A rehearsed self in repeated narratives?; The case of two interviews with a former hooligan

Dorien Van De Mieroop

Abstract

This article investigates the identity constructions of a former hooligan in two repeated narratives, obtained through interviews with a time lapse of six years. In both narratives, the interviewee constructs a similar heroic identity and opposes it to other categories such as cowards and followers. However, when relating how he became a hooligan, the interviewee presents himself as a follower. This contradiction with the heroic identity shows his struggle with group membership and that ‘identity work’ is an ongoing process. On the other hand, the striking similarity between the identity constructions in both interviews supports the thesis of a rehearsed self in big stories, but I argue that this is also due to other reasons, namely the role of the same interviewer who co-constructs the interview, but who is also an outsider and the influence of previous ‘rehearsals’ of the story, both within the group of hooligans and in real life.

Keywords

identity construction, repeated narrative, big story, interview, heroic masculine persona, reflexivity, rehearsed self, group identity, individuality, hooligan, violence

Bionote

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A rehearsed self in repeated narratives?

The case of two interviews with a former hooliganⁱ

Dorien Van De Mieroop

Introduction

‘Narrative is a privileged communication mode for making sense of the self’ (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008: 276). This close link between narrative and identity construction has been addressed and illustrated many times now, so that it can almost be regarded as common ground, known to all researchers in the field. It is typically in narratives that people feel the need to give a sense of ‘who we are and how we got that way’ (Linde 1993: 3), and this is done by discursively constructing identities. These identities are multiple, since ‘there are a number of contextual selves, the people we are in different relational settings’ (Wetherell and Maybin 1996: 223), and these can be made relevant in one and the same narrative.

Furthermore, taking a social constructionist stance, I view identity as ‘neither a given nor a product’, but rather, as ‘a process’ (De Fina et al. 2006: 2) and language is not regarded as ‘a transparent medium for conveying thought’, but as ‘actually construct[ing] the world and the self in the course of its use’ (Wetherell and Maybin 1996: 220). As such, a narrative does not ‘simply mirror[s] some antecedent reality, but helps to create that very reality itself’ (Atkinson and Delamont 2006: 168). Therefore, on the one hand, a narrative’s link to the ‘truth’ may be regarded as problematic (Bamberg 2008a), but on the other hand, it offers us

a remarkable window on the way people discursively construct and interactively negotiate their selves.

Currently, narratives are divided into two main categories, namely big and small stories (see discussion in Bamberg 2007; Freeman 2007a; Georgakopoulou 2006). Small stories are typically short, emerge during interactions and are often largely co-constructed by different participants (for an overview of types of small stories: see Georgakopoulou 2007: 40-56), while big stories focus on past events of the narrator which are often elicited through sociolinguistic research interviews. These interviews in themselves are of course also a form of interaction in which meaning is 'actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter' (Holstein and Gubrium 2003: 68), thus resulting in a narrative that is co-constructed by the interviewee and the interviewer. Furthermore, because there is usually a certain temporal distance between the time of narrating and the time when the narrated events took place in big stories, the narrators often had many occasions for reflecting upon the versions of themselves that are constructed in the story. This opportunity for reflection has been observed to render the selves in such big stories more consistent and construed to make them as morally acceptable as possible (Linde 1993), resulting in what has been called a 'rehearsed self' (Georgakopoulou 2006: 128). My own previous research has showed that this 'rehearsed' nature can be reflected in the style of narrating (Van De Mierop et al. 2007), even in spite of a deliberately active interviewing method (Van De Mierop and Bruyninckx 2009).

In this respect, it is particularly interesting to look into the way identities are co-constructed in repeated narratives. If it is the case that big stories are characterized by a 'rehearsed' self, then repeated narratives should render almost identical identity constructions. Previous

research on repeated narratives has indeed shown a great deal of similarities: Schiff et al. concluded that the survivor identity they investigated in the two repeated narratives of Holocaust survivors maintains significantly consistent over time, in spite of changes in context and situation (Schiff et al. 2006: 374). Within a similar data set, Schiffrin studied four oral history interviews with the same woman and observed a number of functional similarities between the versions, but also important changes. These were due to the fact that the story seemed to become increasingly 'designed for a broad audience with little background knowledge about the Holocaust' (Schiffrin 2003: 553), which underlines the importance of the changing global context and the local interview setting. Although he does not particularly focus on identity construction and his repeated narratives are typical examples of small stories, related in a family setting (thus in contrast with the big stories investigated by Schiff et al. (2006) and Schiffrin (2003)), Norrick comes to a similar conclusion regarding the importance of the audience, for which the story is merely 'redesigned', 'rather than reconstruct[ed] [...] from the ground up', thus showing that stories 'remain substantially intact from one telling to the next' (Norrick 1998: 75). So from these studies, which focused both on big and on small stories, it can be concluded that both the changes in the context and the audience/the interviewer have an undeniable influence on the way narrators construct themselves in their stories – the latter influence being only logical when viewing identity as a co-construction between interviewee and interviewer. However, other than in that respect, these identity constructions remain remarkably constant. This of course supports the thesis that the selves in big stories are – to a certain extent – rehearsedⁱⁱ.

On the other hand, Bamberg's analysis of a twice-told tale (2008b) demonstrates how one teller 'hails two different subjectivities (or "identities" [...]) into being' (Bamberg 2008b: 201)

when retelling the same story with a minimal time lapse of a couple of hours in front of the same imaginary audience, since the story was told in front of a camera. Instead of ascribing two different identities to the teller, Bamberg focuses mostly on the two different narrative techniques (one version consists of ‘the orchestration of characters as actors’, while the other version resembles ‘the genre of self-disclosure or confession’, Bamberg 2008b: 202) and ‘suggests studying identity as a process’, viewing it as ‘continuously “under construction”’ (Bamberg 2008b: 203).

In this study I will further explore the similarities in and differences between identity constructions in a repeated narrative that can be categorized as a big story. To add another dimension to the previous studies, the factor of audience/interviewer was not varied and so stories that are potentially even more similar than have been described previously, are expected especially because of the undeniable role of the interviewer in such co-constructed narratives. The only factor that did change, of course, was the context, since there was a time lapse of 6 years between the two interviews. Since narratives are complex entities that are closely linked to their contexts (De Fina 2000: 133), these contexts, both in a socio-historical and a personal sense, may have an effect upon the way the interviewee constructs his identities in the two interviews. However, my main aim is to look at and compare the way the interviewee constructs his identities in the two interviews and it is not to scrutinize the relation between the changed context and the identity construction in these interviews, since the interviewee’s view of the context was not explicitly probed for in the interviews themselves. That would be necessary for such a study, since as a researcher, one cannot just describe *the context* of each interview based on some historical facts about the topic and some ‘objective’ variables (such as gender, age or class) of the interviewee, but instead, contexts are ‘*subjective definitions* of the currently relevant dimensions of such [social (=own

addition)] situations by the participant' (Van Dijk 2009: 248), which are 'both personal and social' (Van Dijk 2008: 17). This former, cognitive dimension of the '*personally variable, subjective* aspects of context models' (van Dijk 2008: 119) makes it particularly difficult to grasp in a responsible way, especially because detailed accounts of contexts have been criticized for their guiding influence on the analyses (e.g. Blommaert 2001). What I provide here before going into the analysis, is a brief description of the data and a bit of social-collective background information of the topics that are discussed in the interviews and that are also presented in this article. I will however be careful not to do a '*prima facie ethnography*' (Blommaert 2001: 16): no assumptions on the interviewer's identity construction are made on the basis of these background facts, these are only presented here so that the reader who is not familiar with the topic gets a general idea of the extent and intensity of Belgian football hooliganism.

Data description

This article deals with two interviews with a man who used to be a hooligan on the X-side, which was the name of the hard core hooligans of FC Antwerp. This group of hooligans, who later renamed themselves to Antwerp Casual Crew (ACC), was founded in the mid-seventies. It was the first major organized group of hooligans in Belgium and they were known for their violent behavior (Luysterborg and Van Cauwenbergh 2004). They were also involved in the Beverwijk incident in the Netherlands in 1997, in which one hooligan was killed.

The two interviews took place with a time lapse of six years between them (the 1st in 2001 and the 2nd in 2007) and they were alike in topic, namely the interviewee's former activities as a hooligan. Also the interviewing situation was similar, since it was the same interviewer who carried out the two semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the interviewer knew the

interviewee fairly well, since the latter's girlfriend is a family member of the former. This existing informal relation between them is also reflected in the interview, since both participants speak the same dialect and as such, an informal tone is retained throughout the two datasets.

Only two things differ significantly between the two interviews: first of all, there is an unintended difference in length between the first interview and the second interview (1700 words versus 6700 words). This is partly due to the fact that the latter also focused on the interviewee's current family life, which falls outside the scope of this article (this section of the interview is disregarded entirely in this article). But it is also a fact that the first interview is less detailed than the second, although the analyses still show remarkable similarities, as will be discussed below. Secondly, there is of course an intended difference between the two datasets, namely that they were related with a time laps of six years between them. In these years, it became clear that organized Belgian hooliganism stopped existing. While even now, there are still acts of football-related vandalism, these are very different from the well-structured and intentional nature of hooliganism in Antwerp as it was known from 1975 till 1999.

Analyses

In this section I study the way identity is constructed in the two interviews by looking at three aspects of the stories as suggested by Schiffrin (1996: 170), namely (1) their form or textual structure (2) their content and (3) the story-telling behavior. Also in this study, I look at the way the interviewee's experiences are 'verbalized', focusing not only on *what* is being said, but especially *how* it is formulated (cf Schiffrin 1996: 193). Before going into the

analyses, I first give an overview of the main themes in the two interviews in order to provide an overall view of the stories that are being relatedⁱⁱⁱ.

Main themes in the two interviews	
Fighting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 stories of fights in interview 1 - 6 stories of fights in interview 2 	
Using drugs and alcohol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 stories of drug/alcohol use in interview 1 - 3 stories of drug/alcohol use in interview 2 	
Refraining from fighting at the time of the interview because of external factors, namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presence of the girlfriend in interview 1 - presence of girlfriend, son and father-in-law in interview 2 	
Additional themes in each interview	
Interview 1	Interview 2
Demonstrating violence for gaining respect in the group of hooligans	Strict upbringing as a reason for getting involved in hooliganism
Interest in fighting, not in the football match	Imitation of violent hooligan behavior in the UK
	Encounters with the police

Table 1: overview of the main themes in the two interviews

As can be sensed from the table above, the themes that are being raised are typically related to a very masculine self-presentation. Wetherell and Edley (1999) linked this to the construction of a heroic masculine persona, who is characterized by ‘strength, boldness, winning challenges, [and] cool toughness’ (Wetherell and Edley 1999: 351), or who can – alternatively or to differing extents – distance himself from this hegemonic masculinity, which may even be the ‘most hegemonic’ position, since that would demonstrate individuality and independence, which are also typical male characteristics (Wetherell and Edley 1999: 351). Especially in discourse on violence, as is clearly the case here (see themes in the table above), this heroic masculine identity may be drawn upon since it ‘transcends the victim/perpetrator dichotomy and produces a successful masculine identity that includes the use of violence’ (Andersson 2008: 157). This is mainly done by negotiating the masculine position into an opposition between the man-category and a non-man category, in which violence is even constructed as irrelevant (Andersson 2008). Also in this dataset, the interviewee constructs a heroic identity and I demonstrate this by linking it to the characteristics as were described by Wetherell and Edley (1999; see above). Furthermore, the interviewee also negotiates the role of violence in this identity construction. I now go into a detailed analysis of the different aspects of this identity construction, providing examples from both datasets since there was a remarkable similarity in this identity construction between the two interviews. I will focus on this similarity in particular in the second part of this section.

Physical strength and boldness

First of all, the interviewee consistently positions himself within the group of hooligans and he describes them as strong men of whom others were afraid. In both interviews, he uses the exact same terms to refer to the hooligans: he frequently repeats the words *zware jongens*, *harde jongens* or *zwaar volk*, ('heavy/tough guys'). This categorization refers to physical toughness and boldness, and it is therefore with pride that the interviewee tells about his scars which bear the memory of his time as a hooligan (in interview 1) and about his encounters with the police (mainly in interview 2):

1 [Fragment from interview 1]

148 IR *En hebde der enige lichamelijk lek-letsels aan overgehoute?*
149 IE *Één litteken aan m'n voorhoofd. Da is gebeurd me de wedstrijd*
150 *euh Gent-Antwerp, een beetje euh, dawas da is gebeurd*
151 *op een veertienjarige leeftijd. Me de vader mee naar het verbaal.*
152 *Euh toen scoorde ze ne goal op die hekke.*
153 *Natuurlijk iedereen vliegt der op de hekke*
154 *en da was toen nog ni was da verbode nu wel*
155 *der kunde nu trouwes een boete vor krijge*
156 *en de polies is derintusse gekome*
157 *want het begon een beetje te heftig te worre*
158 *en een matrak op menne kop gekrege en*
159 *voorhoofd een beetje genaaid geweest.*

148 IR And did you retain any physical in- injury of that?
149 IE One scar on my forehead. That happened with the game

150 erm Ghent-Antwerp, a bit erm, that was that has happened
 151 at a fourteen year old age. With the father to the football.
 152 Erm then they scored a goal on those fences.
 153 Of course everyone throws oneself on the fences
 154 and that was then not yet was that forbidden now it is
 155 you can get a fine for that now by the way
 156 and the police came between that
 157 because it started to get a bit too intense
 158 and got a truncheon on my head and
 159 forehead has been stitched a bit.^{iv}

In this fragment, the interviewer probes for any injuries the interviewee may have suffered in a direct way. The interviewee responds affirmatively by referring to a scar on his forehead, as such providing instant proof of his words. He then immediately starts narrating a story of how it happened exactly. The level of detail in the orientation phase of the story is striking: information about the football game (l150), his age (l151), and who accompanied him (l151) is given and this contributes to the factual nature of the story (Edwards and Potter 1992). When the story moves into the complicating action, the danger of the situation is illustrated, both by the interviewee's choice of words (l153: *vliegt op*, 'throw oneself on' l157 *heftig*, 'intense') and by the comparison with the current legal situation in which this kind of behavior is forbidden (l 154) and may result in a fine (l155). As such, proof is provided for the danger of the situation. In line 158 then, the actual fact is being related in a rather impersonal tone, which on the one hand illustrates the tumultuous nature of the situation since no agent of the action is indicated, but on the other hand the lexical choice of *matrak* ('truncheon') indicates that the interviewee was hit by the police, thus showing them as an

important antagonist of the group of hooligans. In the coda, the interviewee minimizes the care he received (l159 *een beetje*, 'a bit') which shows his ability to handle pain well, since the previous story and the physical proof of the scar already demonstrated the seriousness of the situation, which is definitely not minimized. As such, this story clearly contributes to the interviewee's identity of a hero, who shows no fear of dangerous situations and who can endure pain.

In the second interview, the interviewee's encounters with the police are also narrated in great detail and these often support the interviewee's status of a notorious hooligan. In the following fragment, the interviewee self-initiates this topic.

2 [Fragment from interview 2 – turn by the interviewee]

198 *Natuurlijk identiteitspa- kaart afgegeven,*
199 *die mannen gaan da allemaal even napolissen.*
200 *Na een tiental minuutjes komen ze terug en*
201 *ze zeggen tegen mij van: 'Ok, wie is hier X x?'*
202 *'k Zeg: 'Ja da ben ik.'*
203 *'Wilt u even uitstappen en wilt u meekomen?'*
204 *En ik moest meekomen, ik werd tegen een combi gedrukt,*
205 *ik kreeg handboeien rond mij, er werden foto's genomen*
206 *en ze zeiden tegen mij van:*
207 *'Kijk se, we kunnen je nu niets doen, we gaan je gewoon*
208 *loslaten, maar we houden je wel heel de wedstrijd in de gaten.'*

198 Of course hand in identity pa- card,
199 those men are going to police into all that for a bit.

200 After about ten minutes, they come back and
 201 they tell me: 'Okay, who is X x here?'
 202 I say: 'Yes, that is me.'
 203 'Would you get out for a while and would you come with [us]?'
 204 And I had to go along, I was pushed against a police car,
 205 I got handcuffs on me, there were pictures taken
 206 and they said to me:
 207 'Look hey, we can't do anything against you now, we are just going
 208 to let you go now, but we keep an eye on you during the entire game.'

This story consists of an introduction in which the interviewee uses a slang verb, namely *napolissen* (I199, translated as 'to police into something', as an alternative for 'to look into something'), which demonstrates his familiarity with the ingroup of hooligans. Secondly, there is a long constructed dialogue between the interviewee and the police officers, which is also a typical means of illustrating the factuality of the story and creating audience involvement (Tannen 1989, De Fina 2006). Since the police's interest was only directed at him and not at his accompanying friends (who were mentioned in the lines preceding this fragment), as is shown by the use of his last name and first name in line 201 (X x in the fragment), the interviewee presents himself as a very well-known hooligan. The description of what happened (lines 204-205) is vivid and expressive, almost like a scene from a movie and so listeners can visualize it very well. Furthermore, when the interviewer implicitly probes for the number of times the interviewee was arrested in the first interview, his answer is not only factual, but the marked choice of modal verbs (*mag ik zeggen*, 'I may say') indicates the interviewee's pride in his self-categorization as a 'heavy guy'.

3 [Fragment from interview 1]

148 IR *En zedde veel gearresteerd en of vervolgd geweest*
149 *door het gerecht of zo?*
→ 150 IE *Euh in totaal mag ik zeggen:*
151 *vier keer gearresteerd en twee gerechtelijke gevolgen*

148 IR And have you been arrested or prosecuted a lot
149 by the court or so?
→ 150 IE Erm in total I may say:
151 arrested four times and two judicial consequences

Describing the fights

In both interviews, the interviewee vividly describes his activities as a hooligan, and especially the high level of similarity between the two datasets is striking. I focus on this similarity in this section, after which I go into some additional features of the interviewee's heroic identity construction.

First of all, I compare some of the stories on a qualitative level. For example, the interviewee describes how the hooligan groups met. These fragments are very similar in the two interviews. For the purpose of comparison, I put the two fragments next to each other:

4 [Fragments from interview 1 and 2 – turn by the interviewee]

Interview 1	Interview 2
123 <i>oftewel spreke wij af me gsm ofzoiet</i>	63 <i>we hebbe afgesproke via mobiel, gsm</i>
124 <i>(.) en dan spreke wij op een bepaalde</i>	64 <i>natuurlijk en we hebben die mannen</i>

125	<i>plaats af vor te vechte enneuhm</i>	65	<i>ontmoet. Wij waren met een man of</i>
126	<i>die jongens kome natuurlijk ook</i>	66	<i>40, 50 alles in totaal, jongens tussen</i>
127	<i>opdage en dan zijn wij me een 20, 30</i>	67	<i>de 19 en 38 jaar, da was den oudste.</i>
128	<i>man en die manne waarschijnlijk</i>	68	<i>Wij hebben, hebbe ontmoet op een</i>
129	<i>eu ook me een aantal</i>	69	<i>parking (.) langs de autostrade.</i>
123	either we arrange with cellular or so	63	we have arranged via mobile, cellular
124	(.) and then we meet at a certain	64	of course, and we have met those
125	place to fight an- erm	65	men. We were with about
126	those guys show up as well of course	66	40, 50 all in total, guys between 19
127	and then we are with about 20, 30	67	and 38 years, that was the oldest one
128	men and those men probably	68	We have, have met them on a
129	erm as well with a number [of people]	69	parking lot (.) next to the highway.

In both fragments, a number of elements are considered as relevant, such as the means to arrange a meeting (mobile phone, l123 and l63), the number of hooligans (20 to 30 per group in interview 1; 40 to 50 in total in interview 2) and the place (unspecified in interview 1 (l125) and specified in interview 2 (l69)). Overall, the second interview is slightly more specified (e.g. the meeting place (l69) and the age of the hooligans (l66-67)), but as was mentioned before, this is a general feature of the interview due to the difference in length. Apart from that, the similarity of some of the wording is striking (compare l123 and l63; l124-125 and l68-69).

When it comes to the description of the actual fights, the interviewee always brings in three elements: their intense nature, their limited length and the presence of the police:

5 [Fragments from interview 1 and 2 – turn by the interviewee]

Interview 1	Interview 2
<p>75 <i>daar is tien en tander</i></p> <p>76 <i>in de gazet van geschreve</i></p> <p>77 <i>da wij dare twee () voe de match</i></p> <p>78 <i>aant euuh vechte hemme gewest</i></p> <p>79 <i>daa gevecht ee gedurende</i></p> <p>80 <i>tien minute geduurd</i></p> <p>((lines omitted))</p> <p>119 <i>wellie slage daar oftewel alles</i></p> <p>120 <i>kort en klein of wellie</i></p> <p>121 <i>gon euhm gevecht aan me polies</i></p>	<p>261 <i>val aan, slaag, slagen, blijven slagen</i></p> <p>262 <i>het kan zen da ge op uw eigen zelfste</i></p> <p>263 <i>supporters slaagt, en een einde deraan</i></p> <p>264 <i>komen, da is in afwachting van (.)</i></p> <p>265 <i>een confrontatie durt duurt nooit</i></p> <p>266 <i>ni meer dan een kwartier</i></p> <p>267 <i>of de politie is ervan op de hoogte</i></p> <p>268 <i>de mensen hebben het gezien en</i></p> <p>269 <i>ze staan onmiddellijk ter plaatse.</i></p>
<p>75 there has been one and another thing</p> <p>76 written about that in the newspaper</p> <p>77 that we had been erm fighting there</p> <p>78 two () before the game</p> <p>79 that fight has lasted</p> <p>80 during ten minutes</p> <p>((lines omitted))</p> <p>119 either we smashed everything</p> <p>120 to smithereens or we</p> <p>121 start erm a fight with the police</p>	<p>261 atack, hit, hit, keep on hitting</p> <p>262 it is possible that you are hitting your very</p> <p>263 own fans, and an end comes to it</p> <p>264 that is in anticipation of (.)</p> <p>265 a confrontation never take takes long</p> <p>266 not more than a quarter of an hour</p> <p>267 or the police is aware of it</p> <p>268 the people have seen it and</p> <p>269 they are immediately on the scene.</p>

As can be seen in the fragments above, the limited length of the fights (I80 and I266) can be linked to the presence of the police, as is explained in interview 2. The interviewee also demonstrates the intensity of the fights: in the first interview, the interviewee introduces his story by saying that the fight has been the topic of newspaper articles, which illustrates the newsworthiness of what happened, and he further underlines this by his vivid description by means of the expression *alles kort en klein slagen* (I 119-120 – ‘to smash everything to smithereens’); in the second interview, the intensity of the fights is illustrated by means of a three part list (I261) and an argument that underlines the chaotic nature of the situation, namely hitting on hooligans who are on the same side (I262), which is stressed by the repetition of the potentially allied character of victims: *eigen zelfste* (I262-263 ‘very own’).

Secondly, the lively character of his stories of fights is also supported by the use of the historical present in the two interviews, which demonstrates the interviewee’s degree of involvement in the story. One might expect that the interviewee distances himself from the stories more over the years, but this is clearly not the case: the use of tenses is remarkably similar in the two interviews, as is shown by the quantitative analyses presented in the table below. In this table, the relative proportion of the different tenses used in stories about the interviewee’s activities as a hooligan is given. These stories were carefully selected out of the two interviews, resulting in two subcorpora of respectively 684 words and 1747 words^v. I have to remark that the tenses that are mentioned are a translation of the Dutch tenses and the pragmatic meaning of their use is fairly similar to the English tenses, except for the Present Perfect: the link with the present for the *voltooid tegenwoordige tijd* in Dutch (translated as Present Perfect here) is less pronounced than it is the case for the English Present Perfect tense. Therefore, I consider this group of verbs as emphasizing the completed nature of the action, thus grouping them with the verbs in the simple past tense.

Verb tenses	Interview 1		Interview 2	
	Exact numbers	Percentages	Exact numbers	Percentages
Simple present	43	57%	152	62%
Present perfect	14	18%	28	11%
Simple past	19	25%	58	23%
Past perfect	0	0%	9	4%
Total	76	100%	247	100%

Table 2: the use of tenses in the interviewee's stories about his former hooligan activities

Two conclusions can be drawn from the table above: first of all, that the amount of verbs is fairly high (one out of nine words in the first interview and one out of seven words in the second interview). Since there were very few passive verbs used – only 1.3% in the first and 0.4% in the second interview –, this high amount of verbs also contributed to an active, instead of a descriptive, narrating style.

Secondly, it is clear that the simple present is the most dominant tense in the stories of the interviewee. The verbs in the present perfect and the simple past account for 43% in the first interview and only 34% in the second interview. It is only in the latter interview that the past perfect is also used, but the presence of this tense is minimal (4%). The difference in tense use between the first and the second interview is not significant ($\chi^2(3) = 5.306, p > .05$), which is quite emblematic for the interviewee's similar degree of involvement in his stories. Obviously, the time lapse of six years between the two interviews did not influence the liveliness of his stories as far as the use of tenses is concerned, and the qualitative analysis showed that also on a content level, there are many similarities between the topics introduced in and the narrating style of the stories.

Violent... but to a certain extent

As his stories and his scars demonstrated, the interviewee constructs a heroic identity that incorporates violence. Throughout the two interviews, he explicitly and consistently positions himself within the group of hooligans, as is also shown by his frequent use of the exclusive we-form (see for example fragments 4 and 5). Interestingly, there is one story in the second interview, in which he distances himself from this ingroup identity construction, which shows that he limits his association with violence to a certain extent. The first part of the story is related at the end of the interviewee's answer to a question about the heaviest incident he had ever been involved in.^{vi}

6 [Fragment from interview 2 – turn by the interviewee]

80 *En we hebben dan euh een zware confrontatie gehad*
81 *en daar is één dode bij gevallen.*
82 *Daar hebbe ze euh messteken en zo allemaal*
83 *aan euh aan't steken geweest, en (.)*
84 *Ik heb het ni zien gebeuren natuurlijk,*
85 *da's gewoon slagen, slagen, nog is slagen en (.)*
86 *uw eigen vel redden, zal ik zeggen.*

80 And we had erm a heavy confrontation then
81 and there one person got killed.
82 There they have erm stabs and so all of that
83 were erm were stabbing, and (.)
84 I have not seen it happen of course,

- 85 that is just hitting, hitting, and hitting and (.)
86 saving your own skin, shall I say.

When introducing the story, the interviewee still uses the exclusive we-form, as he consistently did in the preceding lines (lines 53-79; see fragment 4 for an extract from this story). The interviewee hesitates briefly before qualifying the incident as severe (l80: *een zware confrontatie*, 'a heavy confrontation'), and then factually, but also impersonally, gives the core of his story. In lines 82-83, he relates what happened in an impersonal way, switching from the exclusive we-form to the distant and vague third person pronoun *ze* ('they'). His tone is less fluent than in the rest of the interview, as is shown by the two hesitations (lines 82 and 83), his repetitions (2x *aan* in line 83, 2x *steken*) and his abrupt stop after *en* ('and'), which typically introduces an on-topic continuation. Instead, the interviewee switches to a personal footing, relating his own activities by a threefold repetition (line 85) and further boosting his lack of involvement by the adverb *natuurlijk* ('of course', line 84).

When the interviewer comes back to this story later on in the interview with a general question, the interviewee further distances himself from the incident and provides additional proof for his personal non-involvement in the case by explaining that he heard about the lethal victim only afterwards:

7 [Fragment from interview 2 – turn by the interviewee]

- 335 *Wij hebben der achteraf pas, zal ik zeggen,*
336 *in de auto, we waren rondgegaan,*
337 *we hi- hangden in cafés in Rotterdam uit*
338 *tot nog confrontatie met Ajax-hooligans aan te gaan.*

339 *Maar we hebben ze ni gezien, die van Ajax*
 340 *en euh tot de conclusie hebben we 't op 't nieuws zelf*
 341 *met ons oren moeten horen op den tv*
 342 *dat er me zwaar rellen tussen Ajax- en*
 343 *Feyenoord-hooligans één één Ajax-dode is gevallen.*

335 We have there only afterwards, shall I say,
 336 in the car, we had been going around,
 337 we hi- hung around in bars in Rotterdam
 338 till start another confrontation with Ajax-hooligans.
 339 But we have not seen them, those of Ajax
 340 and erm as the conclusion we have had to hear it
 341 on the news itself with our own ears on the TV
 342 that there has been one one Ajax-dead
 343 during heavy riots between Ajax and Feyenoord hooligans.

The interviewee first stresses the distance from the victim by temporal (l335: *achteraf*, ‘afterwards’) and spatial (l336: *in de auto*, ‘in the car’) reasons. He then inserts a description of what happened before they left, using an exclusive we-form which refers to the Flemish fans only, as is demonstrated later on by the interviewee’s outgroup reference to the two Dutch hooligan groups (l342-343: *Ajax* and *Feyenoord*). But most importantly, he relates how they only heard it on the news (l340) and on TV (l341) later on, which is backed by sensorial evidentiality (l341 *met ons oren*, ‘with our ears’) and the modality of obligation (l341 *moeten horen*, ‘had to hear’) which indicates their lack of choice and thus minimal involvement in the matter. Finally, the news itself is voiced as an indirect quote, which is shown through the

explicit and redundant character of the statement, which reduces the interviewee to the animator-role only (Goffman 1979), thus preventing being directly linked to and establishing further distance from the severe incident. This creation of distance also protects the interviewee's construction of the 'heroic self', which would be harmed by the association with such useless and extreme violence.

Defining what one is not: opposing categories of 'non-men'

Next to these stories of hooligan activities, the interviewee gives additional content to his self-categorization as a 'heavy guy' by opposing it to other categories, since in defining what one is not, the own category is explored in a more in-depth way. A first important opposing group is that of the cowards, from which the interviewee distances himself explicitly.

8 [Fragment from interview 1]

135 IR *En gewoon supporters die da toevallig*
136 *in zo'n café zate liete die me rust of euhm*
137 *ginde daar ook me euhm ambras zoeke?*
138 IE *Wellie zen geen lafaards da doen wij ni*
139 *wij zoeke gewoon de zware jongens op*
140 *van de tegenstander.*

135 IR And regular fans who by coincidence
136 sat in such a bar, did you leave them in peace or erm
137 did you also look for erm trouble with them?
138 IE We are no cowards, we don't do that

139 we just look out for the heavy guys
140 of the opponent.

When the interviewer suggestively asks whether the hooligans ever fought with regular supporters, the interviewee immediately and explicitly refutes this and opposes his own group to that of the cowards, who would do such things (l138) and states that they only fought other men with similar physical strength (l139 *zware jongens*, 'heavy guys'), which is also a characteristic of the heroic masculine persona to be bold enough to engage in fights with strong competitors (cf Andersson (2008): opposition between man and non-man). The interviewee even goes further than that in the second interview, adding a protective trait to his identity construction as a hero who stands up for the weak. In the middle of a turn, he self-initiates this topic:

9 [Fragment from interview 2 – turn by the interviewee]

690 *ik heb vroeger altijd een zwak hart ghad ver iedereen,*
691 *ik kon nooit gen euuuh uit euuuuh etgesjouwde mensen*
692 *of mensen die belachelijk euuh gemokt werre*
693 *oemwille van kleding of dit en 't geen*
694 *en der ni tegen kunne*
695 *ik heb altijd een euh een zwak ghad ver zwakkeren*

690 I always used to have a weak heart for everybody,
691 I could never [stand] no erm ab errrrm abused people
692 or people who were erm mocked
693 because of clothes and so on

694 and who can't stand it
695 I have always had an erm a soft spot for the weak

The interviewee stresses this aspect of his heroic identity construction by means of an accumulation of extreme case formulations (Pomerantz 1986) in the introduction (I690: *altijd*, 'always', *iedereen*, 'everybody'; I691: *nooit*, 'never') He then narrows down this extreme case formulation *iedereen* (I690: 'everybody') to two groups of weak people (I691 and I692), who are also categorized as such in the conclusion of this topic, in which another extreme case formulation is used (I694: *altijd*, 'always') and in which the keyword *zwak* ('weak') is being repeated: *een zwak (...) ver zwakkeren* ('a soft spot for the weak').

Also within the group of hooligans, the interviewee opposes two subgroups to further define his own identity construction. Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1990) observed a similar tendency in their interviews with rockers, hippies, punks and gothics, namely that 'members may discount certain factions of their subcultural group, perhaps in this way enabling the presentation of that group in an optimally positive way' (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1990: 274). The two hooligan subgroups that the interviewee discerns are 'the hard core' (*de herde kern*) and the 'followers' (*meelopers*). He explicitly distances himself from the latter group in the second interview^{vii}, and positively categorizes himself within the former group, which is underlined by the use of the two, emblematically opposing, extreme case formulations *nooit* ('never') and *altijd* ('always'):

10 [Fragment from interview 2 – turn by the interviewee]

443 *Dus ik heb nooit een meeloper geweest,*
444 *'k heb altijd bij de euh herde kern gehoord.*

443 So I have never been a follower,

444 I have always been a part of the erm hard core.

This subcategorization contributes to the aspect of individuality and independent choice that has also been observed to be quite typical of a masculine identity construction (Wetherell and Edley 1999). Furthermore, it is also used as an explanatory factor for a missed opportunity to fight other hooligans:

11 [Fragment from interview 2 – turn by the interviewee]

220 *we hebben geen confrontatie gehad,*

221 *da we vanuit gaan dat er meelopers*

222 *in 't spel zijn gemoeid. Ja zodus.*

220 we did not have a confrontation,

221 that we assume that there were followers

222 involved in it. Yes, so.

This subcategorization fits the heroic identity construction well: as was shown before, the interviewee states that they only fight worthy competitors. If these do not show up, they are recategorized as *meelopers* ('followers'), thus clearly distinguishing them from his own ingroup of hardcore hooligans. This has been labeled the 'being/doing distinction' by Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1990), namely that the hard core is an example of 'being a member', while the followers only 'do' 'activities associated with membership' (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1990: 274).

Struggling with individuality

This self-categorization as a hardcore hooligan, as opposed to the followers, is however in shrill contrast with the story of how the interviewee became a hooligan. In these stories, the interviewee clearly struggles with his individuality. This is fairly logical, since ‘category affiliation implie[s] conformity and a loss of individuality’ (Widdicombe 1998: 52). This loss of individuality is clearly reflected in the interviewee’s initiation stories as a hooligan.

First of all, he repeatedly states that the main reason was ‘to belong to the group’ (*voor bij de groep te horen*). This phrase is literally repeated four times in interview 1 (l22, l27, l 86, l87) and it also comes back once in interview 2 (l29, see below). Secondly, he clearly distinguishes his current self from his former self, invoking his youthful age in both interviews (l16 in the first interview; l23 in the second interview), which he also describes as an age in which one can easily be drawn into a group (l21 *toen waarde beïnvloedbaarder*, ‘then you were influenced more easily’, interview 2). This is also shown in the way he positions himself as a passive agent in the whole process of becoming a hooligan, which is quite similar in both interviews.

12 [Fragments from interview 1 and 2 – turn by the interviewee]

Interview 1	Interview 2
34 <i>en dan pikt een of andere jongen u op</i>	28 <i>ik werd meegelokt in de groep, ik wou ook de</i>
35 <i>van de zware jongens en op den duur</i>	29 <i>grote man, ik wou erbij, euh, horen, en dit en ‘t</i>
36 <i>zijde gij zo bij euh kunnen terechtkomen he.</i>	30 <i>geen, op den duur is dat allemaal gekomen.</i>
	31 <i>Met (.) veel vechtpartijen van vroeger en (.) op</i>

	32 <i>den duur euh ja in de groep terechtgekomen.</i>
34 then one or another guy picks you up 35 of the heavy guys and after a while 36 you could as such end up with erm hey	28 I was lured into the group, I also wanted to be 29 the big man, I wanted to be, erm, a part of it, 30 and so on, after a while it all happened. 31 With (.) a lot of fights of the old days and (.) 32 after a while erm yes ended up in the group.

In the first interview, the interviewee switches to the second person pronoun *u* ('you', l34) or *gij* ('you', l36)^{viii}, by which he creates a distance between himself as narrator and the former version of his self as protagonist. In both parts of the sentence, the interviewee is a passive agent: in the first part, a vague reference to a hooligan (*een of andere jongen van de zware jongens*, 'one or another guy of the heavy guys', l34-35) is the subject and also the instigator of the action, while in the second part of the sentence, the interviewee is the subject of the passivizing verb *terechtkomen* ('end up with', l36). Finally, instead of explicitly naming the group the interviewee ended up with, he hesitates (*bij euh*, 'with erm', l36) and does not self-repair this implicit reference to the hooligans.

In the second interview, there are no explicit self-categorizations as a hooligan either, but instead, there are implicit references to 'the group' (lines 28 and 32). In this interview though, the interviewee uses the first person pronoun, but he initially still positions himself as a passive agent, namely as the subject of the passive verb *werd meegelokt* ('was lured into', l28), which has a clearly negative connotation. Then he briefly switches to an active role, in which he expresses his volition twice (*ik wou*, 'I wanted to', l28 and l29), after which he makes a similar use of passivizing verbs (*terechtkomen*, 'end up with', l32) and inactive

expressions (*is dat allemaal gekomen*, 'it all happened', l30) as in the first interview. Both fragments thus are in contrast with the active narrating style of the interviewee, but instead illustrate the interviewee's positioning as a passive object that is merely conforming to the group's customs.

Discussion and conclusions

On the one hand, the analyses show that a consistent heroic identity is being constructed in both interviews. This identity construction is multi-faceted, since not only boldness and physical strength are characteristics that are being demonstrated, but through the interviewee's stories, he also shows his weaker, protective side and by opposing other categories, the interviewee distances himself from cowards and followers. Furthermore, he also distances himself from extreme violence, as such preventing his identity construction as a 'good' person (Linde 1993: 3) from being harmed too much. His stories are lively and they are related with many similarities in style and in temporal positioning, as the quantitative analyses of verbs showed.

The final part of my analyses shows a different side of the interviewee's identity construction: while he explicitly distances himself from followers, he demonstrates in his stories about how he became a hooligan that he was not such an independent thinker after all. Of course, in these fragments, the interviewee clearly discerns his current self from his previous self, attributing his behavior to his youthful age. So in spite of the blatant contradiction in the interview (compare fragments 10 and 12), this may not be so contradictory for the interviewee's identity construction. Comparing a previous version of the self, with a current, potentially improved version of the self, is not so unusual. Furthermore, negotiating category membership is quite a logical process, since it is 'designed

to address issues of implied conformity and loss of individuality' (Widdicombe 1998: 68), which has been described to potentially lead to contradictory self-categorizations (see for example fragment 6 in Widdicombe 1998: 64-65). Interestingly, also these identity negotiations are highly similar in the two interviews. So in fact, there is a very great deal of similarity in the identity constructions in both interviews and this supports the idea that identities in big stories are indeed 'rehearsed' (cf Georgakopoulou 2006) versions of selves, which are much more stable than what is to be found in everyday interaction. This is of course due to the process of reflexivity, which 'creates the occasion for selfregard and editing' (Linde 1993: 105) and which gave the interviewee the chance to order the chaotic nature of life (Freeman 2007b: 239) into structured tellings, thus drawing on memory which 'is not only a reconstructive process, but a poetic one' as well (Freeman 2007b: 231), of which 'the foremost aim being not to reproduce reality but to actualize and explicate it' (Freeman 2006: 136). This reflexive process obviously takes place, but I argue that this consistency is potentially also due to other factors:

- 1) The interactional nature of interviews comes into play in this particular case as well: both interviews were co-constructed by the same interviewer. Moreover, the interviewer's presence could in this respect have an almost peremptory character, as Bamberg notes as well: 'audiences exposed to those two versions [of the same story (my addition)] are likely to note and comment on the difference, potentially pressuring the teller to give additional reasons for why or how this change could have come about' (Bamberg 2008b: 186).
- 2) In an interview setting in which the interviewer is an outsider, there is less interviewer-initiated negotiation of identity. Through the lack of experiential

knowledge – instead of socio-historical theoretical knowledge – he is not able to challenge the interviewee's words to the extent that other interlocutors who are all insiders, are able to do in an interaction (as for instance in some of the small stories discussed by Georgakopoulou 2007). Thus on the content level, only a small degree of negotiation is to be expected that influences the co-construction of identity, and this makes it much 'easier' for an interviewee to be consistent in his positioning.

- 3) Many of these stories were probably related over and over again within the group of hooligans at the time. Possibly, the interviewee still remembers these processes to some extent and so one could say that there were 'rehearsals' (cf Blommaert 2001: 27) or 'multiple versions way before the "first" telling' (Bamberg 2008b: 180). This may have created many occasions for the elaboration of the heroic identity construction, and I thus argue that this may be due to the ingroup-character of the specific hooligan subculture.
- 4) The interviewee is asked to relate factual stories in which he was involved. What actually is fact, and what is fiction in his story, is in itself irrelevant to this study. But it is not irrelevant for the interviewee and what he relates is his own perception of what *really* happened. This personal perception of the facts underlies these stories, which also explains their similarity to a large extent. This is particularly important when looking into the comparison between the two interviews: their high degree of similarity can, at least to a certain extent, be accounted for by their 'basis in reality' (Schiff et al. 2006: 356). These retrospective stories are thus very different from stories that are for example projections of a potential future, in which selves still need to establish themselves. Retrospective stories indeed contain selves that are

‘rehearsed’ in another sense as well, namely in real-life actions. Of course, narrators’ alterations of this real-life basis are possible and have been described before, but as Schiff et al. stated: while on the one hand ‘we are not seeking to prove that narrative recounts an actual past.’ (Schiff et al. 2006: 356), denying a narrative’s ‘rooted[ness] in actual events’ (Schiff et al. 2006: 356) on the other hand also gives a false impression of the way narratives are constructed.

In conclusion, this repeated narrative has shown that the possibility of reflexivity of a big story is a potential source of constructing a more stable version of the self, but that it can still be ‘messy’ and inconsistent, due to the struggle with group membership, but also to the current action of narrating and reliving it. Following Bamberg in his conclusions of the analysis of the twice-told-tale (2008b: 200-202), I do not claim to ascribe multiple identities to this interviewee, but rather that the interviewee discursively constructs himself in two different ways in the interview, namely the prevailing self-presentation of the heroic hooligan and the initial self-presentation of the youth who just followed his friends’ bad influence. The latter shows a certain degree of reflexivity and distance between the narrator and the protagonist, while the former does so only minimally. So we see a different positioning in these interviews, which clearly shows that, indeed, ‘in the process of telling stories, they [= the tellers (=own addition)] engage in “identity work” that results in (local and situated) displays of a sense of self’ (Bamberg 2008b: 184). Big story research has often still essentialized identity and based itself on the premise that ‘narrators *have* a self and an identity as some internal organizing principle locatable in the “*big stories*” they tell’, which, according to Georgakopoulou, resulted in an intrinsic orientation ‘towards coherence and authenticity’, which implicated ‘a neglect of the contradictions and inconsistencies’ (Georgakopoulou 2007: 18). Contrary to this typical big story research angle, I follow

Bamberg and base myself on the premise of small story research that states that people do not 'have a sense of self as first located in the person and subsequently locatable in their stories' (Bamberg 2008b: 184). With this assumption as a starting point, it is particularly interesting to highlight the contradictions in a narrative which can be regarded as displays of different aspects – or internal struggles with the implications of group membership (cf Widdicombe 1998) – of a self that is being discursively constructed on the spot and – to differing degrees – is being negotiated with the interviewer.

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NOTES

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ⁱⁱ No conclusions on the selves in small stories can be drawn on the basis of Norrick's (1998) study, since it did not particularly focus on identity construction.

ⁱⁱⁱ In interview 2, there was a section regarding the interviewee's family life. This is not taken into account here, since it was not included in the analyses either.

^{iv} All the Dutch fragments were translated as literally as possible, which sometimes results in odd formulations in English. These are usually equally odd in Dutch.

^v This difference in length between the two subsets of the corpus is mainly due to the overall difference in length between the two interviews.

^{vi} The topic of this lethal incident was not discussed in the first interview.

^{vii} The distinction between these two subgroups is less explicit in the first interview.

^{viii} The interviewee uses two forms of the personal pronoun 'you' which are formal (*u*) to very formal (*gij*) in official Dutch. However, these have a different use in Flemish dialect, which the interviewee uses throughout the interview. Both are endogenous forms and have a more informal use in this dialect, and in this case they are similar to the vague *je* ('you')-form.