of these stories contain laughter that is initiated by Dimitris (line 7, line 10) and that Stamatina then joins (line 8, line 14). The laughter consistently appears in a similar structural template, first introducing the laughable narrative, and hence marking it for Stamatina, and then closing it (line 10, line 15), and so acting as an assessment of the previous story as laughable. In other words, we argue that Dimitris uses laughter to bookend evaluations of membership categories, first marking the coming sequence as laughable and then assessing the sequence that has just finished as worthy of ridicule. By doing so, Dimitris is able to target specific bound attributes of categories for mockery

(e.g., religion, homophobic beliefs) while keeping the category itself (Greek) intact.

(6)

1 Dim pote den itan omofoviki,=i itan pada omofoviki, den ksero, kati apo ta dio
she was never homophobic,=or she had always been homophobic, I don't know
2 pezi.
which of the two.
3 Sta ((gelai))
((laughs))
4 Dim e:: (.) apo tote pu to girise stin eklisia ke ta lipa, ego to katalavena
U::hm (.) ever since she went back to church and so on I felt that she was
5 oti vione afti tin adifasi. giati me rotuse. mu elege kseris ti akusa?
experiencing this contradiction. Because she was asking me- She was like you know what I heard?
6 iparchun kapia: camp stin Ameriki pu pigenis ke: (.) ke ginese kala.
There are some camps in America where you go and
7 ((gelai))
you get well. ((laughs))
8 Sta ((gelai))
((laughs))
9 Dim ((gelai)) leo ginese kala apo ti? lei ginese kala re pedi mu ela tora pu
((laughs)) I say you get well from what? She says you're getting well,
10 katalavenis ti ennoo. ((gelai)) i mia for a tote pu pigame ston Stelio, e
dude. Come on, you know what I mean. ((laughs)) One time we went to
11 giortaze o Stelios. lei pos ta perasate? leo kala. e:: pii isastan? leo
Stelios' birthday party. She says you had a good time? I say good. Who

12 ego, >aftos, aftos,< lei a mono adres? ne. <adres kanoniki> lei? kanenas
were you there? I say >him, him, him.< She says just men? Yeah. <Normal
13 kanonikos den ipirche? leo ochi imastan oli:-
men?> she says- Weren't there any regular men? I say no, we were a:ll-
14 Sta $akanonisti.$ ((gelai))
$irregular.$ ((laughs))
15 Dim $regular ((English)) and (…)$ ((gelai)) tis ksefevgun kapia tetia.
$regular and (…)$ ((laughs)) She lets some of these out.

We find the same template for structuring shared laughter in Extract (7), where Dimitris comments on the category "gay" and particularly gay men who orient to Greek heteronorms of family. In the Extract (7), Dimitris and Fotis co-construct their friends Manos and Simos as laughable, commenting on their 30-year monogamous relationship (line 13: *they're both grandparents*) and their eagerness to form a civil partnership as soon as this was legally possible (lines 8–9: *he had told me. As soon as the pact is passed we'll do it immediately*). Dimitris' laugh in line 6 when he realizes who Fotis is speaking about serves to prepare the ground for their subsequent co-constructed assessment, serving as an index of upcoming evaluation. Dimitris' second instance of laughter (in line 12) then pinpoints the object of assessment (*making an agreement*), a laughing "at" that first Fotis and then Stamatina join in lines 10–12. The analogy that Dimitris offers to grandparents in lines 13–14 provides an account of the negative assessment, implicitly aligning Manos and Simos manner of embodying gayness with traditional Greek family structures. This account serves as the closing bookend of the evaluative sequence and allows Dimitris to interactionally reject Greek (homo)normativity as a bound attribute of the category gay.

(7)

1 Fot e: kitakse ego ksero ton: (1.5) to:n Mano me ton e: (.) Simo.
Uh:m look, I know (1.5) Manos and u:hm (.) Simos.
2 Dim de tus ksero.
I don't know them.

3 Fot pos den tus kseris. e: ine chronia: mazi-=
Of course you know them. They've been togethe:r for years-=
4 Dim =pion more afton stin Kalithea pu les?
=Who? The one from Kalithea you mean?
5 Fot ne.
Yes.
6 Dim ((gelai)) $ti ine- echun kani simfono?$
((laughs)) $What, they're- they've made an agreement?$
7 Fot kanan ke simfono.
They've made an agreement, too.
8 Dim $a ne re mu to iche pi. molis psifisti to simfono tha to kanume$ amesos.
$Oh, yeah, man, he had told me. As soon as the pact is passed, we'll do
9 ((gelontas))
it$ immediately. ((laughing……))
10 ((gelane))
((laugh))
11 Fot tora milame gia ena zevgari pu ine mazi 30 chronia.
We're talking about a couple who've been together for 30 years.
12 Sta $a: katalava katalava.$
$O:h I see I see.$
13 Dim ne ne. $ine papudes ke i dio.=daksi ochi papudes ala telos padon
Yes, yes. $They're both grandparents.=Okay, not grandparents, but anyway
14 daksi okay.$ ((gelaei))
yes.$ ((laughs))

Extract (8) presents a final example of Dimitris using nonseriousness to refine what category membership means for him. In this case, his focus is bear identity, and specifically his evaluation that bears are politically unengaged and uninterested in gay activism more generally. Earlier in the conversation, Dimitris expresses his frustration with the bear community as being what he describes as *indifferent* and *lacking in* [political] *awareness*. He claims that bears (or at least those that he knows in Greece) are only *concerned with bliss, how to have a good time, how to go on cruises, how to go to the pools, how to dance*. His comments in (8) build on this earlier evaluation, where Dimitris responds to Fotis' claim that *most people don't stand up for diversity* (line 1) or publicly *defend difference* (line 4). In line 11, Dimitris begins to tell the story of having gone to meet friends of theirs from Byrona (a neighbourhood in Athens) at the Athens Pride Parade. Di-

mitris introduces his narrative with laughter, signalling that what follows is an assessment sequence. The narrative is then repeatedly punctuated by laughter and smiling voice as Dimitris describes how their friends were embarrassed to be seen in public, and preferred to drink coffee *behind some bushes* (line 18). Fotis offers an explanation for their embarrassment in line 19 (*they were ashamed*), an explanation that Dimitris accepts (in line 21). Dimitris marks his acceptance with smiling voice as a way of offering a negative assessment of the events described and so closes the assessment sequence. In this way, Dimitris is able to signal a continued affiliation with bear as a category while simultaneously rejecting shame and fear as necessary bound attributes of the category.

(8)

1	Fot	den stekode i perisoteri sto na: proaspistun tin diaforetikotita.
		Most people don't stand up fo:r diversity.
2	Dim	ochi ochi.
		No no.
3	Fot	tha eprepe <afto.> ime omofilofilos, ime kati diaforetiko apo to
		They should do <that.> I'm gay I'm something different from the
4		sinithismeno. ↓ara prepi na <iperaspisto to mi sinithismeno> to
		ordinary. ↓So I have <to defend the unordinary> the
5		diaforetiko. ochi mono <to diko mu> afto kathafto idos tu omofilofilu ke
		different. Not just <my own> particular kind of gay and
6		sigkekrimena tu bear.=.h=ochi. to diaforetiko.
		specifically the kind of bear.=.h=No. The different.
7	Sta	etsi.
		Right.
8	Dim	i monimi dikeologia tu Vasili ine oti den erchome sta pride giati: e ine
		Vasili's permanent excuse is that I don't come to pride becau: se it's
9		kseftiliki.
		humiliation.
10	Sta	ne ine ↑klasiko. to echo akusi para poli afto.
		Yes, it's a ↑classic. I've heard that a lot.
11	Dim	ne. otan- pote- persi itan pu $kriftikan piso apo tus thamnus i ali?$
		Yes. when- when- Was it last year that $the others hid behind the bushes?$

12 ((gelai)) $thimase?$
((laughs)) $do you remember?$
13 Fot propersi. nai.
The year before that. yes.
14 Dim sto Sidagma ((gelai)) lipon dinume radevu me tus filus mas apo to:- apo
In Sidagma ((laughs)). So we're meeting our ((laughing)) friends from
15 ((gelontas…)) to Virona. leme tha pame sto pride? tha pame. orea. lipo:n
Byrona. We say are we going to pride? We are. Nice. So: we arrive as
16 dinume radevu, pame emis kanonika, .hh mas pernun tilefono. .h pu iste leo
planned, .hh they call us. .h I'm like where are you I can't see you. Uhm
17 den sas vlepo. e sto: McDonald's? what's there? mia kafeteria. ekso apo to
we:ll, in- McDonald's? what's there? some coffee shop. outside Sidagma.
18 Sidagma. ke pao ke tus vlepo piso apo kati: thamnus kati: afta: ((gelai))
And I go and I see them behind so:me bushes a:nd stu:ff. ((laughs))
19 Fot $drepodusan.$
$They were ashamed.$
20 Sta <alithia?> giati? ((gelai))
<Really?> Why? ((laughs))
21 Dim $ne. na krivode ke na pinun kafe. drepodusan.$
Yes. Hiding and drinking coffee. They were ashamed.
22 Sta $tromero. tromero.$
$Incredible. Incredible$
23 Dim leo giati re pedia. e: daksi more, ochi eki mesa, na edo pio: kala. kai
I say why, guys. U::hm okay, not in there, here it's mo:re, it's bette:r.
24 kala as pume gia na mi mas katalavun.
Meaning let's say that they won't know we're here.

Through talk like that illustrated in Extracts (6–8), we see how Dimitris uses shared laughter to challenge certain normativities that for him are associated with each of the positions in the dialogical triad established throughout the inter-

view (i.e., Greek, gay, and bear). The gay position laughs at and excludes normative elements of Greekness, including the centrality of religion and a belief that homosexuality is "irregular" (Extract 6). The bear position, in turn, laughs at and excludes homonormative gayness and an attempt to assimilate Greek discourses of family (Extract 7). Finally, via a mocking description of bears as ashamed, unengaged, and non-political in Extract 8, we see the emergence of a refined categorical positioning – that of the "activist bear" – with which Dimitris ultimately aligns.

However, Dimitris also signals his awareness that this new *I*-position (activist bear) is an ambiguous one, characterized by tension and conflict. We see this in Dimitris' use of solo, as opposed to shared, laughter strategically throughout the interview. In Extract (9a), for instance, Dimitris laughs when he describes himself as the most activist member of the entire (Greek) bear community. Similarly, in Extract (9b) Dimitris uses solo laughter when describing his politics as more *mainstream* that that of queer anarchist groups. Importantly, in both of these extracts, and others like them, the structure of nonserious talk is different than that we find in the previous examples. Here, laugher does not bookend evaluative descriptions of others. It is instead self-initiated solo laughter (though in both 9a and 9b Stamatina also then uses laughter as a receipt token of Dimitris' claim) where Dimitris himself is the laughable target. For this reason, we follow Liebscher and Dailey-O'Cain (2013) in arguing that Dimitris uses solo laughter to interactionally acknowledge that his "activist bear" positioning is a potentially tenuous one.

(9a)

1	Sta	genikos esis echete schesi ke me:- to aktivistiko meros tis LOATKI
		In general, are you guys involved i:n- in the activist part of the LGBTQI
2		kinotitas?
		community as well?
3	Fot	ochi.
		No.
4	Dim	ochi. $o pio aktivistis e: se oli tin bear kinotita pezi na ime ego.$
		No. $The most activist in the whole bear community is probably me.$
5		((gelai))
		((laughs))
6	Sta	((gelai))
		((laughs))

(9b)

1	Sta	i ke afto- >pu leme gia ta politika as pume< ke sto Zak tora pu iche gini
		Or let's say- >now that we're talking in terms of politics-< in the case
2		i proti poria ke egine chamo:s (.) pu plakothikan i anarchiki chori me tin
		of Zak that there was the first march and there was this big me:ss (.) where the anarchist groups fought with the
3		LOATKI kinotita >ke ta lipa<=ine ligo blegmena ta pragmata.
		LGBTQI community >and so on<=it's a bit of a mess.
4	Dim	etsi. etsi. ine poli blegmena ta pragmata eki pera. .h $emis imaste pio
		Right. right. It's very complicated. $We're more mainstream. let's put
5		mainstream ((English)) as to pume etsi.$ ((gelai))
		it like this.$ ((laughs))

To summarise, we have argued that over three hours of recorded conversation with Stamatina, Dimitris worked to collaboratively enact a complex presentation of self based on the intersection and re-interpretation of multiple *I*-positions within his position repertoire. Via the use of specific category labels (*Greek*, *gay*, *bear*) and claims to epistemic authority, Dimitris demonstrates an orientation to both Greekness and gayness, but also narrates a tension (an internal border) that exists between the two. He posits the position "bear" as what Dialogical Self Theory labels a Third Position (Raggatt, 2012), which helps him to resolve – or at least manage – this tension. Finally, we have argued that Dimitris uses shared laughter and nonserious talk strategically throughout the interview in order to further refine his understanding of the categories in question. This laughter is a materialization of the dialogical evaluations that take place among *I*-positions in his repertoire and that characterize Dimitris' dynamic and emergent presentation of self in the interview. At the same time, Dimitris acknowledges, through solo laughter, the ambivalent and contingent nature of the subjectivity he has created, illustrating the social and subjective difficulties that crossing internal borders can entail.

5 Concluding Discussion

In her ground-breaking work on border consciousness, Anzaldúa (1987) describes the *borderlands* as a sense of plurality of the self, "a constantly shifting process or activity of breaking down binary dualisms and creating the third space, the in-between, border or interstice that allows contradictions to exist in the production of . . . hybridity" (Yarbro-Bejarano, 1994, p. 11). Our goal in this chapter has been to describe how such hybridity is discursively enacted by Dimitris over the course of the interview, how the position of "activist bear" emerges as a result of the ongoing construction and refinement of membership categories and their associated attributes. In doing so, we aim to underscore the fact that the self is an *achievement* of social practice – an action accomplished through talk – not some a priori state that talk simply describes. It is via narrating his experiences to Stamatina in the interview that Dimitris actively constructs the third space in which his multidimensional subjectivity, with all of its tensions and contradictions, is able to exist.

Within sociolinguistics, there has long been a reticence to engage with individual psychology or to delve into the inner workings of subjective understanding, based on the assumption that such internal phenomena are inaccessible to us as observers. This reticence was summarised in a well-known comment by Goffman (1967, pp. 2–3), where he states "the proper study of interaction is not the individual and [their] psychology, but rather the syntactical relations among the acts of different persons mutually present to one another". Immediately following this comment, however, Goffman continues:

> Nonetheless, since it is individual actors who contribute the ultimate materials, it will always be reasonable to ask what general properties they must have if this sort of contribution is to be expected of them . . . *A psychology is necessarily involved*, but one stripped and cramped to suit the sociological study of conversation, track meets, banquets, jury trials and street loitering (Goffman, 1967, pp. 2–3, emphasis added).

We suggest that Dialogical Self Theory provides the sort of *cramped* psychology that Goffman mentions. With its focus on dialogue among *I*-positions within a dynamically evolving position repertoire, DST offers a useful analytical toolkit for tracing how subjectivity emerges in talk, enabling us to go beyond broad descriptions of types of possible selves to pinpointing the specific strategies individuals use to construct selves in interaction. In invoking the need for psychological theory to complement existing sociolinguistic methods, we build on a long, if somewhat marginal, tradition within sociolinguistics. Over 40 years ago, Hart, Carlson and Eadie (1980) discussed a distinction between what they term *rhetorical sensitives* and *noble selves*, with the former referring to individuals who frequently

style shift to accommodate different audiences and situations while the latter maintain a consistent speech style across contexts. As Giles, Coupland and Coupland (1991) describe, what causes the distinction between rhetorical sensitives and noble selves is an individual's sense of their own principles, what the author's term "their real self." More recently, Johnstone (1999, 2009) used a similar distinction to differentiate between an *ethos of self* (a sense of self that precludes style-shifting) and an *ethos of persona* (a sense of self that encourages it) to map the linguistic behaviours of individuals over time and in different speech contexts. A similar idea also undergirds Woolard's (2019, 2021) recent call for a *theory of sociolinguistic self* as the missing link in our descriptions of how language fulfils specific social functions. All of these formulations – noble selves, ethos of self, sociolinguistic self – require a vocabulary for describing what the self is and for identifying its relevance in situated interaction (Levon, 2017). We propose that DST could provide this vocabulary.

Ultimately, we reaffirm Wetherell and Maybin's (1996, p. 265) claim that people are not "merely 'social dopes', passive victims of their social circumstances". Individuals actively navigate their social worlds, cognizant of the borders that surround them as they make strategic choices about how to negotiate the obstacles they encounter. These complex subjective negotiations are materialized in and through language and, as we illustrate in the preceding analysis, are available to us as analysts to identify and explore. We hope therefore to have demonstrated the crucial importance of integrating a critical examination of selfhood as a key component of the sociolinguistic enterprise, treating the self as that which mediates between the external borders that exist in the world and the situated patterns of social practice that we observe.

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