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Nikos Bozatzis

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Occidentalism and accountability: constructing culture and cultural difference in majority Greek talk about the minority in Western Thrace[1]

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NIKOS BOZATZIS
UNIVERSITY OF IOANNINA, GREECE

ABSTRACT Drawing upon the notion of occidentalism, developed within cultural theory and critical ethnography, this article explores ways in which explicit and/or implicit assumptions about the West and Western self are implicated, in their conversational mobilization, to accountability management. The data analysed come from a study in Western Thrace (Greece), which included interviews and focus group with majority Greek educators about the Muslim minority historically residing in the region. The analysis presented employs tools from critical discursive social psychology. Building upon discourse analytic treatments within social psychology on the mobilization of national categories and accountability management in talk, it is argued that the banal indexicalization of national categories in talk opens the space for a critical interrogation of the banal indexicalization of an occidentalist cultural imagery that posits a hierarchical distinction between cultures of the West and the Rest.

KEY WORDS: *accountability, banal nationalism, criticaldiscursive socialpsychology, Muslim minority in Greece, national categories, occidentalism, representations of culture, representations of cultural difference*

In social psychology, the 'turn to language' has initiated a growing interest in processes of ideological reproduction in talk. Amongst other research concerns, analysts have focused on ways in which 'race' and nation talk come to be arti- culated in terms of rhetoric and representations mobilized (e.g. Augoustinos and Every, 2007; Billig, 1995; Condor, 2000, 2006a, 2006b; Condor and Abell, 2006; Figgou and Condor, 2006; Rapley, 2001; Verkuyten et al., 1994; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). In this article, it is suggested that existing research in this tradition has neglected 'occidentalism'. Drawing upon treatments of

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that concept in cultural theory and ethnography, I seek to highlight processes of accountability management in conversational data in which occidentalist cultural imagery is mobilized. The segments of talk considered come from an extensive interview and focus group study in Western Thrace (Greece) and involve majority Greek educators talking about the education of the religious (Muslim) *cum* ethnic minority/ies residing in the region.

National categories and accountability in talk

Discursive psychology (Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996) has established that in conversations, people routinely orient to accountability concerns. These often pertain to a powerful dilemma that speakers face: how to attend, conversationally, to stake or interest without providing the grounds for an undermining of their talk as interested. For discourse-oriented social psycho- logists working on 'race', ethnicity and nation talk, this generic interactional dilemma corresponds to the specific ideological dilemma of prejudice prevalent within societies historically influenced by liberalism (Billig, 1988; Billig et al., 1988). On such occasions, the rhetorical stake/interest concerns the voicing of views that might be heard as xenophobic or racist without affording the grounds for an imputation of prejudice, bigotry or in-group favouritism to the speaker.

While this finding has been substantiated in a number of studies, Billig's (1995) *Banal Nationalism* thesis proposes that, with regard to talk about *national* others, accountability-sensitive rhetorical articulations should be seen as instrumental for the ideological reproduction of national ideology within everyday reasoning. For Billig, the parallel historical emergence of the nation and the international order provides national discourse with an introvert and an extrovert outlook: casual talk and argumentation about national categories may take rhetorical shape through disavowals of chauvinistic national allegiances and might, indeed, contain implicit or explicit claims to an internationally minded tolerant or rational moral identity; nevertheless, in doing so, the ideological imagery of the world of nations is naturalized and reproduced insofar as it is constituted as a *topos* beyond argumentative contestation.

Billig's thesis of banal nationalism was introduced at heated political times when, as the author remarked, the established nations of the West were witnessing with horror the 'resurgence' of ('hot') nationalism in their geographical (e.g. Balkans) or political (e.g. far-right) margins. 'Banal nationalism' was meant to be a concept catalyst that would bring to the fore the *national* hues that colour *normal* life in the West in seen but unnoticed ways. To that end, the case was made empirically through analyses of deixis in Western political rhetoric and press, pointing to ways in which national imagery is indexicalized in the course of habitual discursive practices. The upshot was clear: it is not only the West's Others liable for nationalism; nationalism, as a pervasive, banal ideology also permeates everyday life in the established nations of the West.

Billig's focus on nationalism in the West, at a time when global attention was paid to the nationalism of the West's Others, addresses critically the hegemonic distinction between the West and the Rest (Hall, 1992). However, his empirical emphasis on *generic* national deixis has not entailed attention to *particular* re- presentations and conversational pragmatics in which national categories are mobilized. Thus, what does not find its way into the analytic agenda is a concern with the ways in which nation talk may indexicalize a *polarized* and *hierarchical* distinction between the West and the Rest. While, indeed, the parallel historical emergence of the nation state and the international order endows national discourse with a

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dual outlook, international order was never an unqualified com- munity of equals: colonialism (Young, 2001) and Eurocentrism (Amin, 1988; Bonnett, 2004; Delanty, 1995; Wallerstein, 1996; Young, 1990) consolidated an ideological and political divide that separated the 'civilized' nations of the West from the part of the world (of nations) of the Rest. This hegemonic asymmetry in representations of world peoples and nations might be thought of as poten- tially impacting on contemporary everyday deliberations in which national (and cultural) categories are brought into play, both in countries conventionally termed Western and beyond their territorial and symbolic borders.

Of course, discourse studies (e.g. Van Dijk, 1987, 1993; Verkuyten, 2001; Wetherell and Potter, 1992), usually focusing on 'white' majority discourses within Western societies, have documented the mobilization and uses of de- meaning representations of Others. Van Dijk (1987: 210), for example, notes how 'out-group members generally tend to be seen as less intelligent, diligent, clean, effective, modern, or law abiding. [. . .] [they are] not only different from "us" but are also "lower" than us, both socially and personally'. Moreover, Wetherell and Potter (1992), analysing the language of racism in New Zealand, high- light diverse constructions of culture comprising the interpretative repertoires through which the choreography of racist discourse unfolds within lay talk. Nevertheless, in this type of work, the analysis focuses on the macro-structures and propositional content of discourse and not on the level of the conversational management of accountability (cf. Rapley, 2001; Verkuyten, 2001). Moreover, since such studies are, more often than not, theoretically framed by an interest in (generic) racism, they may underestimate the importance of delineating the ideological imagery, representations and representational practices through which particular *national* categories come to be invoked and used.

Condor's (2000) study is exceptional in that respect (cf. Hester and Housley, 2002). Condor focuses exclusively on the ways in which Anglo-British inter- viewees manage their accountability within talk where national categories become topically relevant. Her argument is that participants were reluctant to be heard speaking in categorical terms about 'this country', orienting to such talk as a delicate matter, while they were generally keen to speak about other countries in categorical terms. I shall return to Condor's important paper later in the discussion. For the time being, let me notice that the author did not elaborate extensively on the *comparative* national framing of her participants' talk and on the ways in which the polarization of national categories in terms of 'culture' might be implicated in accountability management. What might pos- sibly arise as a pertinent question is the exploration of ways in which speakers' accomplishment of accountability within talk in which national categories are mobilized involves the banal indexicalization of national referents in ways that hinge upon an ideological imagery that posits an evaluative distinction between the West and the Rest.

Some work in this direction has been done with data from Greece, a nation State whose historical (self-)representations position it at the symbolic margins between the West and the Rest, between the Occident and the Orient or between European modernity and 'third-world' underdevelopment (cf. Gourgouris, 1996; Herzfeld, 1987; Mouzelis, 1978; Tsoucalas, 1991; TÇıöPaç, 1994; OpayKO'oöaKn and Apayrova, 1997). Bozatzis (1999; see also MnoÇaTÇrçç, et al., 2004), analysing accounts of Greek citizens residing in other EU countries, has shown how participants, in their deployment of national categories, navigated skilfully between the Scylla of being heard 'xenophobic' and the Charybdis of being heard 'xenomaniac'. The latter charge refers to a culturally relevant moral stigma in Greece, castigating the uncritical acceptance and awe for 'things European' (Faubion, 1993). Moreover, Bozatzis (2004; MnoÇaTÇrçç, 2005), analysing Greek newspaper coverage of a 1996 Greek/Turkish territorial dispute and the 1999

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coverage of an earthquake catastrophe in Turkey, has shown how Greek journalistic voices oscillated between subject positions of occidental cul- tural perfection and oriental cultural intimacy. While these studies highlight discursive phenomena pertinent to the argument advanced here, their emphasis has not been on the dual axis of occidentalism and accountability.

Occidentalism and accountability: an agenda for critical discursive social psychology

The cross-fertilization of 'micro' and 'macro' approaches within the turn to language in social psychology has occasioned *critical discursive social psychology* (CDSP) as a discernible strand of theoretical developments and empirical analyses (e.g. Edley, 2001; Wetherell, 1998, 2005, 2008; Wetherell and Edley, 1999). CDSP combines the conversation analytic spirit of inquiry with the political-genealogical import of post-structuralism in an analytic demeanour suitable for critical social psychologists adopting a discursive perspective. Within this strand of work, analyses focus on ways in which historically con- stituted representations, implicated in power/knowledge nexuses, come to be mobilized within conversational contexts through speakers' reflexive, vis- a-vis their accountability, rhetorical actions. Following CDSP postulates, the analyses presented in this article seek to highlight ways in which speakers' local management of accountability implicates the mobilization of occidentalist cul- tural imagery.

The concept of 'occidentalism' has been in use for some years within critical works[2] in cultural theory and ethnography and has accumulated a diversified record of conceptual definitions and uses (e.g. Ahıska, 2003; Armstrong, 1990; Carrier, 1995a; Coronil, 1996; Nader, 1989; Venn, 2000). Venn (2000) uses the term to denote the large-scale, historical, philosophical and ideological 'process of [. . .] the becoming West of Europe and the becoming modern of the world' (2000: 8). Through an exhaustive account of the philosophical foundations of modernity, paralleled to the geopolitical process of colonization, Venn charts the historical emergence of the Western subject and seeks to open the conceptual space for the constitution of forms of subjectivity that would do justice to the ethical and political demands of the post-colonial era. Venn's philosophical account of occidentalism may be seen as providing a useful background for CDSP studies on the representational presence and uses of occidental imagery within contemporary talk. Nevertheless, this act of framing would have to be a qualified one: the common post-structuralist tendency to endow discourses or cultural narratives with agentic capacities (Billig, 199 7), and the tendency to make a value-laden distinction between valorized 'subjectivity' and underestimated 'identity' (Wetherell, 2008) would have to be critically addressed.

Coronil's (1996) account of 'occidentalism' comes closer to CDSP's priorities, as it focuses on occidentalism as an ensemble of representational modalities. Coronil explores works in contemporary cultural criticism, highlighting repre- sentational practices that portray non-Western people as the Other of a Western Self. Locating his perspective with regard to Said's (1995) *Orientalism,* Coronil argues that occidentalism is not the reverse of orientalism but its condition of possibility. As he maintains, the concept of occidentalism pushes critical analyses beyond the identification of deficiencies in Western representations of the Orient, towards revealing the assumptions about the West that 'animate' orientalist representations. For Coronil, occidentalism is:

> a style of representation that produces polarized and hierarchical conceptions of the West and its

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> Others and makes them central figures in accounts of global and local histories. [. . .] the ensemble of representational practices that participate in the production of conceptions of the world, which (1) separate the world's components into bounded units; (2) disaggregate their relational histories; (3) turn difference into hierarchy; (4) naturalize these representations; and thus (5) intervene, however unwittingly, in the production of existing asymmetrical power relations. (1996: 57)

Coronil's exclusive empirical focus on texts of cultural criticism notwithstanding, his conceptualization of occidentalism might be utilized as a stepping stone for critical discursive analyses in social psychology.

While Coronil (1996) focuses on academic texts, the concept of 'occidentalism' has also been employed by critical ethnographers in analyses of a range of cultural phenomena (Carrier, 1992, 1995a). For Carrier (1995b) and contri- butors in Carrier (1995a), 'occidentalism' refers to 'stylized images' of the West circulating within cultural pragmatics in societies across the globe, both in the West and the 'peripheries'.[3]The emphasis on *ethno-orientalist* and *ethno- occidentalist* (Carrier, 1992) practices within which occidentalist renderings occur invites a more particularized investigation of *conversational practices* of accountability management that might instantiate occidentalism within everyday reasoning.

Background to the analysis: the minority in Western Thrace

Western Thrace is situated in northeastern Greece, neighbouring Bulgaria and Turkey. It has been part of the Ottoman Empire since the 14th century and was incorporated into Greece in 1920. Western Thrace was exempted from the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey stipulated by the Lausanne Treaty (1923). Its Muslim residents were to remain in Greece and an equivalent number of Orthodox Greeks to remain in Turkey. It should be noted that whereas for the exempted Christian Orthodox population the designation 'Greek' was used in the text of the Treaty, for the exempted population of Western Thrace the designation was in terms of religious affiliation (e.g. 'Muslim'), lumping together different ethnic and linguistic groups (ethnic Turks, Slav-speaking Pomaks and Roma). The current official Greek position of acknowledging the existence in Thrace of a solely *religious* minority is predicated upon this feature of the Treaty text,[4]while in contemporary Greek political discourse, the use of the designation 'Turkish' for the minority is an account- able position (Figgou and Condor, 2007). The current size of the minority population is a matter of political controversy since the last official statistics date back to the 1950s. Estimates range from 90,000 to 135,000 (Anagnostou and Triandafyllidou, 2007; Dragonas and Frangoudaki, 2006).

Greek State policies towards the minority have changed over time, mirroring the state of Greek/Turkish relations (Dragonas and Frangoudaki, 2006; AonpaKonoukou and Xpnoxtöou-Aıovap&Kn, 2002; HpaKİetönç, 1997; Tpoupnsıa, 2001). Overtly discriminatory policies were introduced in the mid-1960s and culminated during the junta of 1967-74, at a time when bilateral relations had deteriorated dramatically as a result of the dispute over Cyprus and the forcing out of the Greek Orthodox population of Istanbul. These policies included the hampering of freedom of movement, land expropriations, restrictions in financial and administrative transactions and rescind of citizenship (Poulton, 1997; Sitaropoulos, 2004; RavvÖTCO'ukoç and Yappaç, 1990; Krooıönoukoç, 2003). In the 1980s, repression led to political radicalization[5] and protest for the curtailment of civic rights and the demand for an official recognition as a 'Turkish' minority. After a politically heated period in 1990, the official Greek policy changed dramatically in 1991, in the direction of establishing 'legal equality - equal citizenship' for the minority. However, up to the present, the self- designation - at a collective level - of the minority with the adjective 'Turkish' remains legally prohibited

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and persecuted.

In such a context, it is not surprising that the education of the minority has provided both Greece and Turkey with a realm for interventions dictated by nationalistic priorities (Benincasa, 2004; Dragonas, 2004; Dragonas and Frangoudaki, 2006; Apayrova, 2004; Mnakxoıroxnç, 199 7). For decades, Greek authorities paid scant interest to the education of minority children. Lausanne Treaty provisions entitled the minority to run its own bilingual elementary schools under supervision by Greek authorities. For secondary education, the students have had four options: two bilingual minority schools, two religious schools, enrollment in monolingual Greek schools and immigration to Turkey.

AoKouvn (2006), in her detailed account of minority education in Thrace, documents numerous educational problems, which include drop-out rates from compulsory education well above the national average and massive under- achievement. Since 1991, the change in governmental attitudes in educational policy has been instantiated through the implementation of a large-scale initiative ('Project for Reform in the Education of Muslim Children' (PEM)) for the improvement of the Greek part of the minority students' education (Dragonas and Frangoudaki, 2006; Apayrova and OpayKouöaKn, 2008). Recent stati- stics show that PEM interventions have started having an impact on the educational standing of the minority student population (AoKouvn, 2006).

The study

This article utilizes data collected within an extensive, collective field research in Western Thrace, conducted within the PEM framework (M^oÇaıZ^ç, KrovoıavTmöou, Toovtönç and O^yyou, 2004; O^yyou, MnoÇaTÇ^ç and Toovtönç, 2008). For the purposes of that study, 59 interviews and focus group discus- sions were conducted with minority and majority students, parents, teachers, State officials, politicians and other key informants. The research was presented to the participants as an effort to record the 'difficulties' and 'particularities' of minority education as perceived by social actors involved in the process. Given the political controversy surrounding the naming of the minority, the researchers avoided using the designations 'Greek' and 'Turkish' and used, instead, the terms 'majority'/'minority' and derivatives. The present article does not offer an account of the original collective study. Instead, I focus on three segments of talk taken from an interview with a *majority* education official and two focus groups with *majority* high-school teachers. The extracts were chosen for clarity of exposition reasons. While I do not make a claim here for the thematic typicality of these extracts within the data corpus (cf. MnoÇaxZ^ç, 2004), I would argue that the rhetorical phenomena underlined instantiate and, therefore, pinpoint a socially shared grid of intelligibility (Shapiro, 1992).

Occidentalism and accountability in discursive action

ORIENTAL CULTURAL POLLUTION

The entanglement of Greek nation-building (in the 18th to 19th centuries) in the process of the ideological constitution of Europe, in its juxtaposition to the ideologically emerging Orient, has been well documented (e.g. Gourgouris, 1996; rıaKroPaKn, 2006; SKonsTsa, 1988; TÇıöPaç, 1994). This literature often highlights the frustration of European intellectuals, romantic travellers, politicians, Philhellenes[6] and Greek-speaking Enlightenment ideologues, with the culture of Greece and Greeks at the time (cf. St Clair, 19 72). In the hegemonic

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occidental gaze, the Greece-coming-into-being was both the cradle of European civilization as well as, in the words of Byron, a 'sad relic of departed worth', due to its centuries-long 'subjugation' to the Turks. Herzfeld (1982, 1985, 1987) has elaborated on the genealogy and symbolic uses of the theme of oriental pollu- tion in Greek discourses, be they pre-independence appeals for European sup- port or contemporary accounts of sheep thieves in mountainous Crete. Oriental cultural pollution constitutes a representational resource deeply embedded in the history of narrating the modern Greek condition. In Extract 1, we see how this representation is mobilized within a specific argumentative context, contri- buting to the business of accountability management.

Extract 1[7]

This extract comes from an interview with a high-ranking education official. It is part of a long, largely monologic sequence in which the interviewee talks about political factors that have led the minority children in Thrace to be practically illiterate in Greek. Prior to this extract, he mentioned in passing that in the past, 'our' policies alienated minority students and pushed them to go for studies to 'Turkey'; however, he also castigated the continuing practice of the minority leaders to take orders from 'the Consulate'. As an example, he mentioned that on many occasions, they would not accept funds that Greek authorities ('Ministry of Foreign Affairs') were willing to provide for the improvement of school infrastructure. They did so, he argued, because they want to keep minority schools in a poor condition in order to render 'us' accountable to 'committees coming from abroad'.

1 Antoniou[8] political reasons like these existed and on many occasions still
2 exist (.) the topic needs be analysed in depth (.) I mean it's not just- (.)
3 one shouldn't approach it simply from a learning perspective there are
4 many factors involved (.) that's why even if you are willing to have a
5 conversation in good faith with anyone of them = you know I take the
6 Muslims >the elite ones< into my office and we discuss things (..) they
7 are using them and they want to carry on using them (.) they want
8 them to be ignorant (.) they want to have them in a dependent position
9 so the MPs or the politicians to be able to claim (.) whatever the
10 situation at hand may be that they have done them the pouo^eTi[9] (..)
11 the poua^eTi we have taken it from them (.) for five hundred years we
12 were enslaved and we learned from them a few things (..)
13 because if you consider for example the Ionian Islands (.) Rhodes (.)
14 Crete (..) where let's say they had other people (.) consider Cyprus
15 where they had the English (.) it's one thing the culture the
16 Cypriot people have it's another thing the culture we have (..) these
17 are residuals (..) and they who as a society are very much inferior
18 compared to us they have those impeding factors (.) which factors
19 some people take advantage of and they force them to do those
20 things (.) this is a complicated problem (..) it's not just (.) you
21 shouldn't approach it from only one angle 'why Muslims don't
22 learn Greek' or 'why they don't do as well in school as Christians
23 do' (.) there are many factors

In lines 1-4, the participant offers a gist formulation of his prior monologue. Two points are registered: (a) there are 'many factors' to be considered when analysing the educational failure of the minority students, and one should go well beyond a merely 'learning perspective' on the topic. Here, the participant's concern to manage his professional accountability by externalizing educational failure and attributing it to 'factors' beyond the

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institutional reach of educators is evident (cf. ll. 20-23); (b) 'politics' and, in particular, the political choices and practices of the minority leaders ('political reasons like these existed and on many occasions still exist') should be considered as 'factors' hindering the edu- cation of the minority students.

In line 4, the interviewee starts outlining implications ('that's why') of his gist formulation by uttering the first part of a contrast structure (Edwards and Potter, 1992) ('even if you are willing to have a conversation in good faith'), which effectively attributes bad faith to the minority leaders. However, the completion of this contrast structure does not come about, since the interviewee injects an assurance that he takes the 'elite Muslims' to his office and they 'discuss things'. This injection, on the one hand, works rhetorically towards the building of a non-prejudiced profile for the interviewee and, on the other, outlines a basis for how he knows (Edwards and Potter, 1992) about the situation with the minority in Thrace; and what he knows comes to be forcefully argued in what follows (ll. 6-10). Briefly put, his argument is that the minority 'elites' want to keep the population uneducated, because they are only interested in their political survival, which depends on their ability to grant 'pouo^ETia'. What interests me particularly here is the way in which the interviewee backs this derogatory and conspiratorial argument, which renders hearable charges of prejudice or irrationality, by deploying an empiricist (Edwards and Potter, 1992), social his- torical mode of accounting, entailing, as I shall argue, national categories and incumbent cultural traits.

For the interviewee, 'the pouo^ETi we have taken it from them' (l. 11). Who are the 'we' and 'them' in question? As mentioned before, the researchers have consistently used the terms 'majority/minority' throughout interviews and focus groups. On the other hand, the particular interviewee, up to the point where the talk reported in this extract appears, almost exclusively used the terms 'Muslims' or 'Muslim community'. So, the chief candidate identity binaries ought to be: 'we' - Christians/majority members; 'them' - Muslims/minority members. However, I suggest that on this occasion, the interviewee's frame of reference has discernible *inter-national* connotations: 'we' refers, also, to 'us' as 'Greeks' and 'them' to the minority as, also, 'Turks'. My grounds for this suggestion are twofold.

First, as mentioned above, immediately before this extract, the interviewee narrated a story in which the minority leaders appear to take orders from 'the Consulate', refusing to accept money from the 'Ministry of Foreign Affairs', in order to hold 'us' accountable to 'committees coming from abroad'. This story establishes an *inter-national* frame of reference: Consulates are nation-State institutions and there is only one Consulate in Western Thrace - the Turkish one; the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs appears as an intervening actor; 'committees coming from abroad' most probably refers to EU delegations, monitoring the implementation of EU laws and directives by Greece. The introduction of an *inter-national* frame of reference affords the possibility for that to be taken up further on in the interaction. And so it does, I argue. Second, an analytically crucial utterance comes in lines 11-12, where the interviewee explicates his assertion: 'the pouo^ETi we have taken it from them' with the remark: 'for five hundred years we were enslaved and we learned from them a few things'. In this, a formulaic piece of canonical historiographic knowledge, for any student going through the Greek educational system, is invoked; as the story goes, the Greeks were enslaved by the Turks for 400 years; 'we' and 'them', here, are unmistak- ably - also - nationally coloured. The interviewee, thus, manages to speak about 'us' and 'them' in terms that invoke national categorization without using national labels. Note that an explicit use of the designation 'Turks' would go against the official Greek position that recognizes a solely *religious* minority in Thrace. Moreover, that designation could also be accountable to the extent that excludes the minority from the - treated as mutually exclusive - category of 'Greek' (citizens)' (cf.

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Figgou and Condor, 2007).

The argument about the cultural pollution of 'us' by 'them' occasions (and is backed up by) an unfavourable comparison of the cultural condition of mainland Greece to regions 'where they had the English' and, therefore, are better off in terms of culture. In mainland Greece, or particularly in Thrace, 'we' still suffer from Turkish cultural 'residuals'. This polarized construction of *qualitatively* dif- ferent imperial rulers of the past, and its association with present-day cultural conditions, accomplishes considerable rhetorical work. It justifies the criticism of the minority; it justifies the criticism of the interviewee's own national category; it provides the moral credentials of a reasonable person adopting a balanced perspective; and it opens the way for one more derogatory statement about the minority in the form of an unfavourable comparison: 'and they who as a society are much inferior compared to us'. Out of the surrounding context, this statement would perhaps sound boldly condescending. Here, the interviewee's discourse, or indeed, the interviewer's as well, do not indicate that this is treated as a statement that could hold the speaker accountable.

In the manner of Herzfeld (1987), it could be argued that the ideological constitution of modern Greece as, simultaneously, *sine qua non* occidental and un- mistakably oriental affords Greek social actors with a contrasting set of subject positions. Assuming the moral high grounds of occidental cultural perfection, criticisms against Greeks (posited as) oriental Others can be levelled. On the other hand, in the appropriate rhetorical context, Western Others or, indeed, Greeks treated as Western Others, can be criticized for flaws discerned from the perspective of an exoticized/orientalized image of Greekness (Bozatzis, 1999). What we see here is the routine unfolding of this cultural reasoning. From an *Occidental* standpoint, the interviewee levels a criticism at and *ethno-orientalizes* (Carrier, 1992) both Greek political culture and the minority in Thrace. In so doing, his voice appears free of national prejudices: the universal voice of a rational external observer who observes the valley from the top of the mountain. Of course, both the towering heights of the mountain as well as the lowlands of the valley are culturally available and hegemonically structured represen- tational resources, instantiated and reiterated, amongst other *loci*, through normative rhetorical practices of offering intelligible descriptions of the 'reality out there' (cf. Potter, 1996).

ORIENTAL 'SLOW ON THE UPTAKE' AND 'INDOLENCE'

The following extract comes from a focus group with high-school teachers held in a minority village. Prior to the talk reported here, the participants, particularly Thanos, were elaborating on their problems in the classroom, arguing that their students are practically illiterate in Greek.

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Extract 2

1	Res. 2	yes but (..) despite all that do you see any change=any
2		improvement? (..) hhee >°because you've been here quite a few
3		years°< hhee becau::se (.) you describe a picture tha::t (.)
4		hhee is a bit disappointing=
5	Thanos	=°it's dreary not disappointing°=
6	Res. 2	=I mean the chi::ldren on the other hand they do::n't have any:
7		((inaudible)) (.) >probably we agree on that< (.) they do not have
8		any menta::l any mental problem (.) it's ju::st (.) as I understand (.)
9		other factors are to blame (.) do you see any improveme[nt
10	Thanos	[I
11		believe that they are also slow on the uptake persons (.) they
12		are also quite <INDOLENT> persons [((inaudible))
13	Res. 2	[yes but
14		where does this come from? I mean is it so::mething [((inaudible))
15		[((inaudible))=
16	Akis	=that's their mentality =
17	Thanos	=<it's the mentality> (.) <the way they have been raised> (.) <the
18		way they li::ve> (.) right (.) their life (..) the pace of the orient whi::ch
19		(..) [°okay°
20	Res. 2	[hhmm hmm=
21	Thanos	= it's a bit more (...) all these play a very important role=
22	Akis	=a kind of slack[ness
23	Res. 2	[so it's
24		also an issue of mentality [you say
25		[((inaudible))

My interest here lies with the way in which the participants manage their accountability while articulating condescending views about the minority. The extract starts with the researcher enquiring and subsequently warranting his question, whether the participants see 'any change, any improvement' with respect to minority children's educational standing. His warranting involves the mobilization of the spectrum of internal and external attributions for the explanation of the students' poor performance: he asserts and co-opts the participants ('probably we agree on that') in an assertion about the non-problematic *interiority* of the students, setting up, thus, any potential explanation in terms of 'mental problems' as inappropriate. In so far as they have no 'mental problem' (line 8), and as long as the their poor performance is caused by 'other factors' (line 9), then the researcher's question might be understood as an effort to have the participants contemplate the impact that recent changes in educational pro- visions might have on students' performance.

The attempt to foreclose the spectrum of internal attributions notwithstanding, Thanos asserts, in the rhetorical form of a strong conviction (Billig, 1989), that their students 'are also slow on the uptake' and 'also quite indolent' (lines 11-12), advancing, thus, the line of explanation previously set up by the researcher as inappropriate. The expression of such derogatory views about the personality of Others normatively raises issues of accountability for the conversation- alists. The researcher's subsequent question (lines 13-14) both challenges ('yes but') this line of argumentation as not satisfactory and works as an attempt to mitigate the derogatory force of Thanos' characterizations: an empiricist form of accounting is introduced which points to the sequencing of external causes and internal results. Nevertheless, the researcher's attempt to provide a face-saving exit route is not taken up. Akis, another focus group participant, supports his colleague's challenged position,

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explaining 'slow on the uptake' and 'indolence' as matters which pertain to the students' 'mentality' (line 16) and Thanos, by means of a list (Jefferson, 1990) which packages an empiricist mode of accounting (Edwards and Potter, 1992), qualifies his prior assertion by repeating Akis' words and grounding the personality traits in question in the minority's 'oriental' culture.

How do the accountability questions raised with the use of 'slow on the uptake' and 'indolent' get to be resolved in this extract? Discursive psychology directs us to consider two interrelated features of talk: the rhetorical devices and the historical familiarity of the representations mobilized (Potter, 1996). Indeed, the list construction and the empiricist mode of accounting unfolded in Thanos' turn package rhetorically a sedimented representation of the Orient as lethargic (Said, 1995). Nevertheless, I suggest that a further rhetorical feature works towards the accomplishment of accountability here. Following Coronil's admonition that critical analyses ought to move beyond the identification of negative representations of the Orient and to focus also on the implicit representations (cf. Billig, 1987) of the Occident that make the former intelligible, I suggest that part of the accountability work accomplished here pertains to the - *implicit* - occidental imagery and subject positions this imagery affords for the speakers and the objects of their descriptive practices.

Said (1995) argued that one of the features of the discourse of orientalism is the ascription of a radical separateness between the West and the Orient. My argument is that the assumption of essentialized difference provides a resource for the management of accountability in this extract. If the Orient *is* different from the West, then whatever comes to be indexed intelligibly as essentialized cultural difference does not render the speaker accountable for its invocation. 'Slow on the uptake' and 'indolence' cease to be understood as unfair personal characterizations. They are presented as constituent parts of 'their mentality', that is of their different culture and cultural constitution. By the same token, cultural difference is rendered to be a natural feature of the world and, therefore, spotting the difference does not render one accountable for the act of spotting; nevertheless, on this occasion, spotting the difference does not entail celebrating that difference. The ideological constitution of the West and the Orient has entailed a hierarchical ordering in which the West is posited as the normative canon against which the oddity or deviance of the Orient is measured. My argu- ment is that the participants' discourse rests upon the implicit assumption of

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an inherently superior and for that *invisible* West, which provides for the subject position, from where the oddity of the orientals is rendered accountable, in the ethnomethodological sense of *observable/reportable* (Garfinkel, 1967). In a way reminiscent of but not identical to the subject positioning unfolded in Extract 1, the Western speaking Self does not seem embedded in any national culture. It seems merely institutionally located, in the position of a national-prejudices- free teacher, who merely ascertains naturally occurring differences in the world out there: the lethargy of the Orient in an implicit contrast to the achievement motivation (Spence, 1985) of the West.

STAGNATION, CHANGE OR INCONSUMMATE WESTERNIZATION?

Extract 3 comes from a focus group with high-school teachers in a mountainous minority village. Before this extract, participants' opinions had polarized around the question of 'change'. For Nontas, their students enter high school already shaped by a 'stagnant' culture that neither values education nor provides them with 'civic culture'. Mina, disagreeing, argued that their students and their parents seem excited by the prospect of social mobility that education promises.

Bxtraet 3

(a)		the rest of you what do you say °about the the change⁰ (.) the pace of
1	Res. 3	changes?
2		guys you see the change eehh >I mean at least those of us who have been
2	Mina	here for a few years now< we see:: it <u>everydav</u> in very <u>simple</u> things (.) I
4		mean let's say a few months ago eehh I asked a [very
5		[but
3	Dina	naive question to Ahmed=I told him 'you Ahmed before the petrol
4	Mina	station was opened where did you buy petrol from?' (. . .) and as soon as
5	9	I asked >while I was asking< I started laughing and I said 'but since you
10 11 12		didn't have cars where would you use the petrol?' and I was [laughing
13	Nontas	by myself
14	Mina	[((indistinguishable laughter by participants))=
		=°and they didn't even have the [licence°
		[eehh

Carrying on her argument with Nontas, Mina boldly affirms 'changes' in the region and, in so doing, implicates herself in a dilemma of stake or interest. The danger for her is to sound favourably disposed towards the minority without good reasons, perhaps, out of political conviction. Her reference to her long-time residence in the region is a category entitlement that works towards establishing the facticity of her 'changes' testimony. Moreover, her active voiced (Wooffitt, 1992) conversation with Ahmed' presents an argument for the recent albeit existing 'changes' in the region. However, insofar as her voicing of that conversation entails an argument about the minority's recent elevation from pre- modernity to the modernity of cars and petrol stations, further accountability issues are raised: Mina might be heard as Othering the minority, constructing

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them as primitives and, indeed, having a laugh about their primitiveness. Let us see how Mina's talk attests to and deals with this hearable rhetorical danger.

(b)

15	Mina	he says 'if you had been here' (.) 'if you had come in the
16		vi::llage six [years ago' (..)
17	Res. 3	[hhmm
18	Mina	you know my sister used to work here a decade ago (.) eehh if she would come
19		now I think that she would think that she has go::ne to a different place=I me::an
20		(.) >'from what do you infer the changes?'< from the shops (..) from the ca::rs from
21		whatever symbolises [western civilisation [((inaudible))
22		from the style of clothes that kids wear at school (.) from the fact that they have (.)
23	Nontas	a computer at <home>=from a million things tha::t (.) right there is no relation (..)
24	Mina	that's why I disagree=the:: this region it used to be:: (.) a decade ago here (.) it
25		looked ll like like we used to be thirty years ago now it's a transitional=I mean (.)
26		>in the same place you go and you see and you say 'whoops they are as we used
27		to be twenty years ago ((inaudible))' and you go to their house< and you see such
28		applia::nces (.) that you don't have at your house=you see such machinery îthat
29		you ddon't (.) therefore it's not (.) I me:an (.) it is like that but [it's not=
30		[((°inaudible°))
31		
32		Mina's accountability-wise sensitive 'changes happening' argument is
33		further substantiated and externalized here. Ahmed's voice is mobilized,
34		again, com- paring the 'now' of the minority's condition to its recent

past. This shift of footing (Goffman, 1979) works towards establishing Mina's limited accountability for her primitivizing representation: it is not that she makes salient and ridicules the backwardness of Others; Others themselves are aware of and acknowledge the distance recently covered. Further, Mina invokes one more entitlement to knowledge about the recent past of the minority: her 'sister used to work here a decade ago' and, mentally mirroring her (Antaki and Lewis, 1986), she ponders on the unfamiliarity that she would feel were she to visit 'now'. The out- there-ness of changes rhetorically established, Mina (line 20) active voices an imaginary potential objection to her argument, interrogating the inferential bases of her changes testimony. This self-posed question allows Mina to retain the floor and to clarify the grounds of her assessment through two list sets. One can conclude that 'changes' indeed take place from the 'shops', the 'cars' or, more generally (cf. Atkinson, 1984), 'from whatever symbolises western civilisation' (lines 21-22); and, from the children's 'style of clothes', the fact that 'they have a computer at home' and from 'a million things' (lines 24-25).

Let me remind you that Mina's change testimony is an argument against Nonta's position about the stagnation of the minority. In contrast, therefore, to the previous extracts, Mina does not invoke an orientalized image of the minority in order to level a criticism from the high-grounds of occidental cultural perfection. She defends the minority by drawing attention to elements of change,

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indeed Westernization, in their living. Note, also, that in her talk, the distinc- tive marks of the occident are trivialized. 'Western civilisation' is not treated as exclusive cultural capital but as a normative stage, a condition of the present which 'they' currently enter. Mina's lay stage theory is both further instantiated as well as stripped of any explicit, negative overtones through her paralleling of 'this region' 'a decade ago' to how 'we' 'used to be thirty years ago'. At the present historical moment, though, 'they' are not 'our' past in any simplified way, as the paradox that, often, 'their houses' are stuffed with 'appliances' 'that you don't have at your house' makes clear. 'They' are currently undergoing a 'transition'. The disavowal of historicizing naivety notwithstanding, the developmental logic (Tucker, 1999) that underlies Mina's account is clear. Her construction of the minority in 'stages of development' terms deals effectively with the potential charge that she disparages it for its primitiveness. Nevertheless, her emphasis on the *process* of becoming Western of the minority still indexes the notion of difference and allows, as exemplified in the next segment of talk, room for a juxta- position of *processes* of Westernization to the *essence* of *being* Western.

(c)

35 Nontas you know what <u>though</u>? shall I tell you something? (.) >in order also
36 to have a laugh < and the gypsies in Agia Varvara[10] (..) if you enter
37 their houses (.) they have incredible <u>sofas</u>=
38 Mina =yes=
39 Nontas =and they still sit on the floor (.)
40 Mina so what? (.) sitting down is their [îçultural
41 Nontas [not upon them
42 Mina choice Nontas it's no::t=
43 Nontas =that's what I want to say=
44 Mina =hhee yes that's it (.) exactly that=
((talk continues with other participants taking the floor))

What interests me here is the way in which notions of cultural essentialism are invoked, problematized and defended (cf. Verkuyten, 2003). In line 35, Nontas signals ('though') that he is about to voice an objection. Suggesting that what follows ought to be heard as a joke, therefore claiming limited accountability (Billig, 2005), he compares the saturation of the minority's lifeworld with 'Western' commodities to what happens with 'the gypsies'. The charge is clear: despite appearances that suggest Westernization, theirs is an inconsummate Westernization, a mimicking of alien styles and ways of life. Nevertheless, Mina objects that 'sitting down' and not upon 'sofas' is a 'cultural choice' and, in so doing, recasts Nontas' remark as an accountable position. Glossing her argu- ment, she charges him for reading essentialized backwardness into practices that should not be thought of as signifying anything more fundamental than a simple, cultural, natural variation in ways of doing things. Interestingly, Nontas comes up with an agreement (line 43). For him, the very fact that 'they choose' to sit down, while owning sofas, establishes beyond objection their *essential* difference from Westerners as well as their effort to *pass* as Westerners.

Accounts from a range of disciplines (Bhabha, 1994; Faubion, 1993; Moghaddam, 2006; Wetherell and Potter, 1992) treat the charge of mimicry as a strategy of hegemonic gate-keeping. Nontas' invocation of the incongruence between owning Western commodities and not using them, favouring 'Other' practices, exploits the rhetorical possibilities opened by Mina's emphasis on the *processes* of the minority's Westernization. On the face of it, it might seem that 'they' have started *becoming* Western, but on a more careful inspection, details reveal that they *are not* and perhaps shall never be authentic Westerners proper. In contrast to Mina's inclusive treatment and trivialization of 'western civilisation', for Nontas, the West

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appears to be an exclusive essence.

Discussion

Unfolding the analyses of the extracts presented above, I have pointed to ways in which the participants' management of their accountability in talk involved the mobilization of an occidental cultural imagery that posits a polarized and hierarchical distinction between the West and the Rest. In the instances of talk considered, the Greek majority educators oriented to the relevance of an evaluatively tinged distinction between a Western self and the oriental/Other culture of the minority in Western Thrace. Undoubtedly, as I have pointed out above, the representations and representational practices unfolded in these extracts relate to the *particular* ideological predicament of modern Greek national culture as being both an heir to the symbolic capital of ancient Hellas and degenerate occidental, tainted by oriental cultural imperfection. Indeed, previous ethnographic and discursive analyses testify to the cultural availability and uses of occidental - self and collective - subject positionings within modern Greek cultural pragmatics. The present analysis makes a case for the involvement of occidentalist renderings within accountability management processes in Greek talk.

Nevertheless, the analysis presented here is aimed at, programmatically at least, going beyond the mere explication of a *particular* - in terms of national culture - case. Such a move would, perhaps, constitute an unreflexive act of Othering, corollary to the age-long occidentalist saga that excludes modern Greece from the symbolic core of the West and prescribes for it a Sisyphian struggle between occidental and oriental self-components (cf. Fermor, 1966; Herzfeld, 1987). My programmatic aim has been to identify an empirical *lacuna* in existing social- psychological/discursive treatments of the accountability-sensitive deployment of national categories in talk by drawing attention to the occidentalist assumptions that might be implicated in such processes. While, unavoidably, only further studies in different national contexts can answer the question of whether the order of the discursive phenomena highlighted in the present article constitute a Greek particularity, there are indications that occidentalism and accountability management are intertwined in nation talk beyond the confines of the modern Greek cultural pragmatics. Let me return to Condor's (2000) important paper.

As noted above, Condor states that while her interviewees were reluctant to embark on national accounting about 'this country', they easily retorted to national categorizations when speaking about other people and places. Indeed, Condor uses a fragment of talk in which an interviewee disavows a national self- identification after, as the author informs us, he discussed 'the *underdevelopment* of Greece and the former Yugoslavia, and the ways in which "Greek people" are *content* with the *simple things in life,* a situation which he explicitly compared with the situation "here''' (2000: 186; quotation marks in the original; italics added). What might be proposed is that the interviewee's disavowal of a national identity is occasioned by the *specific cultural content* that (t)his national identity would take in such a comparative context. Perhaps what raises accountability concerns here is not a *generic* Anglo-British national footing but the *specific* ascription of, say, 'development' (as opposed to Greek and Yugoslavian 'underdevelopment') and, say, 'modernity' (as opposed to Greek exotica) to the collective, national or otherwise, entity to which the speaking self would be constituted as being a part of.

Such a reading is consonant with Condor's *overall* interpretative scheme. Indeed, when Condor takes a step back, as it were, from her data and contem- plates the 'more general' reasons for the national avoidance pattern that she identified, then notions of collective guilt

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about the imperial past, concerns about not sounding to be 'lording it' over 'less fortunate nations' and so on are brought into her interpretative scheme as, *in theory*, chief candidate interpretations. Nevertheless, what might be argued is that, at least with the extract in question, the interviewee's orientation affords the analyst with a more 'local' horizon for interpretation, albeit in the same general direction: it is the polarization of national categories along a binary of, say, 'development'/'modernity' versus 'underdevelopment'/'exotica' and the self/collective (national or otherwise) positioning in the valorized first part of the binary that is treated by the interviewee as an accountable matter.

Cultural theory and critical ethnography works alert critical discursive psychologists to the widespread dissemination of occidentalism, either as a set of 'stylized images' (Carrier, 1995b) of the West or as an ensemble of repre- sentational modalities that 'animate' orientalizing portrayals of Others (Coronil, 199 6). CDSP, with its well-defined armoury of analytic tools and concepts, is in a privileged position to overcome the unproblematized mentalist reduc- tions of ethnographic accounts (cf. Bozatzis, 1997), as well as the ascriptivism (cf. Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995) and the epistemological valorization of 'subjectivity' over identity practices (Wetherell, 2008) of post-structuralist treatments of discourse. In studying occidentalism, the analytic emphasis on accountability (management), when coupled with an understanding of 'context' which reaches beyond the mere interactional one (Wetherell, 1998), seems to open a new vista for analytic explorations for CDSP. While in the post-9/11 world the political rationale for studying occidentalism is self-evident, the chal- lenge for CDSP is to outline a methodologically principled research agenda that would capture the phenomenon in its multiple instantiations within everyday reasoning and beyond.

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TRANSCRIPTION NOTATION

= Latched utterances
((text)) Explanatory information
TEXT Talk louder than the surrounding
[Beginning of overlapping speech
<u>text</u> Emphasis
°text° Ouieter speech
'text' Reported speech/active voicing
te:::xt Extension of the preceding vowel; the more the colons, the longer the extension (.) Short but discernible pause
(...) Each additional full stop indicates a pause of approximately half a second
>text< Speech discernibly speeded up
<text> Speech discernibly slowed down
? Used in its grammatical sense
T Rising intonation
- A cut-off of the preceding sound

NOTES

1. This paper is based on research data from a large-scale project aiming at reforming the education of

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students belonging to the Muslim minority in Western Thrace, entitled 'Project for Reform of the Education of Muslim Children', co-financed by the European Social Fund (80%) and the Greek Ministry of Education (20%) as part of the Operational Program in Education and Initial Vocational Training I (199 7-2000), II (2002-2004) and III (2005-2008). The project has been directed by an academic team from the University of Athens, headed by Thalia Dragonas, Professor of Social Psychology, and Anna Frangoudaki, Professor of Sociology of Education.

2. Buruma and Margalit (2004) use the term in reference to anti-Western clusters of ideas and representations that inform the worldviews and rhetoric of 'enemies' of the West, be they 19th-Century German Romantic thinkers or 2 lst-Century Islamic fundamentalists. This use of 'occidentalism', which according to Bilgrami (2006) constitutes a sophisticated Cold War intervention in the tradition of Huntington's thesis on the 'Clash of Civilizations', is radically different from the critical elabor- ations within cultural theory and ethnography that constitute the background for my use of the term. Thus, I will not elaborate upon that any further. It should be pointed out, though, that Said, in a passing reference in his afterword of the 1995 edition of *Orientalism,* equated 'occidentalism' with anti-Westernis, when criticizing the reception of his own work as denoting anti-Westernism (cf. Ahıska, 2003).
3. See Herzfeld (1995) for an application of the concept to Greek pragmatics.
4. Of course, in critical legal works, the argument has been made that the Treaty text allows for competing interpretations (cf. TarrasAİKnç and Xpıax6nouXoç, 199 7).
5. Other accounts (e.g. Karakasidou, 1995; Özkirimli & Sofos, 2008) argue for the gradual 'nationalization' of an erstwhile religious community.
6. Romantically inspired Europeans who fought in the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s.
7. The extracts presented are translated in English. The transcription notations used are only an approximation. The original data in Greek are available upon request.
8. Names presented throughout the extracts are pseudonyms.
9. 'Favour'. POUOŞSTİ is a Greek word of Turkish origin associated in contemporary parlance with the traditional clientalist *modus operandi* of Greek political parties.
10. District in Athens with a sizeable Roma population.

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NIKOS BOZATZIS is Assistant Professor in Social Psychology at the University of Ioannina (Greece) and a Visiting Researcher at Georgetown University, Psychology Department (USA). He holds a PhD in social psychology from Lancaster University (UK), has been a post-doctoral fellow at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece) and a research associate in two research programmes at the University of Athens (Greece). His research interests focus on the discursive construction of cultural and national identities. ADDRESS: Department of Philosophy, Education and Psychology, Psychology Section, University of Ioannina, 45110, Ioannina, Greece. [email: nikobo@cc.uoi.gr]

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