READER
COLLECTIVE MEMORY-WORK

edited by
Robert Hamm

Reader Collective Memory-Work
ebook
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It was a very nice experience to receive the ongoing support of the authors of the various contributions. Their willingness to share their points of view and to make available their thoughts through the Reader is highly appreciated.

I hope that the Reader can help fostering further exchange about Collective Memory-Work, its use and usefulness, methodological questions, aspects of its adaptation/s, critical elements found in CMW, exemplary applications in various fields of practice and research.

Robert Hamm, Sligo 2021

Contributions and Copyrights

VICTIMS AND CULPRITS

Frigga Haug

INSECURITY IN POLITICS - DIARY OF FEMALE TRADE UNIONISTS

Inge Morisse, Petra Sauerwald, Heike Wilke, Marianne Zank-Weber

WHY WE INTRODUCE A PART ON EXPERIENCE IN WOMEN'S FOUNDATIONAL STUDIES

Projekt Frauengrundstudium

AGAINST THE LACK OF CONCEPTS OF THE MUNDANE:
COLLECTIVE MEMORY-WORK
Projekt Frauengrundstudium

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LIVING CONTRADICTIONS: STAGING POSTS OF FEMALE IDENTITY
*Innsbrucker Autorinnenkollektiv (*Anni Bell, Judith Bachmann, Margareth Faller, Renate Fleisch, Eva Fleischer, Ramona Gruberi, Maria Hörtnagl, Edith Irenberger, Ursula Kanamüller, Hildegard Knapp, Gabi Marth, Inge Mühlsteiger, Margareth Müller, Werner Pfefferkorn, Michaela Ralser, Gabi Rath, Isabelle Reifer, Günther Seewald, Carmen Unterholzer , Frigga Haug, Kornelia Hauser.)

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WOMEN'S INTERESTS AND ASSERTIVE STRATEGIES
Frauke Schwarting and Eva Stäbler

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COLLECTIVE MEMORY-WORK ON FEMALE FEAR OF SUCCESS
A SUCCESSFUL WOMEN'S STUDIES SEMINAR
Marion Breiter and Kerstin Witt-Löw

> Original: "Kollektive Erinnerungsarbeit zur weiblichen Erfolgsangst."
> in *Die Schule ist männlich. Zur Situation von Schülerinnen und
> Lehrerinnen.* Edited by Elisabeth Birmly, Daniela Dablander, Ursula
> Rosenbichler & Manuela Vollmann.
> 1991. Wien
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MEMORY-WORK: THEORY AND METHOD
June Crawford, Susan Kippax, Jenny Onyx, Una Gault, Pam Benton

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THE RELATION OF EXPERIENCE AND THEORY IN SUBJECT-SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
Frigga Haug

> Original: "Zum Verhältnis von Erfahrung und Theorie in
> subjektwissenschaftlicher Forschung",
> in *Forum Kritische Psychologie 47:56-72.*
> 2004. Hamburg: Argument
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WHAT DO PUPILS NEED TEACHERS FOR?
Teachers from Free Alternative Schools

> Original: "Wozu brauchen Schüler Lehrer?"
> in *Aus Erfahrung lernt man nichts. Ohne Erfahrung kann man nichts
> lernen.*
> 2007. Hamburg: Argument
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THE COLLECTIVE SUBJECT OF MEMORY-WORK
Niamh Stephenson and Dimitri Papadopoulos
> Reprint of Chapter 3 in *Analysing Everyday Experience. Social Research and Political Change.*
> 2006. Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave MacMillan
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MEMORY-WORK
Julie McLeod and Rachel Thomson
> Reprint of Chapter 2 in *Researching Social Change.*
> 2009. Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Singapore
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TIME TRAVEL - COLLECTIVE MEMORY WORK 2002 - 2022
Brigitte Hipfl, Erica Burman, Robert Hamm
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GUILT WITHOUT ATONEMENT. LO. LI. TA. A FEMALE FANTASY?
Bettina Pirker
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Frigga Haug
Original: Vom Ringen um Kohärenz.
In: Das Argument 336.
2021
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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Robert Hamm

> *Marion: Are you not the one who constantly*
> *argues for the method to be used in all sorts of environments?*
> *Paul: So what! Am I to shut up then and not question it?[1]*

The idea for the Reader Collective Memory-Work (short: Reader) was born in the preparation phase for an international symposium that was to be held in Maynooth, Ireland in 2020. This symposium was meant to be a forum for people from various disciplinary backgrounds: academic, professional, social activism – who had experience with Collective Memory-Work, or were simply interested in discussing the method, its potential, adaptations, methodological aspects, or problem areas in its implementation in their respective fields. It was also meant to offer an alternative to the hundreds of conferences that take place across the globe all year round where participation serves mainly purposes of accumulating points on the publish-or-perish scale. The Symposium Collective Memory-Work should have been a place where people could honestly engage in discussion with each other. The Reader should have been a compilation of contributions that would have been made at the Symposium, and follow-on discussions thereof.

With Covid-restrictions in place there was no chance to hold an international symposium in the envisaged format. But there was already a strong momentum with a large number of people expressing interest in the idea of exchange about Collective Memory-Work. One way to serve this interest was to revise the concept for the Reader and extend the scope of the contributions. This is reflected in the collection of articles that are included in the Reader now.

The first 12 essays (and also Chapter 14) are all either reprints, or first-time translations of publications from 1980 to 2009. The remaining contributions are all contemporary material.

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1   Dialogue in *The potential of Collective Memory-Work as a method of learning*. (Hamm 2021, see: www.collectivememorywork.net).

  A guiding idea for putting the collection together in this format was to demonstrate shifts and developments in the adaptation of the method. I am quite happy to be able to present in English a number of texts that to date were only available in the German language. And I am also pleased that it was possible to include chapters from earlier English publications that allow to see trajectories of the method travelling across boundaries of disciplines and location. The cooperation of the respective publishers and authors of this material is highly appreciated.

  Very deliberately, Chapter 1 in the Reader is a reprint of Frigga Haug's essay "Victims or Culprits" from 1980. In a way this essay marks the starting point for Collective Memory-Work – not so much in terms of an exact date, but in terms of perspective. Here, Frigga Haug puts forward the essential direction of investigation that guides Collective Memory-Work as a method of emancipatory learning. Her arguments were perceived as utterly controversial at the time. One might assume that since then they have lost some of their urgency, but this is in fact not the case. The idea of perceiving oneself as part of the problem of reconstruction of structures of subordination, and only therefore also being in a position to effect change, still ignites resistances in areas of social and political activism, in society at large or within the confines of academic circles. It is well worth reading the essay again. In relation to the intention that stands behind the Reader, "Victims or Culprits" should be kept in mind as a kind of constant background motif and point of reference when reading the other essays, including the contemporary material.

  At the time of its initial development Collective Memory-Work was designed as a practical intervention in the women's movement, and socialist politics; it was a "call on the many" (Haug 1999: 15) and definitely not meant to be restricted to uses within university settings. One of the earliest projects that were documented in a publication took place amongst a group of female trade unionists. Their essay on "Insecurity in politics" is included here in the Reader as Chapter 2. It should be read in conjunction with Chapters 3 and 4, both by Women's Foundational Studies. Together these three essays provide a route into the thoughts and discussions that eventually led to the design of procedures that were labelled Collective Memory-Work. Out of this context grew also the project on *Female Sexualisation*, documented in the publication from 1983 that due to the translation into English ultimately

became the blueprint for all the further developments and derivations of the method outside of Germany. *Female Sexualisation* (Haug et al. 1987) is still available in print (Verso, London).

Between 1983 and 1997 a total of nine volumes with documentations of memory-work projects were published in German under the umbrella of *Frauenformen*, a project of groups with ever changing composition. *Female Sexualisation* was the second of these nine volumes. In the Reader you will find two essays from other *Frauenformen* publications. Chapter 5 is a report from a seminar that was held in Innsbruck in 1985 on "Living contradiction." I chose this particular piece for its extensive coverage of the practice of using second versions of story-writing, a practice that has been largely abandoned in later projects and adaptations. Chapter 6 is a translation of an essay by Frauke Schwarting and Eva Stäbler that goes back to a seminar on women's politics at Hamburg University. After the seminar ended some of the participants continued working on the issues raised in it, and generated a number of essays. "Women's interests and assertive strategies" is a good example for the systematic sequences in applying Collective Memory-Work, i.e. the embeddedness of the work with the self-generated stories in a discussion of much wider scope, the field review that is essential part of it, and the recursive reference towards the end of a project that brings the insights and newly developed questions back to the area of (political) practice from which the initial topic arose.

An interesting side-effect of including the original material of the trade unionists, Women's Foundational Studies, and the *Frauenformen* volumes is that they allow a retrospective view on topical discussions that were prevalent in the 1980s in Germany, and that provided the background for the development of the method.

Marion Breiter and Kerstin Witt-Löw transferred the concept of Collective Memory-Work into a seminar script. The reprint of their essay from 1991 in Chapter 7 demonstrates the shift towards utilizing the method in a re-occurring seminar that is planned from the perspective of teaching. It is also an early document from a context that is not directly linked to *Frauenformen* any more. Remarkably, their teaching concept was continuously applied over 30 years, and even today Kerstin Witt-Löw still uses it in her teaching in the Education Department at Vienna University (Witt-Löw 2020).

The geographical spread of Collective Memory-Work was substantially a result of Frigga Haug's guest lectures, e.g. in Denmark, the US, Canada, but particularly also in Australia where the method was used from the late 1980s on (Kippax et al. 1990). The outcome of a project of five women that was published under the title *Emotion and Gender* in 1992 (Crawford et al.) became a frequently cited source in relation to methodical steps in Collective Memory-Work. In their book they presented a more neat description of procedures, and embedded them in a methodological discussion. *Emotion and Gender* is out of print and for anyone wishing to obtain a copy of it the only way is to look for second hand offers. All the more it was a very welcome opportunity to include the most cited parts from the book in a reprint here as Chapter 8 in the Reader.

Theoretical allegiances, commitments, and points of reference differ for people who used (and use) Collective Memory-Work, and this is increasingly the case with the spread of the method across geographical and disciplinary boundaries. From the very beginning in the early 1980s, an important connection, theoretically and personally, for the groups in Germany who developed and refined the method was always the context of *Kritische Psychologie* (Critical Psychology) that originated at the Free University in Berlin.[2] The contribution by Frigga Haug from 2004 that is included in the Reader as Chapter 9 gives an impression of the discussions that evolved between protagonists of *Kritische Psychology* and Collective Memory-Work. This essay also leads over to a concrete project in which she was involved as a facilitator at the time together with teachers from German Free Alternative Schools[3]. These teachers produced a book in which they report about their experiences with and insights from this project. One of the essays from their book is included here in the Reader as Chapter 10. It shows how learning experiences in a facilitated project are depicted from the position of participants rather than the perspective of the initiator/facilitator.

Chapter 11 picks up questions of experience, knowledge production, subject status, as was the case in Frigga Haug's essay. Niamh Stephenson

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2   An impressive collection of essays on *Kritische Psychology* compiled by a team of editors for the *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* (2019) has been recently made available in form of an open access publication.

3   German Free Alternative Schools are schools that largely follow concepts of self-directed learning and voluntary participation of pupils/students in learning activities.

and Dimitri Papadopoulos provide a quite elaborate discussion of those issues in relation to Collective Memory-Work. They particularly attend to the related question of collectivity which they depict as a notion relating to a basis of common identities towards a shared goal, thus looking at collectivity not as an outcome but as a process. Their position, originally presented in their publication from 2006, is still highly relevant in the socio-political climate of 2021, as it can help to concentrate on building bridges rather than digging trenches on basis of identity politics.

The Chapter by Julie McLeod and Rachel Thomson is a reprint from a book on methods in social science research. There are a good few such books in which the authors have included descriptions of Collective Memory-Work (e.g. Schratz, Walker and Schratz-Hadwich 1995; Willig 2001). I have chosen to include this particular contribution because in the context of the earlier chapters in the Reader it gives a good impression of the reception of Collective Memory-Work in social sciences, and the bandwidth of connections that have been made with the method in the course of its dissemination and adaptation.

Between the different chapters there are overlaps. Different authors use similar sources and by times even similar citations. The decision to not edit out these overlaps was deliberate. They in fact show the trajectories in ways of thinking (and writing) about Collective Memory-Work. This could have been made even more explicit if further material from other contributions would have been included in the Reader. However, the purpose of the Reader is not in the first place to present a comprehensive history of the method and its derivation. It is rather to contribute to the current and contemporary discussion of its use and usefulness. I am confident that for this purpose the choice of earlier contributions included will be well suited.

Chapter 13 documents a conversation between Erica Burman, Brigitte Hipfl and myself. This conversation refers back to two articles that were published 2002 in which they had suggested a compatibility of Collective Memory-Work with Cultural Studies and Lacanian psychoanalysis (Brigitte Hipfl), and with group therapy (Erica Burman). In the conversation these suggestions are revisited and developments in the approaches of Erica Burman and Brigitte Hipfl towards Collective Memory-Work are traced. In Chapter 14 then Bettina Pirker takes up the notion of psychic reality as a central aspect in her engagement with memory-stories. Her essay stands

as an example of the direction of investigation that was suggested by Brigitte Hipfl in 2002.

Even today Collective Memory-Work projects are still predominantly conducted by groups of women. Chapter 15 presents a reflection of an all-male group in England. This group worked together over a period of 13 years on topics of ageing and masculinities. In their contribution to the Reader they report about what they have done over such a long period of time, and how they retrospectively reflect on it.

Ana Đorđević and Zorana Antonijević have made first steps to implement Collective Memory-Work and to bring it into discussion in Serbia. Their report on two projects about constructions of gender, and of ethnicity in a post-conflict society is included here as Chapter 16.

Chapter 17 is a text that is based on a recently published book on collaborative research methodologies by Christina Hee Pedersen. She presents her practice together with a collective in Denmark where they used memory-work for a project on longing for feminist activism. She highlights the benefits of working systematically through the process of analysing written memory-scenes.

The next contribution is mirrored from the online journal *Policy and Practice - A Development Education Review*. In Chapter 18 Nita Mishra, Jenny Onyx and Trees McCormick link Collective Memory-Work with development education on the background of an online project on Corona in which the method was used. They situate their reflections in a context of discussions about transformatory pedagogical practices.

The title of Chapter 19 is programmatic for its content. Daisy Pillay, Jennifer Charteris, Adele Nye and Ruth Foulkes are pushing boundaries of what is commonly associated with publications on Collective Memory-Work. Their essay goes back to the context of the same online project on Corona as the contribution in Chapter 18. In this project different working groups took quite distinct routes of engagement, both with the topic and with the method, as can be seen in the result presented here as entangled poetic assemblages.[4]

Doris Allhutter's essay on memory traces in society-technology relations takes discussions of feminist new materialism and queer-feminist studies of affect as points of reference. Her text in Chapter 20 is based on two projects with software developers and computer scientist in which she

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4   More information on the online project "From Corona to Solidarity" can be found on www.collectivememorywork.net

implemented an adaptation of Collective Memory-Work that she calls mind-scripting. She suggests mind-scripting as a means to find ways to articulate techno-scientific objectives and sociotechnical practices in political terms.

In Chapter 21 Karen Falconer Al-Hindi, Pamela Moss, Leslie Kern and Roberta Hawkins propose Collective Memory-Work as a practical way of tending to the feminist academic self. They take up Michel Foucault's work on care of the self and discuss against this background their long term practice of using Collective Biography, an adaptation of Collective Memory-Work initially promoted by Bronwyn Davies and Susanne Gannon (see also Chapter 26).

A re-occurring question asked about possibilities of using Collective Memory-Work is: How can it be done in a group where participants do not have sufficient proficiency in one common language to engage in reflective discussions about self-generated memory-stories? Bianca Fiedler reports in Chapter 22 about a currently running project with refugee women in Germany. These women come from Turkey, Kurdistan, Afghanistan, Syria, or Somalia and they rely on translation and also finding a common language in the process of their project.

Since its beginnings in the 1980s Collective Memory-Work has spread considerably, but mostly within academia. Philip Taucher and Ulrich Lipp in Chapter 23 write from within the area of trade union education. They uniquely use cartoons to depict the potential of adapting Collective Memory-Work as a means to overcome the short-comings of story-telling and make it into a method of critical questioning in adult education.

Keitha-Gail Martin-Kerr and Colleen Clements suggest to bring Collective Memory-Work into a discussion with game theory. In Chapter 24 they sketch an outline of such a discussion and the potential benefits for approaching and adapting Collective Memory-Work in academic projects, but also for positioning the method within the field of (social) science.

Yet another theoretical point of reference is put forward by Jenny Onyx in Chapter 25. She sees strong links between Complexity Theory and Collective Memory-Work, and her arguments clearly point into the direction of exploiting these links for fostering a "doing of science" that takes into account the increasing complexity of social reality.

Chapter 26 is a description of trajectories in applying and revising Collective Biography. Bronwyn Davies and Susanne Gannon provide an insight into the developments of their methodological thoughts and the

related practices over a period of roughly twenty years. This chapter is a fabulous example of the benefits of an ongoing flexibility in adapting practices to ever changing needs of situations, and of continuous scrutinisation of such practices in light of new ideas and conceptual understandings.

  The last contribution in the Reader brings back Frigga Haug, who describes the pathway of developing Collective Memory-Work as a genuinely Marxist-Feminist method in Chapter 27. *Struggling for Coherence* is the translation of an essay that was published in June 2021 in German in *Das Argument 336*. Here, Frigga Haug anchors Collective Memory-Work particularly in Marx' *Theses on Feuerbach* and in Antonio Gramsci's theory of personality and cultural politics, proposing it as a vital generalised praxis for a politics of liberation. And looking ahead she refers to the need for a struggle for a new time regime in which the four dimensions of labour in human life are interwoven in the alternative model of the Four-in-one-perspective, which is …

> … an outline for a more comprehensive definition of justice and which is possible to be formulated by women today. It takes as its point of departure the division of labor and (…) it seeks to alter our societies' time regime in a fundamental way. One could decide to work on each of the four areas of labor individually: wage, reproductive, political, and individual development. This would result in a division of labor in which certain groups would take up one of the four areas in isolation as their individual hallmark. Some, led by their class consciousness, would take up labor politics which would be effective for those employed. Others would search for a perspective of the past, a backwards utopia for mothers which nails us lively women to the cross of history, as the philosopher Ernst Bloch put it. A third group would work towards the development of an elite, which would show (…) what human capabilities can be like. A fourth group would take participatory politics to insignificant areas: they would make television a model institution for the wishes of viewers; they would incorporate the employees into the preparation of Christmas festivities or seek the participation of the population in recycling activities. In all of these cases we

would see that each area, taken as the sole focus point of politics can become downright reactionary. The art of politics lies in the weaving together of all four areas. No one area should be followed without the others, since what is sought is a political constitution of life which, when carried out, would be enjoyed as truly lively, meaningful, engaging, relishing. This is not an immediate goal; it is not capable of being implemented here and now. But it can serve as a compass for our demands, as the basis of our critique, as hope, as a concrete utopia which incorporates all human beings; and in which finally, the development of each and every one may become the precondition for the development of all.[5]

Finally, a brief note on my own behalf. Over the last four years I have been involved in discussing, reading, practising, criticising, promoting, introducing Collective Memory-Work. This has been a very diverse journey with a lot of fun and richness in discussions and applications. But there are also moments of frustration when I see, on the one hand how the method can easily become another toy in games of academic self-indulgence, and on the other hand how a panzer of ignorance can be mobilised to simply dismiss any critical questioning. Both of these aspects are not restricted to either of the sexes, you find them in men and women – and not only related to Collective Memory-Work.

 I hope that the collection in the two volumes of the Reader can contribute to countering both of them: on the one hand making clear that this method is not just a sequence of procedures that can be randomly applied, but rather it relies on a genuine, critical approach, and on the other hand helping to find avenues to incorporate the "struggle for coherence" into everyday life.

And in all of that, rather than establishing a new church with prescribed liturgy and rituals, holy spirit and saints and all the shebang ... keep the method "interdisciplinary, deliberately inchoate and therefore alive" (Frigga Haug).

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5   http://www.friggahaug.inkrit.de/documents/4in1_englisch_fin.pdf

On translations

A term that is used throughout in German originals of essays that were translated for the Reader is *Vergesellschaftung*. I have decided to use the term *societalisation* in the English translations for it. This term depicts an enhanced understanding of the process of becoming (and remaining) a member of a given historically and spatially located society. It relates to a distinction that is made in the German language.

  "The word 'social' has two distinct expressions in German: *sozial* and *gesellschaftlich*. While both words are commonly translated as 'social,' this obscures a significant distinction. By far the majority of animal species can be described as social, including humans. But social is a biological characteristic that is determined by its genetics and is therefore subject to evolution. A species of wasps, for example, is social in a predictable way wherever it is found in the world. Moreover, it is social in probably much the same way now as it was perhaps thousands of years ago. In a broad sense, humans are also social in a way that transcends place and time, but we note as well that this characteristic differs significantly in different time periods and from place to place. We speak of this aspect of sociality as 'culture.' The cultures of people living now are very different from those living centuries ago. Indeed, we know that cultures can change radically within a single lifetime. In short, this aspect of the humanly social has history, and it is this historically determined sociality, or culture, that for humans has largely replaced biology (i.e. genes) as the storehouse of the information needed for us to become truly human. All this difference from the wasp is captured in the German term *Gesellschaftlichkeit*. The most adequate translation of its adjectival form, though seemingly awkward, is 'societal'" (Tolman 2019:18-9).

  Societalization includes a definite surplus when compared with the commonly used notion of socialization. It relates to the process in which the individual actor is *inter- and transacting* with a given socio-historical environment, and by doing so becomes *this particular person* within *these particular circumstances*. Understanding this interwovenness is at the heart of Collective Memory-Work.

  When Erica Carter translated *Female Sexualisation* the use of the term societalisation was not yet promoted in an English speaking context. This situation has changed and by now it seems feasible to also point to the implied conceptual differences, hence rather than speaking of

socialisation use the notion of societalisation, even for translations of earlier material.

One of the essential aspects in text-analyses in Collective Memory-Work concerns that *what is not said* in a text. There are quite a number of different terms used in the literature for depicting this: voids, vacuums, white spots, omissions. They are interchangeable and I have not made an effort to unify the uses in one single term.

Similarly, in most cases the German term *Handlungsfähigkeit* is translated as *capacity for action*. But sometimes it is also depicted as *agency*.

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Chapter 1

VICTIMS OR CULPRITS?
REFLECTIONS ON WOMEN'S BEHAVIOUR

Frigga Haug

My title, Victims or Culprits?, with its interrogatory inflection, may appear somewhat inane. It is an impertinence to suggest that women might be the culprits, and the alternative is such a truism that the answer can be given in a single word and we can all go home and forget the whole matter. Of course, we all know that women are primarily victims. There are abundant proofs of this: women's refuges, the vast numbers of rapes and assaults. Furthermore, women may not practice certain professions. They are denied full access to public life. They are not allowed to enter the high temples of power. They spend their lives in subordinate auxiliary professions. They are barely represented in influential organizations. They are doubly burdened by the chaos of screaming children and housework, while their husbands slump in front of the television, relax with beer and skittles, flirt with their secretaries, have exciting adventures and endlessly clamber up the ladder of success. It cannot be denied that women are the victims. They are mainly the victims of their husbands, but at all events of social relations. Their public standing is low. Then there is advertising. Parts of women's bodies are used extensively to stimulate the purchase of consumer goods. They are also used to excite feelings, for example when you are shown a girl in shorts or just a girl's backside on a motorbike in order to encourage you to buy a particular brand of cigarette. Or again, you see beer sold with the aid of a woman's breasts. The process reaches the point where you find products such as an ashtray shaped like a woman's belly, or nutcrackers modelled on a woman's thighs, and so on.

Women are no better respected at work. Their work and the esteem in which it is held can be summed up in the words of a personnel manager who in other respects was quite amiable and humane. Speaking about working with computers, he remarked, "Once the possible sources of

error have been grasped and the test program is functioning automatically, this is just plain prison work and can be carried out by women." And another observed, "Our women must be able to stand for long periods, be accustomed to hard work and be under forty. They must not be overweight, not like an Italian Mamma." In short, women's work is synonymous with unskilled work. This catalogue, which indicates that women are the victims of men and of social relations, reflects the perspective of most feminist writers as well. Thus far we are all in agreement: women are oppressed. What's to be done? How can they rescue themselves?

To simplify grossly: any such rescue has to overcome two obstacles. First, the oppressed bear the marks of their oppression. As we can see from the remark of the personnel manager, the women in this company had not had the same training as the men working there; they have been denied the same work experience, so their expertise is less. Women today cannot do everything.

Second, women have problems in their struggle for their own emancipation because they do not always really want what they want. This makes extra difficulties for women who want things to change and who want to liberate themselves. They do not only have to fight against obstacles in the world outside, they also experience difficulties with themselves. I have in mind here what is often thought of as problems with relationships, problems which act as a brake on the revolutionary impulse. The expression 'problems with relationships' is really a euphemism for the breakdowns in private relationships which thwart their attempts at liberation. The question that arises in my mind in the first instance is this: What is the origin of the structures, the social relations in which women are oppressed and whose marks they bear?

There is no need to dwell on the answer to this, since it is universally known. Women exist primarily for the family. The family is the basic unit of society and women have the task of ensuring the safety and well-being of the next generation. Women's lives, their existence as wives and mothers, looking after the needs of their husbands, the children's upbringing, and in exchange the need to give up all other goals or aims in life – all this can be summed up as the social function of women. This function is commonly identified with women's nature. We have to admit that this is not wholly unjustified. After all it is women who bear the children. But we are then confronted by the question of whether

women's nature is really so intractable. Are women so unable to control their lives that this nature should fill their lives to the exclusion of all else? So the question I must now put to myself is: What is the relationship between the "domination of nature" which is so highly regarded in our society, and which has reached such an advanced stage, and the nature of women? Or, to put the question of the extent to which women's social role is based on their nature in a brutally over-simplified way: Is it necessary for women to have such a large number of children that it fills and dominates their entire lives?

  The question seems absurd, but a glance at history shows that this has in fact been the position up to a time which seems frighteningly close to the present. I need refer to only two facts which are amply documented in recent research (see Sullerot, for example). Accurate knowledge about birth control is an acquisition of the present century. The possibility of not breast-feeding – an exhausting activity which tied mothers down for two or three years or more – and the development of sterilized baby food did not take place until the end of the nineteenth century. Up to the beginning of the present century, that is, a woman who lived with a man might give birth to as many as nineteen children, of whom barely half would survive. (We may note in passing that there has been much discussion in the women's movement about the capable, independent women working in crafts and trades, such as butchers and other craft-orientated groups. These women, too, had a large number of children and in practice were pregnant for most of the time.) The dramatic increases in population in consequence of such behaviour and in spite of the high rate of infant mortality were modified by the fact that not all women were able to marry and, since some were segregated from society (for example in convents), not all bore children. But if women spend a quarter part of their adult life either pregnant or breastfeeding, it is self-evident that they will scarcely have the time or opportunity to undertake anything else (and we may add that before this century the likelihood of dying in labour was high). In these circumstances it is not unreasonable to assert that such women are at the mercy of their own nature. This subjection of women to their own nature became unnecessary and superfluous with the development of birth control and the possibility of feeding the baby with food other than its mother's milk. Despite this women are still kept in the home as if nothing had changed. The point here is not to campaign against breast-feeding; but if we are to fight for liberation, it is vital to

understand the preconditions of that struggle, and a grasp of the ways in which nature acts as a stumbling-block for women is an essential part of this. Only now, when it has become possible to appropriate our own nature, can breast-feeding become a pleasure, since it does not have to be done year in, year out.

Women's function in the family acts as a brake on their development and leads to their exclusion from the core activities of society. It makes them dependent and is a source of oppression. Beaten down in this fashion, excluded and degraded into instruments for stimulating consumption, women are exiled to hearth and home and, even worse, they are made the objects of public ridicule. Those who laugh at misogynist jokes are all able to agree that women are bad, stupid, vain and useless. Their activities are consistently defined negatively. Whole books could be filled with jokes in which women appear only as viewed through masculine spectacles. Here is a typical one. Fred is asked, "Are you married?" "No, I only look like this because someone has just stolen my car." Jokes of this sort make me turn my back in a fury. But since women are often exposed to such misogynist jokes, they mainly shrug them off without thinking about them further. These, however, are not the only kind of misogynist jokes.

In search for jokes which would reveal the low esteem in which women are generally held, I came to perceive another, rather different layer of meaning. Here, for example, are two jokes which could be interpreted as the usual anti-women jokes. The learner driver says to her driving instructor, "I always go when the lights are red. Green doesn't suit me" – which implies that women have nothing in their heads but their appearance. In another, a Jewish joke, a husband tells his friends, "My wife is really very clean. She is the only person in New York who washes the rubbish before she throws it away."

For all that these jokes are based on an agreement to enjoy a laugh at women's expense, they also have another dimension, one which implies and encourages a more critical stance. For they show that women are damaged by the environment in which they exist and even by their own activities. This applies to the stupid joke with the driving instructor in which the woman drives through red lights; and even holds good for the joke which highlights the absurdity of too much cleaning. My claim is that malicious though these jokes are, they contain a consciousness-raising element. They tell us something about the threats to women implicit in

these spheres, which are after all women's own realm. By exaggerating they make the self-evident problematic, and by this means they point to the need to liberate women from their own sphere of activity.

How should we conceive of such liberation and change? Do they not call for a transformation in women, and is this not what the jokes implicitly require? We should remember that motherhood, marriage and the family represent an extraordinary constraint, dependence and blocking of women's potential. If this is generally accepted, how can women possibly still desire these things? Other options are available; women are not forced into this way of life. To overstate the point I would say that by desiring marriage and motherhood, or at least by secretly longing for them or striving towards them, women become willing accomplices in their own oppression.

Jokes clearly reveal both the wasted lives and also the fact that women are starting to defend themselves – but in the wrong way. This is conveyed, for example, by this very nasty anti-women joke: "Many women are like cigarettes. The poison gradually accumulates in their mouths." Jokes like this show that women are beginning to defend themselves, albeit in a distorted rather than a liberating manner. We must therefore inquire into the source of the oppression which women are so ready to accept. How does it gain possession of women?

To advance the argument I would propose the following hypothesis. All oppression not based on the use of extreme force functions with the connivance of the oppressed.

As we have shown, the assumption that women are pure victims is self-defeating, if we are to consider the possibility of their changing, of their actively bringing about their own emancipation. For it would be quite unclear why liberation should be either possible or desirable and, above all, who would actually carry it out. In short, we would be unable to explain how women, who are victims and objects, could ever become subjects. In other words, the belief that women are merely victims remains silent about how women could ever be transformed from people who are the subject of the actions of others into people who act on their own behalf. Tied hand and foot, they would be forced to remain silent, they would have to stay as they were and would be unable to raise themselves from their degraded situation, as long as we retain the conception of women as victims. If, on the other hand, we proceed from the assumption that people, and therefore women, create themselves, it

will follow that individual women will, of course, find themselves surrounded by ready-made oppressive structures to which they are expected to respond in a subservient way. But these structures only survive as long as they are continually reproduced by those who live within them. This implies in its turn that these structures can be altered by those who reproduce them. This is in fact the only way that we can conceive of changing them. That is to say, the idea that women can change the conditions in which they live is predicated on the assumption that they assist in creating them in the first place. It implies, as we have already observed, that as long as oppression does not rely on external force, it requires the connivance of the oppressed. Every action, therefore, contains an element of acquiescence. Being a victim is also an action, not a destiny.

  How does this acquiescence operate? I propose the following thesis. The process of socialization does not imply, as current socialization theories claim, a straightforward process of moulding, the imposition of certain qualities of character from above. The process of socialization is itself an activity which requires acquiescence at every stage. How does it work? According to critical psychology the development of individuals, that is to say, the growth of children into adults and every other kind of development, is a process involving a constant disruption of people's security of mind. You learn something, acquire a certain level of knowledge and the ability to act. In order to progress further you have to abandon the position you have just reached. This makes you feel insecure or, to put it a different way, you experience conflict. The following stage is an attempt to resolve that conflict and achieve security on a higher plane. In this process, in which development means permanent insecurity and permanent conflict, there are normative social structures or authorities such as the family, parents, and so on, which provide emotional support and help you to advance from one stage to the next.

  The fact that development entails conflict implies also that it contains the possibility of non-development. As long as societies are characterized by oppression and exploitation, the all-round development of individuals in society will be prevented by social relations and by the dominant authorities. In our society the efforts of women to develop advanced skills are particularly affected by their exclusion, self-imposed or not, from the social process of production. By such means as bribery, diversion, repression or compensation they are persuaded to accept more restricted

spheres of activity. Before illustrating this, I should like to formulate a provisional starting point for empirical research. In every study of oppression it is necessary to make a precise analysis of people's activities and attitudes. It is important to pay heed to the hidden compensations, rewards and soft options which they may contain as a sort of temptation deflecting us from alternative possibilities of action. This applies as much to the past as to the analysis of individual socialization processes in our own day.

Let us illustrate these ideas with reference to the family and wage labour. We shall proceed from the assumption that to be a wife and mother and nothing more than that in modern society is itself oppressive, for reasons that are very well known: women are excluded from participation in social decisions and, in addition, are unable to support and nurture themselves; their earnings are not considered their own; they cannot feed and clothe themselves; cannot rent a room of their own without their husbands' consent; and so on, and so on. This leads us to the question of why women `voluntarily' choose such a condition, even though they are often conscious of that oppression and still do not prefer a career. This question can easily be answered.

The disadvantages of being a wife and mother are obvious, but so too are the rewards. These can be quite trivial. For example, the housewife may not immediately perceive her dependence on wage labour. If she has no children as yet, she does not have to get up so early in the morning. She does not need to sell herself; she can dispose of her time as she wishes, or at least it may seem that she can. In many ways, then, she may be choosing a life that has more to offer in the short term over one which is more demanding but more socially integrated and which would bring greater satisfaction in the long term. The difficulty of opting for the more challenging life is increased by the fact that the emotional security of staying at home functions as a kind of temptation, and this is socially supported as the dream of eternal love. Learning has risks, and self-development implies risks as well. The questioning of traditional roles requires emotional support; but at the same time, alternative roles for women are scarcely available and so that emotional support is not forthcoming. Up to now, there has been no opportunity for women to assume positions of power, and therefore no social provision for that assumption of power. Even their participation in wage labour, at least in such a way that they are afforded an opportunity to develop their skills, is

something that society has not planned for. There is therefore virtually no social and emotional support, no opportunity to build up their confidence, no chance of being anything but outsiders. It is hard to be optimistic about women's social development, hard to see how they might lift their heads and stand upright and erect.

If women are to improve their position, then, they need the support of a collective, a culture of their own. For this reason the women's movement assumes an outstanding significance; it becomes a necessity for every step women take away from what is socially expected of them.

Better control of their own nature – through birth control and alternatives to breast-feeding – and the existence of the women's movement are therefore the prerequisites of real emancipation. This also implies that if women are to change themselves, they need individually to dissolve structures of thought and feeling within themselves.

The question I should like to ask is this: What is the point of analysing women's actions from this angle? Or, in other words, what is gained by an analysis which maintains that the oppression of women can only be understood if we accept that women have acquiesced in their oppression at every stage? Of what use is it? My preliminary reply is that if women wish to change matters, and if the women's movement wishes to achieve anything, we must acknowledge that existing personality structures are obstructing the process of change.

Think, for example, of the enormous amount of energy which most women expend on private relationships, energies which they direct against themselves in every – inevitable – crisis. These relationships are, therefore, primarily self-destructive. Furthermore, the need for change is inevitably opposed by an inertia which is already a fixed part of the personality. This inertia reflects the claims of immediate pleasure, of enjoying one's life here and now, instead of the arduous efforts required for change. The private relationships just mentioned are not only self-destructive; they also pose excessive demands on women's feelings. If women desire to bring about change, they must find ways of enabling themselves to act autonomously. This means that they must change their attitudes and this in turn calls on them to change their own personality structure. Why should this be so?

If we proceed from the assumption that women lead oppressed lives and that they have to experience their own oppression day by day, it will follow that their personalities will bear the traces of their lives. If they are

thought to be incapable of action, they will only succeed in reversing this judgement by questioning parts of their own personality. This is true of learning processes in general. As women increase their competence and independence, and as they extend their control to other facets of their lives, they will also encounter areas of experience which they are unable to master. These will include all the areas which protect the dominant structures of society. For women it also includes all sorts of social activities which have been inhibited in the course of individual socialization. The prohibition on women's developing, on `growing up', would drive individual women mad, or make them ill and incapable of action, if they were to become aware at every step that they are prevented from becoming competent. Of course, many people do fall sick or go mad and this applies particularly to women. But those who do not go mad and who continue to function within a restricted sphere of activity are compelled to reinterpret, repress or ignore those activities where their competence is not recognized and not made possible. These reinterpretations then become an integral part of their personality. This may mean that these repressed areas appear not to exist or, if recognized, are regarded as boring. Emotionally they may appear to have no place in a woman's consciousness. But if women wish to change the conditions from which they are suffering, they will have to come to grips with these aspects in their own personality which acquiesce in their own incompetence. In short they will have to change their own feelings. This will result in feelings of insecurity and even crisis, a crisis which women cannot face up to without help. Women will only be able to live through such a crisis if they obtain emotional support.

  This brings me to my conclusion. It may be objected that if that social support is not forthcoming — and it certainly isn't — political groups and organizations, a political collective in short, can fill the breach. It is my contention that this is not enough for women because in all attempts to reorganize their feelings or to abandon old structures for new, usually as the result of a crisis, there is a further as yet unmentioned source of tension which prevents this reorientation. This source of tension is in the men with whom they share these collectives and organizations. After all, men are in part the beneficiaries of the already existing personality structures. They will therefore be unable to provide unprejudiced assistance if, for example, women decide to dispense with the idea that a 'personal relationship' should take priority over all other social activities,

if they attach less importance to the family, if they want to take decisions and ensure their voices are heard. It is the women's movement's historical right — and need — to make these changes possible and to carry them out.

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Chapter 2

INSECURITY IN POLITICS
DIARY OF FEMALE TRADE UNIONISTS

Inge Morisse, Petra Sauerwald,
Heike Wilke, Marianne Zank-Weber

We are nine women aged 27 to 47, Christa, Frigga, Hannelore, Heidi, Heike, Inge, Marianne, Petra and Rose. We are working in different sectors: as secretary and packer in a candy factory, third level lecturer, unemployed economist, librarian, industrial management assistant in a company that produces health and safety equipment, trained paediatric nurse who now works with children with cerebral palsy, assembly line worker and lead worker in a cookie-factory. We are all members of trade unions. Some of us are active in works councils. Some of us have families.

  We frequently have problems and conflicts in works councils and trade unions, and we experience that demands of women are only appended opportunistically to other demands. If we strike back conflicts with male colleagues are ignited which often prevents us from asserting our interests at work.

  Our study group *Trade Unionists Diary* consisted of women only. We could not win male colleagues for this work. To them it was more important to discuss the question of possibilities for acting in works councils and trade unions, e.g. against corporate consultants. Unfortunately they accuse us of driving a cleavage into the anyway small circle of progressive colleagues and thus divert forces. In their eyes we retreat to »coffee klatsch« and are not sufficiently available for the important struggles.

  In writing stories and their revision in discussion with other women we see a chance, to come to grips with difficulties. We are interested to find out where and how the patriarchal structures overlie and impede class struggles, where gender specific narrow-mindedness stands in the way of efforts for change and therefore struggles are nipped in the bud. We don't want to pile up our respective »tales of suffering«. That is of no use

to anyone. It rather leads to resignation, exactly what we wish to counter. We try to write and convey our experiences in a way that makes them insightful for everyone, i.e. theorise them and thus make them useful for ourselves and others.

We also see this as a chance for no longer appearing solely as objects in research reports and analyses by scientists. We rather want to work out our own theory together with our experiences in the workplace. We mostly experience these conflicts relatively unconsciously, i.e. at best we get angry about them and eventually file away what we experienced. While writing, in the attempt to regain clarity of the situation and the conflicts, we assess, select and add and thus become really aware what happened. - After the writing however, which in itself is effort enough already, the difficulty proper starts. With and for the other women we now have to reason about our acts and emotions. We are forced to see from a different perspective than only our own. Through questions asked by the other women and through the discussion further steps arise for working [with the texts]. They help us to draw from the stories general insights for all of us, making our political experiences richer and increasing our capacity for acting politically.

In the collective discussion of our stories again and again we detect that we often over- or underestimate the own personality. We appear as the ones who were already fighting all the time, while the others who are »lacking character« gang up on us without following a particular interest; or we don't appear at all, not acting, and all the others are active fighters. One of the steps of working [with the texts] that we developed little by little into a generalisable approach[1] is to try and find out what the

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1 1. Write about a concrete situation, »stories-scenes«, instead of general assessments;
2. Write stories-scenes that we remember spontaneously even if at first sight they have nothing to do with patriarchal structures;
3. Equip acting persons with interests;
4. Be aware of editing the own person;
5. Conditions under which we live and work have to appear;
6. Present events for evaluation, don't include your own assessment;
7. Avoid, resp. detect clichés;
8. Avoid, resp. detect flowery speech, phrase-mongering, meaning of words;
9. Be aware of vacuums, missing persons;
10. Write in the concrete, i.e. avoid fragmentariness, insinuation and abstraction;

interests of the other persons mentioned in the stories are. It fires back if we don't seriously take the motives of others into account. Often we stand struck in face of actions or reactions by colleagues that we did not expect. The result of discussing one of our stories was that the respective colleague gained clarity about the motivation of the skilled workers (metalworkers) in the works council who didn't see a reason to support the colleagues at the assembly line. That is to say, they are paid better, have longer breaks, are not bound to place as the colleagues at the assembly line, and they get around the factory. That is why they resist to engage in conflict with management if it is not their »own business«. This insight helped the colleague to concentrate her efforts henceforth on the problems within the assembly section where she herself was working, instead of dealing with insults and defamation. When these quarrels erupted in the works council she felt less *personally* attacked. That increased her capacity for acting politically, and by saving her nerves from getting wrecked she could campaign stronger as a member of the works council.

Another step in working with the texts consists of describing the *conditions at work* that we live and work in. All of the women in our course need to have an idea about the respective sector of the others, the structure in the company, the relation between women and men, wage differentials, the hierarchy.

Two further steps in working with the texts appear contradictory at first sight. On the one hand what is asked for is to *present events for evaluation* without one's own assessment. On the other hand there should be included one's own thoughts, emotions and personal assessments instead of generalised, uncommitted ones. What is required here is nothing but the separation of conflict and personal assessment, not presenting them as a mixed bag. In this consecutive separation we

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11. Include the own thoughts, emotions and personal assessments instead of generalised, uncommitted ones;

12. For figures of speech (»lamenting over lack of jobs«) and proverbs (»no pain, no gain«) be aware what standpoint they assume, who speaks in that way to whom?;

13. Language: watch for transfer of meaning of words, or families of words from one to another sphere, e.g. the use of language of love in the sphere of money, and what can be seen in it: reversal in relations.

see a chance to deal more objectively with the conflicts that are described.

  In the step of »*editing the own person*« it is necessary to mention thoughts and emotions that go along with our actions. It is not enough to write »My anger reached the boiling point«, or »I left the works council meeting with mixed feelings«, because the reasons are left unclear for others. We are going to present three stories and try to showcase parts of the results of our work so far. For two of the stories language is particularly taken into focus. The stories are the first versions, and in one case part of the second version with the collectively developed changes.

Sitting between two stools with mixed feelings
Petra on Rosi's story

Many of the so far 13 steps of working with the texts relate to our language. We wanted to find out in what way language influences our daily quarrels at work and in the trade union, resp. how it organises our way of thinking. Often we use words that seem to solve a particular situation and are not questioned any further because everything seems to be clear, although in truth in our heads nothing is clear. We aspire to use words and their meanings in a way that renders the particular situation of the writer fully clear, so that reader and writer gain a comparable impression and everyone can learn from it.

  I found especially impressive the amount of clichés, e.g. »tense relationship«, »awkward silence«, as well as empty phrases that creep into our stories undetected when we write. Up to now I thought I was depicting the problem exceptionally well with such formulas. Yet, it obscured more than it explained. I want to show this with Rosi's story.
  She writes:

> »Today is works council meeting. I am a member only since April 81. We are nine members, 4 ½ feel drawn to the employees, 4 ½ more to the employers. Today I am the only one of our side (employees). Therefore three substitute members are present, all of them come from the metal workshop. I go to the meeting with mixed feelings, and insecure in parts because I don't have the laws so much in my head yet. I am welcomed overly friendly. How am I, my

hair is always so well shaped, I am always so good humoured. I smile friendly and a bit embarrassed, but now I am on alert. We take our seats and it proceeds well up to the agenda item »Questions and Announcements«. A male colleague requests to speak and immediately starts a rant, the minutes of meetings would be unsigned, and he relates that to the missing female colleague. As if it was fixed in advance, the substitute member who was in the works council in the past but wasn't re-elected, attacks our best female colleague. Reports were supposedly missing when works council work was to be done. Neither had she sent an apology to the chairperson that she was sick, and so on. Until then I kept calm, but due to the attack on my colleague, who really takes care of everything, I requested to speak. I said, he should leave the colleague alone, because first of all she wasn't present to defend herself and secondly I had already excused her on Monday, the first day she was sick, at 7 a.m., as would have to be in the minutes also. The chairperson confirms this and comes around: all of this could be discussed when all regular members are back. I am really surprised about this, he looks at me cunningly while he speaks. The meeting is over. I immediately ring the sick colleague and tell her the whole story. I am still quite agitated and ponder, was it that the colleagues in the works council simply wanted to check me out in the meeting, which side I would be on. I felt like sitting between two stools.«

So, Rosi went into the meeting with »mixed feelings« and at the end she felt as if she was »sitting between two stools«. These are both set phrases that are used in this form. They evoke in the listener specific combinations of thoughts that we can empathise with. We have the impression to exactly understand. But what do Rosi's mixed feelings, or her feeling of sitting between two chairs consist of?

  In the discussion we found out: The male colleagues are extremely nice to her. They even want to visit her during holidays. They find she bakes wonderful cakes and compliment her for her hairstyle. She does not know how to act. On the one hand she thinks they are nice. On the other hand she mistrusts the cajoling talk because there is also her female colleague

who warns her about the colleagues' non-stop compliment-spitting. But she cannot connect these warnings with her own experiences. She constantly feels to do injustice to one of the sides. Based on Petra's negative assessment of the colleagues she obtains an enemy image and she wishes the respective people should look like enemies so that she can recognise them instantly. After all, nobody rejects her, but both of the rival groups in the works council court her so that their politics can be strengthened and enforced due to voting majority. Hence she is not sitting between two chairs, she rather sits *on two* stools. The expression »between two stools« would be fitting if both groups would reject her. This, for instance, was a cautionary feedback that I received from a colleague when after a warning strike I had difficulties simultaneously in the works council, with the trade union and with management. It could have led to me having no back-up at all any more. Hence Rosi is not void of a place or falling on the bare ground. She is torn because she cannot yet confidently represent a standpoint. If we use such clichés or »linguistic emotional corsets«, and even think in such corsets, the ways we do politics in the works council remains similarly ambiguous.

Rosi's story also shows how men in the works council do politics by, e.g. using the fact that Rosi is a woman. They don't try to convince her by use of arguments, rather they cajole her with comments about the hairstyle, her art of baking and so on. This adds to Rosi's insecurity on top of her (in her opinion) insufficient knowledge of legal stipulations. It prevents her from taking a stance in opposition to them.

Other ways of acting that are also prevalent in further stories are the avoidance of conflict, conformity, relinquishing the own position for a momentary advantage, an opportunism that shows up in the following passage of my own story:

> »In a conversation between management, the chairperson of the works council Hans and his deputy Petra, that in fact should be about the purchase of new chairs for the women at the assembly line, the manager smartly steers the conversation towards the joint holiday destination that he shares with the works council chairperson. The chairs[2], so

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2   The English translation adds a play on words due to the use of 'chair' for 'chairperson' in common parlance. In German the two words are not in the same way exchangable (chairperson - Vorsitzende/r; chair - Stuhl).

important for the women, are already a side-topic. It was much more important that the manager intimated to the chairperson that at the end of the day they had similar interests, pulled the same strings. He passes on information that is supposedly not meant for others, i.e. not for the other members of the works council, but only and in total confidentiality shared with the chairperson. (Says the manager: 'I tell only you as between us two priest's daughters.') For Petra the purchase of the chairs is still a burning issue because she herself feels every day how the legs start hurting and how they swell from the long periods of standing. After a while she reluctantly interrupts the chit-chat of the other two who now patronisingly pay attention to 'Misses S.'. Shrunk to a mere bagatelle in the face of so much accord between the two men the problem remains unsolved. The high cost blows the mind of the men so that they soon bid farewell.«

Making contacts - but how?
Inge on Heike's story

»For two years he has worked successfully as shop steward for the colleagues at the city libraries in Wedding[3]. As an employee at the library he is paid badly. During his trade union work he could make plenty of contacts that are of help for his application for a better position at the city administration. The works council supports him. In May 1980 he starts his new position in the administration. His position as shop steward for the libraries needs to be filled new.
There are some 70 employees working at the libraries in Wedding, mostly women. 25 of the colleagues are organised in the trade union ÖTV, the majority are librarians. Only a few are members of the DAG[4] who represents conservative positions.

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3   Wedding is a part of Berlin.
4   ÖTV and DAG were two different trade unions. Members of DAG were mostly better paid employees in secure positions up to middle management.

Nobody is properly prepared for the departure of the shop steward. In effect nobody wants to do the work because expectations of colleagues are high, the work load immense, the constant criticism disheartening. But everyone knows how important it is.

Over the last two years Heike has worked intensively together with the shop steward. She is a librarian and has one of the three much desired departmental management positions, hence she is also in a supervisory role. Until a year ago she was responsible for extension and development of collections in the district. But due to increasing conceptual and political controversies with the head of the department and the municipal councillor for popular education[5] – both men who support authoritarian management structures and love to gawk at women in mini-skirts – she was relocated to the position of manager of one of the branches. Heike fought against it without success.

The experience that it is hopeless to fight as a lone warrior for your own, or for others' interests made her join the ÖTV in 1978. The shop steward decisively influenced this step. She rejects his reformist social-democratic positions, but she had to acknowledge that as a trade unionist he quite consistently represented the interests of the colleagues. Together they succeeded to force the department's management to withdraw a regulation that ordered all employees in the school libraries to take their holidays during school holidays in the summer. Heike wants to continue this work. She has a more tense relationship to the female colleagues. Heike's candidature for the shop steward position is met by sullen relief. At a joint meeting other colleagues have refused to go for the post because of lacking time; Heike was not even asked. She simply put her name forward. Now she is disappointed. Why are the others not grateful, at most they are relieved that they don't need to search any longer? Aggrieved she speaks with her friend Barbara about the situation.

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5   Volksbildungsstadtrat

> At the election meeting Heike withdraws her candidature
> and states as reason, among other things the lack of trusting
> relationships between herself and the female colleagues.
> Everyone stares to the ground or past her - nearly everyone
> -, only one older female employee supports Heike's
> candidature. Awkward silence, that is broken quickly when a
> female colleague proposes there should be 3 shop stewards
> elected of whom one shall take on the formal function. Three
> librarians (two women, one man) are elected, friendly and
> popular colleagues who are not in a management position.«

What is special about this story are the problems that emerge amongst
female staff if the boss is a woman and not as usual a man. That leads to
»tense relationships« and »awkward silence« in certain situations. Both
of these are clichés in need of interpretation.

  Nearly throughout Heike uses a male coined, rhetorical language that
does not go down well with the women because she does not clearly put
forward her standpoint and her interests. For instance, »he could make
plenty of contacts that are of help for his application for a better
position«; such a sentence would be unthinkable for the description of a
woman. Everyone would think of something quite different, suggestive.
Other examples are »the DAG who represents conservative positions«,
the »authoritarian management structures« of the heads of department
with whom she has »conceptual and political controversies«. Then also
the colleague who may be »consistent as trade unionist« but whose
»reformist social-democratic positions« she rejects. These are set phrases
that organise the thinking of the listeners in a certain manner, because
they have always already been used in this fixed form. But they don't
reveal the real backgrounds. When they are used everyone understands
something different. It is a language that reminds us of the language of
male officials in parties and trade unions in whose meetings women are
hardly ever present, or if they are they are knitting because of boredom.

  For every problem of her female colleagues Heike straight away has a
»reasonable solution«. The women however don't want to tackle their
problems head-on. They prefer only talking about them. Why is that the
case? What resistances have the women to overcome? And: is not a
supervisory role as well as a solely rational argumentation something that
is accepted amongst men, but not amongst women?

What we need is a new formula for politics for women because otherwise we run the risk to act like men and do politics in the abstract instead of representing the interests of women. But for this the women, as well as all acting persons in the stories need to be equipped with interests, i.e. if we don't simply want to depict their behaviour as indifferent and gossipy we need to find the real motivation for their acting or non-acting. In the second, overhauled version Heike describes the »tense relationship« with her female colleagues in more detail:

> »She did not have a friendly relationship with her female colleagues. They didn't trust her due to the supervisory role. In topical exchanges she mostly appears superior and secure, nearly every time she has an idea and the others build up something like a defiant front of refusal to joint thinking: 'Discussing with you is hopeless. You always know better!' In some rare conversations it becomes clear that the others are tired of being often the inferior ones, 'being driven into a corner', as they express it. Obviously Heike does not give them breathing space for their own ideas.«

This could be an entry-point for doing politics.

Smiling about small statements?
Heike on Marianne's story

> "One day there was a naked, busty, blonde BZ-beauty[6] pinned to our works council notice board. A female colleague with whom I am working together more closely pulled it down on the spot and came running to me. At first I still smiled, but that stopped after having a closer look because under the BZ-picture was written in black ink: *Greetings from Marianne!*
> The team I am working in (2 physiotherapists, 1 occupational therapist, 3 childcare workers, 1 social worker) was outraged over this rather stupid idea. The only one's we would have expected to do this were the taxi-drivers who brought the

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6   BZ is a tabloid paper, the BZ-beauty refers to a 'page 3' model.

children to the day-care centre, or our caretaker. Nearly everyone in our workplace is female besides some 'job-related' male colleagues who we thought are not capable of such an act, because in cooperation at work and in the trade union they always presented as extremely progressive men. To our surprise we found out that one of the oh-so progressive men had pinned the sex-photo onto the notice board. This is a colleague who never misses an opportunity to make his progressive opinions heard amongst colleagues, albeit that in fact he cuts off less eloquent others from speaking in an ungentle manner. When we asked this colleague whether it was him who put the photograph onto the notice board he denied repeatedly.

Later we were even more surprised when we heard that our psychologist and our day-care manager were not fully uninvolved in this 'joke'. All these men are active trade unionists. We considered ways to confront them. First, we thought of a house-meeting, but we dismissed the idea soon again as we were afraid that in such a meeting the whole story would merely trigger belittling smiles and 'our' men would come out as little heroes. In our own team we then spoke only with the eloquent R. He reassured us that all was done spontaneously and it was not meant to be a personal attack on me. But these affirmations cannot convince me. I suspect that the ambiguous relationship of R. to me was the trigger for the photo-action that secretly was indeed meant to make me look silly. From the past he new me merely for the small statements that I made from time to time in meetings. A lot changed when I joined the ÖTV. I went to the meetings of the workplace branch (R. gave me a pat on the back) and I attended training courses. Gradually R. could also find use for me. When I joined the works council I made another leap forwards and I was well informed about the inner happenings at work; suddenly I could join the conversations.   But obviously that also made me a competitor for R. By now it is the case that R. does generally not respond to my contributions in discussions, interrupts me at will, or stops me from talking by referring to the

agenda. As much as I was self-assured at the beginning of my work in the works council, I know become more and more insecure due to his uncooperative behaviour. Therefore I have difficulties not to take the photo-action as a part of R's tactics to diminish my reputation amongst colleagues.«

This is only a part of Marianne's story. Central in it are humiliation and self-humiliation. We are shocked how deeply patriarchal structures that in our own experience we often do not even recognise in all their poignancy contribute to damaging of female positions in struggles. At first the damage done by male forms of dominance and politics in Marianne's story–particularly drastic due to sexual behaviour–is bigger than the ability to fight. We discover that we touch on problems of capacity for action as such. By way of two steps of working with the texts–editing the own person and including one's own thoughts and emotions–we ask to which sector of defamation the pinning of the BZ-photo to the notice board belongs. We want to find out why R. put it up in the first place and why Marianne is especially hurt by it. She spontaneously explains that »blonde and dumb« as a connected pattern of thought belong to the area of attempts of defamation by men. We suggest that she writes down exactly what she thought when she discovered the photo.

We discuss the effect of such an act on us: Petra asserts that she *always* feels hurt when she sees such photos, because they are the expression of men's desire to put women into the »appropriate« place as sexual object. This has to affect women who are socially and politically active especially strong. In the concrete case of Marianne's story she thinks, R. settles scores with her and her works council engagement. In his helplessness he pre-emptively »knocks out« Marianne before any further dispute, so that due to her increasing insecurity he can easier deal with her. We suggest for such a situation to test hitting back on the same level, probably even exaggerated with a photomontage showing R's head mounted onto a body-builders body with either a miniature or a gigantic prick.

My own thoughts on the areas of language and forms of politics as they appear in Marianne's story are these:

1. As a matter of course she does not consider »progressive« men would resort to pinning-up pictures of bare-breasted women to destroy Marianne's growing self-confidence. But she does not define this

»progressiveness« any further. What becomes clear is only that R. is eloquent and thus superior in comparison to her.

2. In the context of men and their role as »little heroes« I recognised that Marianne refers to her own »small statements«. The »little heroes« are still grandiose enough; the »small statements« are reduced by the word »small« to something merely insignificant. Only when women learn to approach the »greatness« of men eloquently and knowledgeable they will be accepted by them. Whereby the freshly obtained confidence proves too fragile to withstand sexist humiliation.

3. Marianne uses the word smiling on three[7] occasions. First she smiles about the photo, then she fears belittling smiles. It struck me that children *and* women are belittled, their actions not taken serious. When will we women take ourselves serious enough for no longer writing about ourselves in this way?

Our stories show how deeply patriarchal structures that we often only detected in parts determine our lives, restrain our own activities and obstruct us in gaining a self-assured position. In searching for different praxes we discover the strength that lies in the collective work of women. Not because that there are no conflicts, but because working through our experiences gradually frees us from the isolation and the finality of our socialisation. A support for the analysis of our own positions are the steps for working [with our written stories] that we developed in the course of one year. They hand us criteria for going beyond simply looking at our actions and identifying restraints but also fight against them.

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7   The text by Marianne is presented only as an excerpt in the essay.

Chapter 3

WHY WE INTRODUCE A PART ON EXPERIENCE IN WOMEN'S FOUNDATIONAL STUDIES[1]

Projekt Frauengrundstudium

In women's seminars in the past, irrespective of them being organised by ourselves or us being participants in them, it was obvious: One group of the women came with the idea that the seminar would eventually be the place in the university where they could bring in their personal experiences. Dealing with theory they found too aloof; it had nothing to do with them and therefore they strictly rejected it. They wanted to feel good and create a personal climate. In their opinion this was not possible by a joint effort of appropriating theory. The other group of the women however wanted to deal with theory only. They saw experiences as redundant. The conflict between the two positions, either directly learning from personal experience or learning only from theory, made working conditions quite difficult for everyone. Moreover, not all women were interested in the experiences of the others. The result: great dissatisfaction on the side of all participants and a shrinking of numbers in the seminar to only half of the women.

Unfortunately at largely this point we had stopped questioning and clarifying what significance our personal experiences have, what and in what form they can contribute to our analysis of contexts, connections and interrelations, and therefore bring to the fore possibilities for change. We suggest to address the significance and usefulness of experiences at the beginning of the seminar so that these problems don't impede on it for weeks. The paper presented here may be used to find some orientation in this regard.

Why do we use a text on role play? In role play the world of everyday experience is displayed. We thought that excerpts from Frigga Haug's

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1   Translator's note: In this abridged section numbering has not been applied as in the original document. Instead the sections are separated by sub-headings only to suit the content presented.

critique of role play (1977) are helpful for the discussion of the usefulness of everyday experiences for gaining knowledge. Role play as well as the narration of personal experiences are praxes of dealing with social experiences. For clarification in our discussion we defined the terms experience, knowledge, theory and praxis.

Experience is the process of experiencing itself.

Knowledge means comprehending the construction, structure, and the becoming.

Theory builds on experience, but it is not the same as experience; it is its generalisation and processing.

Praxis is the acting of humans.

Theses for discussion:

> "To begin with, employing reality without any mediation for purposes of learning presumes that from the parts in which reality presents itself one could learn unrestrained already. It is thus presupposed that the world gives sufficient information about itself by sheer appearance in a manner that strategies of coping with life could result from the appropriation of the surface appearance, the phenomenology. It is presupposed that the actions of humans could be understood according to their outside appearance and that experience leads to knowledge. Life itself wherever it expresses itself and in whatever restricted way, appears as if it was the best of sources for teaching." (Haug 1977: 170f.)

> "One will indeed not learn without life and experience, but that does not mean at all that one necessarily has to learn from life. History, but also everyday experience, shows en masse how stubbornly humans resist learning from their own experience. And yet reality presents itself to them constantly. But neither the »view from close-up nor from afar render the eye-witness an expert« (Brecht 1963: 150). In a commodity producing society where the necessity to be saleable permeates nearly every area of life, one has to expect that neither material artefacts nor the relationships

nor the modes of behaviour of humans express themselves in the manner as they really are. To get to know the essential aspects requires more than the surface." (ibid.: 171)

"Altogether it can be said that the attempt to appropriate reality in [role] play amounts to an avoidance of a bad reality whose rules are meant to stay hidden. The result remains contradictory: just as autonomy, freedom, change, satisfaction actualised by the play can stay in the mind, it is also possible that the fiction of having lived through all of this already can prevent real changes and engagement in real life. Illusion protects against knowledge! Brecht points out that this quid pro quo, the desire to evade reality and instead indulge in the realm of dreams, is a widespread attitude." (ibid.: 178)

Sidenote: We are of the opinion that experience, counter to general assumption, is often far apart from reality. Based on this quote we discussed elements of escaping behaviour as expressed, e.g. in the desire of the female students to simply feel good in women's seminars.

"... the significance of the individual experience would have to be made clear, both for its relation to scientific recognition of world and for the mode in which a progressive pedagogy needs to take it as starting point. In the critique of the concept of role play it became obvious already that the individual experiences alone cannot be sufficient to understand the world and the acting in relation to it. And yet it is also clear that these experiences cannot not be part of understanding the world. Experiences of individuals can be thus that they don't lead to learning ... that thinking about them leads no further. Therefore it is recommended not to transform everyday experiences of individuals straight into Lehrstücke, as was done in the praxis of consciousness-raising groups. But it is not the mundane of the everyday experience that is meant to be avoided. In fact, the chosen pieces of reality should be quite mundane because they need to be intelligible for everyone, and possibly found in

everyone's experience. To this effect they tie in with the experiences of the individuals. They are the touchstone against which the presented modes of behaviour can be corrected, and they provide the material on which the individual learns to construct the different parts anew. The individual experiences are not only a piece of general human praxis and for that reason instructive, they are at the same time always already the common-place interpretation of this praxis, which is the reason why the recount of experience is not suitable as a spontaneous act of comprehension." (ibid.: 234/235)

We see that on the one hand we do not have to learn anything at all from experience, and on the other hand it is the absolute condition for gaining knowledge.

"After all, experiences are are not simply true replicas and as such a possible basis for processes of gaining knowledge. In experiences the structures of this society are rather already engrained - thus [they include] undemocratic structures as far as society is undemocratic. The unquestioned adoption of experiences, as is done in most role play, and as it happens in mere narration and listening to experiences is simply a duplication of the existing, hence a solidification of the given structures. The modes of behaviour that were learned as adaptation and adjustment are once more confirmed. In this way norms can be even better internalised by way of being active." (Haug, 1980)

Comprehension is impossible on basis of experience only because contradiction as such, e.g. cannot be lived out. In fact, to find orientation–or to be able to live at all–contradiction in the immediate life is resolved to one side, reframed, put to compromise, repressed etc. Therefore we cannot directly gain knowledge from our own experience. If we were to live out contradiction in reality it would tear us apart, as if we were to go to the right and the left at the same time.

- To be useful for us experiences need to be re-organised, and their essence being brought to the fore.

- They only help us advance if we lead them into crisis, i. e. we have to put experience against experience to come upon contradiction, because one experience on its own cannot comprise contradiction.
- We need to work with experience in the collective.
- By taking our personal social experiences as subject matter for research, using them as basis for gaining knowledge we are increasingly able to comprehend our habits and at the same time develop alternative possibilities for action.
- Experiences are important for women's studies.

Memories of mother's day - social experiences I

Simply recounting an experiences does not bring us any further, and it is not certain that what was individually experienced will be of interest for everyone. Yet experiences are–as explained above–the only source for gaining knowledge and gaining knowledge always aims back at our own praxis. How then to use the experiences of all women in a collective?

So far we assumed that each one knows from experience what she could tell the others. From the various experiences, some similar and thus generalisable, some contradictory and thus offering routes for further investigation, we might come to important insights; therefore the process of gaining knowledge would consist of aggregation, comparison and reciprocal affirmation. Now something else is to be done. What the individuals in their development lived as shared experiences is encrypted, buried, hidden, covered up and became the sediment of specific personality structures. The social experience itself is an area of research of enormous dimension. It can only be tackled collectively and by relentless continuous questioning. If we look at our emotions, attitudes, prejudices, inhibitions, affections as themselves historically developing, produced by us in lived experiences, then we cannot expect that even one of those experiences that are sunk into the foundations of our personality can be truly known and simply narrated by us.

In this regard the process of gaining knowledge of the social structures, the general conditions of socialisation, the mundane mechanisms is identical to researching the glue that we used to construct our personalities. We are researching ourselves in order to research social praxis and we are our own research subject matter with the aim to make

visible the universal in the individual praxes, so as to create the possibility for change for us–retrospectively–and for everyone.

To approach our own history in this way by working with experiences we need to ask simple, or apparently simple questions and attempt to answer them both collectively and individually. On first sight questions asked of experiences are mostly scary. They force upon us to make a choice. Maybe we find unimportant what is asked for; here we need to be suspicious already: what is perceived as irrelevant can be pushed aside as annoying while it is in reality the source of particularly stiffened structures. A similar case can be where we do "not want to be reminded", because we feel it being embarrassing or otherwise unpleasant. Or we find specific questions stupid because we cannot remember anything instantly.

At this point it may be possible to formulate three theses, not yet securely supported but surely useful for advancing our work:

1. There are actually no questions asked of our past and our childhood that, if only we make the effort of remembering, would not bring to light remarkably much news, a whole treasure of unknown social praxis to be discovered.

2. Even if someone is of the opinion she cannot remember anything, once she tries to unearth the past, in the process of compilation, narrating and writing she will always bring to light new deeds and emotions, impressions and opinions that are surprising to herself. This is like a ball of yarn where we need to find the beginning–which can be strenuous–and then a thread can be unravelled that becomes longer and longer.

3. The bigger the resistance against a specific question that we decide to work with, the more likely it is that we dig particularly close to the solidified walls of our personality. The latter is what we want to research.

Let us take the example of <u>mother's day</u>. Of course no-one of us can be bothered with it; at best we grant out mothers a phone call or a bunch of flowers. We are emancipated. At the end of the day it was the Nazis who institutionalised mother's day–for reasons well know to us, ideology of motherhood, fresh blood for the army and loads of Arian people for their imperialist conquest. But what does that mean: ideology of motherhood? How does it operate? Which experiences are generated by it, and which precede it? How at all did the fascists manage to incite such a fixation with motherhood, and what exactly is the meaning of fixation here? And

what are the effects up until today? What emotions are mobilised by the word mother?

A word with cultic connotations long before the Nazis made mother's day sacrosanct. How were they able to do that anyway, if there were not the respective emotions already existing on which to build? And is mother's day eventually nothing but a specific form of a more general emotion? Or, a specific way of organising emotions? In our own case, it seems that it would not be too easy to quickly refasten mother's day societally and take a universal endorsement for granted. But what could happen to us instead, based on the development of our emotions? What are our emotions triggered by "mother's day?" Let us brush away the spontaneous enlightened opinion–without losing is completely, of course–and try to interrogate the emotions that have never been attended to again.

How did we spend mother's day with our mothers?

What can we remember?

What emotions did we have and what did we do?

The stories that we write are meant to help us
- questioning our shallow enlightened attitudes
- to prepare the ground for digging out our emotional compliance with particular aspects of societal praxis that guarantee the subordination of women, or their remaining in subordination
- to obtain initial answers on the modes of efficacy of societal institutional praxes that contribute to women's subordination, answers which go beyond a surface level of determining functions; and to include the women who live these social praxes.

If we go back to the days of our childhood, we will find that mother's day was in fact not at all irrelevant in our actions, emotions and eventually our memories too. – Memories thus need to also be painstakingly retrieved.

One result of the memories written down by every woman will most likely be the discovery of the powerful influence on the development of our emotions by an institution that we today deem obsolete. At the same time we may find a couple of "positive feelings", if we resist the temptation to reframe our memories retrospectively in enlightened

fashion – for instance that we had always only sceptically "joined in." These "positive feelings" are surely part of the steadfast elements that make the organisation of societal endorsement possible in the first place.

To predict any further what else could be learned, discovered, excavated from the stories of memories of mother's day doesn't make sense. If we knew already we would not need to start searching. If we truly knew our childhood we could work and fight better. What all we can get from the story, what we can find out, that is only the result of our study. In addition to results as mentioned already, as far as there is time, imagination and motivation enough, it is of course possible to use the collected stories, or the most relevant sections of the nicest memories to produce something useful for many, e.g. a street theatre play, or a story for a newspaper, or a research essay on the effects of fascism until today with the example of mother's day etc.

Political Economy

If it is correct, as we have shown with the example of mother's day, that even our most private experiences have to be excavated in strenuous memory-work by ourselves, then we need to consider which tools to use for doing this work.

The first question concerns the prerequisites and conditions for our experiences. We are not isolated beings who carry the conditions for their development in themselves. We are born into specific structures of societal life that are in existence already and independently of us. We become what we are by growing into these structures. To comprehend our becoming we need to study these structures.

In their household task as mothers in a family women take part in constructing these structures by taking care of, and educating the offspring needed by society, and by providing care for the men as compensation for their coping with the struggles in the "hostile life." This "hostile life", production for society, is organised in hostile antagonism. Even those who are not taking part in the production process are yet forged by it. Not only are all provisions and food that is used at home produced in places where labour is sold for wages; not only are these provisions and food available only for money; humans regulate the relations between themselves, including the one between the sexes, on basis of those forms in which everything is only available for money.

The exclusion of women from societal production excludes them at the same time from developments and struggles in which the wage labourers improve the means of production and acquire new skills in handling them, and in which they fight for their social security as well as for participation in decision making.

We can only comprehend the way our experiences are influenced by this particular exclusion from societal production if we study both what we are excluded from and how this exclusion is organised. It also affects the millions of women who carry out the simplest tasks and services, thus excluded from the advancement of the means of production, in part time or only temporary work and who do not make time for social struggles because of their "double role."

The most advanced theory that explains the origins and the general laws of this kind of societal production is the theory by Karl Marx (The Capital). Appropriating it takes a lot of effort. All short-cut forms are makeshift solutions containing the danger of dogmatic learning. (For instance, one learns that productive labour in capitalism is only what brings profit to the capitalist, although quite obviously the making of the soup in your own kitchen is also productive. It would be important to learn instead, <u>how</u> particular production relations, hence societal relations are <u>produced</u> between the wage labourers and the owners of the means of production.)

For Women's Foundational Studies we recommend to use different texts and pick them carefully along the lines of the questions in the seminar. Besides the danger of dogmatism we also recognised a danger of "dissociation", i. e. a detached way of studying societal structures. What applies for all appropriation of theory applies all the more for the basic theories: We don't need them for their own sake, we rather need them as a means to gain knowledge of our situation, as a tool for our social emancipation. We recommend specifically the appropriation of the following problem areas:

- Struggle for paid household labour (What is household labour? What is labour? What are wages?)
- History of labour and division of labour (What work was done by women in the past? Why did they stay at home? How did their concrete tasks and their social position change?)

- Concepts of political economy and description of the most important general laws of capitalism.

Theory of ideology

The short course on political economy informs us about specific forms, structures and contradictions in which the production of the socially necessary goods is organised: the advancements of societal production and the private interest of the owners of the means of production whose self-interest pushes these advancements on, the forms of competition and exploitation connected with it, the struggles therein and their prospects.

If we study this area as the societal framework also for the life of the women, albeit that they are often only part of those movements and struggles indirectly and in mediated ways, important questions remain open: what is the immediate field of action granted to them, what drives them onto this field and what leaves them so persistently stuck in it.

The institutionalised celebration of the mother and motherliness that was mentioned already refers to a context which to research promises answers on these questions specifically for us women. Let us just think about what all needs to come together for something like mother's day to be possible at all. (Leaving aside for the moment that it was introduced in a fascist state).

A society whose members are as hostile to each other as experienced day-in day-out under capitalism necessarily relies on keeping at least its offspring for some time apart from the struggle for survival, knowing them to be protected and cared for. That this is done in the family and–central to it–by the mothers is a specific form of organisation of a societal necessity. Fulfilling this task is relegated to the private household instead of society itself providing the necessary protection and emotional security that is needed by its individual members.

Instead of sharing responsibility for this function amongst all members of society the task is delegated solely to the women. Why do women willingly take on this task? At the end of the day it means a one-sided reduction of their possibilities to be active in society. Looking at the forms in which the class society secures its continuous existence one finds an element of an explanation: It is the task of the state to guarantee the coherence between the hostile individuals and groups. It is still an

essential aspect of state's policy to nurture and strengthen such capacities, attitudes and emotions in women that societal organisation as a whole denies its members. Loving care, willingness to sacrifice, motherliness are values whose state sanctioned homage on mother's day is the ideological climax of extensive policies protecting families and mothers. What spontaneously seems to be the most intimate, personal, private area of the women in fact has most public traits, even formed by the state; women's love of men and children, men's and children's love of the woman and mother is advocated and rewarded from above.

At the same time women on their own accord claim to provide a protective refuge against the hostile environment. They organise their lives accordingly and fight for the experience of happiness at home where one can escape the harshness of the struggles outside.

If then we don't want to defend as supposedly most natural and genuine needs what might in fact be top-down infiltrated norms internalised by us, if we want to learn to distinguish between state-formed distorted and human, i.e. truly societal catering for needs, we need to study in more detail how our individual wishes and desires connect to societal requirements and state's regulation of behaviour and how they construct a mutually stabilising correlation.

Critical Psychology

Aim of Women's Foundational Studies is our emancipation. We want to gain spaces and capacities for action, want to organise our self-development. In all their stability the resistances that we face in the economic power relations and in form of ideological heteronomous societalisation are not just discouraging for us. They also provide us with the ongoing convincingly explanation that our situation in fact cannot be any different to what it is. Down to our everyday use of language, we take the circumstances as an excuse. We say: "That's just the way it is" when we speak of our repression and of what is not known, felt and lived.

We say: "I was never allowed to help repairing the car" but not "I did not help repairing the car", we say "I was not asked to write an essay" but not "I never asked myself to do it." If we try to emancipate ourselves from dependencies we don't speak of our deeds and the difficulties that we overcame, instead we say "it was made possible to break free" or something alike. To solely look at the circumstance, the powerful, the

proprietors, the fathers and men as guilty of our oppression leads to us even having to <u>become</u> emancipated innocently.

In our experiences so far and even in writing this proposal for Women's Foundational Studies such excuses and retractions "haunt us". At one point we state "we had the opportunity to invite representatives", in spite of the fact that we organised this opportunity (as reality) ourselves. We can only recommend to all women for their self-learning to take this "self" extraordinarily important, not only in such emancipatory words like "self-determination" but also when we speak of those responsible for the oppression, as in "self-inflicted", "self-sacrifice", "self-responsibility" etc.

With the theory that brought us to this knowledge it is even worse than with Marx's "Capital": Not only are the volumes of "Critical Psychology" grown to a couple of thousands of pages, their appropriation also requires the dismantling of an entanglement of words and presentations for making the practical research on the nature of humans fruitful for ourselves. [However . . .] the result of such labour of appropriation can deliver yardsticks for what makes humans human when compared to animals (e.g. higher animal species also develop social behaviour) and what is humanly possible. We can also get ideas of the temptations and conceptions that women use to make themselves avoiding life by avoiding conflicts.

Education for femininity

We realised that women are ascribed the social function to become housewives and mothers, to settle for making the home nicer, and lovingly taking care of the well-being of husband and children. Being restricted to functions within the family means abstinence from professional life, economic independence, a life for themselves. Traits like love, motherliness, care, selflessness are not innate. Women acquire them in the course of their lives.

We think that humanness includes more than these traits, namely the striving for autonomy, active participation in societal life. To comprehend why women act as they do we have to examine how they became as they are, i.e. how they societalise themselves individually. The feminist attempts to research female socialisation, some of which we have examined, could not overcome the deficits of bourgeois socialisation theories. Women are depicted solely as victims whose identity has been

"robbed", they were always already subjected to an "occupational ban", from early age on their "abilities are choked off" etc. (see: Frauenjahrbuch 1976: 71). In contrast to the man's role the "role of women and girls" holds only disadvantages, it is supposed to be objectively and subjectively of less value. The girls' willpower thus would be systematically crushed. Based on such assumptions it is impossible to answer the question how it should be possible for women to resist at all, to actively intervene.

We reckon the socialisation theory in the first volume of *Frauenformen* (1980) is important because it makes clear that women are not only forged by social structures, rather they are at the same time acting subjects who are in a position to change the conditions of life by active interventions. We are of the opinion that this theory integrates existing explanations of socialisation, advances and completes them, and that it shows possibilities for change for women.

For the appropriation of texts we think it makes sense to develop questions that shall serve as guidance for a focussed engagement with socialisation theories. Such question could be:

- How do women acquire typically female traits?
- Where and how are women impeded in their development?
- Where and how do women impede their development themselves?
- How do women resist, and what are the consequences?
- Where do women assent?
- Do the theories show possibilities how women can change themselves?

At this point it can be quite beneficial for women who study sociology or psychology if they actually engage with theories of learning and socialisation.

Working with the part on socialisation in *Frauenformen* is meant to allow insight into the universal and generalisable of female socialisation. If we understand socialisation to be a process of individual societalisation in which the social structures are processed, it is not enough to simply <u>want</u> to change the latter. We need to look for possibilities for changes in ourselves, reprocess norms and values, check time again where we impede our own development, where we stand in our own way during struggles. Changes rely on changed persons who are necessary to make changes possible at all.

Workshop of writing women - social experiences II

Even if we can say in general terms how education for femininity takes place, if we accept that female socialisation is not only a process of impediment by others, that it rather requires to be studied as an active appropriation by way of processing pre-existing structures, we still don't know yet how this happens in concrete terms on everyday level. This is a question for empirical research so far not done by anyone, and impossible to be done individually. This research–let us call it the reprocessing of social experience–can in fact be only the result of a collective research process. Only if we start to work everywhere, try to remember, think through the present, now, from a distance, become able to comprehend the mechanisms at work, it will be possible to know in concrete terms how in actual fact becoming-woman happens in our society. This is a pre-condition for the change. Let us get started in the women's seminars. Of course we are aware that in this way we only capture a section of "female socialisation". Specifics of social strata are not included, e.g. differences between nations, regions, urban/rural etc. Not being able to do all at once however shall no longer be an obstacle for starting at all. Let us start now. We picture the reprocessing of social experience in a way as mentioned already: by way of writing stories; hence we establish a workshop of writing women.

How to write stories?

"Writing is only possible for those to whom reality is no longer self-evident" (Wolf 1972: 209) "Before one can write, one has to live..." (Wolf 1979: 5).

Writing stories means to give an account of experience. Now, experiences we have every single day. How then choose? Why to write exactly this story? What use is it for me, for others? Could I not just simply talk about it? How exact do the descriptions have to be? Do stories have to be an exact replica of reality? Do I have to expose my innermost? Am I able to write at all?

For a year now we write stories in which we try to study and comprehend the idiosyncracies and behaviour that make us suffer, and that up to now we accepted as "characteristics" of women, albeit that of course we assumed that these very attitudes and emotions of ours have

to be the result of education/socialisation: why are we so fast to accept life as back staff instead of taking on a task ourselves? Why do we not like to be alone? Why do we prefer to give in instead of risking a conflict? Where to put the jealousy? Why are we able to wait for hours? Why do we secretly wish for a happy family? Why do we suffer from conflict in relationships to such an extent that it makes us unfit for work? Why does it take such an effort for us to be interested in social planning and changes, world politics and natural sciences, the economy etc.? Do these topics account for our lack of interest, or is it ourselves or our particular mode of dealing with the world?

  From such general questions about our female characteristics and their origins we should move on to generate questions for working with the texts in more detailed ways. Questions as general as: "How did you become what you are now?", are unsuitable. Directed to such a broad field of research our memory cannot work in sufficient detail. The request to cover such extensive grounds will bring up not much more than pre-processed prejudice. Only a nearly ascetic concentration on one problem, just one aspect, lets the microscope of memory adjust acute enough. It allows for memories not suppressing each other alternately and having to give way to a socially accepted "abstraction." When we start the writing we have to be wary anyway of a number of all-too-well known interpretations of our ways of acting, put into our mouths and heads. If for instance we ask for a memory of a wish from the past to do or to learn something particular, we may initially answer: "Actually, I always wanted to play the piano, but then I would have had to save money to be able to pay for the lessons, and also after a short while the hands start hurting and in fact I prefer to play melodies to exercising drills. Others had it easier, they grew up with music. That's why I have never learned it." Therefore a difficult step in working with the texts is the necessity to remain within the limits of a specific research question. (This, by the way is a problem in all scientific work. It is a reasonably fair assumption that the most widespread reason for failure in scientific work are too general and large-scale questions that make a proper investigation impossible.) Now the second step follows, the writing, finding a starting point, the decision to write in first person or to write in third person to create a distance, the art of omission, finding out what is essential, recording the processes, the exact description of actions of individuals, depicting the relations between persons, etc. It may be the case that at the stage of

writing it becomes clear already that our memory plays tricks on us, e.g. it was always already the mother who forced us to do this or that or the other, there was no choice, the circumstances didn't allow us to act different, everything came as it had to come. Had we had a chance to act differently, of course we would have done so. Or, the opposite way: all the girls from our childhood were these well-known specimen of female socialisation while we ourselves practised resistance from early age on, we were the exception who tirelessly pushed on day-in day-out for new ways of life, etc. At this point the interventionist remembering interferes by ruthlessly detecting the gaps in our perceptions. We need to overcome the molly-cuddling self-deception for its impeding effects on the process of comprehension. In most cases we cannot do this on our own. Here is where the work of the entire group starts, working with the story in a two-fold way: on the one hand it is work with the written story, at the same time it is also work on the memory of the writer. The discussion about the story can be used easily to induce pity and commiseration in the women who take part, and to lament the circumstances. Hence it can be made into a discussion about the personality of the writer, who then in the hope of receiving affirmation and appreciation from the others may give up the distanced position she had gained. Doing this means to accept at face value what is reported by the individual instead of studying the ways of constructing our personality; exchanging short-term tips how to cope with life instead of researching truly intervening changes. Such trivial therapeutic behaviour is suggested by the actual suffering that speaks from many stories–after all, reframed memory is also real life–and the resistance against the task of exploratory intervention in narrative, the demand to look at "authentic life" as something questionable. We need to overcome such behaviour if we seriously want to put social experience to use and open it up to change.

Questions for working with text

We suggest to take into account a couple of issues when working with the written experiences so that the work process can lead to learning. The sequential order is not important; the questions are certainly in need of completion and in the course of our own ongoing work and our dealing with the past it will certainly be enhanced. For not being too abstract we introduce these issues by way of a sample story that was written by a

woman in a women's seminar in Hamburg. She wanted to find out how she came to furnish her life with big spaces of sheer waiting, time again–until today–letting herself sink in this attitude of waiting.

"Would you just sit down and be calm ..."

It was way back in time. An afternoon as so many others. Mother and Grandmother are sitting in the living room, one of them knitting, the other one reading. The weather is not too nice. Otherwise they would sit on the terrace. The mother might even lie on the sunbed-chair under the apple tree. The grandmother would not follow her to there.

The child has finished her homework. She always does this straight after lunch. She briefly sits with the two women, flicks through the TV-magazine. She gets up, goes to the living room window and looks through the curtain onto the street. She wonders whether Klaus will come soon to play with her? Since he lives in the neighbourhood the two are often together. They play with the electric train set, build cable cars across the entire garden and the girl has learnt from her friend how to fix the bike herself.

Pity, she is not allowed to simply go to his house to pick him up. But the mother told her, a girl should not do such a thing. Klaus would lose interest in her. She cannot fully understand what that is meant to mean — but she does not want to lose Klaus.

So she stands behind the curtain and waits. She goes to her room. She looks around. What could she do until Klaus will come?

She sits down on the last step of the stairs and slowly slides down the stairs. When she arrives at the bottom she looks through the bedroom window onto the street. In passing she sees her mother and grandmother still sitting there. Something annoys her about it and makes her even more impatient. "Would you just sit down and be calm," the mother suggests. "What at all is the matter with you?" "Nothing."

She gets her bike from the basement. She orbits in big circles on the street in front of his house. Nothing happens. Is he not coming today? But maybe he first has to do something else today. She goes back into the house, into the kitchen and makes a sandwich for herself. Again she wanders anxiously through the rooms and from time to time looks out onto the street. The sandwich is nearly gone. She steps out of the kitchen into the garden. She climbs the old apple tree, looks over to his door and dreams of the future. Then she would not have to wait any more. She would get married — then she could be with her friend all the time.

The door gets opened. She hears him talking with his mother. He always talks quite loud. So he is there. Then he will come soon, too. She is happy. She climbs down the tree and picks some red currants.

Here he can see her. Then he will know that she is waiting for him. There he comes strolling through the door. But he doesn't come to her. He leaves with his mother.

The girl lies down on the bed, chews an apple and stares at the ceiling. She has to do something at all. The waiting is too bad. Lying there she plays a few melodies on the flute. The dreams come again — of this magnificent time when all the waiting will be over. But slowly the flute takes possession of her. She goes to the desk, picks up sheet music and plays the most difficult passages — filled with joy about this skill. She forgets the world around herself — completely lost in the sound of the instrument.

The bell rings! ——— She throws down the flute on the bed, rushes blustering down the stairs, opens the door - Klaus is there! "Do you come with the bike?" Happily she jumps on the bike. With strong kicks in the pedals she cycles with speed.

Now she would like to cycle to Africa.

The first reading of this story was followed–as always–by a time of pondering silence. Ideas of memories as something sacrosanct, something personal, life experienced and therefore "real" and "true"

blocked the discussion. We went onto the first–probably innocuous level: What about the language?

At first, surprise that she could "write so well after all". Behind this lures the assumption that in fact no woman can write–at the end of the day it is an art. By the way, we have learnt that all women who ever tried could write quite well, and at any rate in a way that we wanted to listen to them.

Slowly a feeling for language develops and what can be done with it, also how we use language unconsciously and how this use restricts us. One of the restrictions is the <u>cliché</u>. Clichés establish a kind of emotional approval that restricts our further thinking, they are used to create connections. Furthermore they want to import an attitude that we didn't have at all, that in fact nobody has and that we nevertheless think of as possible because we hear it ever so often. In the case of the story about "waiting" our unease was triggered, e.g. by the sentence "slowly the flute takes possession of her". At first it is not very eye-catching. How often did we hear something similar? What can she mean by that? How is she subjected to the flute? Maybe more that prior to playing the flute she had no interest in anything but waiting, and now she doesn't think of the waiting any more? Not exactly. The questions lead us to the inaccuracy and haziness of the formulation. In taking the writer serious we raise doubts about her words. She says: I always played the flute when I was sad. Others say: It also means that no-one will come into the room, I didn't have to help with household chores when I played the flute. There are different reasons. Should they not be studied more in-depth? The cliché was more convenient, but its proposition was in fact none. We generalise our experience with the cliché and define it as a "restraining corset for our emotions."

The place of the cliché needs to be filled with more detailed thought. The seemingly pure linguistic work with the text forces us to observe more accurately, to remember more substantially. In working with words we are working with our selves.

Searching for vacuums[1] is another step in working with the text seems less complicated because it does not yet question the account that the writer gave of her past. What is kept silent is not easily detectable. This step requires a lot of discussion, and also some experience in working with stories. It gets easier with the second and the third story already.

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1   These are "white spots", voids in the story.

Here the discussions and question necessary relate to, e.g. the comprehensibility of the different persons, the completeness of their actions, the method of one-sided depiction. Looking for vacuums is incredibly important. Usually the silence at particular spots is silencing essential connections also for ourselves. We learn to be sharper in realising the noisy silence. In our story we found the place of the father vacated. This was all the more puzzling in face of the description of mother and grandmother to be in a similarly peculiar attitude of waiting as the daughter, without deciphering this any further, and also the daughter's desire for marrying a man which made the "manlessness" of the mother surprising. - (In the new version of this story, which included new problems and vacuums, there appear new figures and new modes of behaviour of the mother illustrate important social experiences.)

In the discussion about vacuums we also came across another necessary issue to address when working with the texts: the <u>clarity of the acting persons</u>. Many actions remained unintelligible or they were only hinted at in a silent manner that left their meaning for the research question (How come that I accepted waiting as a possible activity in life?) in the dark. At closer look it is obvious that mother and grandmother are also simply mentioned, but their acts remain unclear and so does their meaning for the daughter. Exactly that mother and grandmother are so peculiarly mentioned in passing and yet they menacingly frame the story, lets us suspect that the relationship between mother and daughter, specifically the feelings of the daughter for her mother, and the bearing on her life in its haziness were the result of a repression. The request for clarification brought up completely changed structures, albeit that they were yet to be truly worked through.

But not only the acting persons are remain blurred. The other contexts are similarly only a sketch. Here it shows that just like in life as such the simple images—also in form of memories—do not speak loud enough. For making contexts speak it is necessary to have methods for analysis that can move beyond the simple replication. For example, we repeatedly discussed the meaning of the playing of the flute. The author depicted a meaning of which she was not too sure herself. This meaning was obviously the result of her way of constructing the memory up to this point in time. It remains open whether playing the flute makes the waiting easier, whether it can be a useful pastime that destroys the pure accessibility and presence of the friend, and should therefore the

description of the feelings for the friend be more ambivalent, or should the playing of the flute be depicted less important. At any rate we noticed not only big ambiguities but also too big of an unambiguousness. Assessments are offered that must have been the result of the author's interpretation; but they are not so clear that they could not be questioned. Does the characterisation of the friend as a person from whom there is a lot to learn and with whom she can play fabulous games suggest that he is loved for these activities that are also meaningful for the girl? But this easily detectable interpretation is contradicted by the way of waiting and the activities that the bicycle seems to offer without the friend only. Looking for such <u>contradictions</u> makes an analysis possible in which the contradiction leads to new research questions. For this story we found out that the problem how an attitude of waiting could be acquired in the first place obviously precedes the story that was selected as important for a possible solution. Waiting at the time of the story was already an established part of life. New memories need to be excavated. Searching for vacuums, the construction of unambiguous characters, the discussion of contexts, the clarification of contradictions, and refraining from judgements ("this is how she learned") leads to new questions asked of the author and her story.

The criteria and questions that allow the analysis of social experiences are by far not complete with this. They need to be further developed and better substantiated in the work process. The key to unlock the experience, to study the construction of the structures of our personalities with an aim for change, will itself be a result of this research process, certainly an essential one. We understand the analytic steps described so far as suggestions. Applying them may not only bring up misunderstandings; they also mobilise resistances. Of course such a treatment of the ever so courageously extracted memories of our lives is an impertinent demand. We are frequently told: You cannot dictate how it really was, at the end of the day she really experienced it! Such an objection ignores that all these memories are already subjected to a process of meaning-making by the author herself. The discoveries proper that are resulting from the analytic process will help to overcome such resistances.

The following second version of the story has picked up some of the questions that came out of the first discussion. The increased insight on social experiences is very obvious. At the same time new questions come

up. In parts the silence became even louder, the figure of the mother more scary, still blurred the feelings of the daughter. New figures appear. The field of research expands, becomes nearly unanswerable for one person alone. The study is not finished for a long time. – At this point a difficulty arises that is basically a problem of psycho-analytic methods, and that we can overcome collectively. The ceaseless digging that can lead to personal de-stabilisation in individual character analysis can be replaced in our collective analysis by general questions. For waiting to be part of most women's personality the attempt to collect many other social experiences with this problem can result in a generalisable answer in which structurally similar modes of processing are detected. These in turn, and exactly because of their general character, offer a possibility for individual change without questioning the entire structure of personality.

"Would you just sit down and be calm ..." (2nd version)

She lives with her parents and grandparents in a house in a suburban area. When she was born her mother was 42, her father 55. In the past the father went for walks with the child, or he sometimes played with her and told her stories. He did that after work while the mother prepared dinner. The father is now an old man who needs nursing care.

In the morning the mother and the grandmother are busy cleaning the house and doing the shopping. In the past, when the father was still working the two women often argued with each other. Then the mother had a heart attack. The child had to call the sister who in turn made sure the father came home from work. Here they all stood around the mother. The child feared losing the mother.

When the girl is arguing with the mother, the grandmother reminds her of these fits and tells her, the mother might die from the agitation by the daughter.

So she has learned to take on the orders, demands and prohibitions by the mother without objection. She is anyway looking after the mother's well-being, just as she realises the mother is permanently looking after the well-being of all the members of the family who live in the house. The child tries

to guess how the mother feels. For every supposed mistake, as small as it might be, she asks the mother whether she is angry with her.

In the afternoon the grandmother and the mother are sitting in the living room. The mother knits, the grandmother reads. What they seems to be of less relevance to the women. For the child, the father, the grandfather or unexpected visitors they are prepared to interrupt their pastime immediately. When visitors come mother and grandmother become always quite cheerful. It seems they nearly waited for it. This may be also why they dress much nicer in the afternoon than during morning hours.

The grandfather comes always home late in the evening. The grandmother starts early enough to prepare his dinner. Then the girl is supposed to not disturb her. But she likes much more to pick the old man up at the train station. He listens to her when she tells him about her day. During dinner she stays with him without talking because he seems very tired. Then he reads the paper and he cuts out interesting articles for the child. In the mean time the grandmother clears up the table. Now the child sees how the grandfather sits down at the table again and does long calculations with his sharpened pencil. He often works until late in the night. If the girl cannot sleep she goes to him and the grandfather peels an orange for her. Then he tells her about his job as an accountant and shows her how to make up a balance sheet. Sometimes she is with him quite a long time.

The child does her homework straight after lunch. While she does that the mother lies on the sofa in the same room and sleeps with a scarf over her eyes. The girl hates the mother sleeping because she gets tired herself. But she stays in the room because she hopes to get to ask the mother when she has difficulties. She waits with doing that until the woman woke up again. Essentially all she wants is to eventually finish. Here she feels like paralysed.

Sometimes she cycles to her friend Uschi. Uschi has a friendly and cheerful home. The two listen to records and practice first dance routines in front of the mirror. Earlier

they have practised particular musical pieces each on their own to have more fun when making music together. The mother gave in to her wish for quitting piano lessons so that she could learn playing the flute together with others. With her flute she now can retreat to her room. Here she does not hear anything of the adults and they don't like disrupting her in the activity.

As much as she likes being with Uschi, she is even more drawn to Klaus. He is a boy from the neighbourhood. She likes Klaus a lot. She likes his confident appearance, his way to deal with the world. He also has problems at home and he speaks with her about it. But mostly he is in good mood and tells her about jokes that he has made with friends in school. He also has a great many of fabulous ideas for games that she likes to join. They play with the electric train set, built cable cars across the entire garden and the girl has learnt from her friend how to fix the bike herself.

She would love to go to him straight after finishing her homework. But the mother told her, a girl should not do such a thing. Klaus would lose interest in her. She cannot fully understand what that is meant to mean — but she does not want to lose Klaus.

So she stands behind the curtain and waits. She goes to her room. She looks around. What could she do until Klaus will come?

There is no point starting anything. He could come any moment and then she would have to stop. She sits down on the last step of the stairs and slowly slides down the stairs. When she arrives at the bottom she looks through the bedroom window onto the street. In passing she sees her mother and grandmother still sitting in the living room. Something annoys her about it and makes her even more impatient. "Would you just sit down and be calm," the mother suggests. But she cannot do that. She cannot suffocate the unrest in sitting still and knitting. All such attempts have failed in the past. So she prefers to wander around. She gets her bike from the basement. She orbits in big circles on the street in front of his house. Nothing

happens. Is he not coming today? But maybe he first has to do something else today. She goes back into the house, into the kitchen and makes a sandwich for herself. Again she wanders anxiously through the rooms and from time to time looks out onto the street. The sandwich is nearly gone. She steps out of the kitchen into the garden. She climbs the old apple tree, looks over to his door and dreams of the future. Then she will not have to wait any more. They would get married — then she could be with her friend all the time. The door gets opened. She hears him talking with his mother. He always talks quite loud. So he is there. Then he will come soon, too. She is happy. She climbs down the tree and picks some red currants. Here he can see her. Then he will know that she is waiting for him. There he comes strolling through the door. He looks over to her. He shouts: "Are you free?" Of course! He picks her up on the bike. Happily she jumps on her bike. With strong kicks in the pedals she cycles with speed.

   Now she would like to cycle to Africa.

<u>What we can learn from analysing stories</u>

In most cases our stories are not consistent because our depiction of situations can be distorted in three ways:

  1. Individual perception is influenced by situational structures and relations to other persons or things.

  2. Prior experiences and already acquired individual patterns of thought determine the perception.

  3. In remembering the perceived situation can be further distorted and changed. That happens by way of re-assessment, effects of taboos, ideal images, mechanisms of repression etc.

  In the collective scrutinisation of the stories we detect contradictions, we notice what is incomplete and ambiguous, that means we learn to sharpen our social perception. It also means that we need to be more careful and critical in the way we use words, think more precisely. The aim is to use language for deciphering contexts, not to blur them.

  Furthermore we learn to see the generalisable in our individual experiences, the detect the structure, i.e. to comprehend ourselves in context. To recognise how we became what we are we have to re-

structure our experiences. In doing so we see alternative ways for action, and in this way the analysis of stories can be used for changing ourselves and a better coping with life. Eventually the production and analysis of stories changes our relation to theory and science. We realise that theory can be used as a force of production for transforming intervention and for making use of our experience.

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Chapter 4

AGAINST THE LACK OF CONCEPTS OF THE MUNDANE: COLLECTIVE MEMORY-WORK

Projekt Frauengrundstudium

Me-Ti speaks: "[T]he introduction of the *Great Order* (...) is a long process and a production. (...) The *Great Order* will be founded in the centres of the great disorder" (Brecht 2016: 125-6). We try to detect these centres when we ask how it is possible that bourgeois society is consistently reproduced and what do individuals contribute to its reproduction. We start from the premise that the individuals substantially take part in this reproduction, and that they even build their personality structures in a manner conforming with the state (Althusser 1977). This contradicts opinions which demand the "simple" demolition of repressive apparatuses (e.g., of the state). Of course the structures are found pre-existent, but they require an active appropriation by the people and this is what makes possible both the reproduction of the most repressive structures as well as their transformation (Haug, F. 1980).

  When we studied these processes of appropriation we realised that the different spheres, the economical, the cultural, the private and the political, do not follow the same rules. For instance the guiding ethical principles in the family, i.e. acting lovingly and caring, stands in contrast to the guiding principle in the economy (logic of exchange, competition). That posed the problem that it is not possible to immediately and comprehensively derive from the rules of the economy the modes and forms of people's dealings with the economic structures that we were interested in (Haug, W.F. 1980).

  The question of what, how and in what contradictions the individuals live is an empirical question. It cannot be studied from "outside". It requires studying the people's concrete praxes (which of course includes our own) and the standards developed in them for discovering which elements of these praxes are constraining and which are liberating (Argument Frauenredaktion 1982).

We need to know how the individuals evaluate and assess their actions, modes of life etc., because they hold them in the structures. The example of the family, whose form can be easily recognised as a chain for the woman who solely lives within it, shows that externally derived value judgements have no bearing on the happiness/misfortune of the woman. Neither are they a call for action. They remain in the abstract.

On the relation of theory and experience

What methods do we have at our disposal? The methods learned in social sciences treat human beings like objects. In face of the statistic average everyday life loses its meaning. We want to start with the acting people themselves and not study "them down there" from an elevated outside position. We put our experiences up for discussion in form of stories of the mundane. We want to find possibilities for intervention for women and further develop existing theories of intervention. Let us recapitulate the most important aspects in form of theses:

1. Existing theories are not sufficient to comprehend the concretely acting people.

2. Determining the contradictions in which the people live and their modes of dealing with them is an empirical question. We intend to shine a light on it by way of the collective empiricism of story writing.

3. Compared to experience, theory has the advantage that it can formulate general laws out of the historically diverse minutiae whose impact (e.g. laws of exchange) remains invisible in the multiplicity of everyday life and yet dictates it at the same time. The question of dominance of the respective determinations is again an empirical question.

4. Experiences stand in a relation of tension to theoretical insights. Our concrete stories of everyday life cannot falsify the theories. But they can act as unwieldy material in relation to the theoretically derived question. They can give important cues that the problem that we identified in form of our question is actually located somewhere else, i.e. our question is not able to capture the "focal point." Stories can signal the need for a problem transfer and thus a new question that stipulates the newly found connection. Stories also point to the need for new and adequate tools for comprehension because the old concepts don't suffice any more for problems that are defined 'newly' in our way.

What was said so far in rather abstract terms shall now be substantiated with the help of an example, namely our work in the context of the women's foundation studies on the topic of "woman and economy".

What have women got to do with the economy

Spontaneously we react with boredom. We skip the business pages of the daily newspaper in favour of local notes because we are hardly able to transfer the business news, the "public" budget management onto the level of our own private housekeeping. We want to study the connections between our everyday experiences and this business section which appears to us to be so far removed. We ask the question how we appropriate the economic structures. We claim that it is necessary to obtain knowledge and an understanding of general laws of development and functioning, in particular relating to the specific situation of women in the context of, and in struggles with general societal structures.

We posed the question: How do the individuals seize the economic structures, how do they actively become part of them? Immediately the problem arose: where to begin? It appeared to us as if theory and everyday life are diametrically opposed poles, unfit to be united. Writing stories on the spot without having a clue of basic economic categories seemed wrong. Did that mean we had to study three volumes of "Critique of Political Economy" by Karl Marx? What is the basic knowledge that is needed? How does surplus value emerge? What is exchange value and use value? The concept of exchange immediately reminded us of childhood stories, marbles for sweets. Even before we had proper access to money we must have learned about the value of the things that we dealt with. Slightly older, the objects were assigned a pecuniary value and emotions: We remember the drama and the mother's tears over the vase that was shattered in pieces, and the long considerations at the local grocery how best to exchange the penny for as many sweets as possible.

For the women the most obvious stories to write where about financial problems, what jobs we got paid for and what value we gave to money. But what to do with the written stories of the experiences? In our predicament we threw ourselves upon the authors, interrogated them, why they had acted in such way and not in another, tried to find ourselves in their stories. But how did the stories relate to theory? We expected help from short texts in which basic Marxist concepts is explained:

exchange value, use value, buyer and seller. We found stories that allowed to apply these concepts: mothers become buyers, daughters become sellers. Could it be this that was meant? Hence we essentially thought of the training in economic-political structures as one in relations of exchange value. And further, that in the process of socialisation–in exaggerated terms–"thing-like relations" are rendered self-evident: the transformation of all sorts of relationships into commodity-money-relations. Thus we tried to find in our memories what we had theoretically identified. It appeared to us that the specific novelty in our approach was that we in fact assumed that the economic relations need to be lived out practically by individuals. Hence they not only impress themselves as external restraining and obstructing forces on the individuals from the outside. They are also part of the individual's personality structure, which accounts for a specific capacity for action. This is what we wanted to lay open for gaining knowledge about the modes of dealing with it. The aim was to unsettle what seemed to be supposedly self-evident. We were looking for resisting alternatives.

We can already say: We thought of the process of getting used to the economic structures as one-sidedly negative, and similar for both sexes, i.e. independent of gender. These assumptions had a strongly limiting effect on our stories and our work with them. Brought to the point, we wrote obedient stories that re-iterated what we knew already in advance (money for exams, money for washing cars or for babysitting), we reassured ourselves that "money for a good job" is an important mechanism in the educational process. We relegated unwieldy and resistant moments into the psyche of the author. We imposed on our experiences categories like "buyer" and "seller" and thus converted them into particular illustrations of ever the same laws. For our rigid forms to fit we had to cut out everything alive. We developed a truly sisyphus-mode of working with our stories: Experiences were appended to theoretical assumptions, just to be taken out again afterwards so that our sparse concepts could be preserved in their purity.

We had to bring to mind what we actually wanted from our stories: Overall we were attempting to collectively secure a building block for the development of a theory of socialisation. Then the stories were supposed to lead to theorisation of our everyday life for not remaining trapped in the multiplicity of our experiences and contradictions. We wanted to bring life into science in a manner that made it possible to overcome the

abstractness of some statements, respectively made visible the use of concrete interventions.

And on theory: By not including gender in our thinking about the critique of political economy we forgot that the history of labour, which is central for Marxist societal theory, is [written] predominantly as a male history. The women feature in it only as an aspect of the reproduction of labour power as a commodity. That leads to an important insight. The categories that are developed for the world of labour and the societal relations are not only difficult to apply to how women get used to the forms of social intercourse, the specific female forms actually escape such access. The process of getting used to the economic structures needs to be thought of as training and as practice at the same time. It is a training in the central forms of labour: waged and unwaged, both of which are offered to us and which today we practice as if they were second nature. The structures are further overlain by household and family laws which are contrary to the law of production of surplus value, namely orientated towards love and care. If we want to study the education for femininity, the internalisation of domestic labour, then we need to find in it a conflict of acceptance and protest, constraint and perspective. It was the following story that made us aware of the entanglement and brought up a new question for us.

Love and Wages

Done the dishes.

In the boarding school there was a set rota for doing the dishes. There were two sinks. At each of the sinks three students. The rota was displayed publicly, so that everyone knew exactly when and particularly together with whom he had to do the dishes. Now, there were some students who had more money than most of us. They let others do the dishes for them and paid 0,50 DM. At the time this was a good opportunity to top up the small amounts of pocket money (8,00 DM a month).

I had a couple of patrons who came pretty regularly and asked, would I do the dishes for them. Always before and during dinner the big dishes exchange, barter and sales

> *auction started. Often we already assembled in the entrance hall for to be seen better and to be quicker than the other dishwashers. "Will you do the dishes for me today? Can I do the dishes for you? ... but it'll cost 0,60 DM or a Mark. ... can we do a swap? I'll do the dishes for you tomorrow ..." and so on.*
>
> *I liked most doing the dishes for boys, there was always an additional thrill. It was suspense, who would let who do the dishes, who was to ask who. And I was disappointed if someone who I fancied at a given time asked another girl, or asked me only as the last one. The meanest were those who could use a few nice words and looks to make me even do the dishes for free by times. This way from time to time I even got the attention that I wished for so dearly.*

Foreshadowed in this story is the entanglement of labour and love; love and wages; surrender; affection and its calculation; exchange and love (which determine human relations in capitalism and the specific mode of life, attitude and function of women). Here we discover for the first time how two spheres that are thought of as separate are connected: Wage-structures are brought into the sphere of love! And this in a way that we cannot imagine in reversed manner between men and women.

The story made us aware of:

1. So far we had a one-sided view of the process, but we have to see it for its contradictions.

2. The specifics of gender cannot be expressed in the terminology that we intended to transfer from the critique of political economy, and we have to do more developmental work on this issue.

3. Our problem was somewhere else than we had assumed. What we have to study is not the structure of individuals and relationships as commodities. It is the <u>specific relation to labour, to wages as gratification, the transfer into personal relationships, the connection between wages and love.</u>

How did we assume to find mechanisms <u>independent of gender</u> in the area of learning to be part of the economic structures! Albeit that we were aware of gender specific compliances as acted out particularly in the realm of waged labour and domestic work. This perspective is most likely

based on our conceptualising of economic structures as something quite remote that has nothing to do with our own lives.

Even our "money for exams" is something private, negotiated amongst individuals, and not connected to the public sphere of the "grand economy." The story brought up the question for us, how women develop the willingness to work for free. In it is contained an uprating of unpaid labour, and at the same time a disregard.

To insist that a work task was done for free suggests that it should have in fact been paid for. The manner of speaking of "doing something for free" points out the renouncement of remuneration. In the context of religious adjustment this accounts for an increase in virtue, a "human perspective" in which a specific work task is no longer assumed to be labour power sold in exchange for money, rather it is an act of altruism, a service to humanity. At the same time in this society having to "do something for free" is a degradation because it suggests a lack of qualification, hence no need for remuneration. Our new question arising from these considerations: In a structure that provides for waged labour and unwaged labour, how come that the women resort to unwaged labour and why do the women accept this relation?

Field review

At a national meeting of the women in the Women's Foundation Studies we systematised our assumptions, elements of theory and what we comprehended already. We wish to present it here as a suggestion for a productive approach to research questions (like our own, see above).

We now explicitly think of the relation of women to the economy as a specific one, and we formulate as a proposition that is still in need of examination:

- Women have a particularly ambivalent relation to labour, waged and unwaged, a kind of "love-hate-relationship" in which constraints and perspectives appear at the same time.

The perspectives relate to the possibility of women acting in the family in response to needs and necessities, the constraints to the fact that in this

society it means at the same time economic dependency and incompetence in many areas.

Through our research question we find ourselves in a <u>field of research</u> that is both old and new. Old, because in this field a lot of thought has been going on already and there are theoretical statements about the problematic that we have to modify for our research question. And the field is new because with our question we suggest a new connection.

Our field is <u>"occupied"</u> in several ways: By emotions, associations, different theories and in reality by the two forms of waged labour and domestic labour. The various elements, worked through or not, establish <u>lines of force</u> in the field that allow individuals to find orientation specific for each situation. The theories allow us to derive lines of force that give people direction, but we cannot demonstrate <u>how</u> they move in the field. Prior to looking at details of the occupation of our field we ask, what is at the core of our problem. It is nothing less than the attitude towards labour as waged labour, and in it the question what is male and female labour; for domestic labour the question, whether unpaid labour points towards human relationships; and overall we are interested in the relation of men to women.

Furthermore we think of: production and reproduction; the perspective of the questions of women and gender; the perspective of societal relationships; the problem of relations of exchange; love.

How then is our field waged labour, unwaged labour a) theoretically, and b) emotionally occupied as yet?

a) Theories of waged labour in their most developed format are found in Marxism. It is useful to bring to mind again some conceptualisations and look at our subject matter for its history, determination of form, and prospect.

b) We already know that domestic labour has no place in these conceptualisations, not now and not prospectively. In combination with our own feelings in relation to tasks like cleaning, tidying, etc. and the space that we are willing to grant them in our lives, this results in our aversion to think about them any further.

In concrete terms that means, our field is occupied

1. by Marxist theory of waged labour (for the moment we neglect other theories in which we certainly find other useful bits and pieces),

2. by the concrete existence of domestic labour as unpaid labour,

3. by our own feelings towards domestic labour and their "regulating" influence on our research impetus.

When closing in on the topic we will come across the discussion of "wages for housework" as it is present in parts of the international women's movement. Female Marxists, as well as non-Marxists, try to fill the massive gap in Marxism.

From the second side our field thus is occupied:

1. By theories of domestic labour,

2. by practical politics.

We find this field and the prior studies within it in need of a lot of theoretical work. Individual experience only comes in as an attitude that confirms our discomfort with the subject matter. Why then should we write stories? To answer this question we first have to explain in more detail what we are aiming at with the writing of stories, how the relate to reality and how we can work with them collectively.

Aims of writing stories

What actually does it mean: writing? In contrast to the fleeting spoken word we wish to capture our experiences. More than in oral narration, writing forces us to sort our thoughts, make decisions what is important and what can be neglected. This can often lead to us sitting in front of a blank page with no idea what to write. We don't find words. We realise how difficult it is for us to express our emotions and actions. Writing down our experiences is already a first, and also critical reflection for which we have to take a distance from our immediate lived experience. "Let everyone be their own historian, then they will live a more careful and ambitious life" (Rehmann 1981). Writing carries more weight, it affords us to take our everyday experiences more serious. By writing them down we also write a part of women's history. What are our aims in writing stories? In "Frauenformen" (Haug F. 1980) we have presented a sketch of a female socialisation theory. There we started from the premise that the process of becoming a member of society has to be seen as an active appropriation by means of processing pre-existing structures rather than a curtailing of the person. We wanted to find out what the process of adjustment and familiarisation in these structures looks like. How come, e.g. that the economic structures become a natural unquestioned part of our lives, and that in our everyday praxes we agree

to live within the determined forms of waged and unwaged labour? There are areas in our life that are so natural to us that we don't even have questions about them. This accounts for a vague discomfort in cases where we don't agree with them.

At the same time we have developed attitudes and emotions that impede on our active intervention, that make us suffer. We are looking for explanations to be able to change them. We realised that many of our explanations, often reaching far back to the days of early childhood (because my mother didn't love me ...), only allow for a restricted capacity for action. Hence we are looking for other explanations that expand our capacity for action. Our stories are the empirical material to try to see our everyday life from a perspective of renewed surprise. We aim to make our everyday lives questionable for the purpose of comprehension. The stories are the material from which we also derive generalisable elements as further building blocks for a female socialisation theory in which we appear as acting subjects.

Preliminary work for the writing of stories of everyday life

The idea of writing stories immediately triggers spontaneous approval by many women, the desire to learn something about themselves in a new format and at the same time provide material for something more general. For not to lose this joy of writing after a short period a prior structuring is required, a kind of scaffolding that helps to not get lost in humongous amounts of experiences. The starting point is a topic, as in our case the question about the relation of women and economy. This is a huge field in which we identify a large number of sub-questions, all of which we could work with. For instance our relation to property, or to domestic labour or our lack of interest in business news.

After extensive brainstorming we tried to overcome the initial diffuseness by each woman writing a story of a long lasting memory. What can such a story look like? It is about a situation that we experienced. The situation should be completed because otherwise we cannot dissect the constructions and try to fit half of our life stories into it as explanations. We see it as advantageous to write in third person narrative (she instead of I). This affords us to look at ourselves from a productive distance. We try to describe the respective persons as detailed as possible with their emotions, thoughts, interests and motives. We

don't assume that our stories are the "truth." They are constructs, blueprints of ourselves and the reality, how we get to grips with it.

In the stories meaning is created, connections are established, values declared, explanations for our actions are offered. This is exactly what we are looking for, namely the way we construct ourselves and work ourselves into the relation with the world, what attitudes we take up. This is the subject matter in our search for knowledge.

We detect in the stories the connections that are established. In most of them common connections are found, like e.g. that school results are rewarded financially. If we were to continue writing in this direction, we would remain on well-trodden paths. Our experience is that our spontaneous questions mostly lead us onto these well-trodden paths and eventually result in no more than affirmation of already known/thought connections.

What is required is the difficult step of abandoning the 'trusted knowledge' and searching for new connections instead, like the one between love and wages in which something is connected that was thought of as belonging to different spheres. That leads us to the formulation of our question which at this stage is more than just a reduction of a topic that otherwise would be too large (how do women come to developing the willingness to work for free?). But what is new stubbornly tries to dock on to well-known patterns of thought in our heads. To escape from this we should write down our assumptions about the connection, in which half-known theories, theory fragments and emotions are so unfortunately intertwined that they impede our work (we had no other choice; we have learned this from out mothers).

We should take serious these assumptions. Firstly, because they inhibit new knowledge, secondly, because once disentangled they inform about parts of the emotional and theoretical occupation of the field. The necessity to know about these occupations leads directly to the question how in fact we should be able to work with this topic if we don't know all the theory about it. Here we can only advise to check with experts in the field what theories are already in existence and what literature will make it accessible.

Working with the texts in the collective

We learned in the women's movement that gaining self-awareness and changing oneself is a painful process that triggers uncertainty. We need a framework that provides support, a collective that we can lean on. And yet the others in the group are similarly our corrective, those who question our points of view and ways of meaning-making, put in doubt our explanations and mobilise their entire knowledge to allow us to gain new perspectives. Therefore we overcome the common division between the researcher and those who are researched. We study ourselves in the process of societalisation, trying to make ourselves into objects of research as subjects of our own development into those who we are.

In the context of our work we generated a couple of questions and criteria that we suggest as ways to approach the stories. Others should be added continuously. In every story we check whether the active persons (not only the author) are shown to be <u>equipped with interests</u>. We suppose that the starting point for our actions are not personal characteristics, they are rather based on interests. Hence we ask for every action: what did the person wish to achieve, what was the objective for their action, what was the motive that prompted it? This also aims at discovering at what points the objectives and the actions become contradictory. It helps us to further sharpen our social perception incredibly by finding out the underlying interests for every conflict, rather than locate the motives in personal characteristics of individuals (not: another person is bad, but rather what makes someone act in this manner–there is no truth, but different interests).

Another essential objective is the discovery of <u>contradictions</u>. Our desire to live harmoniously leads to a one-sided solution of contradictions so as to be able to cope with them. "Pure experience" cannot tolerate contradiction, for being able to act at all in practice we have to make decisions. With our collective discussion we aim at discovering the contradictions that were practically solved and yet are still existent. In them we find the driving forces for our actions. If we experience societal contradictions as individual failure (e.g. if we cannot combine the tasks and duties of a family with our professional development), this leads to paralysis instead of a collective search for solutions.

In addition we carry in ourselves a number of contradictions that are peacefully co-existent because they are not recognised (if on the one

hand we want to live independently, and on the other hand we want to be served by others; or if we want to develop into militant characters without giving up our desire for harmony). We believe that we need to become aware of these contradictions and our previous ways of solving them. Based on our current position and taking into account our joint knowledge this allows for a renewed assessment and for learning to live differently. To find the contradictions in which the individual development happens we suggest the following questions:

- What was the use or the harm caused by the actions for the author?
- Which affection/animosity does the author organise for herself?
- Which dependencies are established/confirmed, which independencies gained?
- Which conflicts are avoided/dealt with/solved, and how?
- In what way do actions, things, persons occur?
- What significance do the respective actions have in the overall context of life?

When we ask these questions we should also pay attention to what is not said in the stories, where the vacuums are. In the stories we construct an image of ourselves in which problems that potentially cannot be integrated are left out. It can reveal essential contexts and make new perspectives possible if we particularly ask: What is not mentioned?

And we examine each text for the use of clichés. This may be something as "it made her feel like a child" or "she went on suffering in silence". Clichés are words used like prefabricated shells that we can slide into. Everyone can understand them in some way or other, despite the fact that the author has not provided a precise description. Clichés produce an emotional accord between author and reader. They ignite empathy and, commiseration. As well as being an obstacle for the author in explaining the meaning, the context and the accompanying emotions they also organise emotional approval by the readers. This stands in the way of critical questioning (Haug 1982).

Empathy proved to be an especially impractical attitude for working with the texts. It only led to questions about the similarity of the readers' and the authors' impressions of meaning implied in the text, but it didn't lead

to critical questioning of the connections that were taken for granted. This, however, is exactly what we want to do. We want to break apart what is taken for granted and detect in it the approval of societal structures. Our everyday way of thinking is permeated by a multitude of such not comprehended fragments of theory (mostly from psychoanalysis, bourgeois sociology and catholic moral teaching). We use them to make sense of our everyday experiences and to explain them to ourselves. This type of connection also organises our acceptance and our settling into the structures. (With milieu theory: I will always be disadvantaged because I come from a certain strata - conditions that are open to societal change appear here as natural, eternal law.)

What can we do about this?

Useful for us in working with a story was always to ask at the beginning questions about the taken for granted – what in the story seemed instantly clear to us? We should collect these elements and specifically question them because they are our most sedimented common sense understandings.

When working with the stories we repeatedly realised that we detected contradictions and found elements of experiences that are completely in need of theorisation, but we did not follow up on them because we could not immediately integrate them within the framework of our question. For not giving away that much fruitful material and for being able to better exchange our results we suggest to use a kind of checklist, an audit trail on several levels. The next section will show how such a checklist can be applied in practical work.

This story was written on the question "How do women get used to working for free?"

Working for free

She was about 14 years of age. A big girl already, her parents used to say whenever she was supposed to do some work around the house or help with other tasks. In any case the parents—the mother in particular—expected her to do regularly reoccurring or smaller tasks without being specifically asked to do so, never mind a reward. This included, e.g. hoovering, cleaning the shower, cooking and baking cakes (the latter she found not as dull and dreary as

the cleaning tasks because here she could at least bring in skill and imagination).

Now she had discovered a new recipe: one for pyramid cake. This cake was one of the fancy foods that the family—herself included—liked eating a lot. But due to it being so expensive the mother bought it only for Christmas.

The price was surely not based on the ingredients amongst which nothing spectacularly expensive was to be found, it was more dependent on the extensive labour process involved.

So she stood for two hours in front of the open oven and baked layer for layer, one spoonful of dough at a time. During the small breaks between the baking sequences she already envisioned how nice the cake would taste and how the others would praise her. From time to time a member of the family came to the kitchen to have a look at where the nice smell came from. Then they disappeared again to the TV-set in the living room.

The next day she came home late from school. The parents had not even waited for her with their coffee-break. All that was left of the cake was one tiny slice. So that was what she had slaved away for over two hours and even given up the crime thriller. When she asked about the cake the mother only said: "It was quite nice, you could bake it again sometime."

How, then, can we work with this story?

1) Revision tasks for the author:

Here all aspects should be collected that are missing, contradictory or remain unclear in the story, so that the author can focus on thinking about them and can expand on them in her second version.

- In response to our questions it becomes clear that in the family housework and "other work" are obviously valued differently. These different values provide a yardstick for a

job to be paid (washing the car) or to be done unpaid as a matter of course. This yardstick should be mentioned.

- On the one hand the baking is valued as something that requires skill and imagination, on the other hand it is depicted as dull and dreary. Here more precise considerations are necessary. We also found that the author should not provide assessments and interpretations, but rather concrete descriptions of actions (e.g. the baking). This is to allow the others to draw their own conclusions, because between expressed and felt assessment there is obviously a discrepancy.
- The author's emotions and motives remain unclear: what does she feel while standing at the oven? Furthermore, there is a change in evaluation in the story (initially baking is a joy, but when there is no reward it becomes a drudgery in hindsight). One of the evaluations must have come up retrospectively or else it points to something else.
- The story is written quite stinted. Obviously the author does not consider her feelings and her thoughts necessary for understanding it, or as part of it. We ask her to describe in detail what she does and what she feels while doing it.

2) New topics that derive from working with the story:

In furtherance to our initial question the stories also point to connections that guide us to new research questions. They can bring up other important themes/key aspects. They can suggest that the focal point of the problem in question is to be found somewhere else (progressive problem transfer).

These new research questions should encourage us to write stories that deal with them - but at least to record new questions and pass them on to other groups.[1]

- This story introduces praise as motivation for the baking. We assume this not to be a sufficient motive on its own.

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[1] In the context of "Women's Foundational Studies" there were groups in more than 20 cities organised in a network in which topical discussions were coordinated and results of working groups or seminars exchanged. The authors also speak of a "learning movement" in other parts of their work.

Hence the new question arises: How come that we indeed expect and wish for praise as a reward? Why should one be praised for work that is useful and meaningful? Praise cannot be seen as a prime motive; is it not already result of something preceding that one wishes for praise?

3) <u>Working hypotheses:</u>

For making real progress in working with a question we need to deconstruct the stories into sub-aspects and a number of transversal propositions that can be drawn from them.

- The connection between Christmas and unpaid labour appeared in other stories also. Hence we formulated a preliminary proposition: Celebrations like Christmas are closely connected to getting used to waged/unwaged labour. It is seen as noble to do something for a "praise the Lord" and at the same time there is a disregard of work that is done for free. Similarly waged labour is seen in two ways, while it is elevated (it brings in money) it is at the same time degraded because it is low doing something solely for financial gain. It would certainly bring us new insights if we were to investigate the role of the church in the establishment of these contradictory value judgements.

4) <u>General suggestions for revision:</u>

The stories should not be written too dry and stinted, they should rather include as many details as possible because this is exactly what allows us to study those of our connections that do not conform with the enlightened consciousness. The scarcity is result of dismissive evaluations of our emotions, thoughts, desires, and us assuming they are irrelevant.

  The writer Ruth Rehmann suggested to let the others continue writing at those points where an author cannot remember any further details. This will trigger protest in the author, her experiences are so much different to what the others assumed them to be; she will write on against the fantasies of the others and in doing so she may yet remember more

details. We consider this to be a particularly positive form of working collectively. It allows everyone to work simultaneously with a subject matter, and progress together towards better understanding of the structures through the multiplicity of experiences.

5) <u>Collection of methods</u>:

We reckoned it makes sense to use as many methods as possible for gaining material from the stories; recording them has a double function: on the one hand we bring to our minds what methods we are actually applying, on the other hand it results in a kind of generalisable collection of methods which is helpful for others also.

- We scanned the story for <u>contradictions</u>: evaluation of baking at the beginning and at the end;
- for vacuums: the distribution of labour in the family is missing, similarly the criteria for jobs to be paid;
- we checked for persons' <u>interests</u> being stated in the text: e.g., the author suggests to work for praise only, but her motivation must be more faceted (create a shared experience), otherwise the disappointment at the end would not be comprehensible;
- <u>context analysis</u>: we detect what appears as connected: Christmas/expensive/fancy food, home made/mundane;
- clarifying what we ourselves <u>take for granted</u>: that she is peeved about not getting praise, that girls always have to do the stupidest jobs …

Rewrite

After working with the texts we rewrite the stories, not only one but all. The author tries to remember more clearly and fill the vacuums along the newly found questions. She tries to reconsider and to describe her emotions and contradictions on the basis of the new perspectives. The rewriting is meant to facilitate a deeper insight into particular mechanisms of female societalisation that we can gain only by way of numerous detailed studies. It also means for the author that she will practically revise her experiences from changed perspectives. The second versions will presumably include some parts in which the <u>how</u> of our

actions and their fields of tensions are worked through better, as well as other parts in which new contradictions appear that lead to further questions. We believe there is no definite end point up to which the stories should be rewritten again and again. Rather we should try out different possibilities and make the results available to everyone else.

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Chapter 5

LIVING CONTRADICTIONS
STAGING POSTS OF FEMALE IDENTITY

Innsbrucker Autorinnenkollektiv

Our aim was to start working collectively with memory-stories in a seminar in Innsbruck. This seminar was suitable for research because it was organised as a series of 3-day-workshops and students were highly motivated. The main part of this essay is based on the results of some of the work in this seminar (with approx. 70 students). It is written by a collective. In one of the first sessions we formulated a number of questions . . . . For reasons of simplifying the work we choose only two of them: *Living contradictions* and *When oppression became unbearable*. . . . nearly all of the students choose [the topic of *Living* contradictions]. When we read the first stories we noticed in them a messy entanglement of contradictions. It took some effort to find out what the authors depicted as contradiction, what type of transformation happened to the contradiction in the story and which contradictions were skilfully camouflaged by the author's constructions. In some cases the assumed contradiction could be identified as the "wrong" problematic; but the formulation of the problem as assumed suitable by the author revealed another contradiction. Recognising it was a first step to overcome it. Other stories at first seemed completely void of contradiction and yet, they were written under this heading. In all cases the joint investigative work made the contradictions move.

  We conceptualised contradiction as generally reciprocally exclusive motives, attitudes and actions that were still practised simultaneously. A first reading of the stories brought another, unexpected result: many had chosen an experience from the properly political sphere. We note here that the women asked about living contradictions answer by referring to political experiences, that they experience the confrontation with issues of regulating society as a contradiction to other areas of life and to themselves. At the same time this result lets us see differently all those

stories that are not directly about politics. Not only do we find it strange how women approach politics. We also recognise that they relate in quite similar fashion to social requirements in other areas, school, family. It is always issues of regulation of life that the individuals see themselves confronted with. Taking them on is not represented as a capability that can be learned, it rather appears as a fateful coincidence. Questions of finding allies or collective strength are evaded similarly in the different spheres of life. In our search for staging posts of female identity that means that we have to take as the subject matter of our research what we understand as politics or political. From this perspective the proposition of the new women's movement that the personal is the political gains a different timeliness: it is no longer about the political relevance of the personal sphere or that its separation is used in doing politics; instead the women approach the problems at family gatherings or in relationship with their parents in the same way as they live out for instance solidarity with El Salvador.

When we formulated our question about the contradictions we had also assumed that we could find out how the individuals live the analytically identifiable contradictions (like the one between waged labour and capital, or those in the division of labour according to sex). Essentially what is reported in the stories is what is experienced as contradictory as such in social life. In this way contradictions seem to be constitutive for growing into society in every case, because they relate to personal unsuitability for societal tasks where the societability itself is problematic.

The Innsbruck Project

In our project we were looking for staging posts for liberation.

Identity was understood as materialising the ensemble of societal relations, thereby allowing to depict societal obstructions in the process of identity acquisition. Constraints and potential for resistance are not easily distinguished in real life. But the search for strengths, for the willingness to change and its success, for victories and practical hopes, for utopias that have the potential to become reality brings up further understanding and insights that increase the possibilities of women's liberation and acting in solidarity. When we remember potential for resistance we pin down stepping stones in a quagmire of obstructions, put poles into a torrential river that chains us to the meagre banks.

The activities are directed towards changing the relations out of inner necessity, assuming that we feel the chains and experience them as misery and lack of meaning. Collectively working out potential for resistance strengthens the courage to give up positions of certainty. It creates focal points in the pathless terrain of attempted female liberation. Making out staging posts for us means to extend beyond the confines of forms of privateness in activities of liberating, collective societalisation.

The project "Staging posts of female identity" was the result of a long period of students' efforts in the context of a seminar at the Institute of Educational Science at University Innsbruck. As students we organised a working group for preparation, and another one for accompanying the seminar. In three 3-day-workshops Frigga and Kornelia tried–in a kind of crash course–to pass on essential basics and insights of their research so far. Presentations and discussions in plenary and working groups were meant to deliver the tools necessary for ourselves to detect possible staging posts for female liberation with the method of memory-work. Many women who up to then were mostly interested in a passive reception of theory became engaged in a process of production, much to their own surprise. Inspired by the prospect to write a contribution to this book, but also in doubt whether that would work for us, we headed into this adventure. Many of us learned to find some joy in uncertainty. When we worked with the stories in our working groups we realised that in doing so we already lived out a staging post of female identity.

"Jump in at the deep end"

> *"This is going to be a short story, more than a lunch break isn't possible. Besides, I had hardly time to think about the topics, how and in which story could I wrap together the contradictions between university, partner and friends, and political work. Would I come up at all with such a story? And somehow it should include how I progressed and am not any longer as dependent as at the age of seventeen.*
>
> *An assistant in the Institute asks her whether she would like to write an article about the working group on El Salvador, of which she was one of the main instigators. Writing is something that she fears, she doesn't fully dare to do it. For half a year however she has now adopted the strategy of no*

longer saying 'No' as a matter of course if she is concretely asked, according to the motto 'jump in at the deep end', because eventually you have to learn it as an important means of political action. And in the moment of acceptance the pain in the stomach isn't there yet. Hence she accepts without hesitation, not showing her uncertainty. And she thinks that she can learn something from it.

Summer and the holiday pass. So far nothing hard and fast has been discussed, and she does not contact the assistant either. At the first meeting for continuing the working group he approaches her again, asks, is she still interested. Again she agrees without hesitation. In a conversation afterwards however she roughly explains her fears, because the embarrassment won't be as bad if it is announced in advance. At the same time she doesn't like that, finds herself silly doing this type of talk.

For the next meeting the concept, the important topics are supposed to be noted by everyone. Thank God, until then there is a lot to do, there is no time left to make problems for oneself. On the last day before the meeting she writes everything together and reviews it shortly before the meeting one more time.

The meeting runs fine. Again she hints at her problems, says, how important it is to her to learn how to write, and that she believes she can learn something in working with him. She even brings along two articles that she has written on a similar issue, but in the end she doesn't give them to him to read. The next step is agreed upon, who will write which section.

The last four days before the deadline the task becomes unavoidable. Thank God, there is again a lot to do. Hence in the short time available it is possible to write with relatively little pain in the stomach, between organisation of events, reading an essay in 'Subjekt Frau' and putting up billboards, and she is not forced to review the article twenty times because she is never satisfied.

At break time during the Haug-workshop she speaks with Herbert and asks him to collect the copy of her article from

> *the assistant, and also his part. She fears the assistant's judgement, is afraid she wrote stupid things and wrote badly, formulated clumsily (a real deficit of her). And she thinks, if she doesn't hear the judgement directly it is not as bad. Secretly she hopes he says the article is 'very good', but in truth she cannot see that happening and she also knows her shortcomings. At the same time there is the fear the assistant would not be honest in relation to his judgement for not hurting her. At any rate, if someone else does it for her, she does not have to face up to it. And she will meet him anyway later today to discuss the final version of the article.*
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> *On the one hand she laughs about herself, because this all is pure mad, on the other hand she is angry that her own person, the fear of being seen as stupid can become so powerful and therefore political necessities can sometimes not be put in practice.*
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> *And now I think similar in relation to the story, am afraid, hope on the one hand that it will be used to work through in this group, and on the other hand also not. And with my fears I don't yet have the principle: 'Get it out. Jump in at the deep end.'"*

This story of politics leads us to different battlefields. We have just tuned into the global fields of struggle in El Salvador when we are already drawn into the author's inner life. Similar to the production of an article she presents "living contradiction" as an interior drama. For her the task of PR-work becomes a sharp conflict between "should want to" and "cannot." How is such a connection of on the one hand global scale politics that transcend immediacy and on the other hand the "individual depths" of a single person constructed? And what problem solving strategy is offered here?

The author presents politics for change by way of a mere keyword, "El Salvador", that seems to suffice to depict and explain the world as an object for change, the individual as an agent of change, a subject. At closer look the story contains self-evidence, unquestioned content and forms of politics which stand in contrast to the claimed change of world and self. The reasons for the author's political involvement, her motivations are not made a topic. Therefore a personal involvement in

solidarity with El Salvador does not feature as a possibility for action that could be responded to in a variety of ways, it rather appears as an obligation, as a moral question, a norm from the outset. Furthermore, she sees writing an article as a means of political work that one simply has to be able to accomplish. Aims and means of politics therefore don't become objects to appropriate. Objectives remain "artificial," completely abstract.

The author writes of fear that stands in the way of the political ambition. But with such an indifferent and unassailable "outside" she finds hardly any access points to bring them into a public sphere for working through. In such a construction the "interior" offers the primary location for the conflict between "should want to" and "cannot." The author deals with her difficulties in writing an article predominantly as a conflict or "personal characteristics", of many "strengths" and "weaknesses." From this "inside" she cannot transfer her problems of competence in writing into concrete learning activities. The deficit remains chained to emotions like "stupid" and "silly." The author turns in circles with her fear, respectively she develops fear of her fear due to lack of coping strategies. The "interior" that we found to be a comforting retreat in the story "Family is always and everywhere" (see below) is here constructed as a prison cell from which to escape becomes a logical necessity.

The author constructs herself as someone who in principle likes to learn, however in concrete terms avoids learning, for example she produces a constant shortage of time that prevents her to start with what she intended. She approaches this contradiction "inside" by educational means: commanding and manipulating herself ("you have to learn it", "in the moment of acceptance the pain in the stomach isn't there yet") as well as putting herself under the lead of a teacher. He is the outside counterpart to the only "strengths" that are presented of her, will and insight. He is a competent ally in her process of overcoming herself, brother-in-arms against her "weaknesses." The assistant appears only at the beginning and the end of the writing process, he requests the paper and judges it, but he is not a collaborator. The judgement itself of the product—we noted the choice of legal jargon—plays a peculiar double role: the author sees it in total terms, a questioning of herself as a person, and at the same time she reserves for her to reject the critique as anyway unjustified. In our reading this indicates that (self-)integration in dependence is crossed by the motivation for self-determination.

Appropriating the respective competences would require an orientation on content and form instead of locating learning problems in character traits. This would be a decisively different pathway towards the intended objectives, i.e. concentrating on concrete steps in the working process (here: producing a draft, discussing it with other people etc.). The otherwise missing yardsticks and criteria for writing an article leave the learning movement without a location. In a peculiar way this puts out of sight the person, and yet puts her into focus as a permanent problem. This prevents the author from entering into the process of appropriation, all that remains is to "jump in at the deep end", a forceful move away from her fears. In doing so the author hangs in the air, the problem solving strategy becomes an isolated test of courage. Such an idea of development does not include company of others on the way, there is no space for learning collectives or critique in solidarity rather than a "judgement" from above. In this story the production of the article for politics of change is done in traditional ways, unquestioned forms of privateness; at the end of the day the effort to change that is necessary to fulfil the task remains solely with the individual person, hinging on her ability to overcome personal problems, or character traits. If the overcoming of personal issues is so dominating, the actual set-up of the environment moves out of sight. It only appears in form of individual persons, or personalisations. In absence of mediating steps between herself and the global, especially attempts for horizontally societalised conditions of development at local level (e.g., the working group on El Salvador as a learning support) the politics of approaching the world and of expanding beyond immediacy in the perspective of change gets in fact stuck in immediacy. Therefore the process of producing politics for change itself remains out of sight; the "deep end" appears mysterious, it cannot be cleared up.

We asked the author to attend to the following vacuums in her second version: her political motivation and ideas (criteria); the relation of the article to the politics, i.e. who is the expected audience, what should it achieve and be useful for; the relation between learning and critique; the–not yet included–appraisal of the product by the assistant; the blandness of the characters in the story; the insufficient forces, or rather strategies against the enemies of autonomy; the complete absence of collectives. (We forgot to ask about the content of the article and her own appraisal of it).

2nd version

". . . because she worked in the El Salvador committee which had as its aim to make better use of the university for an engagement with El Salvador and to establish a basis for a public perception that was in contrast to the dominant opinions in Tirol. For the duration of a semester she had worked together with the assistant in a working group. He was rather impressed by the form of the working group (there were four institutes participating), and that they were established 'from below'. Hence his idea to use both the didactical part, i.e. the structure of the working group, and also the actual content of the work in an article.

 Writing is something that she fears, she doesn't fully dare to do it. For half a year however she has now adopted the strategy of no longer saying 'No' as a matter of course if she is concretely asked, according to the motto 'jump in at the deep end.' In the past she was confronted by times already with the request to write an essay, particularly in the El Salvador committee. That was the case, for instance when she returned from El Salvador and it was about making her experiences and her knowledge publicly available. She had always deemed it important to write these articles because there are not too many opportunities to ask for the solidarity of people. She thinks that public speeches (lectures, theatre) and writing are the most important opportunities they have at hand. Nevertheless she avoided it for a long time and left it to others. That was always quite stressful, and also a blow to her sense of self-worth, and she felt very restricted in her political possibilities for action, and she thought that she definitely had to do that once and learn it. But the situation was still sustainable because in most cases two friends who had helped to build up the committee took on these tasks. Now they are gone. The writing thus needs to be done by someone else, and there are not that many around. Besides, to avoid the articles now would be in a harsh discrepancy to her role in the committee and to her knowledge.

Accordingly—and in line with her motto—she accepts without hesitation, and without showing her uncertainty . . .

(...) In a conversation afterwards they agree to write the article together (or had they agreed already before that, she doesn't know exactly any more). She tells him that she beliefs she could learn something from him, at the end of the day writing is part of his job . . . She is responsible for the part in which the choice of El Salvador is explained and whatever general information about El Salvador shall be in the article, he is responsible for the part on didactics. Thank God, until then there is a lot do, there is no time left . . .

(...) Why is she never satisfied? On the one hand she is never sure, did she include all important elements, on the other hand she thinks of analyses that are at least roughly Marxist and explain the essential contexts in simple terms, and are also written in an exciting way and easy to read. She cannot get such a thing to paper. She thinks she knows enough about El Salvador, but not enough about international and economic contexts. (Although, there does not need to be too much in the article, but it could be more in it.) And she thinks of the statement of the teacher, 'clumsily and badly composed, rugged reading', and she herself finds her style cumbersome.

(...) She knows Herbert for a long time, therefore she's not embarrassed and laughs about her own panic. She is afraid of the judgement, particularly concerning the style, but also that the assistant might find trivial what she wrote, like everyone could write that. Maybe she also fears that he thinks that she is a bluffer and he needs to revise the image that he had of her. That is also something she fears might happen when the article gets published. Therefore she thinks it is not as bad if she does not have to face up to it directly. Secretly she hopes he says 'very good' . . .

(...) At the end she yet collects the part herself, the assistant doesn't say a lot so that she can read his part unbiased. Later when they meet they are both happy with the other's part. She thinks that in fact it would have been possible to write a better article, but so what. He is only concerned that due to

the direct criticism of the USA the article might not be printed. She argues that this cannot be expressed in different terms, and it cannot be left out either, hence it stays.

The assistant takes on the task to join the two parts together. She thinks that this will be easier for him and that she has done enough anyway. At their last meeting they review the whole thing together once more, and he types up the final version."

We found the first version of the story constricting and depressing. Now, the second version leaves us nearly stunned that some degree of satisfaction, kindness and warmth has made its way into the text. Instead of a lone fighter in a political desert caught up in her fears we now meet a woman who sees herself taking a step on the way to appropriation and passing on of competences. We meet a learner. How does such a different view of the same situation arise?

By including the details along the lines of the questions handed to the author the actors and their acting in the story becomes more vivid: The environment of the protagonist is visible as a social fabric, the persons are painted clearer in their respective role as supporters or obstructors of development. The assistant appears as not simply a judge but also as a teacher from whom she believes to be able to "learn something" and as partner in discussion and author of a second part of the jointly produced essay. In the background of her fear of writing "clumsily and badly composed, rugged reading" in a style that she herself finds cumbersome a teacher appears who made such a statement (what did the other teachers say?). Fear in this way becomes recognisable as a product. Herbert who in the first instance was merely mentioned in passing and presented as a kind of service provider is now depicted as a fellow human being with whom it is possible to talk about fear without embarrassment, and also to share a degree of distance (humour) in the struggle. She describes herself in relation to the El Salvador committee not only as one of the "main instigators." Instead the group appears as a network of friends, with division of labour and requirements for development. The author also fills vacuums concerning her own activities, she states her political position and–in general manner– aims, audience, content and style of the article. In the first version of the story she reduces the writing problems to questions of formulation, and by doing so she bundles up the

different requirements of the task in a single unit of one homogeneous mammoth task. By laying out the problematic in this manner the author at the same time constructs a person reduced to an incompetence. The entire human being only appears as Achilles heal, relates to the task only through the lenses of the "deficit characteristics", therefore is necessarily on the run, or rather ready to jump. The first version thus reads like a story of fear, while the revised text–due to further differentiating the problematic–shows more possibilities for development. They de-dramatise the story and allow us as readers for the first time to understand why the author is able to eventually produce a result despite all the obstacles.

This story is about learning. It deals with the contradiction between "learning in school" and "learning in politics," with university as the point of intersecting lines. The accent in the first version is on the "return of school" and learning under oppression in vertical societalisation; the accent in the second version is on the "political utopia" and learning for liberation, for horizontal societalisation. In some respect the author produces her article along patterns of school: isolated, not focused on content but on "getting it done," afraid of the public that is equated with judgement in terms of undifferentiated statistical allocation of position and grades scaled from A+ to E, a threat of judgement of the entire person. Under conditions of competition and separation of public and private spheres bluffing accounts for a general survival strategy. This is even worse for women due to their specific alien position in these societal contexts, with the effect of a constant impostor syndrome (see also Haug and Hauser 1985: 65f.). This objective situation materialises for the author in particular on intersubjective level, namely as mistrusting others ("the assistant might be not honest in relation to his judgement") and as fear of being shown up ("she is a bluffer"). The bourgeois requirement to present a most homogenous, "mature" identity free of contradiction affects progressive collectives too. Among other things it restricts their possibility of advancing a culture of contradiction, a qualitatively different public sphere.

Albert Morrow - New Woman ... (1894) [1]

The author seems to feel coerced to nearly hide her development from her political network, she accepts uncertainty "without showing" it. When she mentions her problem she merely asserts its existence, but she does not offer possibilities for the others to come in as support that the

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1   source: Gallica Digital Library under the digital ID bpt6k6436205m, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=45738109

group could provide to her in making concrete steps in her learning process. Hence it is not the social back-up that allows her to jump into the new and scary (taking the risk of learning requires scaffolding); in the second version it becomes clear instead that the author gains a certain self-confidence from her topical competence. In contrast to the self-subjugation to the judgement of someone else that apparently prevailed in the first story now there are also her experience in and knowledge about El Salvador mentioned. This makes explicitly visible her own criteria for the article, and consequently the possibility of self-representation and resistance (she argues in the conversation with the assistant, that "this cannot be said in different terms, and it cannot be left out either, hence it stays").

Although the more concrete second version offers certain possibilities for and realisation of political learning and increases of capabilities for action, there are still enough vacuums, abstractions, that provide hiding spots for the normative and for personalisation. For example she thinks of an "at least roughly Marxist" analysis, but she does not take her real life situation as the locus for positioning herself in relation to this idea. Hence the idea becomes a norm. The normative pushes aside herself in her concrete circumstances with particular situational possibilities. And at the same time she is pushed right to the centre of attention due to the experience of individual deficits. This experience becomes a problem, albeit that it shouldn't ("with my fears I don't yet have the principle: 'Get it out. Jump in at the deep end'"). Therefore the difficulties in expressing herself, depicted as the author's central problematic, appear in parts in factual form, in form of overestimating the importance of the article, its gaining the status of end instead of means. The sketchiness and the lack of concrete concept of the third cause (who to address, what to achieve, why, how) are both condition and consequence of the spin-off of her fears.

At the same time the quite persistently repeated centring of macro politics around personal deficits points to something twofold: difficulties of women in doing politics, and obstructions that lie within the actual form of politics.

We read the intensity with which the author repeatedly comes back to herself as a critique of a *form* of politics in which the individuals are not considered at best as instruments for general objectives if not outright as henchmen for invisible interests; where *being*-politician is a profession

without generally accessible routes into it; and finally of our own *ideas* of politics where we regard this ignorance of the individual person as a quality of politics and not as a deficit.

"Diving into water"

The next story is not about a metaphorical jump into the water but a real one. It is also written by a man. We were glad to have male participants in our seminar who were prepared to take part in the memory-work because only in this way can we make out what is gender specific.

> *"It was a Wednesday, Thursday or Friday some 13 or 14 years ago. Summer, at any rate.*
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> *Every day in the afternoon I went to the swimming pool with my friend Mario. We often admired the 'big ones' who played tag around the pool. It was fascinating how 'cool' they jumped over barriers and dived headlong into the water, how they jumped over the one who was "on" who waited in the water, swam away from him or outwitted him in other ways. My friend and I could swim just about good enough to swim in the deep pool.*
>
> *For hours we watched them, fascinated, admiring and somehow longing.*
>
> *We also admired the divers on the 3-m-springboard that to us seemed so gigantic. We would have loved to jump. Be we did not dare to do it. We often sat on the board when it was 'out of bounds' and from there we watched what went on in the pool. I always looked down to the water that was so deep under me. 3 meters and then one also looked through to the ground, another 5 meters. Frightening, it was so damned high and the surface of the water was always like a mirror. There was always movement in the water, it constantly changed, it was never calm, one could never adjust to the water, the height. Often when the springboard was made available for diving and we had to climb down the ladder I remained sitting for a short time, looked at the water, wanted to jump and waited until it eventually was calm. But it was never calm, thus I got up and climbed down*

the ladder behind Mario to where a bunch of people was already waiting to finally be allowed to jump.

Yes, and at some time it happened. It was just this Wednesday, Thursday or Friday 13 or 14 years ago.

I had left the pool earlier this day, suddenly my sister who is 16 months younger than myself came to me and said, she had been jumping from the 3-m-springboard.

Wow. That hurt. I could not, did not want to believe it.

I hid my dismay and said that I didn't believe it, that it was a lie and that she should not be such a braggart. But somehow she convinced me. I left her standing there and went out of the house, mulling over, anxious; something had happened that should not have happened: my sister jumped from the 3-m-springboard.

That was awful.

It was like back then when I and my sister got bicycles. I got a real one, a little green bike, and she got one with stabilisers on the side.

But she learned to ride the bike faster than I did. And she wanted to get rid of the stabilisers at a time when I could not yet ride the bike. My God, that was bad, how I practised. I just about made it. When my father 'eventually' dismantled the stabilisers I was able to 'ride myself' too.

And now she jumped from the 3-m-board.

I don't remember was it me asking my father, or was it he asking me to go to the pool. At any rate we went together. That was important because without adult company I was not allowed in any more. Even today I remember how we headed off. Even today I see the blue skies in front of me, the road we went. I remember how we spoke about all sorts of meaningless stuff, because no-one, not my sister neither my father should 'know' about my plan.

So we went to the pool. There I climbed up to the 3-m-springboard. I climbed up as I did so often. As so often I stood up there, as so often I looked down to the water, but today that was not it yet. Today I jumped.

I still remember how long the 'flight' seemed to me, how relieved I was when I dived into the water.

Order was restored. It was alright again.

At home I said to my sister merely in passing that I had jumped from the 3-m-springboard and that there was nothing special at all about jumping from the 3-m-springboard."

In our analytic endeavour we thought about the probably only random difference of the metaphorical and the real dive into water: at the end of the day it is quite significant for our sense of self and our relation to the world whether our volitional actions have consequences that can be felt as material and sensuous–like the relief of the water closing up around oneself–or they remain in the field of the social, of attributions and signification. Obviously a generalising conclusion would require–among other things–one or more female stories about the first dive from the 3-m-springboard and the significance of this in the memory. Our collective attempts to remember showed us scared but not fascinated by the height of the board, and somehow we came down because we needed this dive for our swimming certificate. For some of us the first jump was also the last one. How different the author of our story. At first sight he presents a context that is well known from common assumptions about male socialisation. He has to be better than a girl and he acts this challenging competition out on his own, more or less victorious at the end. Other events (learning to ride the bicycle) are thrown in to support such a suggestion. The hero is a result of competition. For such a simple message the text is constructed quite elaborate and expansive. The calm adventures of long sunny afternoons in the pool lead us into the sudden disaster of the sister's account, ominous father-son dealings up to the actual climax that eventually triggers only a casual gesture, a fleeting remark.

  The narrative effort made us question what in fact is presented here as contradiction – after all the author remembered this story as triggered by the question about living contradictions. We find three possible constellations that can be presented under the emotion of "contradictory." There is the first scene in which the little ones cannot do what the big ones enjoy competently and with delight; there is the unbearable fact that he cannot do what the little sister accomplishes; and there is this feeling in face of the 3-m-springboard: a simultaneity of temptation and incalculable fright.

Eventually our discussion whether all of these are contradictions, whether the little sister is in fact experienced as competitor and why the older boys are only perceived in such joyful perspective brought up the following thesis:

It is not simply "competition" amongst siblings, between brother and sister, between boys and girls. It is rather the fact that the certainty of the social order and the trust in it is threatened, if the 16 months younger sister can do what oneself wanted to be able to do later. The big ones whom he and his friend admire and whom they find fascinating, "somehow longing", they can be watched, contemplatively and with joy because they represent the own future. When the two little ones are older, they will be like them. There is complete approval. It relates to the increase of competences by way of growing up. One can look at it from the sideline and check whether one is there already. One will expand competences step by step. Looking down from the springboard shows the readiness to learn something new, curiosity how it will be and the calculation that seems to be part of mastering the water. All of this is perfectly fine, as confirmed by the friend who is in the same position. This harmoniously challenging world is ruptured when the little sister reports accomplishment of the competence that lies in the future as it were from the past–at an age that he left behind 16 months ago already. Now he knows that the natural growth of competences that are gathered like annual rings is by no means a simple self-fulfilling fate. His own input is required. The author allows us to view the progress of his process of individualisation. The friend is no longer mentioned, the father becomes a mere companion. At the centre lies the solitary decision, the own deed, the redemption. Even the remark in passing to the sister that it is nothing special at all to jump reinstalls the order: if one is growing up, all competences will be obtained.

We asked ourselves, would girls be able to write such a story? We came to the conclusion that they could not do that because they don't build up the trusting confidence in the increase of competences by simple growth. Rather than a prospective look at the own future they perceive specific competences of others as a symbol of deprivation. "I will never be able to do that" – such an ordinary sentence, that we know quite well, contains more an agreement with the incompetence to which they surrender as if it was fate, not activity. However, the active establishment of the own person as a competent individual also leaves noticeable gaps that appear

as vacuums in the story. The social remains peculiarly abstract in the story. Although the climax of the story is located in the family, the mother is missing from the family situation. The father emerges, but there is no reason given why the boy is suddenly allowed to the pool only if accompanied by an adult. The sister eventually is completely abstract: we neither hear her celebrating her deeds nor about her reaction to his comment. This reaction and also the one of the father play no role at all for the eventual sense of self and the pride of the boy. The friend also disappears in the last scenes. He, who guaranteed the natural order of not-yet-competence, has no part in the eventual competence that the growing child acquires solitarily.

A lot remains unclear to us. A number of suggestions require empirical knowledge of the different constructions of girls and boys, their relation to themselves, to others, to the world. An important distinction that the sexes produce themselves concerns the relation to the social world, to the people in their proximity–a distinction that goes together with the process of individualisation–hence we asked the author to fill the gaps in relation to the other persons in his story.

Based on other studies (Haug et al. 1983) we know that the relation of men and women to their bodies is quite different. For women the body is central in their lives, but at the same time they have a more external-instrumental relation to it that also determines their sensuousness. The body is a stake in the process of societalisation. For men we had assumed there is a type of consensual process of toughening up. Their body carries them through the world and therefore needs to be prepared for their actions, whether this is the acquisition of competences or sensuous enjoyment. Looking at the story from this perspective we find another white spot. Not even the temperature of the water seems worth remembering, whether it was cold and scary, nor is there a mention of a fearful shiver prior to the jump; or a triumph of will over the reluctant body. There would be more for the author to revise.

(In contrast to the second version of all the female stories, the revised version of this one brought hardly any noteworthy change or transfer–the same applies to the other story mentioned in this text that was written by a man. We include them in the appendix[2] without having been able to solve the mystery of such stability.)

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2   At the end of this chapter

Our initial question was about staging posts for liberating action. This story tells us that increased capacity for action arises in the process of individualisation. Unhinging from integration in the natural chain of growth leads to the acquisition of competences. Driving forces are the desire for development and the shock of disorder.

"Everyone just cares about themselves, only I care about me"

In this story we hear about a student representative who is in a dilemma over representational politics and grass roots democracy. Similar to the section "Jump in at the deep end", the two sides of a contradiction, i.e. here person and "third cause" are put into an obstructive relation, or rather they are exclusive of each other. But in this case it isn't the person who stands in the way of politics, rather politics is in the way of the person:

> *"She arrived a few minutes late at the meeting of the institute-group and saw an assistant sitting among the students, she nearly wanted to turn around again because he did not belong there, but then it transpired that he was there in relation to a student issue. He spoke for a long time and as soon as he was gone the head of the institute came, she also spoke long about issues that in fact she had no interest in. Library opening times, establishing learning groups for first year students at the institute. Although these issues should have been of interest to her—after all she was an institute representative—she realised that she became increasingly impatient, did not listen to the professor any more, probably also impolitely showed her lack of interest rather openly, but said nothing. There were other important issues to discuss, to organise, and now this woman talking wasted her time. Already angry she now thought, 'she is paid for that, but I am not.' The professor left and the time reserved for the institute-group was over. Hence they agreed on a new date to deal with the issues at hand, the organisational trifle (writing posters, distribution of tasks for the plenary meeting) that only wasted her time but didn't bring in anything for her. Another hour-and-a-half gone, she could*

have prepared for the next seminar. And it all came back to her again: that she had assumed as institute representative she could do something that addressed her interests, e.g. determine the subject matter in the syllabus to some degree—something that she had reckoned was vitally important because she knew exactly what she wanted from studying, and this was one way to get it organised, but on the other hand she also did something that ran counter to her interests. Because the time that she invested in students' politics was missing when it came to the actual studies, she could not get involved in the seminars as much as she would have wanted. Most likely she would need longer to finish her studies than intended, and here she totally cut her own skin because she lived of savings only, she did not get a stipend and her parents were not prepared to pay sufficient subsistence. If people on stipends acted as institute representatives their stipend was extended for a year or two, thus their work was paid, her bank account however paid no heed, the money would run out, no matter had she finished the studies or not. And soon she found herself in a mood of catastrophe. Anger paired with despair. She remembered her failure with her parents, she had not had the energy to go to bring them to court for claiming subsistence, so she did not even have a written confirmation that they would continue paying the laughable 1400 Schillings until she finished her studies. They had said they would only pay as long as it was easy enough for them. And the child benefit would also run for only another four years, until then she would not have finished her dissertation yet. And the high performance stipend that she had hoped for was now scraped in its earlier format and bound to social needs, hence this possibility was no longer there for her either. At this point she drew a line, escaped briefly, not taking herself serious, into the fantasy of writing a letter to the president of the republic and he might grant her a special stipend. Pushed aside these thoughts vehemently by telling herself that she had to let the things come to her, kicked a pole with all her might and found

> *herself in front of the room where the next seminar was supposed to happen."*

The author constructs a perfect dilemma. The drama of the lone fighter. Inwardly a dialogue of resistance takes place without effecting concrete action. The author experiences her situation as desperate servitude due to the following strategy: the way she lays out and locates her problems offers the reader a construction that appears to be coherent in itself. Not only does she present a lot of problems at once, she also tries to leave them in a context where they cannot be solved. She may think about her financial misery as much as she wants, it will not stop the assistant or the professor from talking too long. This avoidance strategy is further tightened by the constant shift from one to another problem area: the author jumps to and fro between political levels, the studies and personal reproduction–in her logic each is directly connected to everything else and only an all-round solution of all the problems is possible and acceptable. Therefore she prevents the emergence of partial solutions, and does not give herself a chance for change which in her perfect dilemma would not be acceptable. Problems are not dissected, strategies for solutions not developed and actions not exerted.

  On basis of the demand for solutions to be all embracing and absolute, and the resulting powerlessness and incapacity for action, help is only possible from above (the fantasy of the letter to the president). The construction of desperate helplessness triggers anger, but she does not channel the anger purposefully, instead she simply discharges of it ("kicked a pole with all her might"). That leaves her still without money and her dissatisfaction with the institute group is still not expressed. The author holds on to the construction of being fatefully thrown into the world throughout the entire story: she does not make a conscious decision to attend the next seminar, instead she "finds herself in front of the room." A thread runs through the story of the idea that whatever she does at any given time is less important than something else that in fact she should do instead; her whole life in a way is not lived at all, at all times she finds herself where she should just not be, the motto: "Luck is always somewhere else." To keep the inner logic of this dilemma intact the author abstains from describing positive elements, e.g. within her studies. Although she claims to know exactly what she wanted from her

studies, she does not explain this any more concrete, instead she constructs the "others" as standing in the way of her achieving her aims.

The author does not expand on meaning and purpose of the studies, sole anchor and fix point in this uncertain environment, they are not put into a relation to the difficulties (lack of money and time). Stubbornly she insists on a specific all-embracing solution for all her wishes. She does not think of alliances, compromise and other alternative ways to achieve her aims. The construction as presented protects the author from acting in intervening ways.

The contradiction offered in the story lies in the presentation of the interests of the author in contrast to the interests of others. She constructs the exclusiveness of those two blocks by picking one part of her interests and using it as yardstick to measure whether her personal interests are included in those of others. The chosen reproductive interest represents the entirety of her personal concerns. Due to privatisation and the lack of societal planning it cannot be integrated in collective interests without further ado. Hence the author depicts herself as disappointed with the collective (institute group) and she cannot acknowledge its broader possibilities of support. Furthermore her frustration is predetermined by the fact that the collective of the institute group is not her fan club but a group of people with individual core areas connected by a third cause.

As the group analysing the story (of which the author is part also) we assume that getting involved in politics is a possibility to affect structural changes in direction of liberation. This is not thinkable individually. In contrast the author depicts politics only as possibility to serve her own interests, (more or less) generalisable interests don't play a role. It is difficult for us to understand why these individual issues should be anchored in politics–other less effortful ways would fit the same purpose. Instead of looking to find consensus in the institute group, establishing majorities in university committees etc., a strategy specifically tailored to her own needs would have the same effect, for instance a cup of tea with one of the lecturers in a position of responsibility. Although the author presents herself as an actor in political committees, the aims of the institute group (improving conditions for students, expanding student influence etc.) are missing as well as the personal gains through political involvement (competences, social appreciation and power). Filling these gaps would explain why the author had put her name forward for

election, thus consciously joining the context of representational politics. With this social commitment the author takes to extremes the contradiction between personal interest and interest of others that is presented in the story.

The author displays the structural contradiction in making politics between the mediated inclusion of individual interests in politics and the resulting impossibility of immediate and complete satisfaction of desires here and now as a contradiction in her own person. Even the limited possibilities of grass roots democratic forms (institute group[3]) in structures of representational democracy (institute, faculty[4]) are constructed as an inner conflict.

Excursus: "With or without money, the problem is always mine."

New for us is the connection in this story of money and involvement in politics. The connection between the people in politics is established or disrupted by money: it seems to depend on money whether or not the author remains part of the institute group. And the simple fact that someone is paid for political or professional work seems to determine whether they are seen as "friend" or "foe." This topic also allows her to formulate wants and dissatisfaction as practical constraints, the difficulties with the mediated character of working in organisational contexts become a question of money. The demand for being paid appears in the text only in connection to the more mediated political work, as if to say "if nothing else, at least I want to be paid"; here again the author's equation of "immediacy = for me", "mediacy = for others" comes in. The author furthermore connects money and self-esteem. The money that others (in this case the parents) spend on her is an expression of their affection, and therefore a measure of her self-worth. At the same

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3   *Institute groups* are made up of elected representatives and anyone else interested. These groups meet on a weekly basis to discuss all issues concerning issues of student politics. Institute groups are meant to also make publicly transparent decision making processes within the institute, and comment on general political topics of concern for students.

4   In Austria the students representation bodies are organised with a type of nationwide student parliament and also similar student parliaments in each university. Political decisions in universities are made in committees composed on a basis of parity (one third of each, professors, assistants, and students). That offers real opportunities of involvement in decision making by way of building alliances.

time she boosts her poverty as an extraordinary poverty, there seems to be no-one with similar problems. Only for this reason the daydream of appealing to the "father of the nation" can work, because otherwise what reason would he have to grant a special stipend if she was just one of many poor people?

The way she constructs her problematic does not offer a solution for the financial difficulties of the author, but it brings a gain in form of readers' reactions. Who would not admire this woman who is politically active in spite of all these extremely difficult personal circumstances? Thus money becomes a screen to hide behind. But at the same time money is hidden: just like other aspects of individual reproduction (addressing physical and psychological needs) the financial situation of the individuals in socialist, or rather feminist groups is neither collectively regulated nor is it even made a topic at all.

In our analysis of the second version story we only pick up on the parts that were changed by the author, and of those only the ones that explicitly deal with politics:

> *"(...) She was not particularly interested in what was said, especially for the latter, because it did not apply to her immediately, but she thought that she should be interested, if not personally than at least because she felt obliged in her 'office' as institute representative. And she acted by combining both: on the one hand she remained sitting and thereby fulfilled her 'duty', on the other hand she probably showed her resentment rather openly, as was confirmed by similar facial expressions by others too."*

The author still constructs the contradictions between mediacy and immediacy of political action, and between grass roots democracy and demands of representational politics in the same area of conflict as personal conflict between "duty and affinity." In the first version she presents herself as suffering and torn by contradictions, now in the second version she appears as integrating and overcoming them well. Linguistically she turns non-action into action. From being controlled by the situation she moves on to control the situation simply by re-evaluating an otherwise unchanged episode. This newly introduced strategy allows her to continue without change.

> *"(...) For a short time she felt like being back in a school class where a teacher spoke without recognising that the attention of the pupils had already moved on to other things. But it was not only boredom, it was also anger, because she urgently had to sort other issues . . . As no-one interrupted her the head of the institute kept talking until she had everything said that she deemed important."*

The collective that remained completely void of attributes in the first version now is shown as emotionally in tune with her (school class versus teacher), it functions as a projection screen for her emotional state. She implies that everyone is similarly not interested just like herself, and derives that everyone has potentially the same competence to intervene ("As no-one interrupted her"). This strategy enables the author to harmoniously resolve the conflicts between her own interests and the interests of others, and between grass roots democracy and representational politics, without changing anything in the praxes. The motto of the first story "I for me and everyone else against me" is turned into "I against another one, and everyone with me."

> *"(...) And when she then left the time reserved for the institute-group was over. Now she aired her anger, she told the others what she had thought, that the professors and assistants are paid for wasting time with such talk but she is not paid for listening to them, she could have just as well done her preparation for the next seminar. The others agreed in parts with what she said, but in parts they also calmed her down, saying that they may simply find a new date where they would distribute tasks for the plenary meeting, write posters and compile the text for the info-sheet. All this organisational trifle that only wasted her time, but didn't bring in anything else . . ."*

This construction of the "subordinate group" (see below "The family is always and everywhere") can only be maintained until the author lets individual members of the group speak and thereby make the utilisation of the group for the author's purposes impossible. The figures become a profile, even if everyone is similarly concerned for the well-being of the

author (they agree with her, calm her down, arrange a new date). The support offered however is not depicted as positive by the author because it refers to the unloved mediated political work ("organisational trifle"). The strategy of "perpetually wrong perspective of the others" permits to depict the collective as letting her down in spite of the offer of support.

> *"(...) Yet she knew exactly when she thought about putting her name forward for the election of institute representative. The unpleasant jobs would be dumped on the 'elected.' But that were not her only thoughts, otherwise she would not have done it. A few months ago she was part of the events that led to a feminist woman whom she liked getting an assistant post, albeit that it wasn't easy. She had liked that, there were concrete visible results, and it was successful. But it was a single case, it had not been repeated since . . ."*

By not establishing a connection between on the one side her political work, deemed to be trifle, boring, wasted time, and on the other side her political success, the latter can be pictured predominantly as fate only: it happens or not.

  This does not mean we assume that in institute politics there would be no "organisational trifle", boring and a waste of time. But we should–especially as women who wish to get involved in such politics–find access points for interventions and actions that bring about change, instead of proving their impossibility. Together we learned from this story and its analysis–as in fact from most of the stories–how essential for survival it is for us to work through the relation of the own person and the possibilities for action to the political structures, so as to be increasing our capacity for action as political subjects.

"The family is always and everywhere"

The following story is located in the field of feminist, or rather socialist-feminist politics, in a networking organisation of various women's groups. In the earlier memory-stories the protagonists appear mostly as lone fighters. Here now a larger degree of politics of alliances, connection of person and collective environment becomes visible. In very condensed

form the direction of the movement in the story "Jump in at the deep end" was towards an increased involvement in the field politics, in the story "Everyone just cares about themselves, only I care about me" it was towards a reserved retreat. "The family is always and everywhere" is rather about a "relocation", a "revision" in politics. This author does not question the necessity of her political involvement, but she requests a direct overlap between third cause and person, accordingly she fluctuates between two different locations of politics:

"She, the subordinated group and the others. Alone, or alone with a couple of women in a women's group that calls itself women's platform. — 23. 10. 1985. First women's platform on the topic 'Women's Summer University 86 in Innsbruck.' She wanted to prepare for the topic, then delayed it and eventually went rather unprepared to the first meeting. She did not like the proceedings there: there were contributions like 'it must be accessible for working women' or 'it has to have a broad effect', topics were suggested in form of keywords — some of the subordinated women's group (in the widest sense women from the autonomous spectrum) took to the floor, more grumbling as she perceived it — a comment: 'I want a Women's Summer University for myself, that means one that I find interesting, not one for others whose interests I can only imagine.' There were many unspoken accusations — 'Gosh, you egocentric autonomous women', or 'you with your idea of women's politics reduced to a level of poster slogans' (all these things were not actually said). She said nothing and was very unhappy with the situation and with herself because apart of making a few comments in solidarity with contributions by the subordinated group she did not act. The meeting was over. She wanted to organise a meeting of the 'dissatisfied' women (the ones she knew), so that those who had not said a lot besides voicing rejection could collect their wishes and ideas and then contribute constructively in the next meeting. This meeting did not happen (relatively little time, too many other dates: preparation meeting Frigga Haug and Kornelia Hauser, working group Feminist Pedagogy). But she voiced

her dissatisfaction in another context (working group feminist pedagogy). She had also thought of some strategies how to disentangle this knot (other forms of organisation, building groups, changed didactics). But this was not the appropriate place to talk about it for long, yet, she had raised the issue and was calm because she knew that some women of the working group Feminist Pedagogy were taking part in the women's platform, a back-up. One of the women said by building a sub-group of 'dissatisfied' women the group as such would be divided. She thought, it is divided already, but she said nothing. She thought about her biography. In the past she had been involved in everything, preparation of celebrations for the 8th of March, demonstration, producing flyers, etc. However, the more she engaged with the topic the more her perspective became differentiated. She was no longer part of the collective socio-political action. She also no longer found <u>everything</u> important that happened in terms of scientific production or action in the women's movement. She did not find all women in the women's movement important. She looked for involvement with women who were closest to her own thinking and feeling. She no longer found dispute with women who worked in the same contexts exciting enough to enter into it voluntarily. Consequently: she retreated from the societal discourse, she ensconced in niches and she feels alright therein. The contradiction: on the one hand she is interested in a change of societal conditions, wants to be able to work together with a lot of people, and her work should be accessible for many, on the other hand she finds the dispute tiring and feels that it does not help her progressing.

Second meeting of the platform. She looks around—most of the women of the subordinated group are missing. There are three or four, mostly rather quiet women — she recognises how she gathers them for her position. She is angry about the late start, another event is still discussed for an hour, this makes her also angry, but she says nothing because she thinks that this form is also important societal activity. A

draft for a flyer is read out — she thinks it is quite good, but there is nothing new in it, i.e. it does not contain something exciting or joyful for her — she says nothing because she thinks there are certain things that one cannot say often enough, and she thinks back — it was most likely a flyer like this that had brought her to the women's movement. Somehow she cannot keep away the feeling that she is already a step further than those women who invest so much time in 'traditional forms' of resistance (flyer, banner, info stall, collecting signatures), just as she did a few years ago. She finds this thought stupid, she should not think that way. Hesitantly she raises her concerns from the first platform meeting, another woman of the subordinated group takes up the reference to the 'failed' meeting in clearer terms. The speaker has the feeling they are not understood. Some women of the subordinated group leave, she feels left alone in midst of a group of women who came together with the 'same' interest. She now gets more engaged, but she feels, she is not really heard. The whole situation annoys her, she becomes tired and lethargic, she would much prefer to jump into a joint work on a topic with some of the women of the subordinated group.

She has lost the desire to find consensus with people who in fact want the same, but differently — nevertheless she will go to the next platform meeting."

The contradiction offered explicitly in the story is about changing society and self-development. The author wants them both, but she constructs the tension between the two as mutually exclusive polarity, an either/or of necessity and desire: In traditional political involvement one will go down because one does not care for oneself - but if one cares for oneself, politics will go down.

She arranges the women who are part of the platform around this polarisation. There are "she, the subordinated group and the others" along the lines of the substantial controversy: the "subordinated group", that is the autonomous women, wants a Women's Summer University "for themselves" instead of–like "the others"– for "others". She connects the first political position with well-being, desire, novelty, the self,

individual development, and the second position–which is presented as dominant–with interests, effort, tradition, the other, societal change and individual stagnation. Emotionally she locates herself closer to the "subordinated group", but she thinks of them as "grumbling naysayers." Yet the substantial basis of the connection among them remains in the imaginary. The construction of this largely fictional group allows her to exacerbate differing positions into mutually exclusive ones. That allows for threats of withdrawal to a space outside of the platform, the space of the subordinated group. Their she hopes to find a snugly feeling of security, ongoing immediate coherence based on emotional affinity. She describes this group like a family. By way of abstractions and voids she tries to keep up for herself this "niche", her possibility for escape to an island retreat. At the same time she separates herself from this group, due to individual greatness: she sees herself advanced not only in comparison to "the others" but also to the "subordinated" women (in terms of reliability, activity etc.). As she has constructed the entirety of the platform as split by mutually exclusive positions, she now can present herself as the individual link, the intended synthesis of self-changing and changing society materialises in its advanced form in herself. In spite of her "differentiated perspective" she therefore can prevent others turning away from her, she can remain important for all women, even if all women are no longer important for her.

  The story is written rather "theoretical", including a lot of thought, but pale in experiences (which also means that it requires a different type of analysis than the experiential stories, for instance theoretical questions can be asked of the author). However, the political aspirations themselves remain vague, they are not filled with content. Her own actions and those of the others are only hinted at, her activities for change remain as missed opportunities only virtual on the level of thoughts. We want to ask the author particularly about the historical changes: What in your opinion is changing society on "macro-level" and "on micro-level" (platform, women's university)? What is your interest in either of them? What exactly do you understand to be self-changing, "for myself?" What makes doing politics joyful? What are the new things that you want to bring into politics, and why are the others responsible for you to be able to intervene or not? Why does the meeting of the "subordinated group" not happen? What in fact is that "subordinated group" anyway? And why are the dissatisfied women absent in the second meeting, how do you deal

with it? − We expect that the author in the second version fills these white spots with more concrete, hence also contradictory content and that she possibly also questions and disrupts her construction of the separation between "herself, the subordinated group and the others".

> *"She, the subordinated group and the others — a platform-story and more. — 23. 10. 1985. First women's platform on the topic 'Women's summer university 86 in Innsbruck.' She finds this issue particularly important because it is a challenge in the specific reality in Tirol. She finds the idea to work for a whole week together with women on feminist questions <u>beautiful</u> — especially if she can <u>co-determine</u> form and content as a co-organiser. She envisions continuous working groups which are going to work on a topic for the whole week, 'led' by women who have already done intensive work on the topic, in which knowledge is passed on according to demand and in which an <u>honest, collective interest in gaining knowledge</u> can develop. At the time she has an interest in the question of 'female identity and female forms of expression.'*
>
> *The way of dealing with the plan in the first meeting left her very dissatisfied. The central focus was on demarcation of positions and inextricably connected to it the affiliation to the different groups represented in the platform, but not the collective interest in the cause. Due to not intervening she felt in parts responsible for the structure of the reciprocally unspoken accusations: 'Gosh, you egocentric autonomous women', or 'you with your idea of women's politics reduced to a level of poster slogans.' She was very angry about her <u>incapacity</u> to intervene, and about the group's strategy of blockade. She sees the conceptual approach of <u>representational politics</u> solidified and supported in the individual organisations of the women to a degree that lets change appear simply impossible. She catches herself out thinking of <u>political knowledge and certain women in a personal union</u>. She thinks for a moment — if just there were other women. She dismisses the thought on the spot . . .*

(...) She is still interested in <u>changing society</u>. In the context of 'women's movement' for her that means seeing patriarchal structures that oppress her and other women, understanding their contexts and making them transparent. As a second step it means effecting change on a <u>general level</u> (for example division of labour between woman and man), and on an <u>individual level</u> in spite of existing conditions for herself and for other women increasing possibilities for action. Her interest is to create conditions in which <u>life is liveable without oppression</u>, that is for her not to be oppressed and not oppressing others.

Today she no longer finds this political acting clear enough to grasp the complexity and contrariness of the issue. <u>Oppression happens in so many ways</u> that it cannot be grasped in traditional forms of resistance (women's shared houses, women's centres). That was one thing, another one was that after a <u>long and troublesome journey from mediated political action to the insight into immediacy</u>, where desire, self-awareness and transformation are intertwined, she was no longer satisfied with traditional forms of politics — but she did <u>not know of others</u> either that could replace them. Thus she still takes part in them as a consumer (she attends demonstrations, signs petitions, votes for resolutions etc.)

For all the problems of this holistic thinking and the resulting incapacity for action, as far as the general political level is concerned she still thinks that the <u>resistance in her desire for allegiance needs to be retained</u>. Hence she looked for women with whom that would be possible to some degree (university, women's centre) — she withdrew from the collective discourse where her impression was that it didn't contribute to a new perspective on the problematic (e.g. it reproduced itself for other women), one that was important for her self-awareness and transformation. She understands this retreat to the 'group of the like-minded' as <u>building a niche</u> and therefore external to the centres of political power, but she finds that it gives her strength to approach change differently, more immediate, always <u>in comprehensible</u>

connection with her own person, more authentic, more substantiated by unequivocal transparency of her interest in this change. There is a great danger to remain in the niche — because it is so cosy there, on the other hand she does not want her resistance to get lost due to her turning against alienated political involvement.

  Second platform meeting ... She is disappointed with the unreliability of the women with whom she otherwise shares so much engagement ...

  (...) She will attend the next platform meeting. The reason lies in her contradictory insights."

When we read the revised version we realise that this type of plea for more desire in politics makes us feel even more slack than the original text. Our expectation that the questions from the first analysis would incite more experiential approaches and concrete action by the author were not met. To us the story appears to be even more smoothed over, more abstract, lacking live. We realise that the author inserts into her text bits and pieces of very general theory from the seminar on Critical Psychology that runs at the same time, and that she entrenches herself behind them too. Wherever it becomes unavoidable to depict herself as an actor she takes into her own hands the "self critical" analysis of the story. By underlining passages in the text she provides us with a kind of guide how to read the text. In this manner she also keeps up her greatness, she holds on tightly as an individual person to what was conceptualised as a division of labour. As readers working with the story the second version leaves us impressed and bored ...

  On the one hand we see this striving for wholeness in political involvement as a chain, if it is understood purely individualistic, as in "I want it *all*." On the other hand there is a progressive element in this demand for a connection of self-changing and changing society, of desire and politics, if they are lived out as "wanting and *acting more – together* with others." For women not to remain in passive resistance, but rather bring together critique and action, transfer their dissatisfaction into collective action requires reliability, as the author recognises herself. Such reliability however cannot be established, if a connection only considered with those who are "closest to the own thought and feeling", the ones she "likes", if the demand for desire in political involvement is reduced to

a politics of desire, sympathy and physical closeness. Trapped in such immediacy the groups are necessarily constructed along familial patterns: women's politics becomes a search for the best "wives", with constructions of exclusion, mating games, threats of divorce; in this manner women's politics lead into a cul-de-sac of dominance of personal questions.

If the experience of dissatisfaction with traditional forms and content of politics, and the experience of joyful alternatives are not grasped in much more concrete terms, the potential of resistance that lies in the demand for more desire in politics, and the explicit connection of desire and politics remains with the normative, the paralysing. Depicting such praxes in more concrete terms would extend the demand for wholeness by locating it in real action possibilities and limits. The problems of commonality and difference, for example in such a platform coalition of women, would then be more likely posed in relation to concrete tasks rather than "subordinated" positioning. The question of demarcation therefore would be brought to the ground of collective division of labour rather than the heights of individualistic particularities. In the end that would be much more effective and proactive, instead of obstructing and defensive. Distribution of tasks and bundling of different individuals and groups could be both potentiating and relativising. Contradictions would be more than just survivable, they could be more contradictory – and liveable.

(In particular in the analysis of this story there appears to be a certain, nearly moralistic rigidity in the assessment of the person and the positions represented. This is not only a consequence of the stage of learning whereby first insights are easily extended and formulated in terms of positions to be defended; more important seems to be that the author and the group working with the story are themselves twofold involved. After all, it is their own life that is dealt with here, they are themselves "the ones or the others" in the stories. On the other hand the difficulties in the deconstruction – for instance if one initially fell for the author's construction – lead to particularly sharp formulations. When considering reservations against a couple of judgemental formulations the usefulness of such analyses should not be forgotten. At the end of the day it is always about capacities for political action in the present for the writers and the group. By interpreting and reconstructing their own experiences they also improve elements of their own politics.

Furthermore the author is in most cases part of the group that works with the text, hence it is not the person but the actions, the layout of problems, relations that are put up for discussion.)

(. . .)

"Experience does not make woman wise, but possibly wife"

In the story "The family is always and everywhere" we met family in politics. In the following story we find politics in the family, questions of how to deal with conflict, standing in for one's interests, alliances.

"She was about twelve years of age when her mother began confiding the marriage problems to her. She had already before that experienced that there are crises, but it did not bother her much. One evening, her father was once again not at home, her mother started to cry vehemently in front of her. She sat there, unable to say a word, unable to leave the room. The mother told her how much she suffered from being with her husband, how much he neglected her and how inconsiderate he was of herself and the family. Eventually she also said that she couldn't stand it any longer and that surely she would take tablets to eventually find relief.

This was the first big breakdown of her mother, in the following years others followed. At the beginning she reacted by strongly condemning the father, if not even hating him, and always comforting the mother and suffering with her. Later she tried to intervene, started struggling with her father, reproaching him about his inconsideration and his weak will. She advised the mother to pack her bags and finally separate from this man, but she realised every time how useless these suggestions were. The more hopeless the situation became and the more her mother became apathetic, the more she had to realise that she could not help her any more.

At the age of nineteen she left home and visited only very rarely. The few times when she was at home she realised

even stronger how the parents lived beside each other uselessly. Thus the decision slowly grew in her not the follow the path of her mother. At this time she separated from her boyfriend, with whom she had been together for five years already; at this time she started to get involved with the women's movement. In spite of the rarity of her visits at home her mother noticed this development and started to harshly criticise her.

But she realised soon that despite the negative experiences at home it is not as easy to abandon acting out the traditional role of the woman, and time again she is surprised when she notices how fast she is prepared to pass on responsibility for herself to men, how fast they become the centre of her life and not only a part, an enrichment of it."

The author offers us a construction that depicts her own actions as possibly directly derivable from the parents' relationship. She wants to live a life that is the opposite of her mother's; but in the text there is no information what that would be in more concrete terms. The men with whom she enters into friendship and the course of their relationships remain as much blank spots as the description of her parents is formulaic and exaggerated and the blueprint for her own life is blurred. Based on her criticism of the father, required qualities in partners or husbands would be: they should be strong willed, compassionate, caring and constantly at home. Responsibility for the break-down of the marriage therefore is mostly shifted to the father and his behaviour that is not adequate for a family. That protects both herself and the mother and saves them having to work on contradictions. The mother is depicted as passive, helpless and completely dependent, her economic situation remains in the dark. Although the author recognises the lack of self-responsibility on the side of the mother to be a reason for the problems in the marriage, she takes on responsibility for it instead of the father. The author leaves open what exactly she means be self-responsibility.

The author depicts as her problem that in spite of her negative experiences at home she does not escape the "traditional role of the woman." She is surprised that she is always ready to subordinate to a man, although she sees the example of her mother. She suggests that

what she tells us about her childhood experiences should have made her into an "emancipated" woman, and she asks at the same time why that is not the case. As exaggerated as the report on the parental relationship may be, it yet offers an immediate answer to the question posed by the author. What she misses in the father is not an emancipation of whatever kind from traditional marriage, it is rather its proper endorsement. The highly passive role of the woman is confirmed to be unalterably protected. In this way she does in fact not look for an escape from the "traditional role of the woman", rather she's looking for "Mr. Right" who one day has to appear and who shall be the opposite of the father.

  The decisive void in the story is the missing image of a concrete alternative idea of relationship. It remains reduced to polarity: a man is either centre of her life or is not part of it at all. In the story far-reaching changes in the life of the author appear as if those actions were happening completely autonomously and without any difficulty. What strengths she developed in them and who supported her remains unclear; similarly it is not explained what the involvement with the women's movement meant to her.

  Longitudinal biographical stories like this one only allow for a rudimentary analysis, and they make a second version impossible because they imply too many omissions. Therefore we suggested the author might write a story each on both the concrete situation in the family and the separation from her boyfriend. On request of the author we then analysed only the first one:

> *"It was quite late when she heard her father coming home. She sat in the living room with her mother, the mother had smoked uninterruptedly for hours. This highlighted her nervousness even more and she tried to calm the mother down. For a while already she noticed that the relationship of the parents was yet again in a crisis, and again the mother claimed the daughter for being her comforter. The problems were always the same: In the area where they had moved in the father had soon found a larger circle of acquaintances with whom he spent the evenings and part of the night. Her mother in contrast lived rather isolated and restricted to the family. She had no interest in the acquaintances of the father and quite quickly she declared them to be her enemies who*

were destroying her marriage. So she accused him constantly of being weak because he promised time again to care more for the family in the future. Also his inconsiderateness was a matter they frequently argued about.

The daughter felt trapped between the two. On the one hand she hated the father who destroyed the familial harmony by his behaviour, on the other hand she also loved him. She often felt her father understood her better than the mother. And due to her being pulled into the marriage crisis solely by her mother, it was only the accusations against the father and his failures that she heard of. She never got to know anything about her father's difficulties in relation to the mother.

Her father briefly peeped into the living room and said hello to the two women. As reply he heard a snappy comment by her mother, and he retreated fast to his room. The mother again started crying and the daughter tried to comfort her. Suddenly they heard a loud noise coming from the father's room. The daughter got a fright and when she realised that the mother didn't move she ran to the room and found her father collapsed. She was quick to note that he had suffered from a renal colic again. In panic she shouted for the mother to come who however remained stubbornly sitting in the living room and left the daughter alone with the comment: 'If he listened to me more it would save him a lot from being in pain. He doesn't even pity me any more.'"

From the presentation of a concrete family scene we had hoped to gain a less formulaic description of the persons. Now we looked at changes in the story concerning the situation in the family and how the characters were painted. Here we came across a first surprise in form of a radical reversal of the acting persons.

Instead of being the culprit the father now becomes a victim. Now the mother is the bad one. The duality of friend/foe remains intact: one has to be always better, one has to be always guilty. Compared to the first version the father is now equipped with interests and actions, up to approximately half way in the story the author also manages to see him more contradictorily. But the attempt to see the parents from a more

differentiated perspective is limited by the absolute requirement to decide to coalesce with one of the parents only. That the story ends at exactly the point of high drama is telling: if the author was to continue here a depiction of the contradictory feelings towards the mother would become necessary.

The mother is clearer in her own argumentation. The daughter no longer speaks in her stead. In the first version the mother appears predominantly as suffering, passive, here now also as stubborn, snappy, accusing, exerting power by way of refusal. Regarding her needs and interests she is sketched more lively by transformation from a passive victim to an active wretch. On the other hand she however also remains abstract in the posture of the crying memorial. The question what she can do, what she actually does, remains open.

The author's function as "comforter" is based on implicit appeals, but not on an explicit call or plea by the mother. In comparison to the first version the author now depicts herself stronger in terms of saviour (now also of the father) and victim (comforter), but she always acts in response to actions and reactions of others, a job in which she is not fully invested personally. The use of Christian vocabulary is salient, saviour, comforter. The aim at the end of the day is freedom from contradiction, harmony, as indicated by the author to be the ideal situation in the family. In the first version the father is shown to destroy harmony, in the second version however it is he who offers reconciliation and the mother is the one who rejects it.

In relation to the problem posed by the author for herself, why she doesn't escape traditional role patterns, we now are out of the frying pan into the fire. First it was the bad father who had to be replaced by a better partner; now it is the, compared to the mother, better ego of the daughter that has to make a nicer relationship possible. All hopes are directed towards relationships of marriage, are to be materialised between two persons, and if that fails it is due to the character of the acting persons. The second version has led to the author no longer seeing the problem only in others but–implicitly by the refusal to be like the mother–also in herself; but not in the circumstances that lead to such an overload put on private relationships.

We noticed as vacuums: What are the concrete tasks of a comforter? Why does the author feel the father understands her better? Did she enjoy certain privileges as comforter? What is the meaning of the term

harmony in its use here? What position does the author take in relation to the mother?

Excursus: On the connection of family and politics

Taking as a point of departure the story "Experience does not make woman wise, but possibly wife" we try to formulate a connection between the actions in family and in politics: In the second version of this story the mother appears as the root cause of the problem, while the daughter is forced to take sides due to lack of alternative relationships and thus has to think in terms of friend/foe. But we would go wrong if we were to assume the daughter could solve the "family problem" by gaining a more contradictory perception. If that was the case, family problems were merely a matter of personal characteristics and behaviour that are subject to the independent determination of the individuals. In the traditional form of family contradictions caused on societal level cannot be solved, even if it is supposed to take on this role. Rather the perspective has to be for a change of structures of living together, i.e. steering clear of familial constructions. In this context we suggest at least a new definition of family to be not only a communion in love, but similarly in hate, work, boredom, loneliness, saving money, solidarity, conversation, retreat and arguing. How should a perception accepting of contradiction be possible, if family is only thought of in terms of harmony, family conflicts are "solved" by assigning guilt, children are forced to take sides in a framework of good and bad, and yet all family members are supposed to appear as a unit to the outside world (see chapter on family in Haug and Hauser 1985: 116f.).

  Women do in fact talk amongst themselves about their problems and discontent in their families, and even when they stay quiet they know about the reality of conflicts in other families. This "knowledge of each other" offers a potential for resistance, but it does not extend to a fundamental critique of the possibilities to find happiness in families. Personalising perspectives in which effects and possibilities of structural conditions are left out prevent the overcoming of this limitation–a contradictory perception of family would be a first step already. Women rationalise both the failure and the hope for success of a family in which the aspirations for acceptance, security, love, etc. are fulfilled, to depend

on their own and their partner's incapacity (failure) or their (special) capacities.

The absence of an alternative form of living together in which the basic wants and needs for love and community are satisfied outside of familial structures adds to the difficulties of gaining a contradictory perception of family. That also explains the pronounced position of hope in the story: hope that appears once the belief in one's own possibilities of intervening are surrendered, hope that hands over one's own fate to somebody else, that lets the vital energies flow into a remote and vague future, such hope saves oneself from having to face the praxis in life at present.

Although this story does not speak explicitly about political involvement we still locate it in this context. To us it seems an example of women appropriating ways of political behaviour in the family already. The rules in dealing with conflict, the perception, or rather the non-perception of the interests of the participating persons, the establishment of alliances, assessment of capacities for action etc. we call politics in the family.

The story presents the elimination of contradiction as conflict solving strategy. In similar fashion women construct the demarcation to political strands they do not accept (also within the women's movement) in a moralistic manner, along a pattern of unambiguous categories of right and wrong. The polar constellation of the persons as good and bad characters prevents the author from developing a more differentiated perception, out of view are their interests, alliances gain an exclusive character (all or nothing, and if all then neck and crop). What we have in mind here is the inability of women to form partial alliances (see e.g. "The family is always and everywhere").

For the author it is not an evident strategy to find allies. Later it became clear that she has four siblings, whom she did not use to get support, for instance by forming a joint front against the parents, or by taking turns as comforters. In the same way women's politics are often solitary actions of individual persons, possibilities for alliances are hardly noticed (see e.g. "Jump in at the deep end", "Everyone just cares about themselves, only I care about me").

We reckon that knowledge of the differing interests is essential for finding one's own position, and for finding possibilities for action. The author retrospectively does not mention herself having interests or a standpoint, hence she appears mainly as re-acting. This matches the self-perception of the women as being impeded in the earlier stories about

politics, and yet the impediment is never depicted concrete enough to allow for one's own possibilities for action to become visible. Just like the chains tie down the entire person, the liberation is also imagined in large dimensions with demands for totality, which renders concrete action in partial steps impossible (see e.g. "Jump in at the deep end", "Everyone just cares about themselves, only I care about me"). – To make liberation possible it is necessary to see this connection between politics in the family and the way women later 'do' politics (e.g. familial constructions in politics, see "The family is always and everywhere"). This gives a new dimension to the slogan "The private is political".

(. . .)

Politics as experience

> *"For to comprehend I need to change, for to change I need to comprehend" (Rossanda 1980, 51)*

In general terms we can say that politics are activities of regulation, necessary to keep a particular concrete society or community and its parts in a specific order, create or change it. To picture the stories of our authors from the perspective of regulation has an advantage. The pre-existing structures can be deciphered not as a "debt" that needs to be paid back (as suggested by some authors). It can rather be seen as a task that everyone has to take on, and for which the acquisition of particular competences, i.e. the activities for accomplishing this task are necessary. This perspective dissects "the political" into its components; the question is: what type of particular concrete society or community is this, are the tasks in it transparent for the individuals?

  Most of the stories suggest an analysis with "political" aspects in mind, and yet they contradict our rather common ideas of politics: instead of a *cause* it is the *person* who stands in the centre; not the task to achieve *something for others* was depicted, but the difficulty *with oneself* and thus what is done for oneself; the social form of the *collective* disappears in the narrative of a massive *individualisation*; the boundaries between the different areas of life–politics, work, private life, culture (organised in a division of labour)–were not kept but constantly crossed, questioned and [the areas] claimed to be one context. If we put the existing political

structures, i.e. the conditions, into a relation to the praxes and wishes of women, we get the idea that the *specific mode* of doing politics has little to do with their approaches and attitudes, hence defeat and "error" are virtually predictable.

For oneself - for others

The separation of state politics from the regulation of everyday issues functions as model for the forms of thinking of politics. The parliamentary-democratic principle of delegation *contains* that politicians act not *for themselves* but *for others* (those who elected them: "the people", the party etc.). The Flick bribery scandal confirmed, among other things, that once politicians do something for themselves, follow their own interests, become (or are) corruptible, the orientation along the own interests has to be always in contravention to the common good; at the end of the day everyone wants to "feather their own nest." If the own interest appears–as in our example–in a political context, politics are "essentially" betrayed, one acts in contravention of its essential meaning. In this sense the boundaries between the different areas (here: economy and politics) and the accompanying separation of tasks can be understood as protecting the common good against the specific interests of individuals, and as keeping individual interests in check that are destructive for the community.

 Our stories display something of this type of state politics: the own interest appears in the political field–if at all–not concrete and implicit (the institute story), it shows as abstract desire to do something for others (El Salvador, "the students"). The "own" is largely the personal impediment (incapacity, financial difficulty, fateful family contexts), its connection to the general is invisible or it is not connected at all. The political tasks appear peculiarly "unpolitical": as individual guilt of wanting something but not being able to do it.

 Hence politics, e.g., as a necessity is recognised by the women, as a real social task. But it is as if they are "lost" when it comes to addressing it, they see themselves facing alien demands, they realise an incapacity to address them. The stories de-scandalise the problem that doing politics is not learned and that it is indeed alien territory for women in which to operate they could not try out. The strong formalisation of male societalisation (see e.g. the swimming pool story) and the relative

certainty of boys and men that they are able to move on step by step because *everything* can be learned does not apply for women. It is rather the case that what is required of them remains blurred, thus leaving unclear which competences they are supposed to have for coping with a task. Thus neither the "for myself" nor the "for others" is filled with life in the stories, rather both is obstructed. For example in the El-Salvador story: For herself the author could have learned to write pamphlets and the insight into the situation there could allow her to see what is possible here. In fact the story is about the author's incompetence and how she overcomes it: she hides, tricks herself, coerces herself, disciplines herself. She does not regulate a cause or the acquisition of a competence but her *guilty conscience*. This is the "highest instance" to which she subordinates and that she fights against, for a cause. Working on and with herself remains central, and as neither task nor competences are clearly determined this work will be repeated constantly. If the interest directly refers to oneself (as in the institute story), it also produces "guilt" because it does not commit to the "general"; here the author is trapped between two unclear demands that grind her down: she wants something for herself (better conditions for studying) and *at the same time* for everyone. If however she acts in her own interest, she has to–as she puts it–stop acting for others, and vice versa. In this reciprocal blockade she can do neither the one nor the other.

  A first conclusion therefore is that learning to do politics has to be understood itself in political terms: as a separate cause in need of regulation that needs translation into reasonable learning steps, so that acquisition and action stand in a transparent reciprocal relation to each other. A second one is that the boundaries between person and politics (task), private and public for women are not very firm. Spontaneously they think of the tasks in social terms (e.g. assessment by others; as something that one should mainly do–or wants to do–for others) and as inter-human relations that are in need of regulation. This immediately "affects" the cause in that the system of relations between person and cause, competences and incompetences can constantly be addressed. It is not clear what the authors are negotiating at any given time, the lack the mediations, the clarity where and when they *can* be for themselves, and where and when for others, and where and when they *have to*.[5] Women can sacrifice themselves for a cause in need of regulation (be that a

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5   Emphasis added, RH.

family, a party), but they can also give up on it again. What is missing is a yardstick for determining the boundaries and the separations. The societal boundaries are not reflected in the women's "personality arrangements." This may be the reason for the productive chaos that we know from women's contexts, and it is explained by women's *mode* of approaching problems.

Mediacy - immediacy

The analysis of the stories and the ensuing discussions brought up the thesis that women approach a task in immediacy: recognising a problem for them goes hand in hand with the desire to solve it. There was not one story in which appeared, for instance a subset of hierarchically ordered problems that could be solved *in succession*. The vague ideas how the tasks should be addressed lock in with the attitude of making everything one's own problem and thus being trapped in the claws of rationalised necessities. The strength of such an attitude are immediately obvious: women do not think primarily of their career or their jobs, as common societal forms would have it. But the strengths are weaknesses at the same time: competences that are a result of being at work are missing. In this way a utopian attitude is chained within concrete relations which leads–as the stories show–into an impossible situation: neither are the tasks organised and structured in a way that *everyone* takes part in solving them, nor are the individual competences established that would *enable* everyone to take part. But both elements are of perspectively strategic importance and both are occupied by women in specific ways: as struggle for competence that falls through in face of individualisation, and as spontaneous grass roots democracy that articulates itself in the immediate problematisation of all relations but does not *organise* their solution. In our opinion it is *the urgent task for feminist politics to undergird and support* with competences and new organisational *forms* this feeling of responsibility for the existing problems.

Perspectives and tasks

A research process lives of its self-produced infinity: answering "old" questions brings up "new" ones, leads to new areas and different trails for discovery. Our analysis of the stories so far has brought up, for example

the question what in the process of societalisation becomes *in what way* problematic to the individuals and how that may differ for the sexes. For transferring the female problematisation into politics (a problem that we found with the Green Women), it most likely requires alternative alliances in which the explicit aim is to connect the "for oneself" and the "for others". The collectives would have to be support and corrective for the spontaneous perceptions of women: joining forces requires concentration on the *cause* and not on the personality. This is not the same as the "rational discussion" that is claimed by men, quite the opposite, the consciousness of the importance of every women in the collective, that *everyone* counts and that it is not a matter of being a martyr for the cause, but supporting it by appropriating it as something that she has to regulate. It will not be enough to acquire knowledge, e.g. in learning about the classical theories and political concepts, courses on Capital etc., although this is part of the basic conditions, at the same time we have to learn to make our attitudes useful and liberate them from their blockades. Staging posts do not yet lie readily *in* the female identity construction, they rather appear intertwined with obstructive attitudes. This brings us to the task for a politics on personalities. But that to us seems still more of a question than a *practical* answer: How can the specifically female social competences be turned politically? We experience in everyday life that the social is politically regulated, by the state and by societal institutions, from "top down." Consciously taking in the own hands the self-regulation of the general issues to us seems a first step towards the self-societalisation. The women–as can be seen in the stories–rush into such new forms, with the radicality of those who don't have traditions and therefore no acquired rights to lose.

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Appendix - second version of male story

It was a Wednesday, Thursday or Friday some 13 or 14 years ago. At any rate summer.

At this time Mario, a boy from my neighbourhood was a close friend of mine. We spend most of our time together, went into the forest or the swimming pool, made our first slingshots or spears, dreamt of fights, gangs, read Superman or Batman comics that always he bought because I did not get any money.

From time to time Herwig was with us too. He was five years older and helped us to improve our slingshots, to plan our battles strategically: we produced an abundance of slingshots, swords, prepared for fights (we practised shooting and fencing [my god what did we cry when one had broken the rules and hit the hand]) . . . and directed by him we built the first cannon that shot little copper pieces.

We spent a lot of time on the bike. We staged races in which our sisters Ruth and Belinda often also took part. Mario, myself, my sister Ruth and Belinda had a funny relationship. Often we liked each other a lot, then we played together, went together to the pool, ... and sometimes we fought with teeth and nails.

At any rate during this summer we went to the pool quite a lot, sometimes all four, sometimes just the two of us.

Mario and I often admired the 'big ones' who played tag around the pool. It was fascinating how 'cool' they jumped over barriers and dived headlong into the water, how they jumped over the one who was "on" who waited in the water, swam away from him or outwitted him in other ways. My friend and I could swim just about good enough to swim in the deep pool.

For hours we watched them, fascinated, admiring and somehow longing.

We also admired the divers on the 3-m-springboard that to us seemed so gigantic. We would have loved to jump. Be we did not dare to do it. We often sat on the board when it was

'out of bounds' and from there we watched what went on in the pool.

I always looked down to the water that was so deep under me. 3 meters and then one also looked through to the ground, another 5 meters. Frightening, it was so damned high and the surface of the water was always like a mirror. There was always movement in the water, it constantly changed, it was never calm, one could never adjust to the water, the height. Often when the springboard was made available for diving and we had to climb down the ladder I remained sitting for a short time, looked at the water, wanted to jump and waited until it eventually was calm. But it was never calm, thus I got up and climbed down the ladder behind Mario to where there was already a bunch of people waiting to finally be allowed to jump.

Yes, and at some time it happened. It was just this Wednesday, Thursday or Friday 13 or 14 years ago.

Mario and I went home earlier this day and for whatever reason I was alone when suddenly Ruth and Belinda came to me and said that they had been jumping from the 3-m-springboard.

Wow. That hurt. I could not, did not want to belief it.

I hid my dismay and said that I didn't believe it, that it was a lie and that they should not be such braggarts. But somehow they convinced me. I left them standing there and went out of the house, mulling over, anxious; something had happened that should have not happened: they had jumped from the 3-m-springboard.

That was awful.

I don't remember was it me asking my father, or was it he asking me to go to the pool. At any rate we went together. That was important because without adult company I was not allowed in after 5 p.m. any more and also I needed a witness. (It was somehow unusual that I went with my father because if he went at all the would go later and then only for a short swim.) I still today remember how we headed off, see the blue skies in front of me, the road we went. I remember how we spoke about all sorts of meaningless stuff, because

no-one, neither my father nor my sister should 'know' about my plan yet.

Se we went to the pool. There I climbed up to the 3-m-springboard. I climbed up as I did so often. As so often I stood up there, as so often I looked down to the water, but today that was not it yet. Today I jumped. I still remember how long the 'flight' seemed to me, how relieved I was when I dived into the water.

All was back in order. It was alright again.

At home I said to my sister merely in passing that I had jumped from the 3-m-springboard and that there was nothing special at all about jumping from the 3-m-springboard. And if she wouldn't believe me she might simply 'ask dad'.

I don't remember how my sister reacted. But I felt in me a strange voice that said, it doesn't matter much how my sister reacted. Important was the casualness, the sentences in passing, that even now are oddly strong emotionally charged.

P.s. One of the following days Mario also jumped from the 3-m-springboard.

Chapter 6

WOMEN'S INTERESTS AND ASSERTIVE STRATEGIES

Frauke Schwarting & Eva Stäbler

Women's issues are fashion in the current political discussions. There is no party platform without a subsection on "women", no political group that would not put the sexism-debate on the agenda at some stage. Across all parties women have been identified as important group of the electorate. These are achievements of the women's movement in West-Germany over the last twenty years that put the question of the relation between the sexes as a relation of oppression into the minds of the people.

  But the success of the movement so far is two-sided: Of course it is positive if, for example there are women's lists within the Green Party, if in a parliamentary debate on women's unemployment women of the CDU[1] and others from the Green Party close ranks, if in parties, committees and institutions quota regulations are discussed and in some cases have been established already, as in SPD[2] and the Green Party. But these new departures also hold new problems. Asking questions about the situation of women is no longer automatically indicative of social progress. The conservatives also appropriate the topic with success. Debates about women's politics are more and more reduced to solutions in the state-near spheres. The women's movement that aimed at radical changes in everyday life and deciphered state politics as delegation of societal regulation needs to find a political answer to the current determination of women's issues by the state.

  But a lack of organisation and the difficulty to agree on common objectives lead to an absence of power from below and allow for engulfments. There is a new urgency in the question of concrete liberation of women, the possibility to prevail, its form of movement.

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1   CDU, Christ-Democrats, centre-right party; RH
2   SPD, Social-Democrats, centre-left party, RH

In comparison to "issues" the term "interest" is a political term that is probably better suited for the articulation of self-regulation and regulation of society. The word "interest" carries enigmatic connotations. In the political sphere we meet "interest groups", in the labour movement "interest" is a term used in class struggle to provide orientation based on a Marxist analysis of society, in everyday life we hear of "interests" in music, or good food. The etymological roots of the word are in the Latin language, it means "be around, be present, take part." Interests therefore should inform about what someone takes part in, at which locations and how this presence is mediated.

Transferred to "women's interests" there would have to be also a statement on the current position in the general relations and the direction of liberation. How do women take part in the regulation of society? How do they pose the problematic of individual reproduction the conditions of which they do not control? We wanted to search for obstacles and staging posts in the process of comprehensive societalisation. We hoped taking into account experiences and scrutinising the concept of interest would lead to finding more building blocks for determining the conditions for our actions.

Everyday assumptions

We collected our everyday assumptions relating to the word "interest" and searched for formulations of problems contained in them. Often it is not in fact a question which interests the women might have, instead it is questionable whether there are any at all. Do women not fight the fight of others and selflessly put their own benefits to the back? And does the "own" not get lost in the attempts to establish harmony? In fact the creation of a pleasant relaxed atmosphere is a general requirement and expectation that women face. But equating compliance in fulfilling this expectation with a "void of interests" seemed to smooth as a conclusion and more like reproducing a cliché. Women have to appropriate the requirements in some way, align them with their own intentions. Hence the question would have to be rather posed as: How do they ensconce in the requirements, what are the resistances and what is the "gain"?

If we explicate a second everyday assumption we may call it a "deficit in assertiveness." This also refers implicitly to the creation of harmony, in that it foregrounds the difficulties in following the own interests and

traces them back to an incapacity of dealing with conflict. Although a focus on components of assertiveness abstracts from the concrete matter of interest, a pre-condition becomes obvious: asserting one's own will requires competences. Many courses like "Learning to say 'No'" or "Assertiveness for women" are witness for the relevance of this problem in the life of women. They also show that the conditions under which women live are changing: There has to be at least a possibility for consciously relating to the relations.

 Some media present the topic of "female assertiveness" in a way as if this capacity on its own could be seen as an all-embracing (self-)liberation without asking any further about aims and objectives. Recently the women's journal "freundin" plastered the billboards in the FRG with an advertisement in which "Today's women" were presented. The pictures convey the new self-esteem and the originality of every individual. Let us have a look at the most popular picture.

The women of today chose which career they want to have.

Motherhood is no longer an alternative to a career. It is one in itself. It is not connected to suffering and hard work. The woman in the picture shows that: She is smart and chic, she holds the baby effortlessly in her arms, no notion of sleepless nights or baby food spilled on the jumper. Text and image communicate playfully: the textual highlighting of the free choice of perspective in life is reduced by the picture to a free choice for

the life that one is expected to live anyway and now has freely chosen. The new personality of the old life is the "modern, assertive" woman.

The images in "freundin" are both encouragement and warning for us. Encouragement, because they show that self-determination becomes a normal component of modern images of women; warning, because it shows how easily the revised modelling of our experiences and interests sends us back to the old positions just with different attributes. Assertiveness is not only connected to career and promotion but also to privatisation and consumerism. Recalcitrance is mediated by advertising and shown as individualisation and also reduced to the body that is staged in a way that makes self-determination into an outfit.

The increasing employment of "women's issues" accounts for an increasing need to formulate concrete visions of liberation. We were stunned how little the everyday discourses put the content of questions of regulation into a relation with strategic modes of movement. We want find a theoretical avenue to the notion of "interest", and then put the everyday assumptions to an empirical test.

Interest as a concept of mediation

In Marx' concept of interest we found elements that we can use for women's liberation. Marx uses the term "interest" to determine the connection of individual actions and intentions, and the relation between them. For him this relation is always a double one, it connects the people and at the same time under certain conditions sets them in forms of domination against each other.

The connection that Marx calls common interest lies in the joint production of all those things that are necessary for a society in general, and for the individuals therein. Division of labour is a condition for such a joint production on large scale basis to happen at all. If a small community was able to produce everything that its members need for their life, it would not rely on others and would not be connected to people outside. The common interest therefore lies in the cooperation of many individuals in divided labour. But division of labour creates connection in form of divisions: town and countryside, physical and mental labour, women's labour and men's. Certain areas of work fall apart in a manner that results in individuals not appropriating different

areas and not developing their capabilities comprehensively. The connection slips out of sight and out of consciousness.

  Hence we found Marx' enthusiasm for division of labour also irritating. Marx sees in the increasing division of labour a chance. If more and more people are integrated, it eventually leads to an all-embracing interdependence of everyone (global market), i.e. the more labour is divided in society and the higher the interdependence, the bigger are the chances for individual development:

> ". . . that the real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections. Only then will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers, be brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creations of man)." (Marx 1845)

We think of division of labour and dependence spontaneously as a source of oppression and impediment of development, not as liberation from local barriers as described by Marx. Now, in determining the common interest as a reciprocal for-each-other Marx does not assume a harmonious integration of the interests of the individuals within the common interest organised by division of labour. It is exactly this element of reduction in the respective activity that brings the individual interests in contradiction to the common interests and separates societal and individual development.

Marx writes about different forms of societal connection. He uses the concept of personal dependence for antiquity and feudalism, e.g. the relation between feudal lord and vassal, master and apprentice. Here the activities "are bound to a specific form of labour and of product." This bond "appears as a personal restriction of the individual by another" (1857). But the restriction of individuals to a specific activity not only chains themselves, it also chains the forces of development of society as a whole.

The second form, characteristic for capitalism is the personal independence that rests on the objective dependence, i.e. the "all-sided dependence of the producers on one another" (1857). Only with the

dissolution of all forms of personal dependencies universal relations and all-sided needs can develop. The all-sided dependence on one another rips apart the confines of personal dependence. For the individuals this second form holds societal possibilities for development, but in their societal connection they are still subordinated, albeit not to particular others. They do not regulate it horizontally and collectively; they are determined by it.

The third form Marx develops as a perspective: "Free individuality, based on the universal development of individuals and on their subordination of their communal, social productivity as their social wealth" (1857). Marx has described the relation of the individuals to their activities in commodity producing societies in terms of alienation. In relations of domination the individuals are subordinated to their isolated activities, their connection; it becomes their problem:

> "The social character of activity, as well as the social form of the product, and the share of individuals in production here appear as something alien and objective, confronting the individuals, not as their relation to one another, but as their subordination to relations which subsist independently of them and which arise out of collisions between mutually indifferent individuals. The general exchange of activities and products, which has become a vital condition for each individual – their mutual interconnection – here appears as something alien to them, autonomous, as a thing." (Marx 1857)

Society as a whole is created by the individuals, it is also their connection, but it is not consciously created, planned and regulated as a general process; it thus exists independent of their will. "It is the interest of private persons; but its content, as well as the form and means of its realization, is given by social conditions independent of all" (1857)[3]. We

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3   The passage in Marx' Grundrisse: "This reciprocal dependence is expressed in the constant necessity for exchange, and in exchange value as the all-sided mediation. The economists express this as follows: Each pursues his private interest and only his private interest; and thereby serves the private interests of all, the general interest, without willing or knowing it. The real point is not that each individual's pursuit of his private interest promotes the totality of private interests, the general interest. One could just as well deduce from this

want to take up Marx' suggestion to think of individually articulated interests as mediated societal connection in individual appropriation. What are the interests that mediate parts of the societal connection for women?

Limits of alternative worlds

What have we learned from Marx about the concept of "interest"? In contrast to the idea that the individuals have some interests as private persons and that those need to be brought into a connection afterwards, for example by the state to counterbalance them, he suggests to think in a different direction. He shows that interests exist in particular forms and depict the ways in which people take care of themselves under the pre-existing conditions and possibilities that are provided by society. In this context "interest" is a concept of mediation: interests mediate the objective requirements to the individuals who then act in a particular way in addressing their issues.

This thought helps us to advance: If interests on the one hand put societal conditions and individual acts into a relation with each other and on the other hand, as shown by Marx, in relations of domination action-for-oneself and action-against-oneself are always intertwined, then we cannot simply speak in they way we are used to of "right" and "wrong" interests. Furthermore, interests cannot be determined exclusively by an analysis of society, instead this also requires an investigation of the process of mediation itself. In what way does this mediation take place? How do the individuals work through the societal structures?

To approach this question we need a theoretical idea of how people in general live and develop themselves in a society. Holzkamp (1983) tries to deploy for the subjects Marx's thought that the satisfaction of the

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abstract phrase that each individual reciprocally blocks the assertion of the others' interests, so that, instead of a general affirmation, this war of all against all produces a general negation. The point is rather that private interest is itself already a socially determined interest, which can be achieved only within the conditions laid down by society and with the means provided by society; hence it is bound to the reproduction of these conditions and means. It is the interest of private persons; but its content, as well as the form and means of its realization, is given by social conditions independent of all. The reciprocal and all-sided dependence of individuals who are indifferent to one another forms their social connection." (1857) Footnote added, RH.

individual's needs does not stand in contradiction to society, rather it is made possible by it in the first place. For him the connection between individual and society is caused by the efforts of the individuals to maintain capacity for action, the need for securing life and controlling the environment.

The capacities and attitudes that humans need to be capable of acting need to be learned in the individual process of societalisation. In its current form what they appropriate in this process is pervaded by class and gender domination. The effect of the inherent contradiction is that our active development of capacity for action always contains both: the development of capacities and the subordination to the relations of domination. The category of capacities for action offers a perspective towards the collective control of conditions of life. This perspective needs to be applied to the mediation process.

What is the role of interests in the process of societalisation? What do they mediate? In this form the question has not been attended to by feminists. But we found a study that looks at this topic from the side of class interests and their mediation. This could be useful not only for the theory but also for an empirical comparison between the sexes. In his study "Learning to labour" Paul Willis (1982) looks at a group of oppositional male students at an English school for working class children. He asks what role the interests and experiences of the working class plays for them.

In school they resist learning. They want fun and excitement. They play tricks on teachers, skip lessons or undermine them, make them impossible. On an informal level the youths eke out liberated spaces and possibilities for control. They act subversively against authorities whom they see as "establishment". They reject the knowledge on offer because it lacks reference to their everyday life, it rather is a means for a climb in society that is denied to them. For a short time these youths disrupt the school's order effectively. They boycott the system of exchange, teacher's knowledge for obedience and discipline, by rejecting the appropriation of knowledge as well as the required obedience. Their resistance draws strength and direction from the working class culture in which they grow up and see with their fathers, in pubs and at football matches. From there they adopt values like the masculinity of physical labour, solidarity within a group as well as mistrust and informal resistance against bosses, swatting and acquisition of theory. The resistant working class culture is

of central importance in a couple of ways: It allows to give meaning to alienating situations like school or work, to pervade them with spirited culture and acquire the necessary competences for it. They learn to exert informal control and cooperate collectively. At the same time the individuals gain "social knowledge"; this is knowledge about their position in society, the role of school and teachers in a process of disciplining and subordination, and about the importance of solidarity for resistance. What they learn about societal conditions Willis calls "cultural penetrations". The members of a cultural form acquire knowledge about the conditions of their existence and in a creative process they produce new possibilities to re-live their culture time again. But the youths, in spite of penetrating the relations, appropriating them in resistance, rejecting consent, at the end of the day they take on the position reserved for them as unqualified labourers.

The same culture that makes resistance possible also effects the subsumption under the dominant divisions of labour, because the constructions resorted to contain not only penetration but also restriction for comprehension, here Willis speaks of "limitations". One of those limitations is the connection of masculinity with hard physical work. Here the relations between the sexes contribute to the reproduction of class division and the division of intellectual and manual labour: working intellectually is connected to the social subordination of the feminine. For the youths intellectual work is sissyish, they want to be "real men" and labourers like their fathers.

Whereas in the penetrations domination, the conditions of work in capitalism and the possibilities of collective action are noticed, the limitations appear as contortion and direct the power of resistance towards other objectives. Willis shows quite strikingly how in the wishes and identities of the working class youths resistance is transformed into voluntary self-subordination, and that it is the creative struggle with the societal contradictions that finally leads to the affirmation of the designated position.

Willis gives us an answer to the question of what interests are mediating in the process of mediation between objective requirements and subjectively coping with them, namely cultural standards. In the process of enculturation the outside structures are interpreted by the individuals who ascribe meaning to them, transfer them into tangible societal relations. In this process resistance and conformance are connected to

specific interests, in this case bound to class and particular regimes, e.g. the school's regulations. That makes a joint discovery of the world and its organisation possible, a creative appropriation of the structures for one's own purposes. The production of the class connection however reproduces the class relationship because the limits of subjective ideas about class are not culturally penetrated and therefore only short-term interests are mediated, but not the long-term ones.

Let us do a recap on the results so far: We wondered whether the concept of "interest" would be useful in an attempt to formulate the women's concrete visions of liberation against the powerful alienating determination of "women's issues." From Marx we took the analytic usefulness of such a concept that describes the historical form of general regulation of life and captures the position and the form of the self-care of individuals in the entire societal context. Interest helps us to comprehend the intentions of the individuals as historically formed. People are not more or less ideological, rather the pre-existing societal requirements lead them into modes of societalisation that they need to be capable of acting, to be able to exist. Formulating a political interest on this analytic basis can penetrate the limitations and spell out the mode in which command over the regulation of affairs is deprived.

Willis shows that interests play an important role in the process of enculturation, and in the penetration of conditions also mediate creative appropriation and possibilities for action. Cultural limitations however can obstruct long-term interests, hence besides the political level it is also necessary to work on the cultural level and study its connections and limitations in relation to political articulation.

Working with memories - the stories

In the context of these theoretical considerations we asked about limitations and staging posts for a politics of women. We approached this question with theory of societalisation and used the method of Collective Memory-Work (Haug 1983). We intended to clarify the concept of "interest" specifically for women, and closer to their experiences. We did not hope to work with "truth" or "correctness." We were rather looking for contradictions for which women are trying to find solutions and perspectives. We wrote the scenes under the heading: "A time when I asserted an interest."

The briefcase

She was ten years old and was going to attend the gymnasium[4]. She was the youngest of five sisters and by attending the higher school she felt closer to them and more on equal footing. She was mighty proud of herself. It was a custom in the family that children got a new briefcase as a present when they started at the gymnasium. But the experience with four children had shown to the parents that the briefcases were of no interest after a few years, and that they landed in some odd corner. Therefore the parents intended not to buy a briefcase for the youngest daughter, instead they offered her the use of one of the four briefcases. For the daughter a world broke apart. She had clearly counted on the new briefcase, had looked forward to it, and somehow it completely belonged to the new phase of her life. She was lost for words, she would never have thought that she could be denied a briefcase. Therefore she was completely upset when her parents made the offer. Distraught, speechless, she ran out of the room, up to the first floor where she shared a room with two sisters. There she was alone and started crying, lying on the bed with her face on the pillow. She cried so loud that she knew she would be heard downstairs. That was just right for her. Everyone should know how much she was suffering and how disappointed she was. Eventually—she had reckoned it would happen—the mother came up, sat down on the bed and tried to comfort and calm her down. But she did not let herself be calmed down so easily, after all this was about a briefcase, the symbol of promotion. A to and fro. Again and again the soothing words of the mother: it was not that bad, the briefcase was not that important, the used bags of the sisters were still like new . . . But to her all of that counted for nothing, she continued to sigh until it was not possible any more. She explained nothing, rather she showed her suffering. The conversation did not end with a clarification.

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4   Gymnasium here refers to the higher ranked secondary school in Germany.

> *The holidays were over. She went to the gymnasium—with an old briefcase, and she was somehow resigned to it. However, she still felt betrayed. The parents went on holidays, came back and as a present they brought her a bag, not a briefcase, but a red shoulder bag, trendy and much nicer than any of the sisters' briefcases had ever been. She was happy and felt she had achieved something. Although she also thought the bag was more like a souvenir and less of a recognition of her new status, it did not bother her too much because now she had a bag as she was owed.*

This conflict happens in the family. Changing school does not appear in the story in a context with a new school situation, new classmates or as a result of an effort, but rather in its social meaning for the author's position in her family. The author links it to social closeness and equal rights in relation to the sisters and the claim for acknowledgement by the parents. This is condensed in the briefcase that can be carried around and presented for everyone to see.

For the author the order to which this claim applies is regulated by others. In this way the parents are instances and guarantors of the order. The refusal of the claim is experienced as dramatic shake-up of predictability, familial continuity and self-evidence. The author constructs the collapse of this order as a threat. However, her outrage over the parents is not directed against the dependence on other's decisions. It rather triggers a flood of indignation over her having to become active herself.

Basis for such a strategy is the acceptance of the order laid down from the top: others have to be made function properly. The means used is persuasion, feelings are demonstrated in a staged show of which the daughter knows the mother will react to. The author displays her suffering. She cries, in retreat and loud, solitary yet in audible reach. Here the process looms that leads to "female emotionality." The staging of emotional outbreaks is a competence for establishing capacity for action in an order regulated by others.

The victory at the end of the story is at the same time a defeat that is based on the strategic use of emotions that does not allow for the formulation of concrete aims. Sadness can be comforted. This way the parents only regulate the emotional state, they don't fulfil the wishes of

the author. In this story we find in a couple of ways the rehearsal of the female life as destined for the future. The own deeds and successes gain their importance only by way of rewarding friendliness and acknowledgement by others, without it the pride loses its grandness, the deeds lose importance for oneself.

We had expected to receive stories of resistance to and rejection of allocated positions in which order is depicted as an obstacle, this story teaches us differently. The author does not fight heteronomy, instead she allies herself with the regulations and instances for asserting her wishes. Societalisation *with* the order and the acquisition of competences that serves it has to be comprehended as a safeguard for possibilities for action. At this point we wish to revert to results of an earlier project (see Projekt Frauengrundstudium 1984: 15f., 76f.). There we found childhood stories about dealing with order (in a sanatorium for children) not only written by girls, but also by a boy. For girls resistance as breach of rules leads into isolation (eating forbidden sweets in the bathroom), following the rules means inclusion in the social group mediated by the authority figure (educators) with whom the girls ally. Conversely, for the boy the breach of rules means protection. In search for possibilities to get around eating the food until the plate is all cleared the boy allies with another boy. He bypasses the rules without having to fear sanctioning. In resistance possible solutions are found that at the same time lead into the social, on a horizontal level, similar to the results in Willis' study. The protection in their peer group allows the working class youths to refuse obedience, they can make their own rules and occupy spaces.

In this context we can also read our scenario as getting accustomed to relations of domination. On a general level the wish for the superiors to be friendly and to take care of the individuals is an expected wish that diverts from the dominance included in this constellation. We are shown therefore how the perspective of material and social security in everyday life can turn into the solidification of relations of dominance in which one calls on instances to keep their promises.

From care to baptism

For a couple of months she attended the college for physiotherapy and her dissatisfaction grew. This rather manual labour, this rote learning in subjects like anatomy

and physiology, this was not the future she had envisaged. In fact, she had always wanted to study religious education. During long night walks she ruminated, she was sure already that she would not want to work as a physiotherapist, but the fear of the reaction of her parents and relatives who had so much supported her in starting the courses threw her back to the temporary solution of first finishing the training and then study. But the days in the college became more and more agonising and her feeling to be at the wrong place grew still stronger. And then the day came. She wrote a long letter to her parents, reported of her decision to quit the college, explained the reasons including a lot of apologies and justifications, and her plans to study religious education. In front of her inner eyes she could see the troubled face of her mother and the angry face of her father already, but for a few days it remained calm yet.

Eventually the great battle came. One afternoon the phone rang and her father was on the other side; without further ado he let loose a tirade full of anger and disappointment, she had been completely incapable to perform and to manage her life, and she was not to come home again at all, and she was to see not a penny any more. Inwardly she boiled with rage and agitation, but outwardly she reacted cool and calm, this was his decision and she would say thank you very much and she didn't need his money, and with a triumphant feeling she flung the phone down.

She was not going to let herself be blackmailed and she was going to make it on her own. Then she would just now become a nurse. She had contacts to a hospital and reckoned that could work; a few months ago she had already had an interest in the training for nurses. There she would earn enough money, she would live in the nurses dormitory and be independent! Over the next few days she felt strong, assertive and grown-up.

A week later the parents asked her to come home to talk with them. She went, curious what might come up. In passing her father handed her a little present, his way to show that he felt sorry and during the coffee-break he asked

when and where she wanted to study and how much money she would need every month. Without spelling it out straight he thus let her know that he was prepared to finance her studies. After she made clear that it was his own decision and that she was not going to accept any conditions she accepted the offer. Three months later she started studying religious education in Hannover.

This story deals with huge topics of life-planning. The quest for the right occupation, and connected the search for a vision for the future. The author's choice poses a problem, she wants to quit her training courses. Besides her dislike for manual labour she mainly mentions psychological states as reasons. The new plan of studying is also depicted only as a vague hope to be at the right spot. In the concrete process of asserting a vehement transfer happens: Once her family withdraws the material and social support, all her focus is on independence. Had we thought that other ways to reach the goal would have been sought we now discover that the goal has disappeared. The author had connected the study so directly with the dependencies and conditions of family life that in her resistance against the family she also abdicates her vision for the future. But the abdication does not appear as a scandal or resignation, instead it comes as a triumph, a resistant victory over her dependence.

There is a break and suddenly a new alternative is brought in: she is going to be a nurse. Again we were surprised because earlier she had strongly decried the duties in such occupations. But this future is only of a formal character, it is simply a means to be independent. The strengthening effect of the alternative lies in the present. Here the author can feel strong, assertive and grown-up and the pure image of an alternative appears as if it were a concrete action.

Despite her living not with her parents any more, the family remains the central battlefield for future planning. Just as in the "briefcase" here the power to enable or to prohibit is invested in the familial instances, the own actions serve as a demonstration to the parents. This constellation reproduces relations of personal dependence, even when resisting: rebellion then means that independence becomes a radical requirement in the present and nothing else can be wanted. This story shows us the abdication of one's own perspective in life as a strength that helps the author to modify the construction of the relations of power: Eventually

the father with his offer to support her appears small and rueful, graciously the offer is accepted.

The arm of the institution of family stretches out far. Instead of making it a matter of general regulation the state leaves the security of provision and life-planning to the most part to the family. As this story demonstrates the societalisation of women in this form causes their attempts to create capacity for action to be at the same time perpetuating the family. The spontaneous radicality in the struggle against the pre-existing order is the radicality of abdication, which stands in the way of the search for new forms of regulation.

The spray-affair

She had moved into her new flat. Here she had to share the toilet with her neighbours. Her neighbours were an elderly couple. Straight away when she moved in the two pointed out that to them cleanliness was very important, particularly as far as the toilet was concerned. She felt the demand on her implied in this message; however, she was happy to hear it because a clean toilet was important to her as well, if she had to share it with others, albeit that otherwise she was less fussy but rather casual. During her first longer visit at the said toilet she discovered a spray can with a flowery design and the label 'air fresh' hanging at the wall. She guessed that for her neighbours the 'refreshment' of the air with the content of this can was part of the cleanliness that they found important. For herself however this had more to do with air pollution, chemical contamination and she found such air refreshers(-contaminators) extremely repulsive and sickening.

She held counsel with her friends over the matter. How should she explain to the neighbours that she was opposed to spraying that stuff in the toilet? Educate them that such sprays are bad for the environment? She doubted that the two were open to hear such arguments. One suggested, "You can say that you are allergic to such things." Well, that was a possibility to ban that poison from the toilet without her neighbours having to feel attacked (that was important to

her). But she thought it was exaggerated. Anyway — maybe she should not make a fuss about it at all and just cope with the occasional chemical onslaught. She thought, "there is no point in wanting to teach older people." But the smell . . .!

The next day she visited the neighbour woman who was to show her the rooms in the basement and the attic. A part of her thoughts was still circling around the toilet-spray-topic. She was curious herself, what she might say about it. She monitored herself and felt her courage rising one moment, and the next moment diminishing again. Inwardly she cursed herself, that it was so difficult to express her needs. With such a bagatelle that should have been quite simple.

Just when she was ready to say good-bye the neighbour announced another "request": if she was going to renovate the flat again she might bring the rubbish, old wallpaper etc. to the landfill instead of pushing it into the litter bin of the house. Without thinking about her view on this matter she hurried to agree because now she saw her own chance. "By the way...", she started, "I would also have a request. I see that in the toilet you use air refreshers." (In actual fact she not only had seen it, but smelled it all too clearly.) "I don't cope well with that spray and I would prefer if you were not to use it."

She tried to interpret the neighbour's long gaze, until the neighbour eventually said: "Indeed, we don't need to use it all the time. Just—if we have visitors—then it is better though." "Alright," she answered with a smile benignly, "if there are visitors." — That she did not want to take off her neighbour after all.

We had assumed that it is difficult for women to put their own small mundane activities into a relation with questions of general regulation, but this assumption was shifted initially in the story. In the struggle over the spray the author's intentions are directed far beyond personal well-being towards big questions of regulation concerning environmental pollution and chemical contamination. But in the asserting process this dimension of the problematic disappears: In the first instance it was a matter concerning humanity as a whole and the author had a large

movement behind her, but at the end she is alone with her personal "need", speaks of physical intolerance, a "bagatelle".

This process shows that the insight into the correctness of an issue does not yet mean there is a strategy to change it. The search for assertive strategies shows the helplessness of the author. She equates political education with a personal attack, an attempt to "educate older people", a threat to the consensus that she found with her neighbours. We were surprised to see that in this construction a question of regulation that can be reviewed on a sheer factual basis becomes a matter of personal presumptuousness, a request that depends on the goodwill of other persons. On this social level a regulation-consensus is used; only after the neighbour takes the risk of disapproval with her request, the author can reciprocate and voices her concern. In the moment of her concrete action she loses the political dimension. All that is left is the individual indisposition that is hardly worth of being asserted. Once the substantial elements are lost, what remains is the body as a resource, she has to present in contravention to herself (her body), to be able to act for herself.

The story brings us a problem transfer in relation to the difficulty to connect individual and general questions of regulation. The problematic is not about mundane everyday activities to be grasped for their political significance, it is rather the re-translation of the big issues onto the plane of our small mundane activities. Here the general questions disappear in the personal relations, in the establishment of capacity for action, which leads to a de-politicisation for reasons of assertiveness.

That indicates that in personal relations other modes of assertion are available in which the intentions take on a different form. We assume that this is not only due to different logics (here the gift exchange instead of education), but rather a polar opposition of the two areas. The political is perceived as overburdening and as something hostile to the immediate well-being, therefore one stays away from it. Emotions are the yardstick.

We can see that politics that relate the big issues to the individual life-style are successful: big objectives can be put in context of everyday life and be translated into small ones. But the strategies and means to change regulations are not simply transferable. What is missing are strategies for translating the objectives into tangible everyday actions.
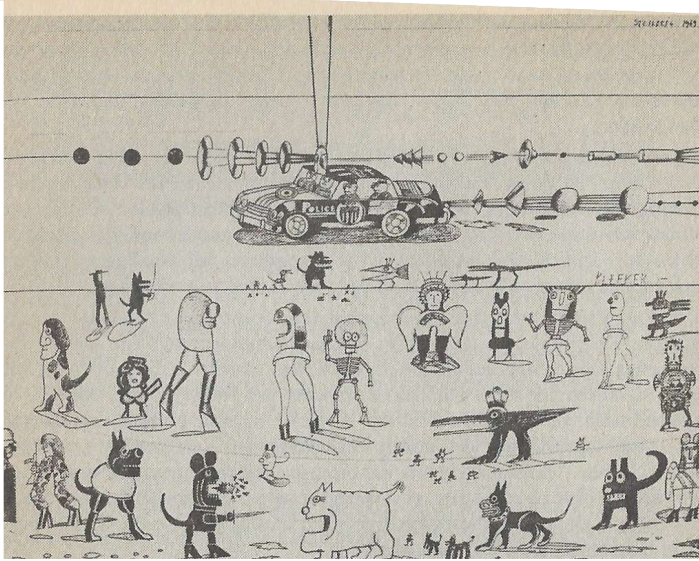
Politics without framework - problem transfers

1. The concrete objectives in the stories are so small that initially we found it difficult to connect the stories with politics at all. Only by looking at what is connected to the objectives, the social sites, the involvement in particular forms of struggle "enlarged" our perspective and let the struggles for assertion become existential questions. The intentions of the women aim at order in which concrete objectives are regulated in different ways. That allows to advance thinking of politics beyond the regulation of society by the state or in the explicitly political arena, instead it becomes possible to ask also what is regulated and how in other areas, especially concerning the regulatory activities of individuals.

2. But it is about big issues: one's intentions, freedom and independence, life-perspectives, people's health and well-being, a healthy environment. The common assumption that women put their intentions on hold needs to be modified: They disappear exactly when they are fought for.

3. If possibilities for development are connected to heteronomy and dependence, the concrete objectives and the transcending perspectives fall apart and are set opposite to each other in the process of assertion. One of the two sides is let go to eliminate of contradiction – the political

dimension is sacrificed for the sake of concrete partial steps, or the abstract independence is lived as everyday task.

4. The own standpoint, the justified necessity of the cause to be asserted that would hold the two sides of the intentions together, disappears in the personal relations in a manner that leaves hardly anything to be asserted at all.

5. In these forms women societalise in a way that makes them achieve capacity for action by using strategies aimed at affirmation by the authorities. The resulting personal dependence is not so much a material one; rather women live societal integration in the form of integration into family and friendships, in personal relations.

6. The importance of affirmation and integration chains the individuals tightly to the pre-existing order, the strategies acquired are competences in incompetence.

7. Order is experienced as protection, even, or better especially against authority figures who personify the rules. That fastens the alignment with persons in superior positions, and not only in the family. Order provides orientation and offers ways and means for assertion.

8. The transfer of big issues into everyday actions in the story of the "spray-affair" shifted our assumption that women had difficulties to appropriate big politics. Here the personal involvement with the big issue proves to be overburdening because no suitable strategy is available for it to be translated into small, doable steps.

9. Our question how individual concerns and regulations could be generalised, or on societal plane be thought of, has thus turned into the question how the societal in the regulations by way of its creation and assertion in private form becomes small, particular interests.

If identity is appropriated via integration into personal relations, every intention aiming at general or societal objectives will trigger a rupturing contradiction. There are different solutions: In the regulation of personal relations the general dimension gets lost, or the women escape the personal relations that deny them integration whereby the original intentions mutate into a means of personal resistance.

10. It is urgently necessary for political strategies to consider the fact that societal dimensions disappear in the form of private, personal assertiveness. Due to its tie to everyday life particularly the women's movement has an immense potential for mobilisation. But if the forms in which struggles are enacted are ignored, this type of politicisation can

effectively de-politicise as women lose the societal in the social[5] and remain isolated.

11. The limitations in the depicted modes of movement account for an urgent need to direct our forces against further privatisation, as it is planned at present in questions of provision, education and unemployment. Only if women no longer mediate themselves in society via the personal but via their actions and thereby determine the conditions themselves, the "particularity" of their concerns can break open and be brought to bear in its general significance.

12. "Women's interests" could become a concept for struggle that addresses also the limitations which disconnects women from the collective and general regulation of society.

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5   The original here reads "das Verallgemeinerbare im Sozialen verlieren." I have translated 'Verallgemeinerbares' as "societal" which is not a literal translation, but it depicts better the concept referred to. RH

Chapter 7

COLLECTIVE MEMORY-WORK
ON FEMALE FEAR OF SUCCESS
A SUCCESSFUL WOMEN'S STUDIES SEMINAR

Marion Breiter & Kerstin Witt-Löw

The course "The fear of girls of being successful - a pattern of female societalisation" was designed by two lecturers as a joint project running over one year. It took place 1988/89 at the Department of Education at the University of Vienna in the format of four weekend seminars.

The seminar concept

Topical point of departure were the results of research done by Matina Horner (1971) who found out in projective tests that women associate success in their jobs with personal misfortune, not being loved, and loss of femininity. She labelled these tendencies "fear of success" which could be understood as specifically female intrapsychic dynamic. Subsequent research (Solomon 1975) also showed that men assume negative personality traits in professionally successful women even to a larger degree. Obviously the female fear of success is mirrored by male fear of professionally successful women. Therefore it is probably nothing but a realistic appraisal of societal norms and an attempt to come to an arrangement with them.
  The guiding question for the course was, whether in the process of education and socialisation such basic attitudes are nurtured, and if so: how? And what relationship is there between these attitudes and cultural specific gender stereotypes, their assessment and power potential? Small groups (of 4 - 6 students) were supposed to review existing research approaches and results, supplemented by studies conducted by the students themselves in the shape of interviews, analysis of pupils' essays or drawings, surveys, analysis of TV-programs, etc. Conducting and presenting this small group work took place in the first part of the course.

The second semester centred on active stakes of women in gender patterns that are effectively to their disadvantage, and also on personal reflection of this problematic by means of Collective Memory-Work. This part of the process took place in the same small groups as the earlier theoretical work.

The method of Collective Memory-Work that was introduced by Frigga Haug and others (Haug 1980), proved to be quite useful for capturing the *How* of processes of socialisation, the subtle events and acts that we call societalisation. How do women appropriate the structures that surround them, how do they work themselves into these structures? What psychic structures do they build up within themselves?

The question determines the method. For focussing on the *How* of the processes of socialisation we have to take subjectivity serious: the individual person, and her specific way of working through and mediating her particular history. Hence, knowledge should be gained from experience. We assume that there is not an infinite number of ways of working trough a pre-existing reality. Hence every individual (life-)history also contains an element that can be generalised - a "pattern of female societalisation."

Assuming that women are active participants in the processes of their societalisation opens the optimistic perspective of possibilities for change. Whoever is actively involved in reacting to pre-existing circumstances will also be able to actively change themselves and those circumstances.

That brings us to another demand that is important particularly in women's studies. Subject and object of research should not be separated. In traditional social scientific research there is the almighty, mostly male researcher who determines question, method, and interpretation without clarifying the subjective roots of his own research interest. On the other side there are the researched who are pure suppliers of research data. Collective Memory-Work in contrast is based on a collective research process in which everyone is researcher and researched. The collective is a means of help and a corrective, a group of co-researchers and co-researched. As a lone individual we can hardly escape the morass of self-consolidated oppression. The group makes it easier to question the constructions of our own identity.

What we subjectively remember is a construction, determined by forgetting, repressing, tampering, retrospectively introducing references etc. The memories are full of polished contradictions, emotions expressed

in clichés (and thus defused), white spots and incomprehensible leaps. What is at stake are exactly these constructions, the forms of working through pre-existing reality, the appropriation of societal structures that are full of contradictions and antagonism, like e.g. production/reproduction, private/public, female/male.

For coping with these contradictory structures and maintaining the capacity for action an individual has to compromise, smooth over contradiction, adjust emotions, desires and wants to reality. Many of these attempts to adjust come at the cost of great personal suffering. They can be maintained only because ideologies are built around them. Our proposition is that the phenomenon of "female fear of success" is such a compromise.

The praxis of Collective Memory-Work

At the very start of the course, not influenced yet by theoretical reviews or presentations each participant wrote a story of an event in their own life on the topic of "success" or "failure." The story was supposed to relate to a specific period in life as determined by the small group. It was to be written in third person narrative to create distance and make the later work with the stories easier. The stories were analysed by the same small groups in the second semester - only after the group had collected theoretical material on their topic.

How does collectively doing memory-work by way of writing stories actually work? First, experience is put against experience. Where recounts in the stories seem to be not comparable questions arise. This is already an investigation of circumstances that allowed for the respective events to happen in the first place. What is requested is not empathy, it is rather about questioning the seemingly self-evident in our deeds, thoughts, emotions. When working with the texts the group needs to avoid simulating a psychotherapeutic session or an analysis of the person of the author.

The language of the story is scanned for clichés - which are often used to express emotions. Clichés are a societal offer as a means for describing and generalising emotions. They can stand in the way of comprehending more complex contexts. White spots, omissions, contradictions and breaks in the narrative, the interests of the characters in the story should be noticed [by the group].

In such an analysis, during which the "tangents in conversation" and associations are also important, patterns of gender specific behaviour are detected, new connections can lead to propositions or questions as starting points for theorizing. A good analysis will also be of benefit to the author of a given text, inform her/him about the own patterns. Together then the group can also consider alternative possibilities for action. Several participants reported that the search for such alternatives was initially difficult. It was only in the process of continued work within the group that some patterns of thought were actually "de-self-evidenced", thus opening room for new thoughts – the first step for breaking free from long-routinised painful gender restraints.

Of the 41 authors 37 were female, 4 were male. Therefore it was not possible to attend to gender specific differences in the notions of participants what they deemed to be success. Such differences could only be referenced in reverting to already existing research and experiences.

What is female success?

We asked this question in our seminar - assuming already that female success is something different than male success. A lot of the students' answers brought up notions of 'harmony', 'happy life', 'finding a balance between family and job'. The word 'career' in the sense of a prestigious professional position did not come up. These statements are reactions of women to the contradictory demands which they face from early childhood on. In school the standards for measuring performance are similar for girls and boys, and often girls, who are also assumed to be more diligent, perform better. But at the same time as access to enhanced education in schools has increasingly opened up for women and they successfully make use of this opportunity a process of inflation and devaluation of exactly these school qualifications and certifications has taken place. Neither does a final cert guarantee a career, nor does a university degree – particularly in subjects with a high level of female students – guarantee a well paid and prestigious job. In the achieving society[1] achievements are valued differently according to gender.

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1   The German term here is "Leistungsgesellschaft", which could be translated as meritocracy; but the connotation that goes with the term in the German language contains a sharper edge that is difficult to put into a fitting English term. I decided to use the makeshift solution of "achieving society" as used, e.g. by Lisa Renken in her dissertation on the "Modell Leistungsgesellschaft:

Parallel to achievements in school girls are also expected in families to show a social orientation towards mediation, harmony etc., while boys are supported to assert themselves (see Scheu 1977). This is mirrored in adult life by the manifold unpaid tasks that women (have to) perform in job, family and society. Meanwhile "showing elbows" brings men into power positions. In addition there is pressure from puberty on to be beautiful and be successful as a sexually attractive woman, i.e. have a boy-friend and later a successful husband. This is the background on which harmony is seen as female success, a blurred concept that at the same time speaks of the contradictory reality. In it failure is predictable – as is also clear from the stories which the students wrote.

These are stories on success in school, in (heterosexual) relationships and in families. Most of the stories are in fact not about success, instead they are about failure. One of the groups soon changed their topic into 'powerlessness'. We suspect that writing/talking about failure is more 'adequate' for women than foregrounding one's success. The analysis of the stories however shifted perspectives by times: in 'failure'-stories a rather courageous and active girl appeared who in the context of given circumstances was indeed successful. That made another problem visible: obviously women have a concept in which success has to be something 'massive'. Consequently they perceive themselves on the side of failure, and they chain themselves emotionally to this side.

Female patterns of experience and behaviour in self-generated stories

a) Patterns in 'relationships':

These stories are about the first relationships of 14 to 18 year old girls with boys or men. What is success remains unclear in the stories: initially it would be success to have a boyfriend at all – at least in the daydreams of the girls. These daydreams are present in all stories, and in some of them the daydreams and fantasies occupy more space than the real happenings.

While the fantasy of the status as wife 'of', or girlfriend 'of' is about family and love and it ends with the famous happy-end-kiss, reality itself is full of conflicts: the efforts to evoke and maintain 'his' attention, the

the 'Achieving Society' and the Concept of 'Leistung' in the Third Reich and the Federal Republic, 1933-1975" (2016). RH

unsettledness because of sexuality or the sexual expectations of boys, the stress to ensure not to lose 'him'. Rarely is 'he' described in the stories as a graphic person, his interests and actions remain incomprehensible. That renders him volatile and her all the more helpless and dependent.

The tendency of women to escape from unsatisfying reality into conventional rose-tainted clichéd daydreams is also mentioned by Frigga Haug (1984). She interprets this as a hindrance to engaging with real chances for change. If we want to detect alternative possibilities for action for the protagonist, it is therefore important to go back and get a detailed description of the concrete persons and of the situation. On the other hand, if the authors paint out their fantasies so extensively, they also do so because it demonstrates the clichéd success of 'having a boyfriend (or husband)'. The descriptions of the everyday dealings within the relationships however leave unclear what actually constitutes a successful relationship. The girls' fantasies are lonely phantasies. They reckon that as soon as their desire to have a particular boy as boyfriend becomes publicly known they would in case of failure have to bear sneering insult on top of injury.

For the male success in "pulling" a girl there is no female equivalent. In the game of the sexes the girl only learns to send out decent signs, and to transmit an innocent, merely accidental invitation for male activity. In one of the stories a girl cycles in circles around the pitch to make herself visible for her crush, but when he indeed notices her she is unsure already – is he laughing about her, does he see through her plan? Success is if a boy is interested in the girl, better even if it is the one that she also wants. The own share in this success remains unclear. We find here a well-known pattern of female behaviour that is equally obstructive in adult life: It is difficult for women to state their interest and aims clearly and unambiguously, and then make the necessary steps to achieve them. They find it easier to trust that the partner, the boss, the friend etc. will have a feel for what she wants (Benard and Schlaffer 1989).

Sexual attractiveness and success with boys have another dark side: they create envy and make the respective girl lonely. For instance, one of the stories tells about a girl who performs well in school and is also liked by boys. She increasingly gets "bullied" and isolated by female class mates and teachers. The story ends with the dry comment: When she got pregnant, the parents took her out of the school.

b) Patterns in the family:

The most frequent descriptions in this area were those of rivalry amongst siblings. If a concrete person is mentioned, it is the brother. Predominantly mentioned was the feeling of being discriminated against, being treated unfairly – first by the impertinent brother and consequently also by the referees, the parents. Girls are expected to behave reasonably, which constrains them in multiple ways in the stories: If a girl enters into a physical fight – whereby in the stories it is made clear that this happens always purely in defence – then there surely is a punishment coming on top of it from the side of the mother. Even if the girl wins a physical battle with the brother, it still is not a clear success. Some of the female students write proudly about their victory, but also about the extensive pangs of remorse afterwards. One author felt 'low', another one describes her immediate concern that she could have inflicted pain on her opponent – even though the brother was first to attack her. Obviously behind the remorse there is the internalised norm that a girl is not supposed to get the better of a boy – as became evident in parts when working with the stories. It is also made explicit how the girls' attempts to verbally appeal to the attacker lead to nothing. In face of this, consoling phrases like "the wiser head gives in" only appear as parental mockery, a camouflage of (gender specific) powerlessness.

At the same time parents only realise rivalry amongst siblings or react to it once it is battled out physically. The silent suffering of the girls attracts little attention – a pattern that is replicated in school and society (see Naime and Smith 1987).

The most successful strategy in familial conflicts that is mentioned is to ally up with with the father who is acknowledged as the most powerful in the family. This however comes at the price of making oneself small. For girls to decide a conflict in their favour the role of "daddy's little girl" or the "little daughter in need of protection" is the most promising. The mother on the other hand pulls the short straw in all stories. In cases of siblings' rivalries she is of no help, in relation to the father she is a rival, a competitor. The mothers in the stories appear as "clichéd mothers" throughout: punishing, unfair, helpless, stupid. This is a shocking result if we consider that the mother is generally the first figure of orientation for the own gender role.

c) Patterns in school and university:

Despite there being strong ambivalences the stories that deal with school and university still bring up more experiences that are taken as success than those about family and love relationships. The girls' desire for social approval which gives the experience of success a feeling of being real plays an important role in most of the stories. Here the question arises, do girls/women have an increased desire for approval or are they in fact not sufficiently taken care of when compared to boys/men? Research and experience suggests the latter: Men are constantly coddled up socially and reaffirmed in their self-confidence, in school and university, by women, male organisations, economic and political constellations (see Spender 1985). Women enjoy these privileges not in the same manner, but–as is prevalent in many of the stories–they see it as an individual problem.

Success often occurs where there is a positive role model that is worth to be followed: "The girl took her primary teacher as substituting her mother and decided to become a teacher, too. From this day on her school performance improved."

To male pupils there is often a–male–role model shown like, e.g. Albert Einstein, to whom they are compared and thus put in one pot with the "geniuses." This type of cult around the genius evokes the impression that men are simply more talented, that they gain knowledge without any effort (what especially in university is played out as bluff-strategy) – whereby of course the female part in the achievements is kept under the carpet, as in Einstein's case the mathematical theories of his wife Mileva Maric (see Stephan 1989). All the more is it success for a girl if she can get the better of such a little Einstein; it is no accident that a good few stories are of maths-lessons.

The authors see good results often as a case of good luck, something that somehow "falls from heaven", but not as a result of talent and effort. The same result is found in a US-study (Parsons et al., in Schultz 1980: 154f.) that deals with self-perceptions of preschool and primary school children. There it was found that girls have significantly less expectations of their own abilities than would be justified by their proper achievements. For a girl therefore success is more a matter of luck while failure is the expected consequence of an assumed lack of abilities, whereas for boys this is exactly reversed.

This type of self-image has a lot to do with the negative expectations of teachers as depicted in many of the stories: "A teacher was of the opinion that good results of girls in the sciences are pure chance and have nothing to do with intellect." "In contrast to some of the boys she is never encouraged to voice her opinion. But like all the other girls she is afraid to speak without being asked or to ask a question because the teacher uses such occasions to make fun of the girls." "Girls only learn off by heart, they don't understand." Such recounts are in line with the results of many studies that confirm that teachers think male pupils are more open, active, interested and brilliant, even if the teachers discipline the boys more often and mark their work poorer (Schultz 1980: 88-91).

This fact brings us to another pattern: in spite of receiving good marks for many authors no explicit feeling of success comes up. Success is success only if it is connected to personal social appreciation and acknowledgement. Consequently good marks are not a sufficient motivation for sustaining in difficult situations in school and university.

In the stories the central position in the distribution of appreciation and acknowledgement lies with teacher. There are no expectations in this regard of the other pupils. Quite the opposite – they are usually depicted as a grey mass that is characterised by fierce competition and a lack of solidarity. There is no mentioning at all of success that would come on the basis of help and support by colleagues. Instead betrayal, isolation, loneliness, rivalry feature all the more often – an upsetting result that once again speaks volumes about the distorted values in our achieving society. All the more it is a problem for self-confidence and self-images of women that in co-educational classes boys receive significantly more attention than girls. They may be more often reprimanded and disciplined, but they are also more often called on to speak, praised and attentively listened to (Brehmer 1982).

The difficulty to receive personal appreciation and acknowledgement increases in the large anonymous institution of university. In the stories university frequently appears as an obscure monster, individual persons are not described in detail and where they are mentioned they are free of any characteristic interests. Formulations like "diffuse dissatisfaction", "being in the wrong place", "having no motivating target", "vacuum carefully hidden behind academic grade", demonstrate that there is little awareness of a connection between studying and lived praxis. Where such a connection can be established – e.g. in pushing through a topic for

a presentation that is of personal interest to a student – this is experienced unambiguously as an experience of success. The lack of relevance of course content hits women specifically hard because their education lets them develop more distinctively the ability and the desire for a connection between theory and praxis, a connection which they find hard to establish in the university (see Mohr 1987).

Reflections

For us this seminar was success. Initially there were 120 students who wanted to enrol. We could only cater for 50. Eventually 35 students took part in all four weekend seminars throughout the year, often with great energy and very committed – a figure that is comparably high. Time again lively discussions arose in which theory and personal reflection could be vividly connected. Even a planned brochure with the documentation was produced within the given time frame. It seems to us the following aspects contributed essentially to the success of the seminar:

- In the context of educational studies there is obviously a great demand for seminars in which female lived experiences are made a topic. This demand is not met by an adequate supply at present.
- The request of students for getting to know new research methods and to work more oriented on praxis is equally strong.
- Planning and conducting the seminars in a collaboration of two lecturers may have increased work load for us, but it made our work much more enjoyable and more creative and it certainly added to an open and dialogic discussion climate.
- The work in small groups was particularly beneficial for the connection of theoretical work with their own research approaches and Collective Memory-Work. Many participants clearly understood the relevance of science in everyday praxis. Eight of the ten groups that were built at the beginning worked very well until the very end. This is also a result of introducing "warm-up" activities and team building exercises, plus allowing ample time for

> establishing the eventual small group composition on the first day of the seminar.
> - The format of four weekend seminars made it possible to work together more intensely and added to the commitment of participants.

Outlook

From our own experience we can say that Collective Memory-Work can be a productive research method for a large variety of groups and settings. For instance, one of us facilitated a workshop at a teachers' conference 1988 in which stories of conflicts between pupil/teacher, teacher/colleague, teacher/principal, teacher/pupil were discussed. Time for this workshop was very restricted (3 hours), and yet a surprising amount of patterns of females' dealings with conflict and female behaviour was brought up, with the effect of inspiring an engaged discussion.

Our seminar in Vienna is now running in its third year in the format as described in this essay. We have made very good experiences in it. The financial obstacles that are regularly put up for us only show the underlying problematic: the fear of many male scientists of successful seminars run by feminist lecturers.

Overall Collective Memory-Work is a creative and enjoyable research method that we can recommend for other sectors as well:

- Training- and research institutions
- Adult education
- Reflective supervision
- Consciousness raising groups

Applications in other fields – e.g. in spheres of youth work or school – would have to be tested.

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Chapter 8

MEMORY-WORK: THEORY AND METHOD

June Crawford, Susan Kippax, Jenny Onyx, Una Gault and Pam Benton

The method 'memory work' (Haug, 1987) seemed to offer not only a way of exploring human experience but also of capturing and documenting its production. The way in which we decided upon memory-work was not, however, typical of psychological or sociological research, for we decided the method first, and the topic to be explored, emotion, second.

  (...) We had come together initially to talk about our disquiet with traditional psychology and its methods. Memory-work, we believed, would enable us to move beyond the constraints of a traditional psychology, to make links with the exciting and radical ideas emerging from feminism and the new paradigm of social constructionism.

  Emotion was chosen as the 'topic under discussion' because emotion (...) is women's business; in as much as it is associated with intuition, it is foreign to Western male thought. The topic was also chosen because (...) emotions are produced in people's attempts to make sense of their world, in their efforts to appropriate and resist the structures of their everyday lives; they are the stuff out of which people construct and evaluate selves.

Theory and Method of Memory-Work

Memory-work was developed by the German feminist and scholar Frigga Haug (1987). The strength of her method is that it is integral to her theory of socialisation, of how persons become selves and the part persons themselves play in that construction. The underlying theory is that subjectively significant events, events which are remembered, and the way they are subsequently constructed, play an important part in the construction of self. Because self is socially constructed through reflection, Haug's theory dictates memory-work as method. The initial

data of the method, memory-work, are memories, which are reappraised collectively to uncover and document the social nature of their production.

Haug's theory of social construction of self captures much of what was and remains central to our own approach. We were confident, therefore, that memory-work, the method she and her co-researchers had used so successfully to study female sexuality, would work in researching emotions. We believed that memory-work was likely to reveal the processes of the construction of emotion. We began to explore it as a way of investigating emotions and in the process we, inevitably, modified and elaborated it.

The theoretical underpinnings of memory-work are essential to an understanding of the method itself; the method is not merely a technique for data collection, but includes analysing and theorizing the data, interpreting and re-interpreting them in the light of the overall theory. (...)

We begin our exposition of memory-work by comparing it with other methods, namely collection and analysis of accounts, and case history methods. These methods of enquiry are dictated by the respective underlying theories. All three take seriously the subject and what the subject has to say. They share an epistemological basis in treating the subject and the object of knowledge as correlative and co-constructive and reject the view that 'subject' and 'object' designate independent entities. Meanings are constituted in action and action in meanings.

Accounts and case histories are coloured by subjectivity; they concern what is, and what has become subjectively significant. They tell the stories of attempts to make sense of the world, to make familiar and understand, to resolve contradiction. The 'talk' of these texts, broadly conceived, enables communication between selves and, more importantly in this context, it provides a way of reflecting on and evaluating behaviour of self and others.

The initial 'texts' of memory-work are written memories. As such they have two special advantages: the first is that memory-work enables an engagement with the past. The initial memory texts, the memories themselves, differ from narrative accounts and to some extent case histories, in that they describe what was subjectively significant; memory-work texts focus on past events and actions. These reflections of what occurred then, provide the starting point for memory-work, now.

Memory-work is based on the assumptions that what is remembered is remembered because it is, in some way, problematic or unfamiliar, in need of review. The actions and episodes are remembered because they were significant then and remain significant now. Their significance lies in the continuing search for intelligibility necessitated by the unfamiliarity of the episode, the conflict and contradiction that might have been present, and the lack of resolution.

The second advantage of memories is that individuals' memories provide the medium in which their actions are given direction and evaluated. As Shotter (1984, p. 212) explains, the process of using one's own experiences in structuring one's own further actions is very familiar. What perhaps is not so familiar or obvious is that the relation between oneself and one's memories of one's past experience is similar to the relation between other agents and oneself. One's self engages with one's memories, has a conversation with them, responds to them, as another responds to oneself. Memories are essential to the duality of self. The 'I' reflects back on the 'me' and together they constitute the self. Memories contain the traces of the continuing process of appropriation of the social and the becoming, the constructing of self.

In their attempt to wrest meaning from the world, persons construct themselves; and in their struggle for intelligibility they reflect. They remember the problematic, which is itself socially produced, in terms of the resolution previously sought if not achieved. Memory-work thus is intimately bound up with the uncovering of the processes of the construction of self. As Haug (1987: 50) argues: "Our basic premise was that anything and everything remembered constitutes a relevant trace – precisely because it is remembered – for the formation of identity." Memories are fundamentally important as constitutive of self in a way that the 'talk' of accounts and, to a lesser extent, case studies cannot be.

The method focuses on uncovering the processes of social construction captured in the memories and reflections of individuals. Its first focus is the individual reflections and the ways in which they indicate the processes of construction. For example, when reflecting on a happy experience, Ann remembered:

> Ann was about 7. Her dad was factory manager of a concrete block factory. They lived in a house on the premises. There were stacks of concrete blocks near the house. Ann climbed

among them and by moving some blocks (just possible) was able to fashion a rather grand fort. No one could see her if she so chose.

Happiness for Ann (...) was experienced with respect to control and choice with regard to space. Other memories, written in response to the cue 'play' elaborate on this theme.

Amy:

The first children were sent out to play as usual, and the parents got stuck into talking. A was worried about them forgetting lunch. Outside it was surprising. Down the back of the yard it looked like a jungle. J said it was her special place and she took the others into it. There were leaves and branches everywhere and the girls pretended they were explorers. Then they found the treasure for the day. Slung from one tree trunk to another was a hammock. It looked to A like a raft to use to discover the strange tangled world they were in. With delight all four of them hopped into it and it quivered and trembled with their weight.

Tim:

His Dad was building a cubby house for him and his younger brother. It was on stilts, with steps going up to it. On a really hot day in summer he, his little brother, and two family friends were playing in it, pretending it was a helicopter. There were no walls on it yet, just a frame, so it was like those helicopters with big bubble windows that you can see everything from. He was having a lot of fun because it was just like a real helicopter, in the back yard of his house.

The three memories contain references to childhood spaces, spaces in which to act out fantasy, spaces separate from the adult world over which the children have control. The common meanings, in this example of the constructing of happiness and delight through a sense of 'my place', are the second and equally important focus of memory-work.

This second focus is on those same memories compared and contrasted with each other and appraised and reappraised by self and others, the co-members of the memory-work group. In memory-work these reflections are reflected on again, reappraised, within the memory-work group, where the common elements become evident. The individual members of the memory-work group, each of whom has written one or more memories, come together and collectively interpret, discuss and theorize the memories. New meanings are reached, but they are reached by the co-members themselves, together; there is a striving for a 'common' sense.

The two foci of memory-work, which we refer to as phase 1 and phase 2 in our description of the method itself below, capture something of the duality of self. The self talking with itself, is phase 1, and responding to itself as others respond to it is phase 2. The meanings reached or arrived at by the group are a function of the meanings as negotiated then at the time of the remembered event and those now collectively theorized. Meanings are negotiated until a 'common' sense is achieved. The process of the struggle for intelligibility is revealed. The task of memory-work is to uncover and lay bare the earlier understandings in the light of current understandings, thus elucidating the underlying processes of construction involved.

Thus, memory-work is, we believe, a method *par excellence* for exploring the processes of the construction of self and understanding the ways in which emotions, motives, actions, choices, moral judgements, play their part in that construction. It gives and insight into the way people appropriate the social world and in so doing transform themselves and it.

We (...) consider further the relationships between reflection and memory, the striving for intelligibility and the construction process in [other parts of *Emotion and Gender*]. But here we will discuss the memory-work in the context of hermeneutics, and then describe the method itself in more detail.

Hermeneutics as an Alternative to Empiricism

Memory-work is firmly positioned against empiricist methodologies of mainstream social science. Whereas empiricism is essentially atheoretical and claims that knowledge is self-evident, a hermeneutic approach is

theory-laden and acknowledges that knowledge depends upon interpretation. Hermeneutics does not observe the positivist imperative of the separation of the subject from the object of knowledge. As pointed out above, the co-researchers act both as subjects and the objects of knowledge, producing the data (in the form of memories) and subjecting these data to a progressive process of critical reading and theorization.

This collapsing of the subject and object of research, the 'knower' and the 'known', constitutes or sets aside a space where the experiential can be placed in relation to the theoretical. Haug argues that memory-work is possible only if subject and object of research are the same:

> The very notion that our past experience may offer some insight into the ways in which individuals construct themselves into existing relations, thereby themselves reproducing a social formation, itself contains an implicit argument for a particular methodology. If we refuse to understand ourselves simply as a bundle of reactions to all-powerful structures or to the social relations within which we have formed us [ourselves], if we search instead for possible indications of how we have participated actively in the formations of our own past experience, then the usual mode of social-scientific research, in which individuals figure exclusively as objects of the process of research, has to be abandoned. (1987: 34-5)

In issuing this plea for subjectivity, Haug raises the issue of generalizability. Haug (1987: 44) argues that: "Individual modes of appropriation of the social are frequently conceived as personally unique; . . . this involves an underestimation of the sociality of human beings." The range of actions accessible to any given individual is limited by the structures in which the actions occur and by which they are restrained. The range of possible actions can be reviewed in research as general possibilities. Thus, each individual mode of appropriation of the social, of engagement with the structures, is potentially generalizable. "If someone therefore a given experience is possible, it is also subject to universalization" (1987: 44).

  Hollway, who makes a similar plea for subjectivity, deals with the issue of generalization as follows: "The concern for mass generalization and the

requirement to use large numbers for statistical manipulation together produce knowledge which does not address the complex conditions of people and their conduct, either in their uniqueness or their commonality" (1989: 15). She goes on to argue, as does Haug, that information derived from any participant is valid because the account given is a product of the social domain.

Certainly on the occasions when we have presented our work, the response to it has indicated that people recognize their own experience in what we have said and written; they find it plausible. The credibility of our work is one marker of its generalizability and representativeness. Further, as emotions are socially constructed, then the notion that the findings of our work are or should be generalizable to peoples of other places and other times is misconceived.

There is a sense, however, in which the question of generalizability must be answered. Until memory-work groups other than the ones in which we have been involved are established, then it is possible, although we believe highly improbable, that our findings are relevant only to us and the groups with which we have worked. In this sense, the question of generalizability and, indirectly, representativeness, becomes one of concern for heterogeneity. Confidence in the relevance of the outcome of memory-work to persons other than those taking part in memory-work groups can best be achieved by ensuring the heterogeneity of the groups themselves.

Whatever the outcome of further empirical work, a method such as memory-work enables the exploration and analysis of experience in a manner which is radically different from empiricist methods. Memory-work can do this because, like other methods with which it shares a common hermeneutical epistemology, it does not give priority to either subjective experience or theory; rather it sets them in a reciprocal and mutually critical relationship. Hermeneutics is, of course, not new. Dilthey is credited with its introduction to the human sciences (see Messer et al. 1988; Greenwood 1989). Psychologists and sociologists as well as historians and literary critics are participant observers who inevitably use their empathic responses to understand events and actions. Further, if human beings understand only that which they have made, as Vico has argued (see Lana 1979; Shotter 1986), then an experiential as opposed to an evidentiary epistemology is necessary.

It is not only because of this sharing in a common hermeneutic epistemology, but also because of Haug's theoretical compatibility with our own position, that we knew our application of memory-work to the study of emotions would work. In this sense our adoption of memory-work was not entirely serendipitous. What was unexpected, what overwhelmed and excited us, was the strength of memory-work in enabling us to ground emerging theory in our data and their analysis. We found that memory-work worked even better than we had anticipated.

Memory-Work as Method

Memory-work involves at least three phases. First, the collection of written memories according to certain rules. Second, the collective analysis of those written memories. There is also a third phase in which there is further reappraisal; a reappraisal of the memories and their analysis in the context of a range of theories academic disciplines. We are still involved in that third phase; in writing [*Emotion and Gender*] we have reappraised much of our work in the light of theories of emotion as well as the memories and memory-work of other groups. In the process we have also reappraised the theories.

Subjects/Researchers

Before memory-work can be done, however, a group of co-researchers or co-workers must be formed. Memory-work is carried out by a collective. The memory-work groups may be formed in a number of ways: they can be formed with one or more of the researchers as full members of the group, or with one or more of the researchers as facilitator(s). The use of a group facilitator is not discussed by Haug. Status differences in group membership are very likely to damage each member's freedom in reaching towards what is truly common to the group. That said, however, the presence of a skilled facilitator may be useful on occasions.

The way we began was to form ourselves into a memory-work group. We were our own subjects; the distinctions between researcher and 'subject' disappeared. Our memories were our raw data. This initial group was, in many ways, the most satisfying and productive; most of the data and analysis presented in [*Emotion and Gender*] come from this group.

Other memory-work groups consisted of four, five or six people, including one or two of us, the researchers, as full and active members. In an important sense, the work of these groups becomes indistinguishable from that of the initial group. We set up a number of memory-work groups in this way.

We also formed memory-work groups of which we were not members. The groups remained independent of us. We explained the rules for both writing and analysing their memories and left them to it. That is, we encouraged other groups of four or five or six people to be both researchers and subjects. The men's groups referred to in [*Emotion and Gender*] as well as other women's groups were set up in this way.

Finally, we also set up memory-groups in which one of us has acted as a facilitator. Although, as noted above, this is not a preferred option, this variation on the memory-work groups is a good one if the topic to be explored is one that people find embarrassing or difficult to discuss and/or where the group loses direction. A skilled group facilitator may be able to relieve anxiety, enable the writing of memories and the collective discussion, and re-direct attentions. In these groups, however, we were always aware of problems created by our presence. The group facilitator becomes the leader and the sense of collectivity is diminished.

In all these examples, each particular memory-work group itself has carried the major weight of the analytic work. We have, however, reappraised many of our own memories in the light of the memories and memory work of these other groups.

In general, we have preferred to set up groups in which the individual members are reasonably homogeneous on some criterion which, a priori, we regarded as relevant. For example, in exploring emotions, the memory-work groups were of 'older women', 'younger women' and 'young men'. In our experience, groups of friends work well together, although groups in which the individual members were strangers were also successful. The main criterion for success is mutual trust, which is essential if the groups are to meet for the necessary time. Many of our memory-work groups met for months or longer, an indication that the memory-work groups had found the experience rewarding and stimulating.

Phase 1

The memories are written according to a set of rules. The rules we used were based on Haug's injunctions but as our work continued we developed and modified some of them. The rules we used are described below. The first five are essentially the same as those recommended by Haug (1987).

1   Write a memory
2   of a particular episode, action or event
3   in the third person
4   in as much detail as is possible, including even 'inconsequential' or trivial detail (it may be helpful to think of a key image, sound, taste, smell, touch)
5   but without importing interpretation, explanation or biography.
6   Write one of your earliest memories.

The force of rules 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 is to ensure that the co-researcher writes a description of a particular event or episode rather than an account or a general abstracted description. For example, if one is asked to write a memory of 'arguments with your partner' then it is likely that an account justifying and explaining such arguments would be written. The written memory is likely to contain characteristics of all arguments – or at least the more serious ones. On the other hand, if one is asked to write a memory of the 'first' or 'most recent' or 'most serious (or trivial)' argument, given the rules above, a description of a particular and significant event is more likely to be written than an account which typical includes warranting and justification.
  But which event or episode? What topic? The process begins by the co-researchers choosing a topic (or trigger). Each co-researcher writes a memory of an episode evoked by the trigger. Some of the triggers we used were 'saying you are sorry', 'crying', 'saying no', 'danger', 'holidays', 'being praised' . . . The trigger chosen depends of course on the topic under investigation. The choice is extremely important and some triggers do not produce the expected. For example (...) 'saying you are sorry' does not always produce memories of guilt or shame. Such memories were in the minority; anger and a sense of injustice were the emotions which

coloured the memories commonly written in response to this cue or trigger. The trigger 'secrets' did, however, produce memories which revealed guilt and shame.

We also found that starting with the obvious was not always helpful. Haug (1987: 53) noted that: "any set of ready-made questions is likely to be firmly rooted in popular prejudice" and we found that obvious questions produced obvious and somewhat over-rehearsed responses. The memories were rounded and smooth, they lacked any sense of contradiction; their meanings in general were glib. For example, in a study related to women's sexuality (Kippax et al., 1990), triggers such as 'initiating', 'touching' and 'penetration' produced counter-intuitive and more illuminating descriptions of sexual episodes than 'first love' or 'loss of virginity'. The latter triggers produced memories of episodes which represent sex and love in their least problematic form.

The importance of the ways in which the episodes are triggered cannot be over-emphasized. [Elsewhere][1] we discuss work reported by Campbell and Muncer (1987) which used a method similar in some ways to memory-work, namely group discussions focused on particular episodes. In their study Campbell and Muncer explored the social representations of anger and aggression by asking their respondents to talk about recent experiences of anger and/or aggression. It is unclear what the actual instruction were but if the researchers asked the group members to discuss recent memories of when they felt angry, what the group members will produce is a set of episodes in which anger is represented in its clearest and least problematic form; episodes which are filed away under the heading 'anger'. The method Campbell and Muncer used can document the social representations of anger as it is but it may not reveal much about the way anger came to be constructed.

Asking for detailed description, including 'inconsequential' detail, avoids evaluation; ". . . we attempted both to denaturalize existing value-judgements, by describing our memories down to the very last detail . . . and to disobey the precepts they embody" (Haug, 1987: 49). Detail is important because in detail we recognise the constraints placed on our understandings by the notion of 'relevance'; the so-called 'irrelevant' aspects of episodes or events point to the hidden moral and normative

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1   See *Emotion and Gender,* Chapter 10

aspects of our actions. A good example of the importance of detail comes from one of the groups of students which we set in train.

The following memory was written in response to the cue 'doing something silly':

> Melissa, age 19, is minding her boss's house while she is on holiday. Melissa was standing in the bathroom. It was immaculately designed and maintained although very sterile. She was getting ready for work that afternoon, was already dressed, applying make-up and blow-drying her hair. She was also smoking a cigarette.
>
> Melissa placed the cigarette on the vanity counter-top, with the lit end hanging over the edge. The vanity was a lovely cream with deep colours swirled through it, with gold taps and accessories.
>
> When Melissa had completed whatever she was doing, she picked up the cigarette, horrified at the burn mark she had left. She panicked, imagining her boss's face when she returned to see a big black stain, obviously marked on the vanity top. Melissa tried everything to remove it. Nothing worked. She felt so stupid and got angry at herself whenever she thought about it. Melissa hasn't smoked since.

The white of the bathroom, its cleanliness, is contrasted with the black mark which the cigarette burns into the woodwork. Smoking is unclean, particularly by subordinates in their boss's bathroom.

The following memory (...) was written in response to the cue 'fear':

> They sit at the dinner table – Ann, her mother, her aunt, her brother, her father. The room is dim, yellow light bulb or late summer evening without the light on. There is lots of dark wood – floor, table, picture rail. Any talking is in low voices . . .

The details speak of dread. It is dark, dim – not 'soft' voices but 'low' voices. Fear is apprehension and dread of what is to follow: they "hear the bathroom door close. They try not to hear the crack of the leather razor strop and Graham's cries."

As well as this request for detail, the injunction to write in the third person also helps to avoid the warranting and the justification which is characteristic of accounts. Writing in the third person enables the subject to have a 'bird's eye view' of the scene, to picture the detail. The subject reflects on herself/himself from the outside – from the point of view of the observer, and so is encouraged to describe rather than warrant.

If interpretation is avoided then the smoothing over of rough edges, covering up the absences and inconsistencies, is also avoided. For this reason, too, biography and autobiography are to be avoided. Biography represents linear constructions whereby earlier actions and events lead to and determine later ones. Haug warns against the coherence which biography brings; the coherence of the reinterpretation of past events as antecedents of what follows, that is, of what we 'know' to be the consequences. Coherence hides resistance and in this way works against the method: a method in which the analysis "has to be seen as a field of conflict between dominant cultural values and oppositional attempts to wrest cultural meaning and pleasure from life" (Haug 1987: 41).

The first rule listed above – 'write a memory' – we found puzzling at first. Writing, we thought, is more likely to lead to a construction of coherence and logic and some inevitable loss of richness than a verbal articulation. However, we followed the rule and became convinced of its correctness. Writing has a number of advantages. Writing gives one permission not to bother to make things 'normal' or proper.

> Writing is a transgression of boundaries, an exploration of new territory. It involves making public the events of our lives, wriggling free from the constraints of purely private and individual experience . . . As an alternative to accepting everyday events mindlessly, we recalled them in writing, in an attempt to identify points in the past where we succeeded in defending ourselves against the encroachments of others. (Haug, 1987: 36)

The writing provides a discipline to the memory-work group. Another advantage is that talking is far more likely to involve self presentation; it is difficult not to get caught up in justification and interpretation when one is identified as the speaker. Writing from the third person point of view encourages description and discourages interpretation. Writing also

provides a fixed and permanent record. A final advantage is that written text gives the everyday experience of our lives, the 'unimportant and uninteresting' a status, a significance that is worth exploring. Writing is, in this way, of special significance to women. Women see writing as an impossibility, because they believe there is nothing to write about. The everyday of women's lives is thought to be insignificant, unworthy, banal. Writing helps to counter this impression.

  The final rule, which we used in our work on emotions, was to write an early memory, a memory from childhood. For each memory we decided to write a memory of the earliest episode. In most cases, this produced a memory form early childhood. This rule was of our own making and we adopted it because we were interested in capturing the processes involved in the construction of emotions, something thought to occur early rather than late in life. Early memories, we thought, would reveal more clearly the processes of construction. (…)

  Individual members of a memory-work group follow these rules in writing their memories, a process which often requires a week's gestation. Our own experience was that, in general, about a week was needed. Sometimes a cue would trigger a number of memories. Sometimes, some cues were slow to trigger a memory. Very occasionally for one or more of us, the trigger did not work and we could write very little in the way of a memory.

Phase2

Having written their memories, the co-researchers meet to read and analyse all the memories. The rules or guidelines for this phase of the memory-work are given below. Once again, in our work we did not adhere to all of them strictly.

  1   Each memory-work group member expresses opinions and ideas about each memory in turn, and
  2   looks for similarities and differences between the memories and looks for continuous elements among memories whose relation to each other is not immediately apparent. Each member should question particularly those aspects of the events which do not appear amenable to

> comparison. She or he should not, however, resort to autobiography or biography.
>
> 3   Each memory-work member identifies clichés, generalisations, contradictions, cultural imperatives, metaphor . . . and
>
> 4   discusses theories, popular conceptions, saying and images about the topic.
>
> 5   Finally, each member examines what is not written in the memories (but what might be expected to be), and
>
> 6   rewrites the memories.

The analysis aims to uncover, in the first instance, the 'common' sense, the common understandings, contained in them. The memories are theorized as a cross-sectional example of common (social) experience. In this regard, as noted above, it is important that autobiography and biography which emphasize individual aspects of experience be avoided. What is of interest is not why person X's father did such and such but why fathers do such things. The aim is to uncover the social meanings embodied by the actions described in the written accounts and to uncover the processes whereby the meanings – both then and now – are arrived at.

  In examining each memory for absences, contradictions, clichés, and cultural imperatives, the collective reflection and theorizing of the episode, as remembered and written, exposes the processes involved in the making of a 'common' sense of the actions described. The taken-for-granted of everyday life is uncovered in, for example, the cultural imperative to 'enjoy holidays', the clichés surrounding 'walks in the country', the absence of peers from women's childhood memories. The collective reflection and examination may suggest revising the interpretation of the common patterns, and the analysis proceeds by moving from individual memories to the cross-sectional analysis and back again in a recursive fashion. Exposing these processes of construction raises the possibility of modification and transformation of the common sense understandings. In this way, the method is reflexive. It generates data and at the same time points to modes of action for the co-researchers.

  Typically, at this stage in the analysis, new triggers or cues are suggested by the group members and Phase 1 is set in train again. In the ideal case,

the process continues until the members feel that the topic or they are exhausted. In reality some memory-work groups are constrained by external factors such as limitations of time.

The knowledge of processes of construction that memory-work generates comes from two sources: first, each co-researcher's reflective activities, that is, how each co-researcher 'talks to her/himself' about her/his own experiences; and second, how co-researchers 'talk to each other' about their own and others' actions and experiences. Reflections on (memories of) a particular episode or event are based in the meanings arrived at and available then, at the time of the event or episode, and now, at the time of the theorizing. Members of the collective are thus regarded as "experts in everyday life" (Haug, 1987: 54). The collective theorizing, in Phase 2, involves the co-researchers in a reappraisal of these meanings in the light of their common experience.

We adhered to the guidelines listed above with the exception of the last. We experienced some difficulties in rewriting our memories and found that such rewriting was unproductive for us. On reflection now it seems obvious that the difficulty in doing so relates to our decision to focus on a memory of an early event or episode. With regard to our 'emotion' memory-work, we worked almost exclusively with memories of young girls and boys, where by definition, we and they were still learning the social rules and were still involved in the appropriation of the social with all its contradictions. We found it difficult to rewrite the memories of then, given our position as adults now.

The rule to write memories of early events had another impact on Phase 2. There were gaps and absences and conflict and contradiction in our memories but, as we discovered when we wrote our adult holiday memories, there were far fewer clichés and cultural imperatives in our childhood memories. We had not yet learned them.

These two points, of course, raise the whole issue of the extent to which the reported memories are from then rather than now. At one epistemological level they are obviously now by virtue of being memories. However, we experienced a strong sense of distinction between the quality of different memories: those which were immediate and those which felt much more worked over as if they were the product of experience subsequent to the report event or episode. Many of our childhood memories had the quality of 'immediacy' and it was this quality

that made them difficult to rewrite. It was also this quality that was associated with the reduction in clichés and cultural imperatives.

Immediacy is not to be confused with question of accuracy. The memories are true memories, that is, they are memories and not inventions or fantasies. Whether the memories accurately represent past events or not, however, is irrelevant; the process of construction of the meanings of those events is the focus of memory-work. (...)

Phase 3

There is further analysis in Phase 3, when the material provided in Phases 1 and 2 is examined and further theorized. We compared and contrasted the memories produced in response to a number of cues and our discussion of each of those memory-topics. In the case of our work on emotions we wrote memories to a large number of cues over a period of three years. The theorizing of the memories that were written in response to the early cues, our early memory-topics, influenced our theorizing of the latter memory-topics. We also incorporated insights gained form the theorizing of these 'late memory-topics' back into our review of the earlier topics. A similar process of comparison took place as we compared our memories and our theorizing with the theorized memories of other memory-work groups.

Further, we read and listened to the group discussions and critically examined the themes and common sense understandings arrived at, relating them to our own understandings of social practice as informed by particular theoretical positions. As we reached new understandings we reappraised our initial analyses of the memories.

This recursive process led us to our own theories of the construction of emotions. As Haug (1987) suggests, we reflected our insights against other theories of emotion, psychological and sociological as well as the 'everyday'. We asked questions about the ways in which women are portrayed as 'emotional' and about the language of emotions. We discussed forgetting and remembering, repression and suppression; we thought about the impact of our gender on the ways in which we worked and theorized as well as on the construction of our emotions; and we wondered about the differences between childhood and adult memories and noted the relative lack of clichés in our childhood memories. In other words Phase 3 is the phase in which we evaluate our attempts at

theorizing. Writing *Emotion and Gender* has led us to reflect once again and to ask ourselves when if ever the process of reappraisal and reflection will end.

Doing memory-work therefore involves the group in these three phases. However it is necessary to remember that these three phases are recursive; they feed into and off each other. We have written about them as though they are separate but in practice the three phases of the process are not so easily distinguished.

Memory-work and Intersubjectivity

We have applied memory-work to explore the social construction of emotion. This was our major goal. Because the method is so intimately linked to a theory of socialization, we have also explored the role played by memory and emotion in the construction of self. In particular we explore the social processes underlying that construction.

The memories themselves, written by the co-researchers, provide insights into the co-researchers' search for intelligibility. The reflections comprise episodes of contradiction and contrast, the unfamiliar and the problematic and they provide a key to the ways in which the emotions were constructed with the social and interpersonal interactions of the remembered episodes. The feelings of self, the gestures of others, were and (...) continue to be interpreted within the framework of the unfolding actions of self and others, that is, intersubjectively.

This interpretation is taken up and the episodes reflected on again by the group of co-researchers (for us, both at the time of doing memory-work and now in the writing *Emotion and Gender*). The commonness of the episodes and the common sense reached, point to the importance of the social process. Together with each other, the co-researchers reach common and sometimes new understandings of the episodes under discussion. The collectivity of the co-researchers distinguishes memory-work from a somewhat similar use of reflection within psychodynamic therapy. In memory-work, understandings are not sought or reached within a particular psychodynamic or other theoretical framework, but within the commonsense understandings of everyday life. Hierarchical relationships between researcher and researched are avoided.

Reflection is the heart of memory-work. But although reflection is an individual process, in memory-work it is made public with the collective.

Thus, the embracing of subjectivity does not necessarily lead to individualism. In a manner which is reminiscent of Mead (see Joas 1985) and very similar to that adopted by Shotter (1984), Haug recommends building upon the human ability to recognize the commonality of experience. Thus, as Mead, and Vygotsky and others note, intersubjectivity precedes subjectivity.

Mead (1909) builds his notion of intersubjectivity from the structure of gestural communication, which is connected closely with the body and founded in cooperative action. Human communication is, for Mead, the basis of the social character of consciousness. We stress that when we use 'intersubjectivity' (...) we refer to the inclusive notion of intersubjectivity as based on actions and not restricted to language.

In three chapters [in *Emotion and Gender*] we take a number of episodes and describe the constructions of a number of emotions. We reflect again on the episodes and focus our attention on the ways in which feelings and emotions enter into our understandings of these episodes.

The meanings of actions are not found in the actor's head but in the common meanings which she/he negotiates in interaction with others – both then at the time of the episode and now in reflection. The memories of events are collectively reappraised. Memory-work makes it possible to put the agent, the actor, back into psychology – in both method and theory – without falling into psychological individualism.

Arnold who wrote at the time when the mind (or cognition) was not considered a proper object of psychological study, and agency was denied, turned her attention to the cognitive aspects of emotion. (...) [S]he recognized the importance of reflection and memory to any study of emotion. Although her psychology remains individualistic and she makes no reference to agency, she ties emotion to memory in a way that foreshadows Shotter: "We remember what has happened to us in the past . . . we imagine how it will affect us this time and estimate whether it will be harmful" (Arnold 1970: 174).

Shotter (1984: 214) makes the ability of humans to reflect the centrepiece of his argument for agency. Indeed he argues that human agency depends on both foresight and memory. It is memory, he claims, that "is the process by which past specificatory activities are linked to current specifiablility – which make for intentionality, and gives a 'directionality' to mental activities" (208). Our memories contain the conditions for agents' further self development.

It is in this way that memory-work, as we have noted, is a method with which to explore the construction of self. Harré (1979, 1983) argues that human agents are also social beings, persons. Indeed their agency depends upon them being social beings. As Shotter notes:

> Human beings seem to accumulate within themselves, not just a history, but a sense of their 'position' in their world in relation to all the others with whom they share it. As persons they must be not just conscious but self-conscious, that is, aware of the function of their own actions in relation to the social order at large in which they are 'rooted' (1984: 209).

Intersubjectivity is thus central to memory-work. Memory-work attempts to uncover the process of the production of selves. Selves are the creation of the collectivities in which they live and act. Selves are able through their reflexive powers of self-intervention to re-create themselves. Identities are not formed or maintained through imitation or through any simple reproduction of predetermined patterns. The human capacity for action forces person to attempt to live their own meanings and find some means of self fulfilment albeit with a predetermined and circumscribed social space.

Memory-work as a Feminist Method

The method memory-work was first developed and continues to be developed in a feminist context. It replaces the hierarchy of 'experimenter' and 'subject' by a collective process involving co-researchers. It also differs from hermeneutic methods with which it shares many similarities, as noted earlier in this chapter, in that the collective process does not give priority to the interpretation of an 'expert'. New understandings and meanings are reached by the subjects, the co-researchers themselves. The memories and 'talk' remain the property of the co-researcher. The method thus had political force and, in this way, has links with consciousness raising.

Memory-work offers a way of escaping from some of the problems inherent in traditional psychological methods identified by many feminist writers in the United States and the United Kingdom (for example, Crawford and Maracek 1989; Gavey 1989; Holloway 1989; Kimmel 1989;

Maracek 1989; Mednick 1989; Fine and Gordon 1991; Kitzinger 1991; Parlee 1991; Wilkinson 1991), although doing feminist research using methods which lie outside the mainstream raises its own problems, as Parlee (1991) for example notes.

  The method of memory-work transcends the opposition between the individualistic bias in psychological theory and a structural theory that does not recognize human agency. It deconstructs the taken-for-granted in its concern with contradiction, conflict and absences. It facilitates the questioning of existing knowledge which Grosz (1988) characterizes as phallocentric (that is, where 'male' subsumes 'female', and is taken to represent human).

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Chapter 9

THE RELATION OF EXPERIENCE AND THEORY IN SUBJECT-SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Frigga Haug

For a number of years I repeatedly come across the separation/connection[1] of experience and theory, albeit in different forms. One time it is about the relation between theory and empiricism (Haug, F. 1997), another time about qualitative vs. quantitative science (Haug, F. 1978); or I directly address it as a problem of experience and theory (Haug, F. 1982 and 1989); the question appears as a problem of generalization from individual cases (together with PAQ et al. 1978); it touches on the role of examples in the creation of theory (Haug, F. 1980 and 2003), on feminist critique based on experiences with male-rationale theory (Haug, F. 1982) and eventually on questions of didactics: should the teaching of theory start with experiences and if so, how? The set of problems condenses in memory-work as a method of research where a number of tentative suggestions are applied for addressing these questions, and at the same time always new unresolved problems, obstacles, challenges for further consideration appear. Furthermore the questions come up altogether in the attempt to work "subject-scientifically." After all, "the subject" itself, which here is so confidently and consciously put up as standpoint of science with tremendous effects for the method, is a completely unidentified and uncertain position; and as a matter of knowledge it is contentious. The various questions tangle up and thus prevent a simple collection and recount of existing knowledge.

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1   Frigga Haug's use of this term is explained, e.g. in *Der im Gehen erkundete Weg* (2015: 117) where she states, the term intends to express a practical dialectic in a way that makes one trip and that demands to think about it. It aims at thinking of separation and connection not as alternatives. Instead they are linguistically forged together to allow new insights about relations in which the separation of connection is a method of domination. RH

Therefore I am going to pose the problem differently here: I begin with the mission of subject-scientific research and creation of theory, the "subject", and its experiences in this world, or rather its dealing with them. In this context I have started a project with teachers of which I will report, so as to eventually drive the process of understanding to a point where a couple of sections of reality and new questions are comprehensible.

1. Entirely unmatched in the density of formulation, and still not fully utilized is the shortest text by Marx, the Theses on Feuerbach. He says right at the start: "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism – that of Feuerbach included – is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object or of contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity*, *practice*, not subjectively" (Marx 1845). The front put up here, critical of a materialism that itself appears as critical adversary of idealism, complicates the task of thinking and comprehending.[2] The point in question however is not at all the reinstatement of idealistic procedures by way of critique of materialism. Expressed in today's terminology it is rather about making sure that those who put the material circumstances in which people live as the prime objects of research understand that nothing societal can be comprehended if it is not at the same time understood as subjective act of the people.

Later Marx will say that men make their own history, even if they do not make it as they please. The complicated research task that derives then is to study the circumstances as man-made, hence open to change and historically traceable; to understand the people as designers of their life subjectively from the side of their thoughts, feelings and intentions, although in turn the way they fashion their lives is in many regards strange and obstructed by the very circumstances that they have created. This connection of modes of research that are necessary now transcends from the outset the thoroughly guarded boundaries of disciplines like psychology, sociology, economy, philosophy, biology etc. In concrete research processes therefore this constellation calls for research collectives, and for a radical shift of the questions as they usually present

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2   In a great number of seminars I tried to work with the Theses on Feuerbach; time again one of the essential difficulties was that the students were eager to position Marx on the side of the materialists, even if they knew little of him otherwise. Hence they were at pains to not see the direction of the critique.

themselves. Questions and problems as they appear in everyday life say something about the constellation from which they arise; but as they come directly from within a process they conceal the inner connection. To discover this connection thus requires a transfer of the question - this becomes both point of departure and result of the research process.

This positioning of the research matter, its subjects and objects does not yet tell us how exactly to proceed. Wolfgang Fritz Haug draws consequences for creating theory when he addresses critique of theory: "Every theory makes its basic distinctions on practical grounds. It relates, even if mostly indirectly to projects of conservation or rearrangement of circumstances. While there is no theory void of this dimension, there is theory without reflection on it. Not everyone will accept the suggestion to enter into the 'inter-paradigmatic' discussion on the level of the relevance of their conceptual frameworks for praxis" (Haug, W.F. 1993: 78, trans. RH).

This sentence speaks to our question about the relation of theory and experience, here in the formulation of praxis, a term that seems less passive in comparison to experience. And it speaks about the bias of theoretical statements. It dismisses the idea that there could be scientific theories raised above and detached from all messy connections to real circumstances. Theories at all times relate to societal reality, be it that they support and reinforce given circumstances, be it that they aim at changing them. In this sense all theories are biased. How scientific they are depends on the degree to which they reflect this relation and thereby understand it. Implicit in these sentences is the assumption that a biased positioning in favour of conservation of bad circumstances does not cope with scrutinization and reflection and therefore drives scientific insights into the general (see Haug, W.F. 1973). This is the point where the field of research opens up for theory of ideology and for Critical Psychology. W. F. Haug explicitly supports the aim of the latter, but he maintains it has a blind spot when it comes to theory of ideology (1993: 79).[3] In such a constellation there is a call on subject-scientific research to include in its analyses the heap of dominant theories and opinions. These theories and opinions–for reasons anchored to praxis, so as to conserve the

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3   Morten Nissen (2004) discusses the problem that a position outside of ideology is impossible; I would however suggest, with Marx, to distinguish between ideological and scientific forms of knowledge, whereby the latter remain a process of approximation but they are not simply ideological - this would have to be discussed further.

circumstances–articulate a circle of unclear, misaligned, alienated circumstances which becomes increasingly inscrutable for the individual subjects. Even more, it is part of the individuals themselves so that they can be prone to see as good what effectively is harmful to them. The shift in the direction of theory of ideology however still does not explain how in concrete terms "the reality, sensuousness" can be perceived and researched as "sensuous human activity, practice."

Let us have a look at the understanding from within Critical Psychology, and the objectives it sets for itself. Klaus Holzkamp refers directly to the constellation in the quote by Marx, i.e. the relation between the "subjective" and the "objective" conditions: "The 'standpoint of the subject' therefore does not at all exclude the consideration of objective conditions, it rather includes it" (1983: 539). In this context he sketches the connection between objective conditions of life and subjective action possibilities. And he points to the question of "subordination to objective conditions of life" in which "the subjective situation etc. of human beings[4] is historically real, and thus 'thinkable'" (538). Only from this standpoint can the possibility for change in association with others, hence "pushing back" the subordination, emerge. Thinking and research therefore does not start from the "standpoint of the winners", does not produce rally cries for a take-over of power, it rather explicates from the reverse "standpoint of the oppressed" how shaping the world becomes possible.[5]

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4   In his works on German Critical Psychology Charles Tolman translated "subjektive Befindlichkeit" by using the English expression "subjective situation". He explains: "The German term here is *Befindlichkeit*. (...) The roots are in the verb *befinden,* which in the reflexive form, means 'to be' or, more precisely, 'to be situated'. Basically, it is the state I find myself in, as it appears, seems, feels to me" (1994: 150). Morten Nissen (2019) pointed to connections to Heideggerian terminology in Holzkamp's use of *Befindlichkeit*. A good explanation of the problematic in translating is offered by Eugene Gendlin (*http://previous.focusing.org/gendlin_befindlichkeit.html*). I used Charles Tolman's term to capture the meaning conveyed in the original quote by Klaus Holzkamp that Frigga Haug uses in her text. RH

5   Walter Benjamin hits the same spot in his pathetically-insinuating sentences when he accuses the social democrats of teaching to unlearn the hatred necessary for change and the readiness to make sacrifices that is necessary for real action. "This indoctrination made the working class forget both its hatred and its spirit of sacrifice, for both are nourished by the image of enslaved ancestors rather than by the ideal of liberated grandchildren" ([1940] 2006: 394).

The standpoint of changing circumstances thus requires that the individuals perceive and understand themselves as part of these circumstances. The problematic therefore shifts to the question of experience as sensuous realisation of world.[6]

"The fact that my subjective experience does not stand between me and objective reality as if it was a wall, rather I am able to perceive and comprehend my subjectivity as an aspect of the process of material realisation of life, accounts for me being able to *'know' much more* about my experience than what would result from its *immediate* description. Namely, all that about its *structure, its conditions, its limits* etc., what we have developed in our categorial analyses as *instances, dimensions, aspects, levels of individual situation/agency*. This, as stated already, does not at all reduce the immediacy of my experience, it is yet 'transcended' and therefore comprehensible" (Holzkamp 1983: 539).

On the one hand the explication of the standpoint of the subject seems to encourage the investigation and collective study of experience, even downright provoke it. The formulation that the individuals can know more than they appear to know also justifies research of experience. On the other hand, at least at this point it again remains unclear, how to proceed in it. How is it possible to use expression and narration of experiences of subordination to gain this transcendence that enables the individuals to comprehend and therefore change their acting, their action possibilities and their subjective situation in the context of specific conditions, living in specific historical circumstances?

Morus Markard explains this point: "Therefore people are not supposed to be *object* of psychological research, not, as is usual also in 'qualitative' research, be 'researched', rather stand on the side of the researcher - together with professional psychologists. 'Psychology from the standpoint of the subject' is meant literally: Object of the research is not the subject. It is rather the world as the subject experiences it - feeling, thinking, acting. Corresponding to this program psychological theories have to serve the *self-understanding* of the subjects about their interests, motives, reasons and consequences of action in problematic situations in life" (Markard 2004).

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6   Frigga Haug speaks of "Wahrnehmung von Welt", not "Wahrnehmung der Welt". The difference is reflected in the translation by not including an article. "Realisation of world" includes myself as always already inseparable part of world. RH

The orientation towards experience of world allows to include research of the "objective conditions" as well as the ideologies that extend–as information about the world–even right into the subjects. Out of the blue in Markard's quote there appear "professionals", who are cooperatively involved in this process of "self-understanding in problematic situations in life." As of yet it is unclear what effectively would be their role (in this context Markard suggests to think of such a cooperative research process in terms of "course of development", a suggestion that cannot be discussed here); also the difficult question is bypassed, how exactly we picture a subject that is determined from behind by conditions that it would need to change to acquire an upright gait.[7]

Accordingly, the question remains in the dark, what is the role of contradictions in such a process of change, bringing change on the way, obstructing it, pushing for new solutions that lead to new contradictions, etc. In short, it is not yet visible how to solve the "Münchhausenproblem", i.e. that we cannot pull ourselves out of a mire by our own hair. In his context Markard refers to the process as one that should be directed towards "emancipatory actions of the individuals oriented on finding solutions for problems." The difficult balance, i.e. that we deal with "subordinated" subjects who are children of our circumstances, that we don't believe that in everyone there is a substantially positive core that can be built on, that we at the same time assume that everyone has an interest in shaping their processes of life from a perspective of emancipation, all this seems to suggest that everyone–as Gramsci says–is a philosopher, intellectual, and that subject scientific research is about making the world comprehensible for those who live in it. But that requires attention to contradiction, self-changing, compromises, adaptation and resistance. It renders urgent the task of questioning habits, certainties and traditional subordinations.

Closing in on the question of experience in the context of comprehension it also remained incompletely defined what experience in fact could be. It is subjective, it connects the individuals with all their senses to reality, it is at any rate pre-scientifically individual, random. To understand experience as in need of attention is a first desideratum.

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7   Morten Nissen attends to the contradictory question of the subject (2004); as I follow his line of thought I can keep this point short at here; see also W.F. Haug 1983 and 1987.

Marx supports the demand to work with experience. He posits experience in opposite to scientific comprehension: "Scientific truth is always paradox, if judged by every-day experience, which catches only the delusive appearance of things" (Marx 1865). Experience appears as the basis for comprehension, but it can only be comprehended in relation to production of conditions of life. In the *German Ideology* Marx and Engels write: The premises to begin with "can thus be verified in a purely empirical way." "They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity" (1845). The object of comprehension is the relation of praxis and development. Experience needs to undergo a certain critique for becoming in a transcended way basis of comprehension.[8]

Marx introduces two further dimensions in the debate about theory/science and experience/empirics. In *Grundrisse* he states that theoretical generalisation has a practical reason that in turn effects subjective consequences. Hence there is an inner connection between subjective development, human praxis and the respective possible forms of thought:

> "The fact that the specific kind of labour is irrelevant presupposes a highly developed complex of actually existing kinds of labour, none of which is any more the all-important one. The most general abstractions arise on the whole only when concrete development is most profuse, so that a specific quality is seen to be common to many phenomena, or common to all." (Marx 1859)

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8   The intention to properly discuss in this volume [FKP 47] did not reckon with the work load and time commitments of the participants. Briefly: if we had waited for all contributions to be ready and to start discussing them, and—if we wanted them to be of a good quality—revise them, the volume (scheduled for publication in 2003) would have been pushed into eternal future. But the questions that are to be on the agenda come together even in the way of working alongside each other. In Morten Nissen's contribution on critique and negation I discover suggestions that I am also concerned with. I similarly discuss them as problems of critique (see Haug 2003), as "contradicting oneself", as crises. In this context further discussion could be fruitful.

The second dimension we find in the way Marx thinks of development. The indifference towards a specific kind of labour is a category that on the one hand heralds misery, is connected to pure exertion of labour power, and yet it also means liberation, emancipation. What is overcome–as mentioned in *Capital* and the *Communist Manifesto* as basis for the dialectics of the method–are the barriers that stand in the way of the forces of production. As such are mentioned, e.g. "personal skill", the "rules of the guilds" with "their traditional habit of clinging fast to a very definite kind of labour" (1859).

  Morals and family ties appear as obstructions. At closer look the obstruction is also a protection for the individuals: "last resorts", "safety-valve of the whole social mechanism" (Marx 1867). This interlacing, that the chains at the same time are a security, accounts for the possibility of liberation being lived as catastrophe, as if all dams are breaking. Shattering the old forms does not bring liberation as such, it opens possibilities that can be seized. I have called this constellation and analysis of the process of development a "crisis arrangement" (see Haug, F. 1983: 112). Symptomatic for it is for example what Marx writes about the family:

> "However terrible and disgusting the dissolution, under the capitalist system, of the old family ties may appear, nevertheless, modern industry, by assigning as it does an important part in the process of production, outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relations between the sexes." (Marx, 1867)

Marx sorts his categories in a way that spontaneous empathy, emotion and will are articulated on the side of the old forms that are similarly depicted as obstructions. That makes reading difficult and at the same time forces the readers to insert themselves into the process of change. Likewise the famous quote from the *Communist Manifesto*:

> "All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All

> that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind." (Marx 1848)

Let us take the suggestions by Marx on method as a demand on our own research.

2. I move on to the research area of "Learning" in which experience and appropriation of world are central. Again I am turning to Marx and his *Theses on Feuerbach* first. Thesis 3 reads: "The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society" (1845).

  It seems mysterious why suddenly there appear educators in need of education. The text condenses to an almost unbearable degree what requires to be carefully taken apart. In its first part it obviously criticised those who, for example fight for abolishment of capitalism and for that reason want to educate and "enlighten" the people; hence make humble subaltern people into revolutionaries. The choice of words ties together revolutionary political praxis, or better the critique thereof, with the everyday praxis in schools, thus allowing to articulate it on the same political level. This means that the way of changing educational institutions and changing pedagogies is insufficient, if not problematic.[9]

  The second part in Marx' sentence turns the tables and transfers the problem into a question asked of the subjects: Who are the change-makers? This transfer shifts the problem to a different location: Those who need changed circumstances for their development are themselves ensconced in the old circumstances - the process of change that needs to be made by them changes them too. Or even more complicated: for people to change society it is necessary that they have to refer to themselves as part of change, i.e. be ready to act self-reflexively and in large contexts.[10] The last sentence draws the conclusion that a search for

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9   Brecht picks up this question in his *Refugee Conversations* - see also my book
    on learning relations (2003), pp. 80f. for the connection of school and life.
10 Brecht also recounts this complicated process whereby he explicates its
    contradictions. The labourer Kalle expresses it this way: "[Y]ou've given me
    to understand that you're in search of a country where conditions are such

general change is not possible if not everyone is equal part of it. Every attempt to educate others, from above, from outside, to make them change, destroys the perspective because the standpoint is no longer a general one. It rather perpetuates domination, hierarchy, an elevated superiority, "divides society in two parts."

This correlation also fits in with the subject scientific concern. However, it adds to what was explicated already the contradiction that lies in the change itself. Not only do we have to assume that multiple ideologies keep the individuals in their locations–thus it is not enough to insert theory of ideology into Critical Psychology–we also have to reckon with resistance and contradiction, with crises. As long as we don't suddenly want to still operate from above and from outside, there is a demand on Critical Psychology to integrate this complication in its research pattern. How do people convince themselves to become active in contradictions even if that entails suffering, effort, letting go of the familiar, hostility by others, loneliness etc. To emphasize this here does not mean that it would have been excluded from Critical Psychology so far. It rather means that it is not enough to only consider these dimensions as a possibility, instead they are so central that their consideration and working with them needs to be essential part of every research arrangement.

Gramsci refers in yet another way to the third thesis on Feuerbach. In his prison notebooks he discusses the connection between common sense and science and he comments critically on an author who supposedly wrote with a critical view on theory:

> "[H]e really does capitulate before common sense and vulgar thought, since he has not put the problem in exact theoretical terms and is therefore in practice disarmed and

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that onerous virtues like patriotism, a thirst for freedom, goodness and selflessness are just as unnecessary as shitting on your homeland, a slave mentality, brutality and selfishness. Socialism creates just such conditions. ... I should also point out that all sorts of things will be necessary in order to achieve this goal: the utmost bravery, the strongest thirst for freedom, the greatest selflessness and the greatest selfishness" (Brecht [1998 in German], English version 2020: 95).

Rosa Luxemburg speaks in similar terms about the possibility of change in her short text *Die Proletarierin* (The proletarian woman): "For the bourgeois woman with property her house is the world. For the proletarian woman the whole world is her house, the world with its suffering and joy, with its entire cruelty and its rough greatness" (1914).

impotent. The uneducated and crude environment has dominated the educator and vulgar common sense has imposed itself on science rather than the other way round. If the environment is the educator, it too must in turn be educated." (Gramsci 1971: 435)

This statement surprisingly speaks to our problem of theory and experience. Experience in need of attention is depicted here as common sense. It is to be comprehended in "exact theoretical terms." If that is not done, we will be overwhelmed by it. This also means, whenever we don't approach reality with comprehension we will be stuck in what is spontaneously evident; we simply reproduce the existent. Surprising, how now with the *Theses on Feuerbach* the need to educate the educators is included: they are the environment in which common sense opinions and thus hegemonic thought is reproduced. Thus the educators not only integrate in the generality of those who need to drive forward change in themselves; this generality also means in turn: the students are the "crude environment" that itself drives the education of the educators. A precise formulation of the question in the learning context therefore is: How do teachers learn from the challenges of students? The question is posed subject-scientifically. It asks the teachers about the environment in which they want to learn while teaching.

   In my book on learning relations (2003) I have asked about the relation between teacher and student from the standpoint of the student: What do students need teachers for? At the same time I have tried to explicate from the standpoint of the teacher what they can do for students in the conditions of school and life. I came to the controversial conclusion that they need to "lead experience into crisis" and develop the necessary competences to do so as their own life experience and self-reflection. The connection presupposes the importance of crisis for processes of learning and change that was mentioned a couple of times already. It assumes that the conscious alteration of habitual order or learning arrangement is necessary to open up possibilities for students to overcome old habits, co-existence with what is not understood, harmonious ensconcing and sacrificing comprehension.

   Teachers in this context function as "organic intellectuals". They side with the interests of the students and they know about the difficulties of self-changing, teachers thus who lead experience into such a crisis in

which the students have to actively roam and change. In this regard Brecht proves to be an extraordinary master teacher because this is exactly what he constantly does in his plays and writing. He starts with a common sense experience from within our circumstances and confronts it with a second experience that demonstrates exactly the opposite. He positions the two experiences in a way that disturbs and interrupts their peaceful co-existence that until then seemed to make both of them possible. Those who are confronted with such contradictory experience have to make a decision. To do so requires to approach reality in a way to better comprehend it. The premise is that there are experiences that come closer to the real relations than others and therefore could render the old experiences invalid in their field of application.

That they don't do this "automatically", i.e. that we do not simply accumulate knowledge from one experience to the next, is based on us clinging to tradition, familiarity, acquired likings, the habitual. We don't give it up easily as long as it does not lead into crisis. At this point I want to come back to John Dewey who was mentioned in my book on learning relations already because he very pointedly writes about this problem for pedagogy, but therefore also for the subject-scientific approach to experience. In very much up-to-date manner he discusses in his essay *How we learn* the double character of experience that on the one hand notes similarities and in face of anything new recommends an attitude that entails "mental inertia, laziness, unjustifiable conservatism."

> "Its general effect upon mental attitude is more serious than even the specific wrong conclusions in which it has landed. Wherever the chief dependence in forming inferences is upon the conjunctions observed in past experience, failures to agree with the usual order are slurred over, cases of successful confirmation are exaggerated. Since the mind naturally demands some principle of continuity, some connecting link between separate facts and causes, forces are arbitrarily invented for that purpose. . . . But experience also includes the reflection that sets us free from the limiting influence of sense, appetite, and tradition. . . . Indeed, the business of education might be defined as just such an emancipation and enlargement of experience." (Dewey, John. [1910] 2007: 72, 75).

For working with experience in further studies I have adopted Brecht's paradox thought that you *cannot learn from experiences and that you can only learn through experience.*

With this suggestion for the method we come back to the question how teachers teach and learn, i.e. how they act as learning subjects. It becomes necessary to have themselves speaking exactly about this problem.

The new research question arises from some collisions with reality that I did not yet comprehend. In the past, when students pressed me to tell them what in fact I was learning from them I usually waved aside awkwardly and tried to change the topic. It seemed quite certain to me that because of the well-known advantage in knowledge on the side of the teacher and the resulting task to teach the students it would be most impossible for me to learn from them, in a way failing to fulfil my task. That they even developed such an idea seemed to me born out of overestimating themselves. Hence I remained silent because I didn't want to hurt them.

But I had posed the question on the level as it presented itself: the level of conveying knowledge, just as if this was my only task. Only in the context of using learning journals that the students wrote parallel to the seminars I realised as a "shock experience" that I knew hardly anything about the students and their learning processes, learning possibilities and the way they worked through what I wanted to convey in terms of understanding the world (see chapters 8 and 9 in my book on learning relationships, 2003). They were "the environment" in which I was active, and I had in a way refused to be educated by them (to use Gramsci's terms). Or, for putting it differently in this context here: in my teaching I started with their experiences without knowing them and I searched for counter-experiences without determining them together with the students for their praxis first.

This experience stays with me. When other teachers again asked me for advise and professional development I started a new research project that tackles exactly this question: How do teachers learn who–with great engagement–set themselves the task to start with pupils' experiences as a kind of reform pedagogy?

The research question sets out on the terrain of the teachers. I problematise the naive status of experience, as if it was something that can simply be taken and fed into teaching like a useful mosaic piece, and

on top of it also brings subjective satisfaction. This questioning of experience itself challenges the teachers (most of them are female) to scrutinise their dealing with the experiential approach in pedagogy, even if it was only to prove my propositions to be wrong. Everyone tries to remember a situation in which they "learned from experience" or as well "did not learn from experience." This wording shifts the attention of the teachers from attempts to substantiate their successful application of the experiential approach to the uncomfortable situation of reflecting on themselves as learners. A first result in the discussion of the written memory-scenes was thus that originally the teachers had intended to write about the pupils and their learning, but in fact had moved themselves into the foreground, and that they could approve of this process.

One teacher writes:

> *A group of 10 children, two teachers, one assistant. Everyday there are diverse activities on offer: painting, crafts, clay, garden, breakfast. The only obligatory activity is the morning circle time, everything else is voluntary, self-determined. Everyday up to four 4-6-year old children hide, so that they do not have to take part in the morning circle. It is obligatory, everyone waits until everybody is there. After a couple of months we adults decide: everything is voluntary, the morning circle included. From then on the children no longer hide and participate.*

She takes up the topic of learning from experience and writes an interpretation of the recounted experience.

> *We, the adults, learned that children want to make their own decisions, also that they love to be with us and don't need to be forced. The children learned that they can challenge the adults, that we need to pay attention to them, that they are important. But also that simply based on the own determination, joy of shared activity in the group a voluntary decision can be made: I take part or not.*

In the subsequent discussion the "experience" and the interpretation were met with general approval. It is easily recognisable that here someone writes "based on experience." But how does experience show, and what is learned from it? Who learns?

Certainty and agreement with the scene diminish as soon as one zooms in closer on such questions. Learning subjects are the children and the teachers. But the children don't actually appear as persons themselves, they are described from outside, without emotions, thoughts, hardly any activities, no motives. First they hide, later they don't. They don't speak. The teachers issue rules, but they also don't appear with activities, emotions, thoughts, wishes. Hence they learn, what they, being "anti-authoritarian" teachers in alternative schools, knew already: coercion triggers unnecessary resistance. But all is fine if teachers let children decide themselves, and they do voluntarily what one wants them to do.

The surprising lesson for everyone was not only the peculiar void of living experience in an everyday story; it was furthermore the insight that the construction of the story–which is in fact not a particular scene–is based on a pre-supposed pedagogical proposition. In this case therefore what we are dealing with is an illustration of theory which in this way anchored to reality is also released from further critical scrutinisation. If something appears in reality as it is assumed in theory to be, for example in pedagogical doctrines, then this seems to prove that the theory is correct. And, as it is a pedagogical advise that predicts a certain behaviour, the emergence of this behaviour seems proof of the correctness of the thought. In leaving out real experience the translation of theory into reality passes unchallenged. Such an affirmative relation however contradicts our yet unsystematic knowledge based on experience in reality with real children who act contradictory, different, diverse, chaotic. At this point it would have required–among other things–a collective clarification of the respective positions in the power relations and a similar discussion of action possibilities. As the text does not deal with experience there are neither subjective rationales nor a joint exploration thereof included. As another thesis we can therefore say that the coherence of such a pedagogy relies on the omission of the very subjects that are supposed to be central to it.

Once we are released from the pressure of having to argue against experience, because it doesn't play a role anyway, we now put the theoretical presupposition to scrutiny. In our working group we

proceeded by distilling from the text a core thesis that we all, including the author, agreed to be the central proposition, the motive for the narrative. This is: *Our aim is for every subject to internalise the rules and adhere to them voluntarily.* As anchor points for validating this message we add further common sense "pedagogic" doctrines. These now speak from the top about those at the bottom, teachers about children:

1. *Children want to make their own decisions* - a proposition that is as self-evident as it is unclear, because the question remains open of the purpose of a decision, as in the story the question of exploration of rules. The sentence appears so steadfast, it can trust we will approve of it. It is part and parcel of the equipment of alternative teachers, and yet it bypasses the actual problem: How do children learn to make their own decisions that do not cause harm to themselves? The process is again as difficult as the entire question of self-determined subjects. How to appropriate world without falling into Münchhausen's quagmire, if world is full of domination and traps of subordination? Or better: How can agency in shaping world together with others be increased?

2. *Children love to be with adults, hence coercion is unnecessary.* This statement is as simple as sinister. It presupposes a necessary togetherness of children and adults for its own sake, a togetherness that can be established free of coercion because it follows the desire of the children. If that was the case, why then would one want to write it down as an insight at all? It sounds like an invocation. Like whistling in the dark against fear, we sense behind the sentence the fear that children might want to be among themselves and hide. There is indeed no account given of the togetherness of adults and children.

Although everyone at first had agreed with the text and its message, the clearly formulated thesis above was met with uncomfortable silence. In the rather passionate discussion that followed everyone realised that it is a manipulative praxis that is spoken about. A praxis that does not in fact ask for wishes and motives of children, neither those of teachers, unless we see them as blank personification of rules. Instead–and in this manner quite aligned with the neo-liberal context–it promotes that everyone internalises the measures of control that keep society functioning and integrates of one's own accord into the order.

What is there to learn from this story and discussion in relation to the original question about subjective experience?

1. If we as teachers make experiential statements about the question of experience in learning they should relate to us as learners. The point in question is self-understanding, self-reflection, the question how teachers are challenged by children, "educated crudely," and how they deal with it. Experiential statements of children can only be made by themselves. Therefore if we write about children, their words and reasoning need to be added to the observed acts.

2. It is incredibly difficult to make real experiences and report about them. This needs to be learned.[11] This possibility is guarded by dominant opinions and norms, ideologies, advisors. Like censors they filter what we can perceive and think. That means that in our abilities and possibilities we are always thwarted by moments of domination and problems of subordination. We have internalised the societal offerings. From there they speak when we begin to speak. – Gramsci called this an incoherent personality, strangely composite in many layers, and he defines the task to work ourselves coherent. – Althusser uses the concept of subject ambiguously: "(1) a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission" (1970). "Taking these two meanings together, 'subject' depicts an individual who is subordinated in the form of autonomy and voluntariness" (PIT 1979:119). Althusser thinks of the subject as a bundle of conscious and unconscious reactions to societal structures, expectations, interactions. Subordination happens by means of interpellation and recognition. Certainly, in this way it is difficult, if not impossible, to think of a self-active subject that is not subaltern and subordinated to the core and incapable of self-liberation (on this see also Nissen 2004). Between the Scylla of an inwardly positioned autonomous subject and the Charybdis of complete permeation by domination it is important for our objective to find a way how the individuals can experience themselves as members of this society, assess their thoughts and actions critically and *contradict themselves*. Gramsci proposes that the effort to work in a manner with oneself that eventually one can "affirm oneself" needs a collective, a group that is committed to collective shaping of society. It is clear that within capitalist alienated structures this

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11 Walter Benjamin speaks of an increasing atrophy of experience, reflected in the replacement of older relation by information, and of information by sensation ([1940] 2006: 316).

remains unfinishable business; it is similarly clear that the question of shaping social circumstances is a touchstone for us to assess our own thoughts and emotions, and change them. The theoretical problem however for a science of the subject like Critical Psychology is to take the subjects as starting point, have them speaking and studying, and at the same time create a framework of questions in a way that allows the individuals to *contradict themselves*.

3. Another important lesson was the significance of pedagogical doctrines and how they are unscrupulously taken for valid, as well as their role in our memory, our perception and our speaking. It is as if these doctrines as a kind of prejudice have occupied the position of the subject, and called the individuals into this constellation. Incidentally, soon enough it became obvious that what here seems to be an individual case applies to nearly everyone who took part in further workshops. The possibility to make an experience, to acquire real knowledge was always blocked by a pedagogical doctrine. The dominant and paralysing way in which this occurs calls for research of both: the doctrines and their validity, and the reason for the susceptibility that obviously allows such theories to become part of the personality structure.

Our initial question thus was transferred a few times. The point is not so much the relation between experience and theory. Central is first to look at two different ways of approaching knowledge; one spontaneous, immediately subjective, the other one reflexively scrutinising for generalisation. They both rely on each other, however not in a way that would allow for the reciprocal relation to be instrumentally created and, e.g. therefore easily used as pedagogy. Rather both areas are challenged and in many ways permeated by domination and subordination, and they determine each other in just this way. To find a way through this jungle requires a collective project for learning to tirelessly work self-reflective, sharpen all senses and the ability to observe, re-discover and recount, and most of all the ability to contradict oneself.

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Chapter 10

WHAT DO PUPILS NEED TEACHERS FOR?

Teachers from Free Alternative Schools

In our first seminar we were surprised to notice that–in spite of our belief that we wrote about our own experiences–we had simply put explications of pedagogical doctrines to paper. Now we met again to explicitly look for "real" experiences. And indeed, we managed to create recounts that dealt with experience. Nevertheless, pedagogical doctrines and everyday trivial psychological explanations permanently intruded our recollection of our experiences. A text by Walter Benjamin (2006a [1940]) that we examined helped us to better understand and comprehend this phenomenon. Benjamin shows how the atrophy of experience is virtually part of the world we live in. He first follows Proust who depicts the limits of voluntary memory in "the past . . . situated somewhere beyond the reach of the intellect and its field of operations, in some material object." Hence, only the taste of a pastry (*Madeleine*) brings Proust back to the times of his childhood. Benjamin writes:

> "According to Proust, it is a matter of chance whether an individual forms an image of himself, whether he can take hold of his experience. But there is nothing inevitable about the dependence on chance in this matter. A person's inner concerns are not by nature of an inescapably private character. They attain this character only after the likelihood decreases that one's external concerns will be assimilated to one's experience" (2006a [1940]: 315).

According to Benjamin the lack of lived experience therefore is a product of our alienated way of live. It is by no means "natural." He notes that

> "[N]ewspapers constitute one of many indications of such a decrease. If it were the intention of the press to have the reader assimilate the information it supplies as part of his

> own experience, it would not achieve its purpose. But its intention is just the opposite, and it is achieved: to isolate events from the realm in which they could affect the experience of the reader. The principles of journalistic information (newness, brevity, clarity, and, above all, lack of connection between the individual news items) contribute as much to this as the layout of the pages and the style of writing" (2006a [1940]: 315-6).

Benjamin identifies the press as an element of the world we live in that has a share of responsibility for the atrophy of our experience. In fact it's genuine purpose is the active separation of the reader from the printed experiences. This is achieved by means of the said principles of journalistic information. "Another reason for the isolation of information from experience is that the former does not enter 'tradition.' Newspapers appear in large editions. Few readers can boast of having any information that another reader may need from them" (2006a [1940]: 316). The separation further succeeds due to the short-lived character of the information and at the same time the pervasiveness and accessibility of the printed material.

  Benjamin's opinions on the press were unsettling for most of us. We new the problem of stimulus satiation and bias, but it was new to us that even such an 'innocent' concept as "being up-to-date" can have a flip side, and can be consciously used against the appropriation of one's own experience.

> "Historically, the various modes of communication have competed with one another. The replacement of the older relation by information, and of information by sensation, reflects the increasing atrophy of experience. In turn, there is a contrast between all these forms and the story, which is one of the oldest forms of communication. A story does not aim to convey an event per se, which is the purpose of information; rather, it embeds the event in the life of the storyteller in order to pass it on as experience to those listening. It thus bears the trace of the storyteller, much the way an earthen vessel bears the trace of the potter's hand" (2006a [1940]: 316).

Benjamin notices how historically experience slowly fades away, so that "today" [his text was written 1939] we are at the threshold of the information society to the sensation society, or even have passed this threshold already. In contrast he emphasises the quality of "storytelling", the oldest form of communication, which overcomes the separation of experience from the listener/recipient, or does not even allow it to arise in the first place. "Articulating the past historically does not mean recognizing it 'the way it really was.' It means appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger" (2006b [1940]: 391).

  The historical perspective does not accept a "per-se-ness" of an event. Only if a quasi sensuous connection to the event exists, a memory can be historically incorporated.

> "Historical materialism wishes to hold fast that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to the historical subject in a moment of danger. The danger threatens both the content of the tradition and those who inherit it. For both, it is one and the same thing: the danger of becoming a tool of the ruling classes" (2006b [1940]: 391).

Historical materialism aims at enabling this appropriation of experience and therefore counteract the danger of the subjects being made to objects/tools by the dominant relations for the purpose of conservation of exactly these relations.

  The pedagogy of experiential learning was developed on the background of children in today's world mostly having only "second hand experiences." Now we learn from Benjamin that experience similarly contains the danger to become a tool of the dominant opinions. Consequently we could no longer be satisfied with initiating experiential learning because we understood that this itself is a contradictory field. Instead we were personally asked to find an approach to experience, and to understand which experiences made possible a learning in the direction of expanding capacities for action and which experiences functioned as conservative handing down of dominant opinions and morals. We wanted to go on a search for our own resistances against learning, for the desire to ensconce, for the interpretation of experience in favour of reiteration of what is known already. This insight into the contradictory character of experiential learning led to a pressing

contradiction in ourselves: As teachers in Free Alternative Schools we held the belief that school as an institution prevents learning and that teachers disturb the natural process of learning, that the structure of school is permeated by dominance and that the traditional way of conveying knowledge and information stood against personal experience instead of nurturing it. At the same time all of us were teachers, and we assumed we were indispensable in this role. Hence the question arose: What do pupils need teachers for?

The following 10 theses by Frigga Haug attempted to answer this question. They offered a grid to lay over our texts for identifying better how we construct the world for us:

> To learn something new the old and familiar certainties need to be left behind. Most important for learning is unlearning.

> Learning is uncertainty because what is familiar is questioned.

> Our experiences contain the structures of dominance that we live in, and that we help reproducing, ideology, dominant opinion, conformity or also resistance.

> To break them apart and comprehend them requires working with the experience which holds us firmly like a belt of cement and which proposes self-evidence.

> But we are the experts of our own lives. We are to be questioned, so that we are not ambushed from behind by what we became, rather understand who we are and change in a way to be able to accept ourselves.

> Learning is the crisis of experience.

> To resort to crisis and letting go of old certainties requires emotional back-up, for example by teachers, parents or also a social movement.

The first step to learning from experience is to question an experience by means of a counter experience.

That requires knowledge, imagination, self-critique - of pupils as well as of teachers.

Learning is also self-critique.

If we seriously take on the theses by Frigga Haug we have to reconsider our role [as teachers]. It seems to be our task to lead experience into crisis. We encounter the difficulties that learning is connected to abandoning certainties. This certainty is the arch-enemy of knowledge, and the process of letting-go and unlearning takes a lot of effort. To make it possible for pupils we ourselves have to constantly face the challenge of unlearning and reflect on our experience. The reflection brings to our consciousness the temptation of preservation that is contained in every supposed "experience", i.e. it may be better not to learn. Habit affords us certainty. We are calmed down by the idea that at the end of the day everything is alright as it is, our beliefs and our thoughts. We are relieved. But it also prevents departure and change.

> "For someone to be able to learn requires a kind of reflected advanced experience of a teacher, who hauls the experience out of its self-evidence in life and renders it uncertain. He is going to destroy illusions and encourages consequences for a revision. For such processes teachers are needed in multiple ways. Not only can they lead into uncertainty, they are also needed to back-up the learning processes. In doing so they are emotionally challenged as persons who are permanently questioning themselves as well. At the same time the experience of the teachers is required as knowledge of the specific capacities of defense and repression. Here it would be possible to stipulate that a person is all the better as a teacher the more he has reflected upon the own experiences, i.e. established an 'inventory' - as noted by Gramsci – without evoking the impression that this would be a finite process" (Haug, 2003: 66).

Our perception is filtered through societal norms, we make our experiences fit in with what we belief and think already, we interpret them accordingly, or we repress them. Hence it requires a close look to identify real experience. We find ourselves in the contradiction of, on the one hand being centre of our action, and on the other hand being subordinated to societal relations. To achieve an increase in our capacity for action we need to consciously find our way through this field of tension between the freedom of the subject and the acceptance of our subordination that we also help reproducing.

  Let us thus understand learning as a self-activity that does not remain without consequences for one's attitude in the future. Learning is geared towards acquisition and determination of one's own conditions of life, towards increasing emancipation from dependence and being at the mercy of alien and probably unknown forces.

Working with our stories[1]

After an intense engagement with theory and equipped with insight into the complexity, contradiction and difficulty of grasping and understanding experience we turned to our stories. Every participant had written one or more stories on the topic "As I learned from experience" or "As I didn't learn from experience." We read all stories and then decided to work with the following scene:

> *Peter is 14 years of age. He lives with his siblings and his mother in most deprived circumstances. His father is not around. Peter has experiences of abuse, there are speculations that he engages with men (in whatever way). Ah, yes, he also steals. He comes punctually too late to school[2], often he does not come at all, for a couple of days, stays over night hell knows where. He suffers from an acute lack of sleep, in school he sleeps whenever it is possible. He is vulnerable, aggressive, mean, funny, intelligent, sporty, lazy, interested. I like him. Peter comes late as usual. I welcome*

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1   All names in all stories are pseudonyms.
2   This is a Free Alternative School that operates as a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

him, happy that he is there at all: "Good Morning, Peter, come in!"

He answers: "Shut up, you wanker! Sucked too many cocks last night, or what?"

"Hey, what's the story? Did you not sleep again last night?"

He: "That's none of your business. You are not my father!"

"I know I'm not your father. Still I'm interested to know what's up!"

He: "You are not my father, okay? So leave me alone!"

Hence I leave him alone. We do maths. Peter leans over his worksheets. He doesn't understand the task. "Rudolf, can you help me?" Sure I help him. We work through the sheets together, joking together. His mood brightens up. I turn my attention to another child who asks for my help. I speak with the child as Peter suddenly shouts across the room: "Rudolf, did you swallow too much sperm last night?"

I: "I didn't swallow any sperm last night. Do you want to talk with me, Peter?"

He: "No, I won't tell you anything. You are not my father."

Shortly afterwards he asks me: "Can I talk with you under 15 eyes?" Sure he can.

He asks me, would I come to his house some time after school to paint a dolphin onto the wall in the living room. I ask for time to think about it, again completely puzzled about Peter's contradictory behaviour towards me. It feels to me as if he is looking/searching for his father in me, that he yet is not allowed to do so, that he hates me and likes me, that he trusts and mistrusts me. I try to cope with this by showing as much as possible consistent and steadfast behaviour, but time again I fail in face of Peters completely mad behaviour and thereby I reaffirm him in the belief that men are shit. Such a shit!

This story was written by a teacher in a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It shows the "crude environment" in which the teacher is situated and that educates him. Of course we had chosen this one for exactly that reason. The curiosity and perplexity was big, how to react in such a situation, how to deal with such a pupil. A lot of the text

gives explanations, why the pupil is as he is presented in the story, nearly like an excerpt from a school file. The story depicts an experience of failure. The author judges his acting on basis of the psychological advise to show consistency and remain steadfast, so as to allow the pupil to have a counter experience to what is assumed to be his experiences otherwise. By doing so he also renders himself largely incapable of acting in the situation. We distil the message of the story: *Antagonistic emotions cannot be mastered. Everything is in vain, there is nothing you can do.*

  With the best of intentions the author approaches his pedagogical task that, given all the explanations about the pupil, seems so clear, and yet he enters a loop of despair and resignation. He wants to help, overcome distance that appears in form of infringement, wants to establish a different closeness that the boy seems to need so desperately and at the same time is unable to allow for himself. The author depicts himself as an example of friendliness and forbearance. It seems that nothing can bring him out of balance, but he feels trapped in his powerlessness. At closer look we realise that all the attempted explanations build a screen in front of a real experience. Everything that is known in advance seems to be confirmed in the scene. When we look for the subjects, the actions, emotions and activities of the teacher and the pupil we are taken aback: the interests, wishes and emotions of the pupil remain a void. This is a surprise given that half of the entire text is at pains to explain what the pupil is like and why that is the case. The teacher knows everything about the pupil in advance, there is no need to get to know anything new about him, hence a new and fruitful experience with the pupil is prevented. When we worked with the story we found out–as an even bigger surprise–that there were other pupils and another colleague present in the situation, but they don't get mentioned in the story. The author constructs himself as alone and forbearing and for that reason also remains incapable of acting. Once the heroic attitude is acknowledged as a construction of the author, there are suddenly openings in the situation for manifold options to act differently; options that the author in the situation couldn't see. Maybe a dialogue about the grotesque situation with the colleague would have been possible, or a request for the other pupils to comment on the situation, or an open confrontation with the pupil in which the emotions and interests of the participants (that includes the teacher!) are questioned. It is possible that here the key is hidden that would open the door for a true encounter and a new

experience. As a problem transfer we find in the scene: *If we construct ourselves as alone and forbearing we remain incapable of action.*

Working with this scene teaches us that our monadic being in the world and our lack of social perception prevents capacity for action, creativity and imagination, and that we urgently need to sharpen our senses in this regard. The excuses for the violating behaviour of the pupil and for his sexual provocations as contained in the interpretation that to us seemed increasingly made-up eventually led to the question, whether the author had possibly asked a school psychologist for advise. It left us baffled to hear that that was indeed the case, and at the same time it explained the depicted behaviour. Those assumed certainties in knowing pupils stand in the way of clear thoughts and feelings in the actual situation in school. Often they prevent experience, change, learning in dealing with pupils. What we always already know slowly creeps into our thinking: pupils, especially in a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, are difficult, obstinate, our work with them is tough, frustrating and futile. And one by one all our ideas of good, nurturing, human engagement are gobbled up by resignation. We leave aside the question what task, what meaning and what success we personally see in our work and how we can gain capacity for action in relation to it.

Well then, what to do if you are a tolerant-liberal educator, an alternative teacher, and you are confronted with provocative behaviour on the side of pubescent pupils? The question is all the more pressing if the students come from an environment where sexual abuse, alcohol and domestic violence are prevalent, and if the teachers have expectations influenced by psychological and pedagogical manuals. If we want to be able to act as teachers, our own attitudes and their origins are in need of critical scrutiny, including their relation to manuals.

Another colleague from the same school writes:

> We (a colleague and myself) are working with our group on the project of "knights." This day we spoke about the way the tournaments were held and particularly what the lances of the knights looked like. In a text on it that we read it said that the lances were in parts equipped with "tournament horns" to make them less pointy. Now the question came up what that may have looked like. Two pupils jumped up and drew their ideas on the blackboard. Then Georg went to the

> *blackboard too. His drawing showed a lance, and in front of it a female genital and eventually my name beside it. With a grin on the face he said: "This is Christiane's lance." I was totally shocked by this image and felt immediately personally attacked. I was also so angry that I would have loved to grab Georg, shake him and ask him what that was about. However I managed to keep calm (because I did not want to show how outraged I was) and I only asked him what this was about, I would not attack him personally either and I said that I found this totally appalling (and with this I erased the drawing). Georg looked at me for a while, I cannot say what went on in him, he said nothing.*

The story tells of an experience of overwhelmingness in a pedagogical situation, a reverse of power relations under conditions and amplification of everyday sexism. The message could be condensed: *Verbal and pictorial sexual attacks hurt in a way that effects temporary incapacity for action, particularly within patriarchal patterns.*

When we look for the subjects in the text, their actions, emotions and wishes we find that the author appears only late in the text, first with emotions, hardly with actions, wishes and interests. We note as linguistic peculiarities subjunctive, passive constructions and negated actions, as if it was the highest command for a teacher not to step out of her role and not to react spontaneously. Georg does not appear as a person, rather as a personification of the attack. His emotions and interests remain a void, similarly those of two other pupils and a colleague. This scene also plays out in a construct of isolation. Strikingly the author with her scene was met by empathic reverberation in our group for her description of feelings of extreme hurt and consternation. This story was also characterised by the lack of description of interests, motives, wishes of the subjects and a lack of social perception. We therefore were able to understand the depicted emotions as a defence strategy: she had signalled consternation to a pupil who was easily identified as the creator of a pornographic drawing.

This construction allowed us to formulate the thesis: *The general sexual degradation of the female sex in our society is an access route by which even pubescent boys can win a power game. They know already how to play the strings of patriarchy.*

The emotional non-engagement with the topic throws the participants out of the pedagogical situation. The lesson for our group from working with this story was that the contradiction between intimacy and society, in which sexism is located, calls for an urgent engagement with the topic. And that the definition of the teacher as guardian of morals and as master of the pedagogical situation needs revision.

The problem of control in pedagogical situations also appears in the next authors' story:

> *It is Thursday morning. With my group (5 boys, 2nd to 4th class) I have started a literacy project. We sit together at the table and work on different tasks. I feel relaxed and content because all the boys are immersed in their work and show a real interest. The atmosphere is calm and happy. At approximately 9:15 there is turmoil in the corridor. Voices and footsteps can be heard. I think: Ah, the third group has a break! Immediately I realise I am no longer relaxed. I am afraid, the turmoil on the corridor might distract my pupils in their work. I am afraid the door might open soon and somebody come in and disturb us. Someone will come and pull Richard's ear, then he will start crying, the others will laugh about him and my beautiful work atmosphere is ruined. And in fact, the door opens. Thorsten and Max come in. "What are you doing there?" ... I react immediately, grab Max and ferry him out again, under constant arguing. While I am at that, Thorsten sits down at the table with the others, looks at the tasks, takes a sheet and starts drawing. "My" boys have not let themselves be distracted and keep on working. I am happy about that, relax and leave Thorsten in the room. Work continues as if Thorsten was part of the group. Klaus has finished his task first and turns towards a paper model of a castle that he wants to continue building. After Thorsten has finished his drawing he joins Klaus and helps him. I observe the two. Thorsten passes on his knowledge and skills (geometry, techniques ...). Both are fully immersed. Thorsten is a gain for me - not a disturbance.*

On first sight we took from the story the message: *You don't have to always cry wolf.* It mediates a counter experience, against the disturbance of the work atmosphere, an experience of gain: *Whatever can fail will fail (Murphy's law), but don't trust your fear.*

But at closer look this reassuring idea becomes questionable. After identifying [in the text] the actions of the author, her emotions and interests, it becomes obvious that there is an arc of suspense worked into the story. Starting with inner calmness it rises into a hurricane of emotions that leads to drastic actions before ending in calmness again. The emotions of the children are only described from outside and collectively, similar their actions. Wishes and interests of the children are not present in the text. Linguistic peculiarities include passive constructions, constructions of negation, explications of fears and terms like "my beautiful work atmosphere" or "Thorsten is not a disturbance."

The effort of the author to keep control over the situation remains unquestionable. The contradiction between the impression of the author that the boys are immersed and have a real interest in the literacy project, and the fear that a disturbance could distract them from continuing their work without putting up a fight shows that the power of defining the "beautiful work atmosphere," the immersion in the work and the "real interest" lies solely on the side of the author. The arbitrary measure of ferrying out one of the two boys "under constant arguing" (why him?) is not further explicated. After detecting this we identify the authors' construction of herself as a "puppeteer" who wants to keep total control, who lets her pupils act like puppets and immediately reacts if one of the puppets threatens to step out of line. The scene appears like a preventive battle in the classroom: first the evocation of the worst fears, then the immediate attack by the teacher before any of the fears can become reality. In contrast to the relaxed experience of gain there is a humble admission: even with pupils school can by times be nice, as long as one is in total control.

We find ourselves out for having a strong desire to control a pedagogic situation while at the same time knowing that in a controlled situation learning (as depicted above) will hardly take place. But then, how else?

The following story tells of a failed attempt to overcome this role definition:

The workshop

Even today, six years later, I still remember the first visit to the woodwork room at the Free School. There I experienced a place where boys and girls aged 6 to 10 were busy, and I was properly affected: For me this place was the epitome of Free School, the ideal implementation and connection of various ideal educational conceptions that I carried as theories in my head for a long time and that had made me join this school. It was like a dream. The workshop was a small cosmos, an image of the "real" life: a room full of dangers, full of resources, full of ideas. And immediately I found all my pedagogical ideas and assumptions confirmed. It was a prepared environment that incited activity. It was a room full of boards, nails and machinery, too full for any safety regulation and yet without any dramatic accidents (although the children's preferred route from the workbench to the hammer led over the sloped board on the floor that at a certain point, similar to a see-saw, flipped over). I saw girls working with the electric drill as a matter of course; children who cut a board with great effort, near despair but not giving up. I also saw children who genuinely showed an interest in the constructions of others and exchanged expertise, others who worked together on a soapbox car. The mix of ages let different themes, abilities, interests evolve beside each other naturally (from a bed for puppets to a laser sword) and made different roles possible for the children. There was the possibility for welding, soldering, wood turning, everyone could work according their own interests and abilities (from a model boat to a model aeroplane). Lorenz, the facilitator in the woodwork room exercised pedagogical reservation and took on a decent, supporting role: he helped in searching for material, cut boards with the circular saw, asked about the plans of the children when they asked for his help but without making further suggestions from his position of experience. Whoever had an idea was welcome to come, whoever was finished or needed a break tidied up and left the workshop.

Two years ago we started as a team to work on a re-structuring of the school. I was significantly involved in steering the re-structuring, and one of the many motivations for me was the idea of mixing up the different sections. Was it not an ideal of project work that adults and children would search together for a way, an experience, a discovery? And for that reason, should not the adults also discover new areas of work all the time? I wanted to also by times cook or bake with the children, sew or work in the woodwork room! There the atmosphere was joyful, sensuous, exciting, relaxed, busy, natural. In the classroom instead it was often artificial, boring, exhausting, time again peppered with discussions about use and usefulness of this or that exercise, with secret peeks to the watch.

In short: since this school year I am working one day a week in the woodwork room. I wanted to make the experience of learning from children, not having to always be knowledgeable, look for creative solutions together with the children for problems that we both did not yet know how to solve. I wanted to overcome my fear of machinery and gain competences, I wanted to be role model and as a woman move naturally in a male domain.

When I let Lorenz give me a first introduction to the workshop I already realised resistances that did not help to pick up the explanations. With all my might I fought against a sudden lack of interest: The meaning of the different colour cables will make you competent, you want to know how the voltmeter works, besides as a child you have had quite positive experiences in the physics group. Why do you think now you won't remember? Take the opportunity, Lorenz gives you the explanation, listen, why would you look for deeper meaning?

Some weeks afterwards Elisabeth comes to the workshop while I am there. She wants to solder a flashing light. It appears I have forgotten everything. I don't know even which is plus or minus, the long or the short wire. David (seven years of age) helps me out and explains to Elisabeth how she can build her flashing light. She works. David goes, I help

other children. It is five minutes to three, shortly before the workshop closing time. Elisabeth asks for my help. I do a bit of testing with the voltmeter and give her a task that may help her progress. She would like to have my support, but I talk my way out by saying that others need my help, self-reliance, blablabla. Elisabeth doesn't get on, begs, nearly whinging: When will you eventually come? My initial admiration for Elisabeth, who dares to build a flashing light, slowly shifts towards annoyance with her dependence. At the same time I feel my insecurity, not having a solution myself. Come on, Susan, look at the problem together with Elisabeth, tamper around a bit, find the fault, a solution, don't bow out for not knowing, be a role model.

Phew, it is three o'clock, done for today.

Is this now a failed, or a successful, or maybe not an experience at all?

The thesis on experience could be: Either I am not able to live up to the postulate of openness towards the world and the interest for everything that surrounds us, or the postulate is nonsense or I don't understand it.

The second experience: I cannot remember something, although I am interested in it, although I don't remember any bad experiences with the topic, although I could have acquired it without fear and activity orientated, although to my mind the old story of the gender relations does not really offer an explanation.

We were amused by the epic length of the text. When we searched for the message of the author we already found that her personal experience takes place only in a relatively short passage of the text ("When I let Lorenz ... done for today"). It is framed by descriptions of grand dreams and utopian imaginations, illusions and disillusion, explanations and justifications.

  In the text segment that we considered relevant we read: *Uncertainty leads to incapcacity for action, good will alone is not enough, creativity requires competence. Incompetence dismantles the alternative teacher.*

  I have no solution, only the watch can save me – the contradiction between the pedagogical postulate and the immediate experience can be

expressed in the formula: I would love if I did not need an advantage in knowledge, and yet I need it! The story describes a couple of experiences: an experience with oneself, with unpleasant emotions, with forgetting, failure, aimlessness that is experienced as not joyful, helplessness and incompetence. The admiration of the pupil at the beginning of the scene flips over into annoyance because the pedagogical idea does not conform with reality, a joyful joint activity does not automatically develop in the room.

The author constructs herself as incompetent, yet with high aspirations. One is tempted to believe her, because her own actions remain a void in the text. For example, she helps the other children, but there is no mention of what she does, with whom, whether it is helpful. The pupils are constructed differently: Elisabeth as demanding and trying, David as competent and self-reliant, he appears as "deus ex machina", a god who suddenly appears, saves, and vanishes into thin air again. Other pupils don't appear at all, they are white spots. The resistance of the teacher against learning shows in twofold ways, thus quite tenacious: the block against the introduction to the workshop, and the refusal in the pedagogical situation. The inner dialogue of the author, the irony in the text and the passivity stand out as linguistic peculiarities; they serve to camouflage the experience. Irony helps to bear failure, it creates distance to the unbearable feeling and the urgency of repression. That leads to a critique of the pedagogical idea: *It is easy to criticize assumptions of reform pedagogy, if we construct ourselves with grand aspirations, but without actions. If we construct ourselves as void of action and emotion, if as pedagogical actor we evade and disappear, working in the workshop cannot work.*

Again the pedagogical doctrine plays a role, but this time the story is not a reaffirmation, it is rather a rebuttal. Yet, the doctrine is the pattern that serves as background for experience.

An insight from the entire seminar was that we find it difficult to make a real experience and to recount it, but in a second attempt we are able to do so. A new problem emerged when it became clear that the focus on the subjective experience had led to ignoring the real pupils and the rationale for their actions. It was a bitter insight for us that we exclude the pupils from our stories. We are unable—at least in critical situations—to perceive them with their emotions, interests, actions and describe those.

First we were tempted to ascribe this phenomenon to the explicit question for subjective experiences of teachers, i.e. think of it as triggered by the method. On second view we found that the individuals had depicted themselves in a way as solitary, private and lonely that even in groups in which–as reported when asked for clarification–not only pupils but also a couple of teachers were present it was impossible to make a shared experience whatsoever.

At this point the work is not finished yet. Benjamin thinks (in his reading of Proust) that the privateness of experience and memory is not a human condition, it rather belongs to the "inventory of the individual who is isolated in various ways" (2006a [1940]: 316), hence it is result of alienated relations under capitalism.

Instead of turning to an abstract suggestion for an education in social perception, we made the intense shared experience that the collective work with individual experience hauls it out of isolation and privateness and therefore this work alone is already an expansion of social perception.

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Chapter 11

THE COLLECTIVE SUBJECT OF MEMORY-WORK[1]

Niamh Stephenson and Dimitri Papadopoulos

The problem of politically engaged research

We would hazard a guess that, although academics may not have self-consciously set out to master this particular skill (and may even see academic research as standing in opposition to 'sensationalist journalism'), many working in the humanities and social sciences can now write a good headline. Particularly one announcing disaster. *Feminist accused of sexual harassment!* shouted Jane Gallop (1997), when she needed to unhinge the way feminist critiques of sexual politics had morphed into moralizing criticisms of sex. *Caught in the neoliberal noose* we wrote ourselves in analysing the predicament of people taking responsibility for decisions about unpredictable and relatively untested HIV treatments. And, as we try to see beyond these headlines, we find a thong of exclamations: *No escape! Structuralists and poststructuralists alike trapped by the logic of our own theories and actions! Fools to have thought we could ever offer anything anyhow! Complicit Interpellations! Tainted academics further embroiled as they try to stop uncontrollable regulation!* There is striking futility both railed against and proliferated in these banners. Reading through ever more careful analyses, and listening to increasingly tightly crafted lectures which return us to our current predicament cast as a colonizing and immoveable force, we have to ask: *Does it have to be this way?*

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1   In this chapter there are a number of references to the other parts of the original publication, *Analysing Everyday Experience,* which also refer to the CMW-project undertaken with HIV-positive men in Australia that provided the background for the book by Niamh Stephenson and Dimitri Papadopoulos.

. . . [T]he problem is that the terms social researchers use (and criticize) to understand the emergence and operation of contemporary modes of self-regulation and experience – agency, autonomy, responsibility – serve to proliferate and strengthen the forces we are trying to rework. . . . [W]e argued that the political project of articulation initiated primarily by cultural studies seems to run into the dead end of privileging a very particular form of experience and neglecting other forms which challenge the very foundation of our current political praxis. This difficulty is more apparent in and crucial for discursive approaches and governmentality studies where even attempts to make the domain of subjectivity the focus of inquiry can be understood as an extension of neoliberal governance and regulation. Although these conceptual tools seem to offer little in the way of understanding how we might actively participate in initiating radical socio-political change today, they are defended on the grounds that they accurately capture the machinations of power in our societies. (and this is particularly apt for governmentality studies). But this melancholy has a conservative appeal - it lets us off the hook of working out how to act, of risking the uncertain move beyond our particular interest to one more general, of developing connections between people and interests, of actively working on the political dimensions of social research. In this chapter, we approach the broad terrain of the relationship between research and politics from the viewpoint of methodology.

  If we accept that social research is not simply a matter of representation, but involves (knowingly or unknowingly) intervening in and constructing our current social and political conditions, we are then presented with a set of questions about how this happens in the process of researching experience. In this chapter, we turn to these questions by discussing a specific methodology, memory-work (Haug 1987, 1992). Hence this chapter further elucidates the production of the written memories and analyses what we discuss in *[Analysing Everyday Experience]*.[1] However, we have devoted a specific chapter to this methodology because it provides a useful point of departure for considering anti-foundationalist approaches to experience. We outline the rationale and method of memory-work, emphasizing the way it

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1   see Chapters 1, 4, and 5 in Stephenson and Papadopoulos (2006)

undoes the subject of linear, causal, biographical narratives. Memory-work invites consideration of experience as collectively produced, a notion which is foregrounded in Haug and other's (1987) original introduction to the method. Two decades later, it is both necessary and possible to reconsider and rework the notion of collectivity. . . . In turning to memory-work here, we are not trying to advocate its use on the grounds that it is a superior methodology for researching experience – memory-work is not a fixed method, rather it was envisaged as an open set of tools, tools which require replacing and refining in response to different configurations of both experience and the socio-political realm. Thus, memory-work offers fertile ground for considering the relationship between experience, social research and socio-political change.

Power in and of social research

Because social researchers are involved in a set of practices which construct and regulate objects and people even as they aim to liberate, there is a need to consider the power both in and of social research. How are researchers complicit in the regulation of people's lives? Can research avoid simply reproducing versions of reality which it set out to resist or rework? Is it possible to intervene in forms of regulation in which we are already complicit in order to produce new objects which reflect different visions of social reality, past, present and future? These are all questions about how we can work with rather than shy away from the political dimensions of research, and they are certainly not new (for example, Wetherell & Potter 1992). Notwithstanding its vital importance, the ongoing discussion about the question of power in research - how power is played out between researchers and researched – risks inadvertently drowning out an equally important focus: the power of social research. In the literature on social research methodology, discussions about techniques for intervening in the power relations inherent in social research (for example, for empowering participants) are common (for instance, Massat & Lundy 1997). Less attention has been devoted to the relationship between social research and ways of intervening in the socio-political realm beyond the research process itself.

 Any attempt to harness and work with the power of social research introduces the problem of expertise. If academic expertise is a means of exercising power and influence over others (not only those who participate in research, but those who constitute its audience) the past two decades have seen a proliferation of attempts to develop research methods designed to share power and acknowledge different forms of expertise (for example, Lather & Smithies 1997). The imperative to acknowledge different forms of expertise and to involve different actors in the production of academic knowledge is evident well beyond discussions of methodology – consider the increasing move toward funding researchers who involve research partners (such as government departments, commercial entities or community agencies) in the planning and design of their work. This important shift foregrounds the difficult question of representation: is social research a means of representing everyday experience first and foremost? From a methodological viewpoint, many have responded to this question by attempting to identify methods which promise the best possible means of representing experience (for example, Clandinin & Connelly 2000). When questions of method revolve around how best to frame research participants' involvement so that the research can 'give voice' to their authentic experience (for example, Hones 1998), the foundational notion of experience being invoked limits possibilities for understanding political transformation (Butler 1992). Discussion of these difficulties has led to the recognition that, instead of simply positing social research as a neutral vehicle for the inclusion of disempowered groups, it offers *particular* and limited modes of representation, and it may well involve shaping and changing the identities of those to which it aims to give voice (for example, Prior 1997). If we consider the power involved in social research as productive, as opposed to simply oppressive, it is evident that research can create new modes of exclusion in the same moment that it enables new forms of inclusion.

 Social researchers have embraced discourse as an object of social research, in part, because this move provides an exit point of sorts from the quagmire of representation. Here, research produces knowledge of discourse not knowledge of people or subjects. For example, focus group discussions with men can be analysed with a view to what they can

illuminate about discourses of masculinity, not the actual men participating in the discussions (Wetherell & Edley 1999). Men's talk is a pathway to discourse, rather than to their authentic experiences of masculinity. In this sense discourse provides a way of avoiding the problem of representation (and, by implication, the problem of expert knowledge of subjective experience). But it does not, in and of itself, deepen researchers' efforts to understand or work with the power of research: a melancholic uptake of discourse can serve as a justification for avoiding this problem altogether. Memory-work is interesting in this regard, because the methodology requires that researchers and researched approach experience as contestable so that they can participate in the rethinking and reworking of their present socio-political conditions.

The rationale for memory-work

Memory-work does not provide a neat solution to these questions about the links between academic work and the broader social and political realm. It does go some way towards providing a way of working with experience without falling into the trap of defending and affirming experience *per se*. And this is a real trap for those who are interested in approaching experience as more than a by-product of discourse. In contrast, memory-work is an attempt to work with experience in such a way as to question the connections between experience, subjects and modes of appropriation. Experience is simultaneously envisaged as socially produced and amenable to being reworked and re-interpreted.

  The women who developed memory-work, Andresen, Bünz-Elfferding, Haug, Hauser, Lang, Laudan, Lüddemann, Meir, Nemitz, Niehoff, Prinz, Räthzel, Scheu and Thomas, came together in the eighties as a group of German, Marxist feminists wanting to research female sexualization (Haug, 1987). The fundamental difficulty they identified with the work they were encountering – be it psychoanalytic accounts of feminine sexuality or Foucauldian genealogies – was a tendency to apply theory to experience, to subsume experience under theoretical positions. The effect of prioritizing theory over experience like this is to distort and flatten the multiplicity and diversity of experience. They disputed the

transcendent understanding of theory implicit in this relation, and the positioning of researchers as inexplicably free of their own subjective experiences in the moment of theory production.

Inadequate accounts of experience perpetuate the problematic opposition between objectivity and subjectivity. In contrast, 'objectivity' can be understood as dependent on subjectivity (Deutscher 1983). Haug and others were already working in a Marxist tradition which disputed this opposition: from a Marxist perspective subjectivity is understood as produced through and working on the objective conditions of existence (Holzkamp 1984; Tolman 1994). They aimed to build on this insight by challenging the opposition between objective, transcendent theory and subjective, bounded experience. This meant returning to experience in the attempt to cultivate different approaches to the relationship between experience and knowledge. So, they took experience as a starting point - of sorts.

They wanted to unhinge and destabilize entrenched power relations between objective researchers and subjective researched. So they enacted the impossibility of subject-object distinctions by making themselves both the researcher and researched of their own work (Willig 2000). They began to theorize their own experience and to devise tools for doing this. They saw experience as collectively produced, and to facilitate identification of and intervention into these processes, they decided to do work as a group. They wanted to do research which had an explicit political value, which enabled intervention in problematic modes and processes of sexualization. Their goal was to initiate social change rather than document it, or bemoan its absence. But why intervene by taking experience as a point of departure; an alternative would be to start with social practices, structures or discourses? Importantly, they thought of individuals as actively appropriating social structures. Rather than being passively determined by our social contexts – we actively take them on, make sense of them, weave ourselves into them and in so doing become who we are. So the constraints of the social realm cannot be thought independently of our experience with them. Haug and others were interested in "experience as [the] lived practice ... of a self constructed identity"; they understood experience to be simultaneously "structured by expectations, norms and values" and to contain "an

element of resistance, a germ of oppositional cultural activity" (1987: 42). As with Hall's (1981) insistence on the insights of both the culturalist and structuralist/post-structuralist approaches to experience, memory-work involves working with the tension between these two positions (but the attempt to do this is not without its problems, as discussed below). Whilst their articulation of memory-work is bound to the terms of identity and resistance, we will be arguing that the methodological tools they developed are useful for interrogating the dissolution and fragmentation of identity (Cifford, 2000).

  Haug and others were part of a much broader move to recognise the personal as political. They had participated in the feminist consciousness-raising movement, and wanted to build on it. In this regard, they did not see themselves as discovering or revealing the previously excluded personal sphere, they went beyond the call to simply identify the personal as political. Rather, they recognized that as researchers they were not providing a neutral channel for representing the personal in political terms, but they were involved in constructing the relationship between personal and political realms. Memory-work is an attempt, not to reveal the political dimensions of experience, but to put experience to work by translating it in ways which intervene in the production of socio-political conditions. That is, the political efficacy of research hinges on the particular ways in which it enables and enacts translation between the personal and public. As they began to draw on their own experiences in undertaking research, they identified concepts and processes which work against effective translation. Foremost amongst these is the notion of determinism – social or psychological. If they lapsed into explaining their experiences as determined by the past, they found that they closed down ways of thinking about and translating between public and personal realms. Rather than think of the subject or self as the sum of his or her experiences, they countered any notion of the past as causal "of today's person" (1987, p. 46-7). Instead they set out to refuse the compression of diverse experiences into evidence that we have always been becoming who we are now.

  So although Haug and others wanted to draw on their experiences, they foregrounded many of the hazards entailed in doing this. In particular, they were aware of the risk of nailing people down to the accounts they

give of experience, fixing identities and subjectivities in the process. This meant devising ways of theorizing experience which open possibilities for rethinking who we are now (tools which, we want to suggest, might be extended and used to even refuse the question), for asking how people appropriate the social realm, and for initiating change by identifying and devising different modes of appropriation. To the extent that biographical and autobiographical accounts offer linear, causal explanations of individuals as products of our past experiences (Phillips 1999), they tend to occlude the very social processes which need to be interrogated and to shore up a notion of the subject that memory-work seeks to challenge – as coherent, unitary and masterful - making the present seem inevitable. So there is a sense in which biographical coherence needs to be treated with suspicion as its very logic is afforded by the fact that the narrative tends to reproduce clichéd notions of subjectivity or identity and occludes elements of experience which are not captured in normative accounts.

Whilst Haug criticized biography *per se* as the misguided means of offering overly psychologized, linear, coherent explanations, this is not to say that there is either a theoretical or methodological necessity to approach biography in this particular way. For example, the idea of biography and autobiography as a process of excavating interior, psychological space undertaken for the purpose of accessing the 'truth' of the subject is subverted in the (largely feminist) genres of ficto-criticism, autobiographical theorizing and anti-narrative (for example, Gallop 1988; Probyn 1993; Waldby 1995; Gillian Rose 1995). In Chapter 8 *[of Analysing Experience]*, we draw on Sebald's fictive biographies of emigrants' lives to elucidate the singular, dispersed and continuous dimensions of experience. However, acknowledging the limitations of linear, biographical accounts for theorizing socio-political change poses a fundamental challenge to another methodological approach common in social research: narrative analyses (for example, Kleinman 1988; Riessman 1993; Frank 1995). To the extent that narrative approaches invite participants to »tell their stories« and involve giving linear explanations of subjectivities, they occlude understanding of experience which may appear meaningless from a given perspective, but which nonetheless may materialize in significant ways (for example, consider Tristana's radical negativity, discussed in Chapter 2 *[of Analysing*

Experience], an experience which cannot be apprehended through a politics of articulation). Because Haug and others were interested in theorizing experience for the purpose of understanding and intervening in processes of change, they devised tools which effectively challenge any notion of the individual subject as unitary, fixed, or determined.

The subject of memory-work

It is evident then, that in contrast to social research which contributes to an image of the person as fixed, unitary, bounded, self-knowing – that is, a phallocentric subject (Irigaray, 1985) – in memory-work it is the fluidity and malleability of experience which is of interest. Co-researchers bring experience to the group, not in order to assert a particular version of subjectivity (for example, being a woman means being subjected to a patriarchal regime), but as a means of questioning the necessity and the construction of aspects of subjectivity (for example, in what ways does the appropriation of sexuality affirm or question this patriarchal regime). To the extend that memory-work avoids casting experience as a fixed property of the individual, the process can be a means of challenging hegemonic notions of subjectivity, not just in the analysis of empirical data but in their production (Gillies et al. 2004; Gillies et al. 2005).

  The subject of memory-work is distinctly non-unitary. Unlike many humanist depictions of agentic subjects, memory-work does not assume that the subject's interiority is transparent to him or herself. This is evident in the practice of memory-work: although the idea that »I know myself« is challenged (for example, through the practices of writing in the third person, of taking the gaps and absences in memories as objects for analysis, of insisting that authors do not have the ultimate authority of interpretation over their own memories), it simultaneously allows the functional value of claims to »know myself« (for example, in affirming the value of negating others' inadequate interpretations and in emphasizing the importance of making oneself better understood, see below). Rather than interrupt the »pure« practice of representation, this ambiguity of positioning, knowing yet not knowing oneself, can fuel the group analysis of memories (Stephenson, Kippax & Crawford, 1996). In this sense, memory-work can be thought as enabling a strategic use of the self-

knowledge for the purposes of ultimately questioning the phallocentric, individual, unitary subject and developing a socio-historical account of particular modes of relating to and knowing oneself (Spivak [in an interview with Rooney], 1994). Self-knowledge is always questionable.

Generalizing from experience

Haug and others (1987) argued that because experience is collectively produced, a specific experience is potentially generalizable. They did not mean that a given experience could be directly applied to other individuals' experience, or that two different experiences would have the same meaning. Rather, because subjective experience already contains objective socio-political conditions, analysing it can illuminate our understanding of these general conditions. The epistemological underpinnings of this insistence on generalizability can be better understood if we consider how positivist and post-positivist science have colonized the notions of generalizability employed in social science. From a positivist perspective, scientific laws are generalizable to the extent that they describe relationships between abstract entities, that is, aggregates which have been abstracted form a number of cases. These laws do not account for the actual relationships between unique cases. Hence cases which cannot be explained by a particular law can be explained away by the fact that there are 'always exceptions to the rule', their existence does not necessarily weaken the rule nor do they necessitate further interrogation (in fact, many statistical tests cannot be undertaken until 'outlier' or exceptional cases have been excluded from the data set). But this specific notion of generalizability only flourished in the early 20th century following the proliferation of statistics and positivist science. Previously, generalization was commonly understood as arising from either the theoretical or empirical interrogation of the convergences and divergences between particular cases, cases which were thought to be different instances of universal laws. In this understanding, universal laws cannot be formulated without attention to the specificities of real cases and it is exactly this specificity which they seek to explain. Importantly, here generalization is understood not as a move "from the concrete to the abstract, but from the abstract to the concrete: the equation of the

abstract and general is rejected from the outset. The ultimate aim [is] ... to start with the abstract and make it general by tying it back to the concrete" (Tolman, 1994, p. 139). It is in this sense that memory-work involves interrogating the potentially generalizable dimensions of experience.

The practice of memory-work

In order to undertake politically meaningful work through researching experience, Haug and others felt that they had to work against everyday ways of naturalizing experience. They had to find new ways around their empathy with each other, as well as their moralizing reactions to the accounts offered in the group, both responses which inhibited their ability to question the taken for granted. As mentioned, memory-work is not supposed to be a fixed unchanging set of practices. But, to give a sense of what might be involved, we will use a set of guidelines drawn up by Crawford and others (Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault & Benton, 1992) in their development of memory-work to research gender and emotion. Very basically, groups form out of a common interest in researching a topic, and meet regularly over a period of weeks, months or years, analysing a set of memories. The guidelines for writing memories are:

1. Write a memory
2. of a particular episode, action or event
3. in the third person
4. in as much detail as is possible, including even
'inconsequential' or trivial detail (it may be helpful to think of
a key image, sound, taste, smell, touch)
5. but without importing interpretation, explanation,
biography
   (adapted from Crawford et al. 1992: 43).

The idea is to pick a 'cue' for remembering . . . and to write about a specific event, not a general account. This allows examination of the particular ways in which appropriation works, the points at which alternate meanings and practices are overlooked. It is also important not

to go for the jugular, to try to avoid really obvious cues which are likely to evoke stories that people are likely to be over-rehearsed (Haug suggests that 'losing one's virginity' is an example of this) or already coded as somehow foundational to one's identity ('being diagnosed HIV positive' may be an instance of this for many positive people). Writing in the third person is a curious technique. It is an invitation to co-researchers to observe aspects of themselves. Rather than simply perform or affirm coherent selves it serves to release people from self-justification, facilitating the emergence of apparently incoherent or meaningless details. So writing as 'she' or 'he' instead of 'I' enables co-researchers to entertain the possibility that their experiences could be understood and lived differently. Theoretically, this technique is linked to a critique of self-identity, of approaches to subjectivity which assume individual unitary coherence. By writing in the third person, memory-workers occupy at least two distinct positions – the 'she' of the written memory and the 'I' which emerges in the group discussion (Stephenson, Kippax & Crawford 1996). This separation works to create a space to interrogate what otherwise might be treated as the sacred domain of the unitary individual. The rationale for concentrating on giving the fullest description possible, including apparently inconsequential details, and avoiding self-explanation is similar. The idea is to try to avoid producing a fully justified account which resists unravelling, but to include as many details as possible so that the processes of appropriation are amenable to analysis. Typically, groups decide on a cue, then go away and think and write about them, returning with the written memories.

  Crawford and others have suggested the following guidelines for group discussions:

> 1. Each person expresses opinions, and ideas about each memory in turn, and
> 2. looks for similarities and differences between the memories, and looks for links between the memories whose relation to each other is not immediately apparent. Each person should question particularly those aspects of the events which are not readily understandable, but she or he should (try) not to resort to autobiography or biography.

3. Each person identifies clichés, generalizations, contradictions, cultural imperatives, metaphors … and
4. discusses theories, popular conceptions, sayings and images about the topic.
5. Finally, each person examines what is not written in the memories (but what might be expected to be), and
6. rewrites the memories.
   (adapted from Crawford et al., 1992, p. 45)

As memory-work groups discuss the accounts they try to realize their generalizability, to contest and develop the potential of abstract ideas and theories by linking them to concrete experiences. This means that the analysis proceeds by trying to denaturalize the account, to avoid reading it as part of the author's individual biography and to see it as a snapshot of the social processes through which we are constituted as particular kinds of selves. The notions of both memory as a psychological capacity and one's life-story as linear, relatively coherent sequence of events are deconstructed. In stark contrast to the broader, foundational, turn to experience evident in much social and cultural research, Haug and others did not position experience as evidence. Experience is the matter to be questioned, the problem to be explained (Scott 1991/1993). This is why experience is a starting point *of sorts*. It is not the unquestionable bedrock of subjectivity or identity (Butler 1992).

  Discussing personal experience in the group is a way of identifying and resisting the orthodoxies and self-censure in which co-researchers tend to engage. By focusing on the details and gaps in the accounts, together with the value-laden language in which they are expressed, reading the memories involves an analysis of processes of appropriation. Hearing one's memory being discussed in the group can prompt authors to realize their 'communicative incompetences' – that is, the gaps and absences which lead to confusion and misreading, the turns of phrase which seem to invite particular evaluations. Rewriting the memories means that misreading can be clarified. In addition, the group discussion can result in the incorporation of new insights into the rewritten memories. For these reasons, we have included this guideline about rewriting memories. In practice, the work discussed in this book *[i.e. Analysing Everyday*

Experience] did not extend to rewriting memories, for reasons to do with our different understanding of the potential of collectivity (as discussed in Chapter 6 *[of Analysing Everyday Experience]*). We tried to clarify misunderstandings in the group discussion and to take account of these clarifications in the analysis, but we found that working with the accounts which had been written prior to the group discussion was a useful strategy for foregrounding and working with difference within the group (as discussed below).

The group discussion moves between details and idiosyncracies of the written accounts and the identification and interrogation of broader social norms, institutions, structures or discourses (Willig, 2000) which may elucidate the memories, or may constrain understanding of them. So, for example, in the discussions about 'taking charge' of medical regimes[2] accounts of the emotional difficulties and frustrations people confront were analysed in the light of dominant discourses available for public discussion of HIV treatments (for example, discourses of medical authority and patient empowerment). The point of the analysis is not simply to identify the imprint of hegemonic discourse on people's experience. The aim is to understand the available and emerging modes of appropriation and their effects, not only on everyday experience, but on shaping or interrupting particular discourses. For Haug and others, the effect of theorizing their experiences in this way, was that they began to think of themselves as 'living historically'. What they had previously thought to be the natural sequences of their lives, started to appear as historically constituted avenues for interpreting and managing the material and social realities in which they were immersed. They began to see themselves as women of their time and women able to act on their time.

In describing memory-work so far, we have been largely faithful to Haug and others' initial account (with the exception that the original authors do not draw on discursive accounts of experience where our account does). Yet, they anticipated that it would change in response to different research questions in different socio-political contexts (Johnston, 2001). The memory-work projects discussed here involved rethinking and reworking these tools. In part, this reworking was necessary because the

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2   see Chapter 1 in Stephenson and Papadopoulos (2006)

memory-work groups of HIV positive people were initiated by researchers (in collaboration with community organizations) and, although people were invited to participate as co-researchers they did not write about the group discussions. Thus, the responsibility for an important element of the analysis stayed with the original researchers. But more importantly, the work discussed here focussed on a different topic, and took place in another hemisphere and a couple of decades after Haug and others devised the methodology. This meant that the experiences were being questioned in a very different political climate. In line with Haug and others' initial eschewal of methodological fetishism, we are not trying to 'refine' the tools on offer with the aim of elucidating procedural gaps or clarifying analytic procedures. Instead, we are stretching and breaking with the original formulation of memory-work in response to new or increasingly evident configurations of the socio-political domain – configurations which demand different ways of working on the connection between collectivity and socio-political change. Before discussing this further, we want to turn to the place of collectivity in the work of Haug and others.

The collective subject of memory-work

Memory-work jettisons three popular ways of conceiving of the subject in social and cultural research: the unitary, rational subject who can be understood in terms of his/her linear development; the aggregate subject, characterized and approached as a passive, mass of characteristics dispersed across a population (Danziger 1990); and the psychoanalytic subject whose capacities for action and self-knowledge are hindered by unconscious repression. In their place, memory-work posits a collective subject. This subject is comprised of beings who, knowingly or unknowingly, strive to locate and relocate themselves historically and socially. On foregrounding collectivity, it becomes evident that the knowledge produced through theorizing experience is not about interiority, but pertains to the socio-political domain. Memory-work seeks to denaturalize the given of experience, to understand how we have come to be and how we could be otherwise. The focus is on tensions and

shifts in collective experiences and the extent to which different possible transformations could bring about alternate futures.

Tensions in the subject/s of memory-work

Although memory-work posits and works with a fluid, non-identical subject, the subject of *Female Sexualization* differs from the radical subject of structuralist and post-structuralist movements which were occurring alongside the development of memory-work. Like the culturalists in social history and early cultural studies, Haug and others baulked at the proposition that the subject is spoken into being through language. For example, Haug repeatedly argues that written memories have the potential to reveal "the ways in which individuals construct themselves into existing structures" (1987: 41), implicitly suggesting that the subject exists (in some sense) *before* the process of its social production. That is, in Haug's account the subject is being cast as ontologically prior to her own construction (Grosz 1994). Adhering to this notion of the subject enables memory-workers to insist on the agency of subjects – a response to the overly passive, individualizing and depoliticizing notions of the subject which are not uncommon in social research. But, the difficulty with positing agency as an ontological capacity of subjects is that we lose the opportunity to understanding how agency itself is constructed and distributed in better or worse ways, more or less even (this question is further discussed in Chapter 4 *[of Analysing Everyday Experience]*). We have suggested that these tensions over the extent to which the subject is socially and historically produced can be productive in group discussions. However, when we follow them through into the notion of the collective subject entailed in memory-work, they become increasingly problematic.

  The collective subject is fundamental to memory-work because it is thought to enable socio-political change. Change is possible because individuals actively appropriate social structures: the point of the analysis is to find the times and places where there may be, or have been some flexibility in these structures and to consider ways in which this flexibility might be acted on. By arriving at shared understandings of the appropriations of social structures, Haug argues, memory-work enables

resistance and reworking. The outcome of the process is the development of: "a collective subject capable of resisting some of the harmful consequences of traditional divisions of labour" (Haug, 1987: 58). Socio-political change hinges on this 'collective subject', the 'we' of memory-work.

Crucially, the path to collective resistance is possible because individual experiences, the details of the memories, are potentially generalizable. For some (after decades of post-structuralist work), this claim to generalizability may seem at odds with an emphasis on the value of idiosyncratic details. It might be pointed out that attempts to generalize inevitably result in exclusion. However, whilst memory-work foregrounds the potentially problematic and exclusionary dimensions of universal notions, as discussed above it does not baulk at generalization. The political value of this stance hinges on the notion that "politics begins not when you organise to defend an individual or particular local interest, but when you organize to further the 'general' interest within which your particular interest may be represented" (Gillian Rose 1996: 4). Memory-work refuses the severance of the particular from the general.

How does collectivity emerge and function in practice? Memory-work is portrayed by Haug as a blurring of individual boundaries: "Our work begins ... from the premise that the differences in our various areas of experience will have produced and will carry with them specific and distinct boundaries and separations, and that our collective work will make it possible to soften the edges of those rigid boundaries" (Haug, 1987, p. 58). By no means is collectivity equated with consensus. Discussions are described as 'vehement', and the process of rewriting is supposed to, among other things, provide an opportunity to explore and communicate across differences between group members. Exploring differences in memory-work groups generates rich material for further analysis but, in place of a 'blurring of boundaries', in practice we want to suggest that it is always possible that it can lead to the entrenchment of positions, the blank refusal to integrate alternate interpretations of memories. Does such intransigence figure as a threat to the notion of collective subjectivity? Although Haug describes disagreements, they do not feature as part of the workings of collectivity and there is an implicit suggestion that it is through their resolution that collectivity emerges.

The emergence of a collective subject in the group discussions seems relatively unproblematic. When the resolution of conflicts is characterized as a matter of "personal stability" (p. 57), it is implied that the absence of agreement results from personal instability, rather than the incommensurability of particular positions. There is no explicit discussion of how unresolved difference can be a productive part of the process.

The barmaid's pleasure and the problem of collectivity

Like all concepts employed in the social sciences, the meanings and use of 'collectivity' has to be situated historically. The promise of collectivity may appear more problematic now that the oppositions between practices which constrain and those which liberate, between isolated, politically powerless individuals and powerful, politically capable collectives have been deconstructed. However, we want to suggest here (. . .) that working with a concept of collectivity can be a productive means of moving beyond the mere 'recognition' of difference; it can enable new forms of connection between people and new ways of relating both to others and to oneself. But in what sense is this different to the notion of collectivity entailed in the original account of memory-work?

  Haug and others decided to undertake collective questioning of experiences, so as to harness the power to work against the more habitual, individualistic way of relating to experience – that is, seeing experience as arising from and representing the truth of one's inner being or past history. They recognized that such psychologization of experience inhibited women from acknowledging and analysing the commonalities in their lives and from there, working back to a deeper political understanding, not only of the social production of female sexualization, but of the active roles that women themselves play in this process. But, undertaking collective analyses of experience is not a straightforward affair. Collectivity can both enable and limit the process of socio-political transformation. The tension, between exploring and eliding difference within memory-groups, is more than a matter of practice; it brings us to the heart of current epistemological and political difficulties with the very notion of collectivity. And it is a tension Haug and others must have faced, if not explicitly discussed in their group meetings. For example, in a

chapter about 'the slavegirl project', Andresen, Haug, Hauser and Niehoff explain that the group had been writing about the objectification and commodification of women's bodies. They discussed the skill women (are expected to) develop – an ability to tread a fine line between being sexual beings and being loose women. When they decided to write about this issue one woman returned to the group with the unexpected. She wrote a glowing account of herself working in a bar on a hot day. The only woman in the company of male customers, she decided to play some music and started to dance *'excessively, ecstatically'*, happily ignoring [or bearing] the way *'all eyes were turned in [her] direction'* (1987:. 149-50).

  On first reading the memory, the other group members noted the seeming absence of any conflict over her performance. And it was pointed out that, although described in terms of pleasure, the incident could be read as an unambiguous account of the *problems* of objectification, the very problems they sought to deconstruct. If we follow the account of memory-work as a process which elucidates "our active participation in social structures that gives them more solidity ... more solid than prison walls" it is not hard to understand how such an account might be read (and was read in the group) as an instance of a woman's involvement in her own entrapment (Haug 1987: 59). But the author refused to subscribe to such an interpretation, insisting that her memory was about the *pleasure of transgression*. This led to a discussion about transgression and freedom. The others in the group are reported as deciding that the author simply could not recognize her objectification as such. The problem, it seemed, was that she was drawing on an inadequate account of freedom, traceable to Freud, who thought that freedom was a matter of transgressing the constraints of civilization. What the author's own interpretation of her experience ignored was both the futile isolation of some forms of transgression and the freedom to be gained from realizing the malleability of social rules by working with them, instead of breaking them outright. Thus, the author's insistence on affirming the pleasure she experienced in dancing was explained as a problem of the paucity of tools for understanding and practising real freedom. The insight which emerged from the group analysis of the memory was that the attainment of freedom from sexual objectification is a matter of forging ourselves *in relation to* the constraints of our

situations. In contrast, attempts to simply transgress these constraints only blind us to their ongoing operations – and this explains the author's persistence in remembering her experience as one of pleasure. This reading suggests that, had she only had a better way of understanding freedom, she would have remembered this very differently.

Despite the importance of elucidating different possible relationships between freedom and constraint, this analysis is deeply disconcerting. The author's pleasure is cast in terms of false consciousness. Her experience is subsumed under a broad theoretical position in which transgressing the rules about overt displays of sexuality only ever make women more active (not less, nor differently active) in the unfettered reproduction of patriarchal norms. This is an instance of memory-workers doing exactly what they had set out to avoid – glossing over the complexity of experience. We do not learn how the author of the memory came to accept this new reading. Did she wholeheartedly agree, or did she harbour a critique of the others' inability to theorize the complexities and transformative powers of pleasure? Did she feel like her experience was being subsumed by a reading which upheld bourgeois morality at the expense of interrogating what she was offering to the group? Someone left the group before their book was published – was it the author of the barmaid memory? If she did have any lingering attachment to her initial interpretation, it is subsumed by the authorial 'we' recounting the group discussion. It is impossible to discern whether this 'we' represents seamless coherence and agreement, productive diversity, uncomfortable inclusions or smooths over outright differences in positions or even a break in the group.

The collective analysis of memories can be a powerful means of silencing and excluding people. There is no ultimate basis from which 'good' exclusions can be distinguished from bad, nor should memory-work groups seek to articulate them. It is not the fact of exclusion with which we are concerned here, but the way the process is neglected. Whilst Haug acknowledges that speaking as 'I' necessarily occludes the complexity of subjective experience, the barmaid's tale suggests that it is equally the case that speaking as 'we' glosses over the contradictions of collective experience. Rather than play it safe, and avoid collectivity, is it possible to rework memory-work so as to take account of the fact that

"the alchemy of collaboration does not merge the two authors into a single voice" but transforms them into "the chorus of a multitude" (Hardt [in an interview with Dunn], 2000)?

The problem with collectivity that we are raising is not new. For the past two decades, the collective 'we' of social research and political practice had been deeply questioned. Feminist politics illustrate this well.

> All determinations [of sexual difference] ... have foundered on the shoals of fictional essentialism, false universals, and untenable unities. In addition to these theoretical interrogations, political challenges to feminisms that are white, heterosexual, and middle class by women who are otherwise have made strikingly clear that 'woman' is a dangerous and depoliticizing metonymy: no individual woman harbours the variety of modes of subjection, power, desire, danger and resourcefulness experienced by women living inside particular skins, classes, epochs, or cultures. 'All that is solid melts into air' – the sanguine 'we' uttered in feminist theory and practice only two decades ago is gone for good. (Brown 1995: 166)

All attempts to describe or work with a collective feminist 'we' confront the imperative to include different experiences, subjectivities or identities. As suggested by Brown, the limits of essentialist theories and the increasing awareness of histories of exclusion which continue to unfold through representations of 'us' and 'we', indicate the need to rethink any idea of collectivity as an aggregate of individuals who concur by virtue of a shared identity or history. But inclusion of difference in and of itself does not enable collectivities to operate in more just or equal ways nor does it necessarily undermine hegemonic modes of regulation. The additional challenge is to recognize how, even collectivities that enable us to work with and through and across differences, can be the very site where new forms of regulation unfold. Now, late-capitalist, imperial sovereignty operates not only through exclusion but through *inclusion* of difference (see Chapter 6 [*of Analysing Everyday Experience*]). In such cases what use are 'we'?

The Marxist notion of collectivity entailed in memory-work helps to question the proliferation of liberal and neoliberal individualism. To reconsider collectivity now does not necessarily entail returning to individualizing, depoliticizing alternatives. Rather, adopting the radical openness of enacting collectivity as a *process* returns us to the work of addressing, rather than downplaying, the difficulties and problems entailed in attempts to forge, sustain and develop socio-political change.

Rethinking collectivity

> The two of us wrote Anti-Oedipus together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd. (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 514)

We have described how collectivity figures as the basis for socio-political transformation in memory-work as it was initially developed. But, if the inevitable radicalizing potential of collectivity is questioned and recast as a potential which may or may not be fulfilled, the challenges of undertaking memory-work are reframed. How can we realize collectivity as transformative; how can we prevent collectivity ossifying into the status quo? What does an anti-foundationalist collectivity look like or how is it enacted? One possible move is to argue that, it is not only commonalities that give rise to new understandings, but attempts to recognize differences among and between memory-workers *as* difference which can enable socio-political change. Importantly, foregrounding difference can subvert the consolidation of particular identity categories on which political action is often based. For example, as feminist and queer debates have demonstrated, interrogating difference can threaten the stability of the identity category 'woman' (De Lauretis 1988; Scott 1991/1993; Butler 1990, 1992, 1994). In place of identity politics this way of working with difference calls for anti-foundationalist feminisms or coalition politics – forms of self-consciously risky politics which must remain exposed to hijacking because change necessitates openness. This offers an interesting possibility for repositioning subjectivity (Spivak 1990; Burman 1994). When memory-workers question the basis of common identities, examining difference *as* potentially incommensurable

difference, they are trying to contribute to change. Now collectivity is a coalition working together, not on the basis of common identities, but because they have a shared goal (from which they may envisage different future benefits and different future paths) and recognize the necessity of pooling their efforts to attain it. The emphasis shifts from collectivity as an outcome to collectivity as a process.

The premise of this interest in difference is, of course, that many are excluded access to the socio-political realm on the basis of their religious affiliation, race, sex, sexuality, ethnicity or some other marker of their identity. But[3] the risk of relying on the inclusion of difference as a strategy for change in and of itself is that we end up with practices of recognition which are severed from practices of redistribution (Santos 2001). Such domestication of difference has, in part, provided the rationale for the move from 'identity' to queer politics, (for example, Butler 1990; Rubin 1984). In their analysis of modes of biopolitical regulation and resistance emerging in our late-capitalist, globalized world order, Hardt and Negri (2000) argue that today difference and alterity are easily recouped – contemporary imperial power operates through the recognition and inclusion of difference. We are being ruled, not through the exclusion of difference, but through its hierarchical inclusion. As with the agency of individual subjects, now the value and limitations of differences which operate in and through collectivities hinge on the social and historical practices through which they have come to be included (as well as attempts to rework these practices).

Questions about the link between collectivity and socio-political change can be pursued by considering different modes of connecting and relating, both within and between collectives. In this regard, the distinction made in political theory between 'the people' and 'the multitude' is pertinent now, because it offers a way of understanding how collectivity can become a vigorous, multiple, productive source of creativity (Virno 2004), as opposed to a move towards a sameness. The power of 'the people' is enabled and constrained by a shared identity. Relations within such collectives are dictated by the need for similarity, and difference is the marker of relations with 'others'. In contrast, the multitude involves 'an open set of relations, [it] is not homogeneous and

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3   As discussed in Chapter 4 in Stephenson and Papadopoulos (2006)

identical with itself and bears an indistinct, inclusive relation to those outside of it. Whereas the multitude is an *inconclusive constituent relation*, the people is a constituted synthesis that is prepared for sovereignty' (Hardt and Negri 2000: 103, emphasis added). The relations being described as existing in the multitude are marked by singularity, openness and inconclusiveness. And the possibilities entailed in emphasizing openness evoke the Marxist account of change with which memory-work began. Marx distinguished between emancipation (the inclusion of more people into the same problematic socio-political realm) and liberation (the reworking and reappropriation of the very terrain on which the socio-political realm has developed). In reworking memory-work it may be possible to aim for the latter. Instead of refining the methodology to achieve greater accuracy or faithfulness to a particular procedure, we want to keep wrangling with problems of generalization and to concentrate on the socio-political possibilities of research.

  In practise, the transformative potential of collectivity emerges as memory-workers attempt to move *beyond* the limitations of individual positions. Clearly, this was never thought as a matter of adopting a perspective of objective transcendence. But we want to contest any idea that memory-work should involve individuals constituting themselves as a collective 'people' with the limited goal of emancipation. Instead, the value of practising collectivity lies in the partial joining of embodied, situated knowledges (Haraway 1991). In this sense, collective processes do not comprehensively represent the subjectivities of individuals involved, nor is this their aim. Collectivity is a matter of becoming - or unbecoming - as opposed to being[4] (Deleuze and Guattari 1988; Michaels 1990). The transformative potential of memory-work analyses does not stem form the capacity to resolve (or gloss over) difference. Working with the memories as situated accounts entails interrogating the specific conditions under which a particular strategy emerges as politically effective. It means cultivating partial connections between experiences, adopting a 'mobile positioning' in the attempt to understand the situatedness of different interpretations, an understanding which will always be incomplete (Haraway 1991; Stephenson and Kippax 1999). Thus, the potential of collectivity entailed in memory-work hinges on the

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4   As is argued in Chapter 6 in Stephenson and Papadopoulos (2006)

interpellation of the group as a differentiated, "autonomous mass of intelligent productivity" (Hardt and Negri 2000: 344). Difference is important . . . not for its own sake, but to the extent to which it can enable the flow of singularities, and the transgression of boundaries that have previously closed off concrete entry points into reworking the socio-political realm.

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Chapter 12

MEMORY-WORK

Julie McLeod and Rachel Thomson

[O]ld-fashioned-looking men wearing black suits and hats as if they had to keep their past with them at all times so as not to lose it. (Kiran Desai 2006: 81)

The paradox of memory is the same as that referred to by the 'hermeneutic circle': the past structures the present through its legacy, but it is the present that selects this legacy, preserving some aspects and forgetting others, and which constantly reformulates our image of this past by repeatedly recounting the story. (Paolo Jedlowski 2001: 41)

These two quotes point to the complexity of temporal relations, as well as the facility of literary modes of expression to capture such coexistences. Our aim in this book [that is: *Researching Social Change*] is to map a range of academic approaches that can capture the dynamic relationship between the past and present, characterized both by determination (the past shaping the present) and hermeneutics (the present constructing the past) (Connerton, 1989). Yet we recognize that the language of social science is not always best suited to express the subtleties of temporal processes, and for this reason we employ literary examples along the way.

  In this first section of the book we explore two research methods which take memories as a raw material for the project of researching social change: memory-work[1] and oral/life histories. Our approach locates these methods in times and places, showing how the generation of knowledge about personal and social change forms part of wider cultural and political agendas. Through examples, we tease out some of the practical and epistemological challenges of working with memory. Memories are indirect and unreliable evidence – in Freudian terms, they combine

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1   This text adopts the compound term 'memory-work' (following the use of Haug et al. and Crawford et al.) rather than the more general 'memory work' adopted by Kuhn, except in direct quotations.

manifest and latent meaning, and the capacity to remember is posed as an alternative to a compulsion to repeat. Yet it is the very complex and subjective character of memory that makes it such a rich source for exploring temporal processes.

In this chapter we consider memory-work, a technique for the exploration of relationships between pasts, presents and futures that is closely tied up with the development of the women's movement. Memory-work has had many moments of popularity in different academic communities. Here we provide an overview of the very different ways in which memory-work has been exercised and adapted, explicated through three examples: the work of Frigga Haug and colleagues (*Female Sexualization*), the work of June Crawford and colleagues (*Emotion and Gender*), and the work of Annette Kuhn (*Family Secrets*). In telling a story of memory-work, we seek to demonstrate how methods and ideas emerge in concrete situations, yet are creatively appropriated and transposed into new contexts, giving rise to situated knowledge claims.

These examples all share a relationship with emancipatory politics, and fall within two disciplinary traditions: social science and cultural studies. The methods themselves are fluid and adaptable. Although the work sometimes gives rise to remarkable products, the most important outcome may in fact be the process – the making of collective intellectual endeavours. While the various memory-work projects within this overall history have concerned themselves with the relationship between popular culture and personal memory, the group itself becomes the vehicle for other, hidden histories of the changing relationship between radical movements and academic cultures. It is possible to see parallels with the project of oral history described in Chapter 3 [of *Researching Social Change*], where a methodology was looked to for the promise of political transformation, yet in this case the methodology of memory-work was also understood to have the potential to transform subjectivity and consciousness.

We have engaged in memory-work as a complementary research practice for 10 years, with regular memory-work becoming a vital part of communication within research collectives, feeding into the accumulation of a reflexive understanding of our investments in our topics of research, or connections with and differences from each other as well as directly into methodological and theoretical development. In writing this chapter we have become aware that we are arguing *for* the method, and through

describing and comparing the projects, detailing their methods and recognizing their limitation, we hope to show the potential of memory-work as a method for exploring the intersections of social and personal change.

A Collective Work of Memory

As far as we are aware, the term "memory-work" was coined by Frigga Haug and colleagues in a book published first in German as *Frauenformen* 1 and 2 in 1983, then in English translation (by Erica Carter) as *Female Sexualization* (1987). It was reprinted in 1992 and then republished as a Verso Classic in 1999. Haug and colleagues were a group of West German feminist socialists – some were also academics – who worked together on the autonomous women's editorial board of the Marxist journal-cum-publishing house-cum-intellectual forum *Das Argument*. *Female Sexualization* was the result of a two-year project, and the preface to the English edition provides a retrospective account of how the group came together and how they worked in what were heady political times. The overall ambition of the women's editorial group was "reconstructing scientific Marxism along feminist lines" (1999: 23), and a series of "projects" were established on a range of themes to this end. What is reported in the book is the result of the project that explored how "sexuality is constituted as a separate sphere of existence" (p. 34).

  Attempts to "locate" the memory-work of Haug and colleagues for English readers is assisted by an extensive foreword written by Erica Carter for the 1992 English edition. In presenting memory-work to a British audience in the 1990s, Carter seeks to translate three main elements. First, we are introduced to the "Germanness" of the project, and Carter reflects on the difficulty of translating some of the key theoretical terms, and of smoothing the translation between a language of scientific Marxism and an increasingly post-Marxist consciousness. Second, Carter repositions Haug and colleagues theoretically, in line with academic frameworks salient to this new audience. So, for example, our attention is drawn to the impact on the group of the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS) (for example, McRobbie and McCabe, 1981; Willis, 1981) and their appropriation of Althusserian perspectives on how we come to desire our own oppression and in doing so remake inequality. This dynamic and

psychoanalytically-influenced approach to understanding the way in which agency is active yet constrained is linked by Carter to a second influence on the group – their reading of Foucault and the notion that power is fluid and circulating. She suggests that the authors draw productively on these ideas for their exploration of the body as a site of discourse, facilitating an understanding of ideology as mediated in and through the material. Third, Carter positions the reader's orientation to the practice of memory-work as a resource in feminist engagements with postmodernism and in particular providing feminism with a means to understand how memory is "mobilized collectively" while avoiding the construction of the kind of "linear historical development towards liberation" (1992: 14) which had been the focus of so much political and intellectual critique.

The English translation is divided into three parts, opening with an account of the memory-work employed by the collective. The introduction explains that the decision to privilege the methodology of the project was made late in the day on the advice of the typesetters, who suggested that the intended opening chapter (an engagement with Foucault) was perhaps too dense and uninviting. It is thus that the book opens with an extensive discussion of method (Chapter 1), in which the problem of the book is posed as "the way in which human beings construct themselves into the world ... the threads of that development and the points of their interconnections in our memories" (p. 52). This is followed in Chapter 2 ("Displacements of the Problem") by sections representing a series of projects undertaken by the collective into aspects of female embodiment and their relationship to feminine socialization: the hair projects; the body projects; the slave girl projects; legs projects; and notes on women's gymnastics. The main resource in these projects is written memories and analysis of those memories, although photographs are also drawn on.

The group describe their work as being based on two premises:

> 1. *The subject and object of the research are one*. Rejecting the criticism that memories are too subjective a resource for social science, they treat them as evidence of identity formation – the focus of their investigation. But this does not mean simply treating "experience" or narratives of the self as unproblematic; rather they recognize that such narratives

will gloss the kinds of contradictions, silences and ruptures that are of interest to the analyst. The generation and analysis of memories of embodiment is offered as a way of disrupting and getting into these places.

2. *The research should be a collective process*. The authors argue that group analysis enables the boundaries of forgetting to be made visible. It also enables the construction of the collective subject – "historical contemporaries engaged in reconstructing the mosaic of experiences by which we were trained to enter society" (p. 58). The more diverse the group, the richer the insights.

The authors clearly state that there is "no single true method" (p. 70). "In our experience new modes of analysis express themselves continuously" (p. 70), and "what we need is imagination" (p. 71). They do, nevertheless, reflect on their method and share the lessons that they learned. These are not laid out as a recipe but have to be gleaned from the text, which we summarize as follows:

The principles of memory-work

- *The importance of good research questions* is central to their approach. Questions should not simply reproduce normative notions. So, for example, in their sexuality project they began by questioning "how is sexuality constituted as a separate sphere of existence?" (p. 34) which, in turn, helped them construct the projects. They contrast this with an approach that takes sexuality at face value and enquires simply into topic areas such as "loss of virginity" or "sex education", questioning whether such an approach could produce anything useful beyond stories of painful recognition and disappointment.
- Another focus is on the development of *techniques for reducing prejudice*. Despite their view that memory-work is predicated on there being no subject/object split, they also seek a systematic approach and practices to ensure that the subject is not "prejudiced." Their approach here is shaped by psychoanalytic insight that treats self narratives

as based on "continuities that are manufactured retrospectively in the mind" (p. 48). These techniques for reducing prejudice in the creation of memory texts include focusing on a specific situation (rather than life in its entirety), using the third person (thus approaching past selves as a stranger) and attempting to escape the constraints of relevance by describing everything and anything. They also suggest juxtaposing past and present rather than seeking to forge self narratives, thereby avoiding value judgements and deliberately attempting to imagine the motives and position of all involved.

- Their methodological approach is also distinguished by a *focus on form*. Their discussion of the methods pays a great deal of attention to language and writing. This includes noticing the genres employed, the use of cliché, metaphor and popular sayings, and treating these as evidence of the imbrication of the social within the personal. In seeking to get past these popular discourses, their work is also characterized by a search for an authentic voice, based on the view that women's voices and the voices of the everyday have been silenced in literature. The writing of memories and rewriting of memories represents an attempt to forge the missing voice.

We have found it interesting to revisit this text, 23 years after it was written and possibly 10 years since we looked at it properly. In the light of subsequent appropriations of memory-work we are struck by how open and unprescriptive the method was, involving a range of practices from critical group reading through to writing exercises. We are also struck by the extent to which the book is a product of its own time and place, reflecting a coming together of consciousness-raising practices and the generation of theoretical insight. Some of the language is dated, and the political optimism jars, exposing its absence in contemporary climates. Yet it is not as theoretically naïve as one might have feared, with the exception, perhaps, of the search for an authentic female voice through writing.

  In recent years an increasingly critical perspective has developed within feminist theory regarding the use of experience and "consciousness-

raising as a mode of discerning and delivering the 'truth' about women" (Brown 1995: 41). Wendy Brown describes consciousness-raising as operating as "feminism's epistemologically positivist moment. The material excavated there, like the material uncovered in psychoanalysis or delivered in confession, is valued as the hidden truth of women's existence – true because it is hidden, and hidden because women's subordination functions in part though silencing, marginalization, and privatization" (1995: 41). Brown's position poses a challenge to methods such as memory-work which "demand the right to use experience as the basis of knowledge" (Haug et al. 1999: 34). Brown points to the "sharp but frequently elided tensions between adhering to social construction theory on one hand, and epistemologically privileging women's accounts of social life on the other" (Brown 1995: 41). For Brown, the danger of consciousness-raising (and standpoint perspectives) is that the knowledge gained from such approaches "while admitting to being 'situated', cannot be subjected to hermeneutics without giving up its truth value" (pp. 42–3).

To what extent does the approach of Haug and colleagues fall into this trap? Certainly, the practice of collective memory-work originates in the kinds of consciousness-raising practices that were a familiar part of the women's movement of the time. Haug distinguishes their "memory-work" from less sophisticated group endeavours and conscious-raising groups that failed to take a critical approach to the object of their enquiry (in this case sexuality) or to theorize insights made available by the practices of retrieval and collective analysis. The methodological and political agendas in relation to which *Female Sexualization* was written differed from those of today. Their arguments were with positivism rather than post structuralism. They had to demonstrate that the use of their own subjectivities as a raw material for the production of knowledge was valid, that it was not – in their words – "prejudiced", which may go some way toward explaining their investment in distancing techniques.

Theoretically, they were very much concerned with hermeneutics, the indivisibility of subjects and structures and the impossibility of standing outside of these processes. Yet, politically, they expressed an investment in a relatively unproblematized feminist project, including ideas of forging an authentic female voice in their writing. Haug and colleagues walk a fine line in relation to Brown's charges of feminist positivism, which itself is the culmination of a long series of intense debates with feminism

regarding the status of experience, "voice" and their relationship to politics and agency (Ramazanoglu and Holland 1999; Scott 1992). Certainly their approach is based on a critique of female experience as absent from existing knowledge, and memory-work is offered as a way of generating knowledge from female experience, for the direct purpose of changing women's lives. Memory-work in this sense is understood as an intervention in the world, an emancipatory practice, and not simply as a tool for the collection or creation of data. The categories "women" and "feminism" are treated in an unproblematic way. Yet, in their defence, they do not understand the memory stories produced in the work as transparent or "true" in any way. In particular they are critical of the part played by narratives of the self in "making sense" of contradictions, pointing to the collective interrogation of memories as central to destabilizing these narratives: "we set out to investigate the process through which we have formed ourselves as personalities, rather than the way that things 'really' – objectively – were" (p. 40). Undoubtedly their approach is inspired by their attachment to notions of false consciousness and the operations of the unconscious rather than by a critique of the fiction of the unitary subject. It is a position that is resonant of the theoretical and political climate of western Europe during the 1980s.

To what extent can we understand their project of memory-work as an investigation of social change? As we will explore in the following chapter[2], historical discourse has played a vital part in the formation of feminism as an intellectual and political project. Central to this has been the use of both historical and anthropological methods to demonstrate *specificity in formations of femininity* (De Beauvoir 1949/1997; Rubin 1975). It was perhaps the primary achievement of second-wave feminism to demonstrate the non-universal, socially-constructed character of gender, and the way in which such formations were and are articulated through other historically and culturally defined formations of social class, ethnicity, sexuality and place, and so forth. The project of revealing social construction was so successful within feminism that it undercut feminist claims as to a common subject: be that "woman" or "feminism."

The work of Haug and colleagues emerges at exactly this turning point in the history of western second-wave feminism. Their project is engaged with questions of social change in complex ways. The group take as their

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2   In the original publication *Researching Social Change* the following chapter is about oral and life history. RH

focal point the process of "socialization", the passage from childhood to adult femininity. They do not treat this as a natural or universal developmental process, but rather one in which they are active agents operating within historically-defined parameters. Working as a collective and a generational cohort enables them to identify those historically-defined parameters. The fact that they have come together to review this process through memory-work also locates them within a project of change for the future. They act on the idea, indebted to psychoanalysis, that in understanding how they came to be as they are today, they are also intervening in their own futures. These women are both studying and inciting themselves as a generation that is self-consciously engaged in progressive transformation. The "we" that their investigations represent is both the specific "we" of the group and, through theorization, an abstract "we" encompassing "women", "sexualization" and "socialization" in the collective.

An Australian appropriation of memory-work

In 1985/6 Frigga Haug visited Macquarie University in Australia as a visiting scholar and gave a series of seminars. In attendance were feminist psychologists June Crawford, Una Gault and Sue Kippax. They had been working together (with Jenny Onyx and Pam Benton) in a reading group exploring critical ideas in social psychology. Inspired and challenged by the ideas and practices presented by Haug, the women began working as a memory-work group, exploring the theme of "emotion", the outcome of which was published as *Emotion and Gender: Constructing Meaning from Memory* (Crawford et al., 1992). This book, in turn, played a critical role in disseminating and popularizing a particular approach to memory-work to an international audience. In their introduction to this volume the group provide an explanation of how their project developed. The origins are quite distinct from the culture of Marxist–feminist activism of Berlin in the early 1980s. Here the account is of a group of feminist academic friends, all of whom experienced marginalization within their mainstream psychology departments, and who wanted to explore new ideas beginning to stir within critical social psychology. They described themselves as "academics, and psychologists, and women" (p. 1) who have managed to sustain a regular commitment to collective work in the "interstices of full time paid work and the endless work of young and

older children and sick or ageing relatives, of overseas study and travel, of political commitments" (p. 1). Explaining their debt to Haug, they credit her with developing a method that is "empirical but not empiricist" (p. 4), "a feminist theory that was more than a critical analysis of existing society, one that incorporates its own method for empirical research" (p. 4). Discussing their enthusiasm for working with written memories, the group explain that "We liked the feminist political orientation. We liked the collective way of working. We were intrigued by the collapse of the subject and object, by theory and method, by the idea of becoming our own subjects" (p. 4).

  In a different time and place, Crawford and colleagues inevitably put memory-work to different use. The book, written collectively at the end of four years of group work, represents their creative appropriation of the methodology. It is a version that is more circumscribed than the range of practices described by Haug et al. (1999), focusing specifically on the collective analysis of written memories. The method is also presented in a much clearer and more schematic way, as a set of "rules".

Memory-work rules

They divide memory-work into three phases:
Phase 1:
Write a memory[3]
> 1. of a particular episode, action or event
> 2. in the third person
> 3. in as much detail as is possible, including even 'inconsequential' or trivial detail (it may help to think of a key image, sound, taste, smell, touch)

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3   Once a general subject matter is chosen, a trigger word is generated. They describe their own process of generating trigger words as an iterative process. Beginning with the trigger 'Sorry', they were surprised not to discover memories marked by guilt and shame. They then tried the trigger 'Transgression'. Subsequently they experimented with a directly emotional label, 'Happiness', following this with 'Anger' as a contrast. They used the trigger 'Praise' in juxtaposition with the previous use of 'Transgression' and the situational trigger 'Play' to see if it would produce reports of happiness. Memories of both childhood and adulthood were produced in response to the trigger 'Holidays'. The group advises that around a week is needed to 'gestate' on the trigger and to engage in the first phase.

4. but without importing interpretation, explanation or
biography.
5. Write one of your earliest memories. (p. 45)

All but the last of these injunctions are derived directly from Haug
(although in the original they are much more extensive and discursively
presented). The last injunction was added by Crawford and colleagues,
who in exploring emotion from a psychological perspective considered
themselves to be looking at a developmental process that is most active
in childhood. As such, they wanted to excavate memories from this
period.

It is also interesting that while the group let go of much of the flavour of
Haug's original methodology, they retained and amplified the concern
with avoiding "prejudice." In their introduction they acknowledge that in
using an approach such as memory-work they were "denying the
imperatives of our training", asking whether they could also "remain
rigorous" (p. 4). They emphasize Haug and colleagues' warning against
the beguiling coherence which biography brings. "Coherence hides
resistance and in this way works against the method" (Haug et al., 1987:
41); a method in which the analysis "has to be seen as a field of conflict
between dominant cultural values and oppositional attempts to wrest
cultural meaning and pleasure from life" (Crawford et al., 1992: 47). Thus
memories are to be written in the third person and interpretation avoided
in the initial stages. The choice of the authors to employ pseudonyms in
the book is explained as both an attempt to maintain anonymity but
"more importantly, it helps resist the temptation to write biography" (p.
6).

The gestation of a written memory could take up to a week. Once
memories were written, the group would convene for *Phase 2*. Crawford
and colleagues offer a set of rules for this stage of the memory-work, yet
note that "we did not adhere to all of them strictly" (p. 48).

1. Each memory-work group member expresses opinions and
ideas about each memory in turn, and
2. looks for similarities and differences between the
memories and looks for continuous elements among the
memories whose relation to each other is not immediately
apparent. Each member should question particularly those

aspects of the events which do not appear amenable to comparison. She or he should not, however, resort to auto-biography or biography.

3. Each memory-work member identifies cliches, generalizations, contradictions, cultural imperatives, metaphor ... and

4. discusses theories, popular conceptions, sayings and images about the topic.

5. Finally, each member examines what is not written in the memories (but what might be expected to be), and 6. rewrites the memories. (p. 49)

Again they clarify that "it is important that autobiography and biography which emphasize individual aspects of experience be avoided. What is of interest is not why person X's father did such and such but why fathers do such things" (p. 49).

 Phase 3 of the process is that "in which we evaluate our attempts at theorizing" (p. 51), and for Crawford and colleagues this involves a comparative consideration of accounts generated by different episodes of memory-work and a recursive conversation between their memory-work and the psychological literature on emotions. Writing the book was one of the outcomes of this final phase. They observe that in an ongoing memory-work group these phases would run concurrently. Reflecting on the particular character of this group's appropriation of memory-work is revealing of the ways in which research methodologies evolve as they move across times and places. Most striking is the way that they take what is a messy, unboundaried and highly politicized practice and make it into a "technique" that can be used by others. Undoubtedly this will have been the result of attempting to extract, share and justify a method within their particular disciplinary framework – psychology. Crawford et al. report that they not only had their own memory-work group but also set up others to work in parallel, where they might act as facilitators and/or researcher/members. They were successful in securing competitive research grants to undertake empirical research using memory-work methods. Crawford and colleagues effectively "transcribe" memory-work from its original genre of Marxist feminist activism to institutionalized academic feminism within which they are able to maintain the hermeneutic character of the methodology.

Although their version of memory-work was very schematic, the team saw these methods as contributing to the wider methodological project of promoting social constructionism within a psychological framework. Where Haug et al. employ the language of the sociologist in their concern with agency, structure, reproduction and change, Crawford and colleagues considered the method in the light of social psychological concerns with intersubjectivity that were current in the early 1990s (referring to the classic work of Mead and Vygotsky revisited in the then contemporary work of Shotter). They express excitement with the potential of the method to capture both the "I" and "Me" dimensions of the self, suggesting that in Phase 1 of the process the self talks with itself, and in Phase 2 the self responds to itself as others respond to it. The collective mode of analysis is seen to be critical in mirroring and confirming the collective condition of the self that is captured in memories, with analogous processes observed in "the commonness of the episodes and the common sense reached" (p. 52). Both the "I" of the written memories and the "Me" of the group discussion are constituted socially, confirming for the group the "intersubjectivity that proceeds subjectivity" (p. 52).

Why we remember

Crawford and colleagues are particularly interested in the collapse of the distinction between the subject and the object, which they identify as the hallmark of memory-work. It is this that locates memory-work for them within a hermeneutic epistemology and in opposition to an atheoretical empiricism. They are cautious in making claims for the generalizability of insights generated through memory-work, arguing that "plausibility", "credibility", "recognition" and theoretical generativeness may be more appropriate claims for the method. In a chapter called "Remembering and Forgetting", the group engage in an extended discussion regarding the veracity of memories, and how they mediate the relationship between the present and the past.

On the question of veracity they are clear that there is a distinction between real memories and real events and that the focus of memory-work is "the process of construction ... the search for intelligibility, not the actual event" (p. 151). They are also clear on the question of reality vs construction. Memories are reconstructions of past events, and in

memory-work "we are not seeking to uncover the nature of the event itself but rather the meaning that the event had for us then and now" (p. 152). They endorse an approach that understands the self as constructed out of memories. We do not remember everything, and what we remember is highly selective. Drawing on a wide body of psychological literature, including the writings of Freud on repression, Crawford and colleagues argue that we tend to "remember episodes of unfinished business" (p. 154). The mundane is generally not remembered, nor is the resolved. Such memories can be retrieved, but may only be accessible indirectly. Following Freud they also observe that repressed material, or more consciously suppressed material, may be forgotten and/or unavailable. They summarize their view as follows:

> The ways in which the memories we produce in our memory-work, the building blocks for our theory of self, represent a biased selection of all the experiences that ever happened to us. The bias is a meaningful one. ... Nevertheless in theorizing our memories, we are concerned at the possibility that there were experiences which we do not remember and therefore do not produce in memory-work which were important in our construction but were not reflected upon, as were those which we produced. (p. 159)

In discussion of an example of a repressed memory they suggest that one of the reasons that a memory may not be available to a particular trigger may be that this cultural framework, within which to make the experience intelligible, was not available to the individual at the time. The work of Crawford and colleagues is part of an ongoing tradition within social psychology in which experience and subjectivity are interrogated within changing theoretical landscapes (Gillies et al., 2004, 2005; Stephenson and Papadopoulos, 2006; Stephenson et al., 1996). This discussion has shown how Crawford et al.'s project differed from that of Haug and colleagues (being less Marxist/sociological; more boundaried; more focused on technique; more engaged in questions of subjectivity and psychology), but also some of the ways it was similar (shared focus on socialization; structure/agency; theoretical generation; a partial constructionism/partial hermeneutics; concern with distancing techniques; avoidance of auto/biography). Although Crawford and

colleagues were using their childhoods to explore meaning, the outcome of their project does not bear much light on questions of social change, other than in contributing further towards an understanding of emotion as "constructed" and thus neither universally produced nor determined. These themes are brought into relief when we compare this Australian appropriation of memory-work to a UK cultural studies tradition, influenced by Haug and colleagues as well as by others.

Family Secrets

The original English translation of *Female Sexualization* (1987) was published by Verso in the series "Questions for Feminism", edited by a group that included Annette Kuhn. Kuhn went on to publish another landmark example of memory-work in 1995, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*. There are clear connections between Kuhn's approach and that employed by Haug and colleagues, although Kuhn herself does no more than cite *Female Sexualization* as an example of further reading. Kuhn takes the method in a very different direction from that taken by Crawford and colleagues, into a tradition shaped more by the arts than the social sciences and connecting to oral history, cultural studies and psychoanalysis. This section begins with a description of the main components of Kuhn's approach before considering its antecedents and some of the developments that came in its wake.

Acts of memory and imagination

Memory provides material for interpretation, to be interrogated, mined for meaning and possibilities. It involves active staging of memory; it takes an enquiring attitude towards the past and its (re)construction through memory. (Kuhn 1995: 157) In stark contrast to the approaches of Frigga Haug, June Crawford and colleagues, Annette Kuhn's memory-work project embraces auto/biography, understood as a tool through which it is possible to detect the traces of the collective and the historical and not an obstacle to such understanding. Kuhn's own project draws on a range of primarily visual raw materials, including her family photograph albums and the traces of their use over the years, including inscriptions on the backs of pictures, and the cutting down and reordering of photographs. She also draws on films, music and paintings, as well as a range of sensory

triggers and media through which versions of the past are represented and consumed. She describes her approach as treading "a line between cultural criticism and cultural production" (p. 4), driven by a concern for the way in which memory shapes the stories we tell, and what it is that makes us remember.

For Kuhn, memory-work can be an individual activity. In fact, she luxuriates in the accessibility of the method, describing memory-work as requiring "the most minimal resources and the very simplest procedures. Making do with what is to hand – its raw materials are almost universally available – is the hallmark of memory-work's pragmatism and democracy" (p. 7). Moreover, memory-work is "easy to do, offers methodological rigour, and is fruitful in countless, often unexpected, ways" (p. 6).

A recipe for memory-work

Kuhn provides her own "recipe" for memory-work, which can be usefully compared to others. Her assumption is that the project will begin with a photograph:

> 1. Consider the human subjects of the photograph. Start with a simple description, and then move into an account in which you take up the position of the subject. In this part of the exercise, it is helpful to use the third person ('she', rather than 'I', for instance). To bring out the feelings associated with the photograph, you must visualize yourself as the subject as she was at that moment, in the picture: this can be done in turn with all of the photograph's human subjects, and even with animals and inanimate objects in the picture.
> 2. Consider the picture's context of production. Where, when, how, by whom and why was the photograph taken?
> 3. Consider the context in which an image of this sort would have been made. What photographic technologies were used? What are the aesthetics of the image? Does it conform with certain photographic conventions?
> 4. Consider the photograph's currency in its context or contexts of reception. Who or what was the photograph made for? Who has it now and where is it kept? Who saw it then, and who sees it now? (p. 8)

Although Kuhn suggests the use of the third person in the exploration of the image, she does not do so as a "distancing technique." Rather she encourages the memory-worker to identify promiscuously with everyone and everything in the image, as an exercise in imagination. Perhaps this is because her way into the social and collective is not through the process of socialization or development (as with Haug et al. and Crawford et al., respectively) but through an examination of the form of cultural production. Thus we are encouraged to see evidence contained within the form of the photograph, its genre and technologies of production. We are then invited to stay with this photograph through the passage of time and to investigate the part that it plays in the construction of contemporary memory and identity. Rather than seeking to escape the "coherence" of the biographical, Kuhn seeks to explore the situated practices through which these stories are constructed.

In the course of the book Kuhn adopts a number of different approaches, which accumulate to provide a layered memoir in which memories are traced from origins to application. Examples include her reflections on an image of herself from childhood. The photograph was taken originally by her father, a semi-professional photographer, and for Kuhn it is a record of their adoring and exclusive relationship. This image is traced through its place in a family photograph album created by her eight-year-old self, in which all images of her mother were eradicated. Subsequently the album and the image are revised by her mother who, through rearranging, cutting and inscribing, imposes her own account of the family story. Photographs continued to play a part in her communications with her estranged mother, and are used by Kuhn as ways of attempting to understand her mother's investments in a particular version of her daughter – as well-dressed, neat and slim. The simple image of her childhood self, holding a bird in her hand, with crossed-out notes on the back of the photo, is the site of conflict over memory, about which there is no last word. For Kuhn "in the process of using – producing, selecting, ordering, displaying – photographs, the family is actually in the process of making itself" (p. 19).

An auto/biographical approach

Kuhn's approach is indebted to the ideas and the practices of psychoanalysis, and she takes from this field a rich vocabulary for

considering the operations of memory: accretion (how memories accumulate meaning over time), condensation (how meanings intensify and become "simpler" over time), secondary revision (the way in which we create retrospective narratives to fit with present needs), repression (material that is "forgotten" or pushed into the unconscious), and melancholia (an inability to let go of what is lost – a form of hyper-remembering). Her investigation of her family photograph albums is inevitably also an investigation of the unique psychic constellation that is her own family. Yet in accepting the autobiographical she also enables us to gain access to specific details of the past and to the ways in which biographies are enmeshed in history. Hers is a biography firmly located in time and place – postwar London – and shaped by a painful process of social mobility. It is an account that captures the interplay of personal and social change. Kuhn's interest in the representation and evocation of memory extends beyond her own biography, yet it always starts with her experience. Beginning with herself enables Kuhn to see beyond herself, whether that be to read from the image of herself in her special "coronation dress" through to the creation of popular nationalism, or the familiarity of a world before her birth evoked through the trigger of the image of a burning St Paul's Cathedral. Kuhn employs memory and the connections that are evoked through it (including what Barthes describes as "piercings" that appear to transcend historical or biographical time) as a way to navigate through the incessant and iterative flow that is popular culture. Paradoxically, although she is much more autobiographical than either Haug et al. or Crawford et al., her approach also speaks more directly to an interest in social and historical processes such as social class, educational mobility, nationalism and the operations of nostalgia.

In the opening pages of the book Kuhn explains to the reader:

> The family secrets are indeed mine – in a manner of speaking; and like all such things, they have roots in the past and reverberations in the present. None of which can be understood until the memories behind the secrets are brought to life and looked at closely. This calls for a certain amount of delving into the past, and for preparedness to meet the unexpected. What is required is an active and directed work of memory. (p. 3)

In beginning with "secrets" rather than simply with memories, Kuhn's approach demands that the autobiographical is the route taken into memory-work. It is an approach that prioritizes the present, and the idea of "unfinished business." Kuhn speaks of memory as "a position or point of view in the current moment" (p. 128) and memory-work as "working backwards – searching for clues, deciphering signs and traces, making deductions, patching together reconstructions from fragments of evidence" (p. 4). The autobiographical is also the medium through which to apprehend others, to imagine their motives and perspectives and to unleash this material into our inner world.

Kuhn ends *Family Secrets* with six theses about memory, insights that she has gained through her involvement in memory-work, summarized as follows:

> 1. *Memory shapes our inner world* (there is a relationship between memory, the psyche and the unconscious).
> 2. *Memory is an active production of meanings* (the past is not simply there to be retrieved. Memory is always staged, shaped by "secondary revision", an account that is always discursive).
> 3. *Memory texts have their own formal conventions* (non-linear/sequential/synchronous, counterposing/contrast).
> 4. *Memory texts voice a collective imagination* (although our route to the memory may be individual, the memory itself is, as argued also by Haug et al. and Crawford et al., imbricated with the social/collective).
> 5. *Memory embodies both union and fragmentation* (here Kuhn points both to the way in which memories provide a sense of coherence, but also how the proliferation of memory texts facilitated by media technologies undermine this promise of coherence as it becomes increasingly hard to forge narratives of self).
> 6. *Memory is formative of communities of nationhood* (it is difficult to know whether Kuhn wants to suggest that there is a privileged relationship between memory and nationality or whether she was able to use memory-work to explore nationality, in the same way that Haug et al. used it to

explore sexualization and Crawford et al. to explore emotion).

Kuhn locates her exercise in memory-work within a tradition of "revisionist biography", in which she includes key texts such as *Truth, Dare or Promise* (1993), Liz Heron's collection of feminist stories of childhood, the oral historian Ronald Fraser's *In Search of a Past* (1984), feminist historian Carolyn Steedman's *Landscape for a Good Woman* (1986) and photographer Jo Spence's *Putting Myself in the Picture* (1986). These are all examples of the use of memory as a resource for accessing the historical and cultural, but also use the personal as an interruption of more traditional academic discourse. Kuhn talks about feminist and socialist "outsider biographers" engaging in critical deconstruction of the autobiographical self, for whom there is a gap between the "I" that writes and the "Me" that is written about of this generation. Memory-work is presented as an "instrument of conscientisation: the awakening of critical consciousness through their own activities of reflection and learning, among those who lack power" (p. 9).

Memory-work: family characteristics

Looking across these examples of "memory-work", it is clear that although they are recognizably within a "family" they differ considerably and on most counts. These differences are shaped in part by the time, place and disciplinary context in which the exercises in memory-work take place. From this perspective it is difficult to see memory-work as a single method – as Haug and colleagues observe, there is no "true method." Yet in creating and refining guidelines, different researchers have productively drawn attention to different potentialities within an overall methodology. In juxtaposing these approaches we seek to further enrich an understanding of what could be done with and through memory-work.
  What all the approaches have in common is an embracing of a hermeneutic epistemology which recognizes that, when dealing with memory, the past is apprehended through the subject. Inherent to this hermeneutic position (in which subject and object are one) is an understanding of time as subjectively experienced. This refers to the temporality described by Bergson as *durée*, in which the past is not simply "out there" to be retrieved but which must always be evoked subjectively

and through the present. In each example of memory-work discussed in this chapter it is recognized that the selection of memory (acts of remembering/forgetting) and representation of memories (in albums, as narratives, genres, mediated by popular nostalgia/moral panic) are practices of *a* present. As such, both are shaped by the context and communities within which and for whom the remembering takes place (Halbwachs 1950/1992). One criticism of the consciousness-raising roots of memory-work is that such approaches to excavating "experience" privilege it over other kinds of knowledge: "admitting to being 'situated' ... without giving up its truth value" (Brown, 2001: 42–3). As we raised early in this chapter, this is a serious challenge to memory-work, but one to which it can respond confidently if not conclusively. Certainly, all the approaches to memory-work described here go a long way in "situating" the material generated. The different memory-workers tend to do this through problematizing the relationship between the memory text and associated narratives, yet in different ways. In the social science tradition, both Haug and colleagues and Crawford and colleagues employ distancing techniques to disrupt the formation of autobiographical narratives. Within the cultural studies tradition, Kuhn embraces the autobiographical in order then to treat is as a cultural product, historicized in time and located within space. Whether the memory-workers "give up the truth value" of the memories they are working with is another matter. All respond to the question of veracity within the terms of their discipline, understanding memories as constructions and as "raw material" for the work of social, psychological and cultural analysis.

  Yet the question of the veracity of memories or what Hacking (1995) calls "memoropolitics" has become a volatile and politicized subject, with a history of its own. Memory-work as a method for the generation of memories has to be understood as coexisting with a wider culture of remembrance and testimony within which it has become possible, for example, to 'excavate' and tell stories of sexual abuse and survival (Plummer 1995; Reavey and Warner 2003). In 2001 Frigga Haug reflected on her dismay during a visit to Canada in the early 1990s as to the inability of her students to distinguish between an invitation to participate in memory-work and an invitation to reveal experiences of child sexual abuse. Haug understands this as a symptom of the growing individualism of the feminist movement which focuses on personal confession and the crimes of individuals rather than on global economic

processes. In a subsequent response to her article, Jane Kilby interprets Haug's view as attempting "to re-establish the Marxism underpinning her early and influential writing on memory-work. ... For Haug, memory-work is a method that should take us beyond domestic history" (Kilby 2002: 201). While sympathizing with Haug, Kilby outlines how high the stakes are in debates around memory, and the difficulty of balancing the hermeneutic understanding of the past being shaped by the present (a recognition that our memories are shaped by present-day identities, cultural context and the communities with and for whom we remember) and the determinist position of the present being determined by the past (for example, understanding current identities as the result of events remembered).

Although it may be possible to accept an interplay of hermeneutic and determinist dynamics in social and psychoanalytic theory, such uncertainty and indeterminacy are more challenging within political, legal and evidential terrains. This is a tension that underpins a range of contemporary debates, including the "history wars", that we will consider in Chapter 3 [of *Researching Social Change*]. We can add to this ongoing debate within feminism and other progressive political movements concerning the problems of *ressentiment* – a dependence of feminist/socialist/marginalized identities on the injuries of the past (Brown, 2001) and a desire to be open to imagining alternative futures from the position of an open present, one that is not precluded by particular narratives (Grosz, 2004, 2005).

Conclusion

In this chapter we have traced the development of memory-work as both an empirical practice and a field of theoretical development. The three examples of memory-work discussed are situated within particular times, places and disciplines, and to some extent can be understood as the product of and responses to these circumstances. Together they form a methodological "family" with a shared hermeneutic approach in which past memories are understood as personal constructions within the present, yet which include traces of the conditions of their production.

Memory-work has its roots in forms of collective consciousness-raising and individual "conscientization", which both seek to make public previously hidden stories and experiences but which also problematize

the self that remembers. All of the approaches are comfortable with the idea of an unconscious, with latent as well as manifest meaning, and recognize a relationship between fragmentary/contradictory memories and narratives that forge coherence. How we orient to our memories is politicized and moralized territory. There is no reason why memory-work should lead inevitably to "melancholic attachments to the past", but rather it might enable an awareness of the surfacing and diffusing of the past within the present (Brown, 2001). At its best, memory-work insists that we interrogate what and why we remember and forget. And although it invariably begins with the personal, most approaches to memory-work ultimately seek to comment on wider social, cultural and historical processes. It is not only the outcome of memory-work that makes it a popular practice across disciplines and social fields.

The process of reading, thinking, remembering, analysing, theorizing and writing alone and together can make memory-work productive as a parallel research practice to other projects, generating ideas tangentially and feeding into the analysis of wider data. As Grosz (2005) points out, perception is enriched by memory, and perhaps it is this generative facility that arises from what Wendy Brown calls "mindful remembering." Our own experience supports the comments of Crawford and colleagues who point out: "what was unexpected, what overwhelmed and excited us, was the strength of memory-work in enabling us to ground emerging theory in our data and their analysis. We found that memory-work worked even better than we anticipated" (1992: 43).

Summary points

- Memories are not simply records of the past, but in their evocation represent the past within the present.
- Memories are *constructions* into which the personal, social and the historical are intertwined.
- Memories are likely to be fragmentary, contradictory and include latent as well as manifest meanings.
- Memories can be distinguished/distanced from the narratives that give memories coherence. It is also possible to explore memories through the narratives that occasion their telling/representation.

- Memory texts can be productively analysed as cultural texts: asking questions about audience, genre, composition, etc.
- The context in and through which memories are produced is always relevant. We remember for and with others, and this will shape what is remembered and how.
- The process of engaging in memory-work can heighten perception and contribute to creativity and theoretical generation.
- The value of memory-work is not simply that it provides access to the personal or the autobiographical, but rather that this is a vehicle for the understanding of social, cultural and historical formations.

Further resources

Fraser, R. (1984) *In Search of a Past: The Manor House, Amnersfield, 1933–1945*. London: Verso. Fascinating and moving combination of memoir, oral history and self-analysis. Example of how the complexity of memory can be captured through formal writing techniques.

Marker, C. (1998) *Immemory*. Berkeley, CA: Exact Change. CD ROM created by filmmaker and artist Chris Marker that uses hypermedia techniques to map the kinds of non-linear connections that link memories represented by mementos of a lifetime: childhood books, family photographs, picture postcards.

Radstone, S. (ed.) (2000) *Memory and Methodology*. Oxford: Berg. Edited collection bringing together leading writers on memory including Annette Kuhn, Frigga Haug and Richard Johnson. Explores the politics of memory, the impact of technologies and the art of memory-work as practised in different disciplines.

Reavey, P. and Brown, S. D. (2006) 'Transforming agency and action in the past, into the present time: adult memories and child sexual abuse', *Theory and Psychology*, 16: 170–202. Exploration of how theories of remembering can be employed to create new ways of thinking about

traumatic childhood memories. Emphasizes the way in which memories are structured spatially.

Smart, C. (2007) *Personal Life: New Directions in Sociological Thinking*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (Chapter 5, 'Secrets and Lies'.) Exploration of secrets and silences within families, and how new technologies and legal frameworks shape what it is possible to tell and to hide.

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Introductory Workshops

For anyone interested in a
practical topical introduction
to Collective Memory-Work,
interactive series of workshops
can be organised
online or in person.

They are tailored to match local
topical interests.

They can take place in any given
environment, institutional,
formal, informal. The only
condition is that participation
is voluntary and participants
have an interest in both the
chosen topic and the method.

The best format is a series of
five or six sessions,
each lasting three hours,
and stretched
over consecutive weeks.

If you are interested in
organising such an introduction
to Collective Memory-Work,

contact:

info@collectivememorywork.net

Chapter 13

TIME TRAVEL
COLLECTIVE MEMORY WORK 2002 - 2022

Brigitte Hipfl, Erica Burman, Robert Hamm

Robert: Let me start with a brief summary of Brigitte's paper from 2002. My reading of what you were saying in it is that Collective Memory-Work meets the standards in cultural studies to show the discursive construction of identity. It allows to see which subject positions are assumed or chosen, which fantasies and desires are addressed by a person when they construct their identity. And it makes possible the detection of how a person creates or constructs a certain order, i.e. a meaning making process how to identify reality in the world, what is right and what is wrong.

You state that CMW allows to see how one's own stories are bound to the stories of others, the connection between individual stories.

You also see in it amalgamated two researcher positions. The first one being a structuralist position, as a distanced observer and analyst; and the second one being a researcher who brings in an ethnographic approach and relies on "being in the field".

You see CMW fulfilling a requirement for research in cultural studies to be or to become a political project that opens avenues for new aspects and forms of capacities for action.

At the end of your paper then you turn to potential for further development of CMW in particular in connection to psychoanalytic concepts. Your suggestion is that taking psychoanalytic theory of subject and subjectivity into account when analysing the memory-scenes would mean to focus stronger on elements in texts that are not coherent and on the psychological processes of condensation and transference as expressed in, e.g. metonym or metaphor. The focus then could be stronger on traces of unconscious pleasure as a condition for binding a subject to a particular behaviour, construction or a symptom. What is your position today on these suggestions?

Brigitte: I may start with my context at that time around 2002. As a media scholar, my research focus was on audience studies, where consuming and using media is understood – especially from a critical and feminist perspective – as so much more than just getting information or pleasure. Media consumption is an exemplary field for the interface of the social and the individual. Historically, there have been different approaches, ranging from the analysis of media content in order to postulate effects on its users, on the one hand, to reception studies where the actual uses and productions of meaning are studied, on the other hand. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a wave of empirical audience studies, some of them strongly influenced by cultural studies with their focus on experiences in everyday life and applying Stuart Hall's influential 'encoding/decoding' model, which stressed that ideologically constructed media content is interpreted differently by socially structured media users. In particular, feminist studies was exploring the ways in which women make use of popular genres which up to that time were seen as banal or kitschy. For example, Ien Ang's study on the soap opera *Dallas*, or Janice Radway's research on romance novels are influential examples that illustrated the complex ways in which women use and negotiate what is offered in the media – always in relation to the social situation they found themselves in. In follow-up studies, this perspective often was discussed in a simplified way as active audiences resisting the suggested meanings offered by media. This sparked discussions, which problematized such qualitative studies as uncritical acceptances of what the research subjects said, allegedly missing a critical perspective.

In this context, my attempt was to make three interventions with my paper. Firstly, I suggested it necessary to understand media reception and the use of media as processes of subjectivization; that is, as processes where gendered subjects are constituted by accepting, refusing or negotiating the subject positions offered or suggested in media. Secondly, I directed my efforts towards Collective Memory-Work as a productive approach to research such processes. One of the strengths of Collective Memory-Work is to take women's experiences seriously by focusing on the ambivalences, contradictions, and compromises that make up their narratives, illustrating what these subject constructions 'do' when it comes to agency. At the same time, the discussions in the collective can open up new perspectives and

contribute to an increase in the capabilities to act. Thirdly, I made the argument that for researching media use as an exemplary process of subjectivization, we need a model of the subject that can help us better understand these processes. I was not deeply involved in psychoanalysis, but I found Lacan's conceptualisation of the three registers of the subject to be quite helpful. His differentiation of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary and, in particular, the key role of images and fantasies as kernel of the 'psychic reality' of subjects opens up a more complex understanding of the dynamics involved in processes of subjectivization. From a discursive perspective, it is relatively easy to say certain people take on particular subject positions that are being offered by media. But it doesn't really explain why. That's where fantasies come in as a stage for our desires. Media provide us with a variety of fantasy scenarios, with different genres focusing on specific fantasies of gender-ideals. Certain discursive subject positions are taken up by media users when these discursive positions create a space that can be filled with images and fantasies subjects would like to see themselves in. This is the ideological function of fantasies Slavoj Zizek talks about when he claims that media tell us what to desire.

Right now, I have left the Lacanian approach because my research interests have changed. I am not so much interested any more in the reception side as in what media offers. This is partly because of social issues that have become so dominant, like, for example, the issue of migration. I have turned away from trying to understand the role media play on the individual level to what is going on at the collective level. I became interested in collective feelings and in the affective work that media do, and began to become involved in affect theory. The so-called 'affective turn' was a reaction to what was seen as the shortcomings of discourse theory regarding material and bodily aspects, as well as emotional processes.

In the context of affect theory, I developed a particular interest in the concept of the assemblage. This concept is an attempt to give more complex answers to questions regarding the circumstances for something to happen. As characterized by Gilles Deleuze, assemblages are arrangements of heterogeneous elements such as practices, material aspects, discourses, and ideas, which are defined by relations between its parts. Such assemblages are only preliminarily stable; what holds them together are the connections between the parts. These

connections are channelled by dominant formations such as global capitalism and neoliberalism to stabilize certain assemblages, while, at the same time, there are also unpredictable events and connections that change an assemblage. The concept of assemblage can be used to approach all social phenomena (on all scales), focussing on the dynamics, intensities and processes of becoming. When it comes to agency, the key question is what assemblages can do, what do they produce, and if the capabilities to act, to feel and to think are increased or diminished.

I find that Collective Memory-Work also can be seen as an attempt to grasp as much as possible the components and their relations as well as the forces that are at work in various situations to get a better understanding of the conditions of possibilities and the capabilities to act. The discussions in the collective often refer to changes of certain components in assemblages and what such changes 'do'. I believe that these discussions about new or different connections might be first steps towards 'real' change.

Robert: Thank you Brigitte. The idea of the collective feelings is certainly worth a closer look and we may come back to it again, but let me first bring in Erica's paper from 2002. In it there are a number of comments that I would understand as a general appraisal. It points to the value and the importance of an approach like Collective Memory-Work in feminist studies, and also at the time as an intervention against tendencies of individualisation in society at large but also in academia.

Then you also attend to two distinct topics. The first one is about Collective Memory-Work in teaching or generally in third level institutions, researchers in postgrad studies. In this context you mention one particular problem that I find re-occurring whenever I talk with people from within institutional academia, and that is about assessment. How can you actually satisfy the institutional requirements of mandatory assessment? It is obligatory, sometimes it is actually wanted by the participants, and you mention in your essay that some of the participants in that particular group that you talk about did not want an assessment, which is fine too, but that is already rather exceptional.

But the point that I want to focus on is where you write about similarities between Collective Memory-Work and group therapy or group analysis and you refer to Siegmund Foulkes at the time. You say

both are methods utilising group processes for re-construction of individual experiences. And as I understand, you see a parallel between Collective Memory-Work and group analysis, Foulkes' approach, in the particular focus in the group process on revealing pressure to conform and encouraging resistance to the conformity, resistance in the sense that conformity is actually understood and the pressure is understood and therefore a person can make a conscious decision what to do with it.

You also refer to *Female Sexualization* where you mention a potentially destabilising effect that Collective Memory-Work can have on individual participants. And you mention strategies to counter this destabilising effect that are also suggested in Frigga's writing, like curiosity or personal distance or questions aimed at practice. You conclude this section on group therapy and group analysis with a question: Can group therapy offer more?

I would like to put that question to you. From a position twenty years on from posing it, how would you answer that question today?

Erica: When I wrote that chapter in 2002 I was teaching psychology and I was also teaching in a women's studies program that we developed which formed the frame for some of my engagements with Frigga's work. And indeed, I supervised quite a bit of work using adaptations of Memory-Work as a methodological approach. In the chapter I also describe how we tried using it amongst the women's studies staff who were cultural studies specialists and literature studies specialists. In the end it became so to say an analysis of the genre of the texts, which was also very interesting. And I had recently qualified as a group analyst. As someone who continued holding an academic position and interested in theories of discourse as well as psychoanalysis, the therapeutic project was something that I engaged with. I have felt it is always at play in educational contexts implicitly. In women's studies or gender studies programs there is a focus on experience and I mean it should be that. All our work should serve some life affirming purposes which might include some kind of therapeutic aspects, they are obviously not explicit.

It is a very timely question, that you are asking, Robert. What has happened since is, our women's studies programme closed, as most of them did in the UK. A lot of feminist courses in university contexts either became gender and sexuality courses or disappeared. This is indicative

of much wider political changes that we might want to bring into the picture. There has been an increasing focus on the individualisation of therapy and the therapeutic project as a neo-liberal project of getting people back to work. Especially in England that is absolutely the case. The whole Increasing Access to Psychotherapy (or IAPT) agenda that, I have to say, Tony Blair and New Labour brought in, has intensified this trend massively. And I think, what we have seen in the pandemic is that the demand for therapy has increased massively. This is the first thing that comes to mind as very relevant context in addressing this question.

Since 2002 I continued in an academic position rather than becoming a full time therapist. I've worked in an education department within a university that provides education, perhaps, or probably not actually, in the sense that it is hard to do genuinely educational work in mainstream (especially elite) institutional contexts. I was a feminist critical anti-developmental psychologist. I was always crossing those disciplinary boundaries. And for me psychoanalysis came into psychology as a tool to critique psychology.

My reading of Frigga's work from where I was and am, was so interesting. I saw her as in some sense so saturated in some psychoanalytic ideas that it wasn't an issue, it wasn't a big deal. Especially when I think of some of the ideas in *Beyond Female Masochism*. Perhaps I read it with a kind of orientalist or romanticised gaze on Germany. For so many English mono-linguals reading Freud there's all those things about translation and language and cultural resources etc. I assumed that Frigga absorbed many of those ideas without it being a big deal, which I felt was quite a refreshing way of dealing with a psychoanalytic engagement. I see that as also a link with group analysis which obviously came with the work of Foulkes and many other emigrants like Norbert Elias, also from Germany.

I remain true to the idea of the interest in group analysis as a place to explore pressures to conform and resistance to that conformity, or the analysis of power relations. Sadly that doesn't happen a lot of the time institutionally in group analysis. They should do a lot more, and I'm currently very active in the institutional bodies and committees that are trying to take up issues of inequalities and de-colonisation that are at play in the training as well as the practice of group analysis. So, they are very live issues. And in that sense I revisit that thinking from that period because of the power of groups as a way of resisting the intensification

of the ways in which we are alienated beyond the structural necessary alienation, of the barred subject, a specific Lacanian term concerned with how the conscious, reflecting subject does not have full access to their own subjectivity, some of which remains constitutively and functionally unconscious. And I'm still quite interested in Lacan, but I'm certainly not a Lacanian.

I think it is not surprising, Brigitte, that you drew on Lacan because of that focus on the symbolic order, if you're a feminist and you have an understanding of the symbolic order not as something eternal and ever lasting but as culturally and politically constructed.

Group analysts have this concept of the social unconscious which isn't at all a Jungian term in my reading. And they are trying to get at the same kind of ideas, that I think Memory-Work is very good at topicalising: What is assumed, what becomes unnecessary to make explicit in our culture? And that's where what Frigga wrote about cliché and all of that is so interesting as well.

I feel I've gone round a bit of a circle in my work from the anti-developmental psychology into some of the debates in post-colonial studies, post-colonialist theory, feminist engagements with childhood studies, and then the connection between childhood studies and post-colonial theory. And interestingly, Brigitte, when you mentioned Zizek I thought of the social unconscious. I have found myself lately very engaged with Frantz Fanon's work precisely because it is a psycho-political, psycho-affective approach that is all about the body, the meanings of embodiment and the political economy and psychic economy of that politics. It was Zizek and others who took Octave Mannoni's paper *'Je sais bien, mais quand-même'* ('I know well, but all the same') as a sort of perfect illustration of the structure of ideology which I think it is. If you unravel that paper, at its core it is not only a little clinical example, but also its about racism. Actually, I think it is racist, Mannoni is racist (as he also later acknowledged in a paper called something like 'Decolonising myself' published in the journal *Race & Class*). He was, after all, a French colonial administrator before he became a psychoanalyst. But this paper also shows how the ideology works on adult delusion where adults feel the need to claim to protect children. And this is the structure of the disavowal on which ideology hinges. So, I've got very re-engaged in some aspects of psychoanalytic theory through all that. And alongside all of that re-engagement with

childhood studies and post-colonial theory I also re-engaged with Memory-Work and Collective Biography through devising and designing a project on post-socialist childhoods that Zsuzsa Millei and others have been running for a couple of years now. This project involves Susanne Gannon who has adapted Memory-Work in particular ways, and others. It was a reasonably free adaptation, I think, but still a deep engagement with it. In that project there were some people who couldn't deal with other people commenting on their written memories, albeit written in the third person. They withdrew because it was too traumatising or uncomfortable for them to have any kind of interrogation of the structuring, or destabilizing of the meanings of their experience. So, it kind of re-iterates that point made by Frigga and her students and colleagues who did that project *Female Sexualization* from a position of being an intellectual and political critique. I don't think in the post-socialist childhood project anyone was really disturbed, severely disturbed by it, but certainly some people withdrew, as I understand it. I think that is quite interesting because understanding oneself as a socially constructed subject, we might want to do that in relation to some aspects of ourselves but not others perhaps. With Zsuzsa, we are currently working on a paper together where we're applying to some of the material generated in the post-socialist childhoods project this misnomer which I call 'child as method', which is about analysing the social-political through the construction of childhood and looking at what work notions of childhood do. So we are looking very closely at structures of the narrative texts that have been generated. And obviously if you were not someone who was in a sense academically or artistically engaged you might find that quite difficult, if it was your memory.

In that sense I see the therapeutic project and the political analytical one as being very different. Although the problem that I see group analysis having to confront, because of the eurocentrism of liberal humanism, is precisely its commitment to notions of identity and integration, the whole problem with ego-psychology and bourgeois western psychology. And that is what I see Memory-Work unpicking, its construction.

I was so excited when I read *Female Sexualization* to see how the parting in the hair and the ankle socks link to the broader constructions of nation, national identity. And that is something that I now take with me

into all my analyses of texts. And that's also what the post-socialist childhood project is doing so well.

Brigitte: Erica, you mentioned the changing conditions of working at universities and what the effects are. I see here another field where the potentials of Collective Memory-Work can materialize. There are some groups – like a group of female academics in New Zealand (Trisia Farrelly, Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Sharon McLennan, and Lorena Gibson) – that started to use Memory-Work to work through the current pressures of the entrepreneurial university, in particular the neoliberal academic regime. For them, Collective Memory-Work is a form of feminist 'slow scholarship' that attempts to develop strategies against individualization and direct them towards collective action. What I find so intriguing is the creative ways they find to practice Memory-Work. So, for example, they add half a day or another day to a conference they all attend to then pursue their own questions. By using Memory-Work, the participants will probably experience some mutual support and solidarity, despite the problems, that you, Erica, raised. When it comes to the procedure, for example, it is often too difficult to listen when members of the collective start talking about one's text. It takes time to disrupt the normalized focus on the individual and on individualization. Collective Memory-Work offers a productive way of doing that.

Erica: I suppose one of the issues that is important here is, it is not simply an intellectual academic project. It is a political project.
I encountered Frigga partly through the work of Klaus Holzkamp and Ute Osterkamp, the Kritische Psychologie. Of course there are many kinds of critical psychologies. The *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* has had several issues on the varieties of critical psychology. Just recently Athanasios Marvakis edited an enormous special issue on Kritische Psychologie. And of course, Frigga's work seemed much more playful, much more engaged with the arts and this emphasis on creativity rather than heavy-duty structural regulation. There are very close connections between Wolfgang Fritz Haug, Frigga Haug and Klaus Holzkamp. In a sense that was one route through which I encountered that work, looking to alternatives of critical psychologies. And another, the feminist engagements and commitments to looking at constructions and challenging the constructions of femininity as in the *Female*

Sexualization collection, and the construction of subjectivity. As a psychotherapist and training as a group analyst, because it has a social theory of the psyche even if the theory doesn't quite manage to do on that, it does hold out the analytical (and practical) possibilities. It's an open and as yet unfinished project – perhaps like Memory-Work! For example, I think, a Deleuzian group analysis is going to happen some time soon, there are plenty of post-colonial, Fanonian injections. So I think we have to use what we can. I certainly think that Frigga's work has been inspirational in all kinds of directions. And I think, at that time in 2002, the alignment between the approaches, or the mutual possibilities, seemed particularly striking.

Robert: Understood as a political project, more so an approach than a set of certain procedures and steps that have to be followed, what is the value of Collective Memory-Work? How does it change over time? When you got in touch with the method you were both in a specific historical and spatial context. What is the connection for you between Collective Memory-Work and the particular contemporary situation in which it is actually looked at as an approach, not so much as a method?

Brigitte: For me, Collective Memory-Work has always been a political project. I believe this approach still has enormous power and potential. It illustrates what opens up when we address contemporary issues that are experienced as individual problems or challenges and work through them together. Because of the current dominance of neo-liberal rhetoric, the mutual work in the collective has now become of key importance.

Erica: Certainly I would see its value as an approach rather than a method. And certainly the adaptations that I supervised have been quite free. There was a project that Rachel Robbins did for her doctorate. She called it the 'Making stories project' with trainee social workers in a context in further education rather than an elite university context. A lot of them either had a class background where they had been, or would have been likely, social work clients themselves. They wrote those stories and she was able to find the voice of the trainee social worker in the narration of the account. And that's where a psychoanalytically, or even a Lacanian informed analysis becomes helpful looking at the

distinction between the enunciating subject and the subject of the statement which is also something that has been in my mind around these post-socialist childhood narratives. Because you can see the adult now living in a western neo-liberal context still speaking there in their descriptions of their childhoods. And it's so interesting, you can unpick it.

It remains really important as an approach standing in a tradition of that resistance to individualisation, neo-liberalism. There are forms of group work that are really oppressive and regulatory. I am supervising a project on psycho-social humanitarian provision for refugees, for example. There is always this psycho-education group work type of thing that is about socialization. Maybe it is well intentioned, who knows, learning the language, learning skills. Activation is one of the key words, being productive, getting into the economy, etc. And there is always that dimension to groups that they demand obedience, they are normalising and regulatory etc. And, in taking up what you were saying earlier, Brigitte, there is the social bond, and we can't refuse it. I think we've all experience of that kind of relationship. Whether we like it or not, we can't survive as individuals, I don't mean as a species, but rather I mean in a social and psychic way. And if we want to do anything about the world we live in to make it better we are going to have to organise together. Being prepared to interrogate how we came to be who we are as individuals and how that is grounded in our material geopolitical histories remains a necessary project for any ideas about changing the world. Sounds grandiose. But we have to do some of that work.

Robert: In your paper in 2002, Erica, you say that compared to group analysis surely Collective Memory-Work would require a theory of how groups work. But you put it as a question at the time.

In the literature on Collective Memory-Work there is no elaborated theory of how groups work. And yet, it is a group activity. What are your opinions on that and what would be the theory of groups and how groups work that would be necessary and what elements would be helpful to make Collective Memory-Work even more fruitful?

Erica: I posed it as a question because I wasn't sure then whether it should have an explicit theory or a model, or not. And that would remain my position now, for probably the same reasons. Perhaps it's

another gross attribution, but I suppose the implicit theory I presumed then as within Memory-Work is sort of Marxism-Feminism, or feminist Marxism, or something like that. And then you could say, what theories of groups, ideas about groups are there in Marxism and feminist thinking? What I would **not** want to see is a psychologization. As a critical psychologist, and along with neo-liberalism, the discussions around psychologization have been very, very important as a critical tool. So, definitely don't let us psychologize Memory-Work and say it ought to have a theory, or it's this kind of model or that kind of model that comes from this or that kind of psychological or group dynamic theory! That would be a disaster, the wrong way to go, in my opinion. I think it is more interesting to see how there are always implicit ideas at play that could be interrogated, teased out, explored. And it might be, what are the theories of groups of the people who are taking part in those groups and how are they at play? It would be important not to create any kind of fixed model but rather to see what models of groups are at play in such groups, and how they work.

Yes, it's an interesting question, an important question, but it should remain a question.

Brigitte: I find it interesting in that context as Frigga always addressed the problem of being herself the key figure who is responsible for organising and leading the process in Collective Memory-Work, at the same time participating and writing the stories. She left it as a problem and didn't offer solutions. She also pointed to the strengths of Memory-Work, that is, the outcomes depend on the collective. If there is a quite diverse collective, it will address a variety of questions and open up a number of new connections. In my understanding, for Frigga her problem was not really a problem, but a pragmatic fact that had to be taken seriously. It is also one of the conditions for the openness of Memory-Work since different leaders will adjust and adapt the activities depending on what matters for the collective and what questions emerge.

Erica: When I wrote that chapter in 2002 I was in a sense both intrigued and frustrated that Frigga had written so little about Memory-Work as a method. I found out later that she had written a bit more, but still not a lot. In my understanding then there are three necessary or intrinsic alignments between Memory-Work and psychoanalysis. Firstly, the focus

on history, the links between personal and political history, and how – and perhaps also why – particular historical points or moments become fixed upon or play a structuring role in the production/construction of the subject; secondly, the commitment to a fluid/unstable model of the subject/psyche, which also brings in the question of contradiction. It is in that conflict, that contradiction experienced by the subject, that resistance lies – including political resistance; and third, this means that both share a commitment to a project to construct and deconstruct the subject, as a personal and political necessity.

Robert: In relation to Collective Memory-Work there are a couple of threads intertwined in our conversation. When talking about it as an approach we necessarily discuss the theories that we can apply in our engagement with written memory-scenes. And as I understand it, this is the context also in which Brigitte's suggestions for including psychoanalytic concepts was made in 2002. But we also have the level of praxis. For Collective Memory-Work to happen it needs a collective, people, bodies in a room, physical beings with all their senses, talking, listening to each other, laughing, sometimes crying, tuning into each other. Brigitte had earlier mentioned the idea of collective feelings, and I would like to come back to it. Maybe you could expand a bit more on what you refer to when you speak of collective feelings. Does that relate to the actual praxis of doing Collective Memory-Work in the way I just depicted it? Or do you have something else in mind?

Brigitte: I referred to Raymond Williams' concept structure of feeling, which he used to get a better understanding of the complexities of lived experiences. A key question for him was: how it 'feels like' to live under historic-specific conditions? The concept was his attempt to go beyond the ways critical social analysis was done at that time (in the 1970s) by adding to the social and material structures a kind of affective structure. This is a feeling-and-thinking defined by impulses and restraints that result in a specific configuration of elements that fuel our ways of being. This is also well captured by Sara Ahmed's re-rewriting of Williams' concept as 'feelings of structure' or how structures get under the skin, stressing that these are not individual but collective feelings. The way you characterize the affective dimensions of Collective Memory-Work, Robert, addresses all that quite nicely. With Memory-Work, we are

exploring how historic-specific cultural sensibilities as described in the participant's memories are experienced and felt, and what all this 'does' when it comes to the capabilities to act. We are also doing that in specific circumstances as expressions of certain structures of feeling during the process of analysis.

Recommended Reading

Ahmed, Sara. 2010. The promise of happiness. Durham: Duke University Press

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Authors

Brigitte Hipfl is associate professor emerita in the Department of Media and Communication Studies at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria. Her research is on media, gender, race, and the affective dynamics of media with a focus on issues related to migration and conviviality. One long standing fascination has been with Collective Memory Work and how it can be used and elaborated. Her recent book publications include *Messy Europe: Crisis, Race and Nation State in a Postcolonial World* (2018, Berghahn, co-edited), *Wir und die Anderen. Visuelle Kultur zwischen Aneignung und Ausgrenzung. (We and the Other. Issues of Appropriation and Exclusion in Visual Culture)* (Herbert von Halem Verlag, 2021, co-edited), and the *Handbuch Medien und Gender* (*Handbook on Media and*

Gender), (forthcoming, Springer, co-edited). She is currently involved in an edited book project led by Kristin Loftsdottir, together with co-editor Sandra Ponzanesi on *Creating Europe from the Margins* (Routledge).

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Erica Burman is Professor of Education at the University of Manchester, Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, and a United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapists registered Group Analyst (and full member of the Institute of Group Analysis). She trained as a developmental psychologist, and is well known as a critical developmental psychologist and methodologist specialising in innovative and activist qualitative research. She is author of Developments: child, image, nation (Routledge, 2020, 2nd edition), Fanon, education, action: child as method (Routledge, 2019), Deconstructing Developmental Psychology (Routledge, 3rd edition, 2017). Erica's research has focused on critical developmental and educational psychology, feminist and postcolonial theory, childhood studies, and on critical mental health practice (particularly around gender and cultural issues). Much of her current work addresses the connections between emotions, mental health and (social as well as individual) change, in particular as anchored by representations of, and appeals to, childhood. For further information see   http://www.manchester.ac.uk/research/Erica.burman/   and www.ericaburman.com). She is a past Chair of the Psychology of Women (now Psychology of Women and Equalities) Section of the British Psychological Society, and in 2016 she was awarded an Honorary Lifetime Fellowship of the British Psychological Society in recognition of her contribution to Psychology.

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Chapter 14

GUILT WITHOUT ATONEMENT.
LO. LI. TA. A FEMALE FANTASY?

Bettina Pirker

Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.
She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning standing four feet ten in one sock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita. (Nabokov 1960, 11)

1. Why Lo. Li. Ta.?

She haunts our world as a myth, she is tainted with numerous clichés: Lolita, the child–woman. She tidies up the dual modes of thought and forces us to deal with aporias. She is an imputation, a literary construct, victim of male desire and artful mistress of temptation. Does she exist only because men create her, or does she have a place in our reality? Speaking out her name incites imagination already: for 'Lo' the tongue is far back–a yet diffuse feeling comes up; 'Li' is build at the roof of the mouth–with a feeling of tickling temptation; the 'Ta' is at the front at the teeth, the tongue leaves the inward realms and nearly comes into contact with the outside world. I am going to search for this fascinating creature. Where in our dualistic world does she reside, is she fact or fiction? Does she exist solely as myth or cliché? Is she a literary construct or male fantasy? A vague feeling takes hold of me when I think of her–as if I could remember her. What has a male chimera to do with me? Do other women have a Lolita-fantasy as well and if so, what is the connection of a fantasy with reality? Every question about Lolita brings up another one. She cannot be subsumed under the logical structures of our world. Is she only a utopian vision–something that does not have a place in the here

and now? She is part of the discourse, we believe we know her and yet, we don't know where to find her. To engage with the child–woman requires imagination–and exactly there I will search for her.

2. Against duality

Lolita is a provocation to our dualistic thinking already by the notion of child–woman. You can be a child or a woman, but not both in one. That is against all 'natural' logic? We have practised and cultivated this thinking in terms of right/wrong that it actually seems natural to us. Everything that does not fit the mould is quickly dismissed as abnormal, not in line with our dual norm, or unnatural because it does not adhere to this dualistic culture that for us became second nature. And before long we are in the 'dualism trap.' If there is nature, does it exist only in opposite to culture? Does woman only exist in opposite to man, big only because there is small, poor only because there is rich, can something be long only because something else is short ...? For each and everything there is an opposite. The world is made of opposites. Is it the nature of things to exist only in conjunction with their opposite? Is there really only either/or? How about the 'and'? Once we think in this direction we soon reach the limits of dualism. How, for example, about 'red'? There is no opposite to red. 'Red vs not-read', that can hardly be the alternative. How about such simple things like a table? Does the table only exist in opposite to non-table? This list could be extended endlessly and it lets us say good-bye, albeit somehow tentatively, to dualistic thinking. Lolita shows us an alternative to the opposites. She is somewhere in-between, and this 'in-between' is what has to be captured for possibly the cultivation of a new mode of thinking.

2.1 Culture : nature

I want to explain how unsuitable opposites are for the comprehension of different phenomena by referring to the opposite of culture and nature for approaching the 'in-between', comprehension beyond dualistic thinking. Imagine the following situation:

  We are in midst of nature, at a small lake, the *Forstsee* in Carinthia; you get there only by foot. The nicest coves you will only find after walking through the forest. Naked, 'as created by God', wearing nothing but my

birthday suit I make myself a home on a rock and enjoy the situation–'one with nature.'

  Although we have for ages moved on from teleology we still like to view nature as 'god-given'. This is how it is and always was; we take it as given and don't ask questions. Once we have a closer look at the facts instead of the fiction we find that the naturalness of the lake is indeed fiction. In winter the water is let flow out of the lake, the high-rising electrical towers in the forest point to the power plant close-by that uses the water of the lake. In midst of the forest we find between the trees public toilets and at the side of the dirt track–that certainly didn't create itself either–we are blinded by the flashing red of a Coca-Cola vending machine. The lonely rundown phone booth triggers nostalgic feelings in times of mobile phones. And the naturalness of the naked body does not withstand a closer inspection either. The nail polish, the artificial hair-colour, the shaved legs and the scented suntan lotion are nothing but products of culture.

  This example shows that culture is something that is worked on and internalised for so long that it appears natural to us, and this nature in fact is nothing but a cultural illusion. The facts become fiction and vice versa. The intersection shows the 'in-between' and renders the differentiation of culture vs nature, fact vs fiction obsolete. Dualism seems to lose its validity. Hence it does not make sense to try and clamp down Lolita as fact or fiction, as a product of nature or culture. Conventional categories are too narrow to capture her.

2.2 Woman vs man

> The child-woman materialises a radical break with traditional occidental dualisms. She is a phenomenon of the 20th century, a time when exactly these dualisms become questionable. She upsets seemingly manifest foundations of occidental thinking, namely the apparent 'facts' of opposites man-woman, adult-child, victim-culprit, and those opposites are ruptured at that differentiation which they share, namely their sex (Bramberger 2000: 273).

The differentiation of the sexes seems to be something that affirms a dualistic perspective. Little children already are concerned with the

question who is man, who is woman, or who is boy or girl and what they themselves might be. There is an obvious 'natural' duality that can be detected in vagina and penis, and for that reason 'was always already there'? But even this distinction and clear separation of the sexes only appeared together with the establishment of bourgeois society in the 18th century (see Maihofer 1995: 29).

> Before that there existed what Laqueur calls the one-sex-model. The sexual organs were seen to be similar: women and men had the same genitals, just growing inwards in one case, and outwards in the other; whereby the male morphology functions as norm of gradual difference: the vagina is seen as an inner penis, not the other way round. In short: there was one body and that was a male body. (ibid)

For the last two centuries we internalise and cultivate the sexual dualism, hence for us this distinction appears to be 'natural.' We learn how to behave as a woman, or as a man; gender specific rules of social expression are the first and most impactful rules that we face in our lives. These *gender scripts* complete the overall genderification of the entire repertoire of body language (Mühlenachs 1993: 85). We learn these behavioural rules, often unconsciously, during our socialisation, until we have them internalised and refer to them when perceiving others, and also in relation to our own actions. Maihofer suggests that "we are not only 'made' man or woman, but rather we actually have become exactly this" (Maihofer 1995: 16).

  The dual gender construct made an "independent development as a subject" impossible for the woman, because it is possible only in opposite to the man.

> The societal modes of existence assigned to her prove to be always defined by the man, in their societal status dependent on him. According to Horkheimer and Adorno—as later also emphasised by Luce Irigaray—the woman is either hetaira, prostitute, wife or mother. She is never simply woman. (Mainhofer 1995: 116)

The child-woman rejects this definition dependent on the man. She imparts virginity and thus excludes an existence as hetaira or prostitute. Children as wives may be still common in other cultures, but in our case they are unthinkable, hence the idea of Lolita being a wife does not arise either. The physical immaturity, the childishness as well as the connoted virginity excludes thoughts of motherhood (see Hochholdinger-Reiterer 1995: 5). Lolita adheres to the gender script, all attributes refer to her femininity, and yet she refuses the attribution of the female role. Breton does not depict the child-woman as opposite to the "other woman"–albeit that he speaks of her as 'other'–but he suggests that "in her and only in the mode of her complete transparency is the other paradigm present that one stubbornly refuses to acknowledge because it follows different rules that the male despotism has to prevent from spreading at all costs" (Breton 1993: 66). Bramberger insists that the child-woman due to her being a woman "for being able to be perceived at all she has to be seen from a gender oriented perspective, that she has to become a 'woman to a man', that she has to be desired, that she has to be defined by this desire" (Bramberger 2000: 89). Out of sight in such a suggestion remains the possibility that she might desire herself! Lolita cannot be fixed in binary codes, neither as opposite to man, nor as a mirror image of woman. She is in fact an indicator for another paradigm that does not obey the conventions of dualistic thinking. She is not 'either/or', she is the 'in-between' as well as the 'and'.

2.3 Child : Adult

The child-woman "is the result of a particular interplay of two topics that were discussed enthusiastically at the turn of the century[1]: the question of the sexes and the question of the generations. Their unbroken prevalence demonstrates problem areas within those discussions that are rife with tension and remain unresolved" (Bramberger 2000: 10). This additional dualistic differentiation between adults and children is also refused by the child-woman. It is noteworthy that in this differentiation the explicit distinction between woman and man is waived. Suddenly, and be it only for holding on to dualities, both sexes are subsumed as adults and constructed in opposite to children, who are similarly not distinguished by sex. As much as the formulation of the differentiation

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1   This is the turn from 19th to 20th century.

contains inconsistencies, maybe there is in this case a justification for a duality? "Historically the child whose 'invention' was cultivated during the 18th century counts not only as the other to the adult, but also at times for something special. The child possesses abilities that are lacking in the adult" (Bramberger 2000: 183). In children it seems possible to find a 'naturalness', they live outside the established conventions and look at the world with 'innocent' eyes. We may just think of Herbert Grönemeyer's song "Kinder an die Macht"[2] (1986). The children's mind, their innocence and naivety are glorified. If they came to power there would be no violence, war or injustice. That at least is what the song text wants us to believe, and in doing so it rows in with the common idea of childhood as 'natural' life stage away from guilt and vice of the adult world. "In the German speaking world–there is a consensus in research–the widespread continuous idolisation that is so influential throughout the 20th century for the hegemonic views of childhood can only be observed since romanticism" (Hochholdinger-Reiterer 1999: 15).

  "A questionable but impactful achievement of Jean-Jacques Rousseau as a theoretician is the elaboration and systematic theorisation–we may nearly call it the construction–of the ideally 'innocent' child" (Bramberger 2000: 191). Prior to that a separate life stage of childhood was not known. "In his *Centuries of childhood* Philippe Ariès suggests that the concept of childhood as a unique stage of life strictly distinct to and strictly separated from the world of adults developed only relatively late. During the middle ages the period of infancy was restricted to the very first few years of life, children were integrated in the adult world as soon as they could survive on their own" (Hochholdinger-Reiterer 1999: 14). Hence we have to also let go of the idea that the distinction between childhood and adulthood is something 'natural' that was 'always already there'. Another anchor of duality for theories and ideas about Lolita vanishes.

2.4 Femme fatale & femme fragile

Lolita plays on the two types of women that we know latest since the 'film noir', the femme fatale and the femme fragile who are presented as absolute opposites. The child-woman can be characterised as both,

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2   (Children to power), for an English translation see
    https://lyricstranslate.com/en/kinder-die-macht-children-power.html

seductive and strong (in Nabokov's terms even 'demoniac', 1960: 18) as well as fragile and innocent.

> The subsumption under both topoi [femme fatale, femme fragile] surprises also because the two blueprints of femininity are depicted as contrary to and exclusive of each other. While the femme fatale embodies passionate sexuality, *is* sexuality, the femme fragile is characterised by her lack of sexuality, negative sexuality. . . . thus with the femme enfant a topos is designed that tries to relativise those figures by picking up some of their characteristics and setting them up against each other. (Bramberger 2000: 102)

Is such a coalescing of the two images of women in fact reserved for the child-woman only, or is it not rather the case that every woman is both: desiring and strong, or non-desiring, weak and pasty? Who, as a woman, is really static and belongs to a specific type forever? Is it not rather the case that being human means essentially being in movement, changing, transforming? Our live is a process, not a static construct. In some moments we are weak and come out of them strengthened, or the other way round. We seduce and we are seduced, or sometimes we refuse both. We feel powerful when we act, and often powerless if we can only re-act, but we never remain at the same spot. We move on. Hence the allocation of a certain position is nothing but a pure analytic snapshot that only takes into account the momentary state of being while ignoring the more informative process of becoming. Bramberger acknowledges the power of both femme fatale and femme fragile, a power that solely "lies in their physicalness and sexuality: a powerful sexuality that is depicted as reactive and seen from the perspective of the man, it insists on the order of the sexes" (Bramberger 2000: 120). This perspective excludes a female desire and reverts to ideas of the animalistic man and the woman who is subjected to his drives, albeit that such ideas were assumed to be outdated for a long time already. However, what goes unnoticed in such a depiction is that this powerful sexuality does not need to be only a reaction, it can be also a consciously chosen action that draws its power not from the position of the man, but–and that is the crucial point: from the position of the woman who desires and powerfully expresses it. "The child-woman cannot be fixed to either of the female

roles on offer (and neither to any of the possible images of children!). This is what makes her so fundamentally different to the femme fragile and the femme fatale" (Bramberger 2000: 124). And we realise that no woman can in fact be fixed to one role only; this insight should encourage us to step away from the stereotypes and narrow images of women.

2.5 In-between

"Whatever is fascinating and enchanting in the child-woman, it is horrifying at the same time. This ambivalence is characteristic of her" (Bramberger 2000: 9). In her attempt to understand the child-woman Bramberger describes ambivalent feelings time and time again (see e.g., 2000: 24, 89, 256). As long as we remain in the limits of dualistic thinking this ambivalence is unavoidable. Irreconcilable opposites amalgamate in the child-woman. Although it is deemed impossible or also pathological, contrasting feelings arise simultaneously - ambivalence can even be found to be described as a basic characteristic of the emotional state in schizophrenia[3]. Is the feeling that we have for Lolita abnormal, not in line with the norm? If opposites are the norm, the answer is yes. If however we allow a different, non-dualistic perspective we find other ways of explanation that release us from the discomfort of the ambivalent emotions. Bramberger's attempt to dissolve the ambivalences leads her to an approach that is free of opposites: "The child-woman can illustrate what Gilles Deleuze has theorised as rhizome, something that is made up not of units but of dimensions" (Bramberger 2000: 274). This step away from dualistic thinking is important, but it does not yet reach far enough because Bramberger may leave behind units and move on to dimensions but she still holds on to a static perspective. For Deleuze/Guattari the rhizome is always in movement, it changes but it does not reproduce itself. It can do without hierarchies and is "defined solely by a circulation of states" it is a "manner of becomings" (Deleuze/Guattari 2004: 24-5).[4] Looking at the processes–the 'becoming'–brings us closer to a comprehension of the 'in-between'. Lolita is not static, she changes, she transforms. Only for the split of a second she is transfixed and stationary, caught on paper or film, but the feeling connected with her is individual

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3   see for instance, https://www.wissen.de/medizin/ambivalenz-affektive
4   The reference here is to the English version of Deleuze/Guattari's quote. The edition used for it is younger than the original text by Bettina Pirker. In her German text she refers to a German edition from 1977. RH

and circulates. Aristotle saw the limit of logic in the aporias too. He tried to find a solution for the problematic by emphasising a processual truth and proposing rational decisions that are made according to the demands of the situation (see Aristotle 1964: 30). He realised that as far as contradiction is concerned truth is neither static, nor can it be found in terms of right/wrong, it rather always diverges and can be captured only as a process. The essence of becoming is change and only in these terms can we grasp the phenomenon of the child-woman. She is not forever transfixed in Vladimir Nabokov's novel (1960), nor in the movies by Stanley Kubrick (1962) or Adrian Lyne (1997). Instead she constantly keeps developing, is found everywhere and nowhere. To approach Lolita and fathom this 'in-between', in my opinion it is necessary to de-differentiate virtuality and reality, or rather have a discussion about 'the truth'. A well suited perspective for this is offered by Mitterer (1993) with his "non-dualistic" approach beyond realist and constructivist theories of knowledge that is also used by Schmidt (2002) to explain the construction of reality. According to Schmidt the approach aims at replacing ontological assumptions by systematic variation in observation. It also essentially moves away from approaches that are concerned with either suggesting or denying the existence of reality (ibid. 17). Dualistic positions of thinking agree that objects are essentially distinct of language. But to be able to describe an object language is needed with prior conventionally determined rudimentary descriptions. In case of agreement a dualistic (realist or constructivist) perspective is sufficient because there is no discourse arising. It becomes problematic however in cases of contradiction and the attempt to trace back divergent descriptions to the actual object. A description by way of language changes the object and therefore cannot any more, in logical conclusion, be tested for its truth on the object described in advance (see Mitterer 1993: 126).

> How do we distinguish between perception and illusion? With regard to the perceptions we make, we cannot distinguish between true-perception and false-perception (*zwischen Wahrnehmung und Falschnehmung*). Only when the perception *so far* is superseded by a new perception we

can determine from this new perception the earlier perception as an illusion. (Mitterer 1999: 126)[5]

If we see Lolita as a child-woman who "drives a grown-up man into despair" (Grotter 2003: 20), as a 15-year old girl is described in the Kronenzeitung[6], it is true for us that there exists a girl who is in a position to make a man commit a crime for her. Only if we come to a different conclusion will this new conclusion be true for us and only retrospectively we can identify the earlier 'truth' as wrong. "In a nondualist *philosophy of change* views are not held, because they are true. Truth is modest and undemanding. Opinions are true, because and as long as we hold them, and they are false, because and as long as we do not hold them. The function of concepts like truth and falsehood is limited to the demarcation between opinions we hold and opinions we do not hold" (Mitterer 1999: 149[152])[7]. This application of the notion of truth–the same applies to the notion of reality–allows to see Lolita from a different perspective. The question therefore is not: Are there child-women or not? It is rather: In what way is Lolita dealt with and how does this process progress?

3. Real Fantasies

Bruno Bettelheim reckons the most important task in raising children is to help them find meaning in life (Bettelheim 1980: 3). In his opinion stories stimulate a child's imagination which helps develop the intellect and make some coherent sense out of the turmoil of his feelings (ibid. 5). For fantasies the point is not rational comprehension of the nature and content of the unconscious, but becoming familiar with it (ibid. 7). According to Bettelheim this way of approaching and dealing with fantasies fits unconscious content into conscious fantasies. That certainly applies to adults too. Being in touch with the unconscious and the resulting conscious fantasies help working through past experiences and support the search for meaning in life. Bettelheim calls this "life divined from the inside" (ibid. 23).

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5   English: https://www.3-16am.co.uk/articles/the-flight-from-contingency-10?c=josef-mitterer-s-beyond-philosophy-serialised
6   Austrian newspaper
7   English: https://www.3-16am.co.uk/articles/the-flight-from-consistency-12?c=josef-mitterer-s-beyond-philosophy-serialised

Image: Concept of Fantasy

Meaning → Future → Utopias

Empowerment

Fantasy

(Psychic) Reality
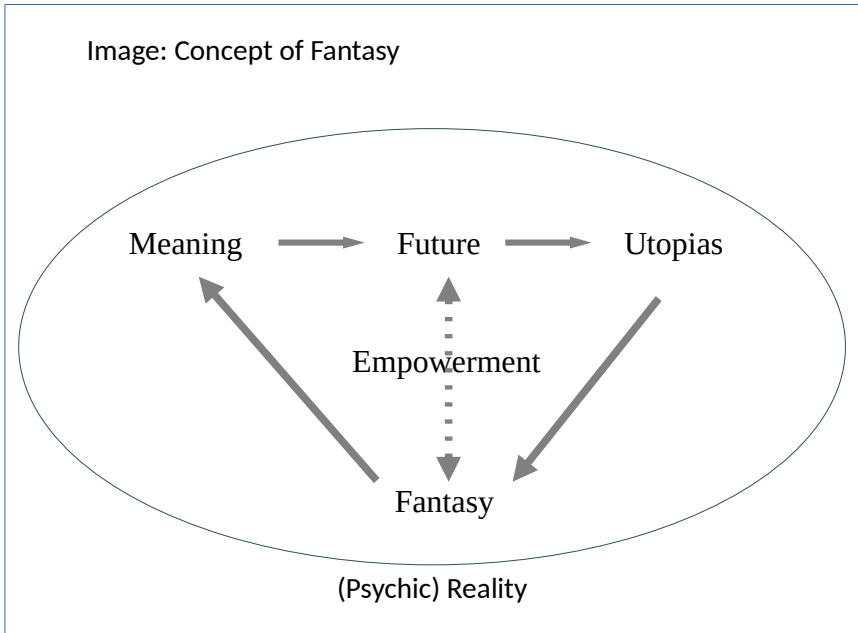
The fantasies are future-oriented, they don't belong to the here and now, but they can very well have a place in the future. This vision of the future can give meaning to life, solutions can be found, anxieties overcome and strength emphasised, which in turn empowers to create space for the vision to become real. Thus unity of fantasy and reality constructs, forms, strengthens and produces identity. For containing an empowering component fantasies do not have to originate in one's own creativity, they can also—as in fact is the case quite often—be inspired by cultural products. Tania Modleski has pointed out that not only "high culture" but in particular also mass-culture plays an important role in the development of fantasies. She shares the view that "mass-produced fantasies" enable the imagination of a utopian world (Modleski, 1982: 30). The reception of mass-cultural products brings up a complex dynamic between fantasy and reality, the recipient and the received intersect (see also Walkerdine 1986: 168). This intersection is what is called the psychic reality (see e.g., Ang 1985: 47; de Lauretis 1999: 307; Walkerdine 1986: 183). De Lauretis refers to Gramsci with the notion of "something deeply felt and experienced" (1999: 304) when she speaks about dealing with

and working through mass-cultural products in fantasies. Anything that is felt and experienced is part of reality. For what I call 'in-between', the intersection, the beyond of duality of facts and fiction, Walkerdine uses the term "fantasy space" (1986: 195). It is fantasy as a fundamental human activity (see de Lauretis 1999: 306) that constructs reality and makes it real, and it is the vision of the future that constructs the future and therefore needs to be understood as a powerful instrument in the creation of reality.

4. The Search for Lo. Li. Ta.

> A female being that is at the stage between child and woman and remains caught in this intermediate stage – that is how one might describe the smallest common denominator of the child-woman constructs. The 'essence' of the child-woman is stagnation, not regression. (Hochholdinger-Reiterer 1999: 4)

Is it not a contradiction in terms that the child-woman can be found in so many different variations and on the other hand it is supposed to signify stagnation? Is she a myth or a cliché? Does she only exist in the male gaze, does she rely on the desiring male opposite, as noted by Bramberger (2000: 9f.)? As a child I did not know the book nor the film, and yet I grew up with an image of Lolita, and I was called 'a Lolita.' In my memory I am the child-woman, she was and is part of me. Am I an exception or do other women remember the same? My search for Lolita starts where Andrea Bramberger finished. In the last sentence of her work there resonates the feeling that there is yet another, in my opinion the most important component of the child-woman – a fantasy that we should allow ourselves to engage with.

> The theoretical perspective on the child-woman remains a view 'out of the window', from a 'lofty' standpoint, a view from the certainty of reliable structures into the wide open of incertitude and fascinating possibilities. To 'see', to 'hear', to think of them is on option for those who follow the allurement that comes with the child-woman . . . (ibid: 274f.)

I am going to leave the conventional structures behind and enter the uncertain territories of memories and (real) fantasies.

4.1 As artistic construct?

The child-woman is found in literature, film, television, advertising, painting. The term 'artistic construct' seems to be suited best to depict the multiplicity of materialisations of her in cultural products. In their elaborate work on the child-woman both Beate Hochholdinger-Reiterer (1999) and Andrea Bramberger (2000) conclude that Lolita is solely a literary construct, from Greek mythology over Nabokov's novel and its film adaptations to the systematic commercialisation of the child-woman image in advertising.

> Apart from a myriad of translations of the novel the popularisation of the notion of 'Lolita' is of course due to the medium of film. It seems that with the specific name there is also an ultimate dilution happening of the concept. Symptomatically, the word is used by now in all spheres of life. There is 'the Lolita', but she always looks different; there is the 'Lolita-complex', and even a new one as we could recently read; of course there is Lolita-porn, Lolita-fashion, Lolita-models, Lolita-furniture and . . . (Hochholdinger-Reiterer 1999: 157)

No doubt, over and over again we find the artistic form of the child-woman, but why is she still prevalent in the discourse? Why are young women or girls called Lolita? The Kronenzeitung immediately refers to Lolita if it deals with the relationship between an older man and a girl (Grotter 2003). The German cover text of "sagt Lila" (Chimo 1997)[8] depicts the novel's protagonist as "Lolita of the suburbs", although this story is not about an older man and a twelve year old girl, but about the fantasies of an adolescent and a sixteen year old girl.

> It seem the contemporary fashion of the child-woman can be explained only by her relation to literature and visual arts. From there she conquered—once becoming popular—the

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8   In English: "Lila says" (Chimo 1997)

most diverse spheres. Particularly important is the medium
of film that obviously knows how to conserve the child-
woman so fabulously. (Hochholdinger-Reiterer 1999: 6)

This however leaves out of view the cultural loop, the interaction
between text and recipient. The point is exactly not the conservation of a
meaning, but the processing of it. The circulation of the product takes
place in discursive form. The discourse is in need of translation into
societal practices. Where there is no meaning, there can be no reception.
If meaning does not materialise in praxis it remains without effect (see
also Hall 1999: 93). If there was only a literary blueprint without a
translation in cultural praxis, Lolita would be meaningless. It is only by
way of the recipients' processing that she comes into discourse; she is
picked up, transformed, reflected, re-appears in diverse form—she
circulates and only this movement gives her meaning.

  Breton takes Melusina, a legendary mermaid figure from French
folktales as an example for a child-woman in literature. He also refers to
the interaction between a literary construct and its recipients. "Poetry
and art will always have a weakness for all that transfigures man in that
hopeless appeal, indomitable, which now and then he takes the
laughable risk of issuing to life" (Breton 1994: 32). In fantasy cultural
products are transformed, they are the place where hopes, utopian
visions and imagination coalesce, and they provide the platform for the
creation of one's own identity and life-world. For Breton art must prepare
the advent of the child-woman into the empire of tangible things (ibid.
64).

4.2 Under male gaze?

Bramberger clearly states that for the child-woman to be able to exist at
all, she "needs the perception of a desiring counterpart" (2000: 9). She is
reflected in the male gaze as "personified male fantasy" (2000: 93) and
only due to his desire she exists. To support this statement one needs to
only enter 'Lolita' in google (www.google.at) to get more than nine million
hits. The majority of these pages contain pornographic displays in all
possible variations, with the sporadic film or book review in between; but
most of these pages are directed to grown-up men with a sexual liking for
child-like or at least women appearing to be quite young. In his memories

Fritz Wittels describes the 17 years old Irma, the youngest daughter of a janitor in the suburbs of Vienna, as a creation by Kraus, "an empty shell filled with sentences from *The Torch*" (Wittels 1995: 59). He also calls her a "Dionysian girl born several thousand years too late" (ibid: 58). In Greek mythology Dionysos was the god of wine and fertility whose "orgiastic cult . . . made women simply crazy" (Fink 1994: 92). The male fantasies made the girl into exactly what it was from their perspective, a

> [C]hild-woman . . . a girl of great sexual attraction, which breaks out so early in her life that she is forced to begin her sex life while still, in all other respects, a child. All her life long she remains what she is: oversexed and incapable of understanding the civilized world of adults. Nor does this world understand her. (Wittels 1995: 60)

From this male perspective it is not possible to understand the child-woman because it is simply a male desire projected onto a girl. If she behaves as expected she is deemed an empty shell, if she doesn't she is accused of not understanding the world. Wittels says himself: "We were not tolerant enough to leave women alone; they all had to be and to behave as we dictated" (ibid.: 63).

  The child-woman is most definitely an object of male desire, a fantasy construct by men; but is that all that is to her, or is there a possibility for another way of existing for her?

> A psychoanalytic concept of fantasies assumes that the subject takes part in a scenario and re-creates it, which makes identification with the different positions possible. Here there is no direct connection assumed between on the one side 'male' and 'female' positions, and on the other side the sexual identity of the persons who take up this positions. The reason for this is that the unconscious structures the sexual difference, but itself is not structured sexually. (Hipfl 1997: 151)

My own emotions, images and fantasies of Lolita that diffusely accompany me for years are reason enough not to simply settle with the

idea that Lolita is solely a product of male desire, but rather it can be found as a (possibly empowering) female fantasy too.

4.3 A cliché?

Childlike women and woman-like children, long hair–preferably curls or long pigtails–large saucer eyes, pout, small firm breasts, no (or only downy) body hair, maiden-like affectation and sexual curiosity, these are the attributes of a child-woman – the Lolita-cliché. "Nowadays the child-woman is not merely a question of physique. It all amounts to finding the one and only, the right, the best physical and age-adequate representation of Lolita" (Hochholdinger-Reiterer 1999: 157). Be it the catwalk, film, porn or billboards, the 'right' Lolita sells everything.

> In the days of movable type, a cliché was a word or a phrase that printers would leave whole, or clenched together (the meaning of the French word cliché), because they knew that such word or phrase would be used frequently. It is not enough to dismiss clichés as evidence of lazy thinking or lack of linguistic creativity; rather we should ask why it is that certain words or phrases are used so frequently by certain people at certain times–what is it about them that makes them popular? Cliches are the common sense, everyday articulations of the dominant ideology. (Fiske, 1991: 117-8)

The female name Lolita carries so many connotations, we need to only hear or read the name and straight away we have an exact image in front of our inner eye. We mostly agree how the child-woman is supposed to look like and what we have to expect of her. We know what Lolita stands for and we take part in common sense. If in the talk show "Vera" (22. 08. 2003, 12:00 - 13:00 h, Sat1) a mother casts her daughter out because at the age of fourteen she had 'seduced' the stepfather, the better part of the audience knows exactly that she is a Lolita and this poor man was defencelessly at her mercy. Insinuations by the moderator that it might also be a case of child abuse do not make a big difference. The dominant ideology does not lay blame on the man and holds on to the internalised imaginations, fantasies of the power of the child-woman. The talk-show

ends with the step-father considering to forgive the by now nineteen year old daughter while the mother still wants to have nothing to do with her.

4.4 A myth?

A myth is not completely different to a cliché.

> In myth . . . the concept can spread over a very large expanse of signifier. For instance, a whole book may be the signifier of a single concept; and conversely, a minute form (a word, a gesture, even incidental, so long as it is noticed) can serve as signifier to a concept filled with a very rich history. (Barthes 1991: 119)

For Roland Barthes the "[m]yth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message: there are formal limits to myth, there are no 'substantial' ones" (ibid.: 107).

> Speech of this kind is a message. It is therefore by no means confined to oral speech. It can consist of modes of writing or of representations; not only written discourse, but also photography, cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity, all these can serve as a support to mythical speech. (ibid.: 108)

Theresa de Lauretis speaks of dominant cultural narratives, like e.g. Homer or the Bible in terms of "public fantasies" (1999: 307). These myths remain, albeit in changing forms, even as long as for centuries; and they are found in the most diverse cultural products. The recipients of these myths see the same thing, but they produce various fantasies in relation to them (ibid.: 327). Child-women appear in stories and folktales as sirens, mermaids or nymphs, or as images of Björk, Brittney Spears or Kate Bush. Cultural products can be seen as mirrors of the respective times; films and magazines that deal with the child-women are today what stories were in earlier days. Lolita bypasses time and always finds her way into products of popular culture so as to connect public with private fantasies (ibid.: 304).

If viewed from the perspective of semiology the "myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a *second-order semiological system"* (Barthes 1991: 113)

1. Signifier	2. Signified	
3. Sign		
I SIGNIFIER		II SIGNIFIED
III SIGN		
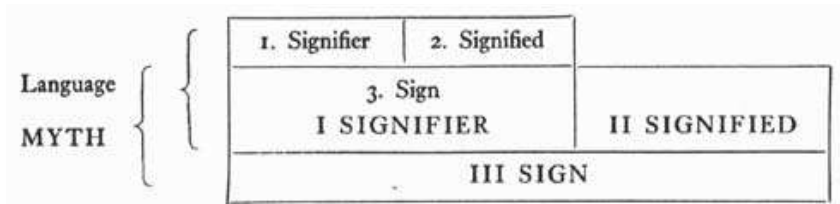
Language { MYTH {

(Barthes, 1991: 113)

Myth is a "*metalanguage*, because it is a second language, *in which* one speaks about the first" (ibid. 114), and myth "has in fact a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us" (ibid.: 115). And Barthes says in this context

> [...] that the signification of the myth is constituted by a sort of constantly moving turnstile which presents alternately the meaning of the signifier and its form, a language-object and a metalanguage, a purely signifying and a purely imagining consciousness. This alternation is, so to speak, gathered up in the concept, which uses it like an ambiguous signifier, at once intellective and imaginary, arbitrary and natural. (ibid.: 121-2)

As mentioned above, for those who leave behind the dualistic mode of thinking and are prepared to engage with the myth (see Mitterer 1993, 1999) this simultaneity of conscious and unconscious becomes psychic reality. A myth–as the child-woman–cannot be judged in logical criteria of true/false, it can only be assessed for its use. "Men do not have with myth a relationship based on truth but on use" (Barthes 1991: 144).

4.5 In my memory?

It was mostly women who called me Lolita when I was twelve, my mother, her friends, my sister. In their eyes, from a female (!) perspective I was a child-woman without a sexual desire looming in the background. They

viewed me with a certain admiration and that gave me strength. To be Lolita made me into something special and gave me the feeling of power. I did not know the novel, neither had I watched the movie. My image was a fantasy–initially the one of the women who called me child-woman, then as time went on my own. The method of Memory-Work can

> [...] make into a matter of investigation the field of tension between film and spectator . . . that can be characterised as interpellation and concretisation, construction of meaning or experiences of fantasies. . . . The spectators are the protagonists who become active in the scenes and fill them with material from their everyday experiences. With texts from Memory-Work it is possible at the same time to pursue the question what role the fantasies, and therefore the 'psychic reality' plays in the constructions of subjectivity for the spectators. (Hipfl 1995: 171)

In my case the material from the film and the book "Lolita" filled my life-world. The women who had accessed the media-presentation of the child-woman filled up what they had seen and read with their everyday experiences and extracted the meaning that was generated in this manner. They transferred their fantasies onto me; I took them on and filled them with my own experiences, hence they became part of my world and as such real fantasies – psychic reality. Albeit that I was not a recipient of the Lolita-topos the fantasies resulting from it–those of the women who transferred them as much as my own–played an important role in my own construction as a subject, the fantasy of child-woman became part of my identity. In my fantasy Lolita was a powerful being. Whatever she desired she could get. The naive-innocent part granted her absolution from responsibility, whatever she did she was never to blame. It was not the gaze of desire by others that established her power, it was rather the strength of the own desire without guilt. The effect on men ascribed to the child-woman gave my sexual fantasies wings. My strength lay in the thought of the power to be able to desire any man and him being defenceless. This defencelessness gave me a feeling of omnipotence. On a wink of the eye every my wish would be made come true. Specifically the patriarchal ideologies of men as powerful perpetrator and women in the powerless role of victims added to my

fantasies of empowerment. By me desiring them and in my fantasy being able to make every wish come true I became the powerful perpetrator and the men were turned into powerless objects of my desire. The dominant discourses of the child as innocent and the woman as powerless protected me from being held responsible because in this construct it was inevitably the men who were guilty. Sexual desire always had the aftertaste of guilt, but my fantasies did not call for atonement. The patriarchal structures strengthened my subversive power.

4.6 A (real) female fantasy?

As the Lolita-fantasy played an important part in constituting my identity I wonder whether this "public fantasy" also played a role in other women's history. For getting access to the empirical private fantasies of women, the psychic reality in connection with the child-woman, the method of Memory-Work developed by Frigga Haug seems to be a suitable instrument.

> A basic assumption (among others) for Memory-Work is that a personality includes a memory. With this I mean that the individuals construct their personality in the process of their life in a way to create a coherent identity for themselves. From the abundance of experiences they chose some for this purpose, assess it as significant, repress and forget others. This process does not happen as voluntarily and arbitrarily as it may sound. In the existing structures there are attributions, obstacles, impossibilities that influence this selection. (Haug 1990: 42)

I asked a couple of colleagues per email to write a short story, fantasy, image or encounter of/with Lolita in third person narrative anonymously and using a pseudonym. As a stimulation and introduction to the topic I included the passage by Nabokov that I also used in this essay instead of a foreword, especially because those few lines had incited 'a slight tickle' in me when I read them.

> For writing . . . a few suggestions, which preferably will be theoretically justified, are in order. The whole process should

> be kept simple and open to examination so that it can be supported by everybody. The process should enable individuals to be active and avoid creating situations where omniscient experts give orders to an uninformed audience. (Haug 1999: no page number)

For not leaving my colleagues in the dark about my intentions with those stories I wrote: *Under the working-title of 'Guilt without atonement; Lo. Li. Ta. A female fantasy?' an essay will be produced in which I want to search for the child-woman, against the common mainstream idea, not as a literary construct or a reflection of the male gaze, but as psychic reality in female fantasies.* I did not state how long the text should be, nor did I include any further tips or suggestions. I consciously wanted to avoid evoking impressions of the film or other representations of the child-woman because my aim was more the detection of the public fantasy, the myth, the cliché of the child-woman in the private fantasies of women, rather than the reaction to a specific media product. Two colleagues were immediately up for writing such a scene, the others refused with the argument that they had nothing essential to say to this topic or also that they did not want to say anything publicly.

> Writing is a transgression of boundaries in many areas. We step out of the privateness of just individual experience and make public what happens to us. We step out of the modest insignificance into an area where we take ourselves serious. Instead of accepting everyday life unconsciously we dig it out once more and try to find those points at which we can resist. (Haug 1990: 49)

I wish to thank the two women who dared to transgress the boundaries and made her private fantasies available to me in written form. The collective analysis of the memory-stories as requested by Haug (1990: 45) was done in the context of this essay only rudimentary. After I had received the stories we discussed them in a more ad-hoc meeting. The verbal statements of the women stood in opposite to their stories, and I wish to pay particular attention to this phenomenon and try an explanation thereof.

5. Lo. The feeling

> In our culture the media are the predominant source for a
> multitude of fantasy scenarios. According to Laplanche and
> Pontalis the stories that are offered to us are endless
> variations in which material from everyday life is used to
> work through the topically limited primary fantasies. The
> stories that circulate are repeated over and over − stories
> about identity, the relationship to others, the relation to
> rules and law. Their staging affords us the possibility to find a
> space in them for our desires. (Hipfl 1997: 149)

Valerie Walkerdine describes how a film engaged her as a viewer at the
level of fantasy due to the fictions included (see 1986: 169f.).

For analysing the memory stories I divided the category of emotions in
three sub-sections: "desire", "power" and "public fantasies." To me they
seemed to represent the emotions connected to Lolita. This separation is
purely analytical, the different areas merge and co-determine each other.

5.1 Desire

In her work Bramberger insists that the child-woman does not herself
desire and all feelings relating to Lolita are impossible without the male
perspective.

> Whatever emotion one might have towards the child-
> woman: all variations of her existence require the
> perspective of a desiring counterpart who creates and
> describes her. Hence she proves to be a chimera, a figure of
> male desire who is determined to constantly evade this
> desire, and yet by exactly this subversion fuels it further.
> (Bramberger 2000: 9f)

The analysis of the memory-stories shows something different. The Lolita-
fantasy makes the men into figures of female desire. The subversion
relates more to a re-distribution of power than to the rejection of the
male desire. Both women who wrote the memory-stories identify with
Lolita, but not as an object of desire, rather as a strong and desiring

subject. It is the conscious employment of one's own effect on the men that is playfully used to direct and determine exactly what is happening. The lust of the man is there not to be rejected but to strengthen and spur on the women, as a mirror of her own attractiveness.

Bramberger takes Kate Bush as an example for the construction of a "correspondence between a supposed knowledge about male desire for the child-woman and naivest demonstration of child-womanliness" (2000: 127). Bush wrote "The man with the child in his eyes" when she was fourteen. If Bramberger had paid attention not merely to the visual staging of the video-clip but also the lyrics of the song she could have detected the expression of female desire contained in it. The song is about a girl who loves a man, but she is not sure he loves her. She desires him and sees her mirror image in his eyes; she finds herself by desiring – not the reverse as Bramberger tries to convince us. The female Lolita-fantasy is not a stage-act for the purposes of the other sex, it is a possibility to create a space for the own wishes and desires. It is what de Lauretis expresses in Gramsci's words, "something deeply felt and experienced" (1999: 303) or as in one of the two memory-stories: "enjoy the sensual orgy to the limit". For the author of this Lolita-fantasy it was important to make clear in our discussion that she is not a "slut", and I should not misinterpret her story. The dominant discourse speaks of the desiring man and the woman who is prey to his gaze. The virtuousness that is ascribed to the women does not fit in with the strong sexual desire in the fantasy. Also the childhood discourse that negates sexuality in children runs counter to this memory-story. It is obviously easier to write anonymously about female desire than expressing it publicly loud and clear, and thereby resisting the attribution of the sexual roles.

5.2 Power

Characteristic for the Lolita-fantasy is a feeling of power. In the first memory-story a film by Adrian Lyne is described in terms of an "overpowering fascination" that two people experience. Hence, a fascination that they cannot escape and that triggers their actions without their own doing. Men, exposed to female allurement, are used for female purposes. The male desire itself becomes an instrument for his subjection, his lust turns to pain and Lolita plays with this knowledge. The initial powerlessness of the girl transforms in the course of the own

history into the power of the woman. The anger about the experienced power of the man becomes strength, the fantasy empowers the woman to turn the tables. She uses, instead of being used. The experience, the child-woman's knowledge becomes the powerful tool of the woman. She calls the shots, what is going to happen and how it is going to happen. The memory of being subjected empowers to swap powerlessness for power, to mutate from passive victim into active perpetrator. The fantasies lead to a feeling of strength that gives the individual real power. The wishes of the fantasy become an intent that can be transferred into action. The use of this power is depicted in the first memory-story as a "game", a playful action without the aftertaste of guilt and injustice. In our conversation about the story the author apologised, I should not think bad of her as a person who would use power just for its own sake. Employing power is a positive element in the sexual construction of men, but women are discredited if they do the same. "A consistent 'double standard' leads to every gesture, every act to be judged differently according to the sex of a person, so that even identical actions are eventually assessed differently" (Mühlenachs 1993: 54). These internalised modes also lead to the anonymous stories written solitarily by the women containing positive depictions of the use of power, while in the subsequent discussion of the story the same is assessed rather negatively. In parts the strength that could be drawn from the fantasy collapses in face of the adaptation to the dominant patriarchal structures.

5.3 Reflexivity of "public fantasies"

Cultural products, myths, clichés are all part of public fantasies. We project private fantasies onto the public ones, as well as effects of the public fantasies are integrated in our subjectivity (see de Lauretis 1999: 320). Anthony Giddens speaks about the basic reflexivity of life in modern society: social practices are constantly re-assessed, scrutinised and rectified in relation to new information about exactly these practices. That leads to essential changes of their character (see 1995: 54). The child-woman is also exposed to this reflexivity and therefore repeatedly reviewed and changed. We receive information about Lolita from the media, enhance this knowledge in our fantasy so that it is useful for our life, i.e. it can be transformed into social practices. The now changed child-woman enters into public fantasies and is in turn reflected as a

cultural product in the media, film, television, journalism etc. – which brings with it a new cycle of reflection and fantasies. The discourse of the child-woman is so difficult to pinpoint because it is the discourse itself that changes the discourse.

In both of the memory-stories we find fragments of public fantasies about the child-woman. In the first one the film by Adrian Lyne is central, whereby his presentation is perceived as "twisted and perverted." The image of women, or rather girls in the film does not sit with the ideas of the author either. Hence, while she refers to the media presentation of the topic she at the same time distances herself in her fantasy from it. She develops a different image that is more meaningful for her life. A colleague had called her a "Lolita-type" long before she had ever seen the film. She interpreted and transformed this fantasy projected onto her in a way that made it possible for her to identify with it, or to accept her being identified as Lolita by others. The fantasy that she developed was not matched by the depiction in the film, therefore she rejected the latter and changed it. In the second memory-story no reference is made to the novel or a film version thereof, but the Lolita-cliché is clearly sketched out: a short skirt, child-like suntanned legs, rhythmically swinging hips and at the same time awkwardness. All these are attributes that can be found in the public fantasies, the Lolita-myth. The author picks them up and paints them in her own colours to make up her private fantasy so that her wishes and imagination find their place.

6. Li. The seduction.

> Lolita integrates the position of the male victim and the child-womanly seduction with the position of the child victim and the male rapist. In the text this simultaneous existence of the different positions supports a subtle presentation of the ambivalence that creates the child-woman. (Bramberger 2000: 24)

If we follow the mainstream, seduction is always connected to perpetration of an offence and being seduced to a victim position. The advertising industry may exploit the "seductive aroma" of coffee or the "seductive smell" of a perfume, but once it is not consumption of commodities but social interaction that is in focus the discourse of

seduction is laden with moralistic value judgements. Christian connotations are still the prevalent premise for our ethical assessments. They are conceptualised in logical good/bad, right/wrong categories. Children's sexuality is discussed in similar fashion and with Lolita we find ourselves quickly in midst of the discourse of paedophilia.

6.1 Morals, ethics and logic

The term ethics originates in Greek philosophy, it refers to the doctrine of ideals for human action, custom and habits. The term moral has Latin roots and refers to traditional custom and conventions of societal praxis, from table manners to the prohibition of killing. Social norms, imperatives and prohibitions are to be learned in the process of socialisation. Values are not laid down in a fixed code, they are signposts without manual, images of what is desirable and central for orientation in different cultures. Values are to be understood as process, they shift constantly. We distinguish between norms that one may (habits), should (custom with quasi legal status) and must (written in law) follow. The ten commandments of Christianity are incorporated in penal law (not murder, not steal, not covet), in the intergenerational contract (honour father and mother) and in the human rights (see Krainer 2002). In ethical questions we often face different opinions that cannot be decided in logical criteria to be right or wrong. Aristotelian logic claims that of two contradictory statements one has to be wrong, but Aristotle (1964) also saw that contradictions cannot be solved by logic, they rather require a proper measure, a middle ground. The discussion about Lolita is rife with moralistic ideas, but it proves to be extremely difficult because the child-woman is a personified contradiction and thus impossible to judge by logical good/bad yardsticks. That can blow to pieces the ethical value judgements of an entire society (see Bramberger 2000: 15). During the 19th century only the sheer physical harm to children was penalised by sexual criminal laws, while in the 20th century the opinion became prevalent that the moral-ethical harm might have long-term negative consequences for the morality of society (see Schetsche 1994, quoted in Bramberger 2000: 15). In the two memory-stories the internalised moralistic value judgements are also expressed. In the first story the protagonist and Lolita in the film are depicted as "two people who were not destined for each other." Here the idea–as acquired in the

socialisation process–of who is destined for whom, who suits and fits together comes to the fore. An old man who desires a young girl is seen as "disgraceful." The author speaks in this context of "disgust" and "anger." The author of the second story does not attend to her own moralistic ideas, she rather refers more to moral stance of the others. She does not construct value statements, but questions: "What would the parents say?" or "If someone came along?" These questions demonstrate how the societal moral conventions are of concern to her, otherwise she would not have posed these questions. In her fantasy the norms are not adhered to and if others would know about it there would be consequences; if not by law than at least societal sanctions.

6.2 Who seduces who?

A question that comes up not only in the context of the child-woman is always: Who seduces who? A socialisation influenced by Christian traditions has taught us that the seducer is equated with guilt, the seduced with innocence. The serpent in paradise has made sure that prohibitions are not respected, the devil tempts us with all sorts of enticements to do evil, they both haunt the innocent, they are the perpetrators that the victims have to resist. Eve, the seductress and Mary, the innocent virgin, they both amalgamate in the child-woman. "The child-woman is always an expression of transgression of sexual boundaries. Her sexualisation irritates, whereby it is never fully clear and cannot be explicitly articulated what exactly causes the irritation, where exactly which boundary is transgressed, who seduces who" (Bramberger 2000: 162f.). If we cannot detect who seduces who, it is also difficult to determine who is good and who is bad; at the end of the day this is what we have learned: the seducers are the baddies against whom the goodies have to defend themselves by all possible means. To give in to the seduction would render the goodies baddies. Seduction is sin, it requires atonement. The advertising industry plays on these fantasies: we can surrender to the seduction without atonement. The ice-cream Magnum is openly advertised this summer with Christian connotation: the seven deadly sins are the names of the "limited edition", pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony and sloth. We commit a sin and the advertisement acquits us of it, because we are seduced. Although we eat the ice-cream we don't lose our innocence. It seems morally justifiable to fall for a

sinfully advertised food item and to enjoy it; sexual pleasure however is obviously still evaluated in Christian terms. Virginity is the sign for innocence, hence sexual seduction needs to be rejected. To indulge in the pleasure of seduction without a feeling of guilt because one didn't resist, that is something that easily makes the virgin into a whore. The second Lolita-fantasy describes a sexual pleasure which the author did not fight against, "quite the opposite." But when talking about it she insisted that she was indeed someone who normally would resist. The Christian values are anchored so deeply that sexual seduction can only be accepted in entirely private fantasies – or as it was the case here in anonymously written stories.

6.3 Children's sexuality and the discourse of paedophilia

In discussing children's sexuality, as is unavoidable with the child-woman, one is just a small step away from the discourse on paedophilia, because children are assumed to be asexual. In both memory-stories the topic of paedophilia is present. In the first one the film version is called paedophiliac, in the second story it says: "he would like it especially because it is prohibited."

> It is a popular belief about the sexual impulse that it is absent in childhood and that it first appears in the period of life known as puberty. This, though a common error, is serious in its consequences and is chiefly due to our present ignorance of the fundamental principles of the sexual life" (Freud 1905: 33).

Haug refers to Foucault when she speaks about the "sexuality dispositif in the family"; this relates to "the mode of establishing order in the sexual and how the area of sexuality is only constituted in this way" (1997: 122). The family is supposed to prevent children's sexuality, prohibit and pathologise masturbation, to "see sex as reason for developmental disorder, disease etc." (ibid. 123).

> As a matter of fact, the new born infant brings sexuality with it into the world; certain sexual sensations attend its development while at the breasts and during early

childhood, and only very few children would seem to escape some kind of sexual activity and sexual experiences before puberty" (Freud 1963: 19)

The negation of children's sexuality makes it difficult to attend to it and renders a discussion nearly impossible, anyone who mentions 'children' and 'sexuality' in one go is pushed quickly into the 'abuse corner.' I don't mean to open an avenue for paedophilia at all, rather the opposite: an open discussion of children's sexuality would lift the veil of silence from this topic and withdraw the certainty of this silence from the abusers.

  What children like, what does them good or not is rarely noticed or considered in decision on matters of their upbringing, not only concerning issues of sexuality.

> Between adults it is considered violence if one prevents another one from retreating from a situation, and thus forces his will upon the other. In contact with children this however can be legitimate as long as it is in their 'best interest'. The difference between the coercion of a child by an 'abuser' and the general 'pedagogical coercion' is therefore not that it happens against the will of the child or is experienced as unpleasant by the child. (Harten 1997: 108)

The construct of childhood that was mentioned earlier forces children into a position void of rights and power. Being constructed as pure and innocent they are kept in this role as long as possible, if need be by force. They are not awarded decision making power, a child's "No" gains significance only if it is in line with the parents' decision. This does not mean that I promote sex between children and adults and approve of it as long as the children enjoy it, but I want to raise awareness of the complexity of the problematic.

> Somehow the problematic is not only guilt, facts, domination, power and in return laws, incarceration, atonement; it is deeper, more contradictory, goes to the roots of the entire society into the constructions of family, childhood and jurisdiction" (Haug 1997: 122).

7. Ta. The way of reading

The observation of discrepancies between the anonymously written Lolita-fantasies and the way their two authors spoke about them in personal communication makes me look at the methods of reading as discussed by Stuart Hall in relation to television. "Any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world. These constitute a *dominant cultural order*, though it is neither univocal nor uncontested" (Hall 1980: 134). Lolita is a construct from within this order, the clichés and the myth of the child-woman as discussed earlier are the common sense. Whoever adopts the common discourse of Lolita remains within the dominant codes. These dominant codes are powerful "precisely because they represent definitions of situation and events which are 'in dominance'" (ibid.: 137). The "oppositional code" that challenges the dominant definitions is, as far as it is made public, connected to a degree of power also. Here we can speak of a "struggle in discourse", and a struggle is always about power, only those who have the required strength can challenge hegemonic dominant significations. Lastly, a negotiated way of reading does not presuppose power struggle, here significance is negotiated, the dominant discourse is not completely dismissed, instead one finds a way to live with it. In the negotiated code the "legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations" is acknowledged, "while at a more restricted, situational (situated) level it makes its own ground rules - it operates with exceptions to the rule" (ibid.: 137).

  The memory-stories brought me to see a further way of reading, different to the three described by Hall. In the conversations both women speak from a negotiated position, to the most part they acknowledge the dominant discourse, but also make oppositional statements. In their texts however they take up a different position in relation to Lolita. Yet, in talking about them their fantasies seem to them not appropriate, acceptable or 'proper'. This way of dealing with the fantasies I call "secret code", it does not enter into the discourse because it is only mentioned secretly, anonymously, inwardly, entirely private. Expressed in public is only a negotiated way of reading. It may be the case that the secret code is in fact dominant because many people read the dominant discourse secretly different. But it cannot possibly become hegemonic unless it

enters the discourse. It is certainly necessary to find ways for the powerful component of psychic reality that is (so far) only formulated in secrecy to come to the surface and enter the dominant discourse. Only in this manner can we bring our perspective into effect, transform the discourse and dissolve old and defective structures.

8. Guilt without atonement - Conclusion

Engaging with Lolita paves a way to a different way of thinking, beyond the confines of dualistic structures. She is not 'either/or', she is 'and', the 'in-between.' As myth she is a part of the "public fantasies" that reflexively enters private fantasies, becomes modified and is mirrored back. In common sense she is, as male chimera, only there to satisfy the desire of men. In the (real) fantasies of women, their psychic reality, she is an empowering concept, a strengthening emotion that could settle old scores with patriarchal structures, powerful men and powerless women. In public women may present a negotiated position towards Lolita, but in their fantasies there exists a different position, the "secret code" of the child-woman. However, the dominant structures and power relation are internalised to a degree that this immensely powerful position does not enter the hegemonic discourse (as of yet). We should look for ways to use this power to break apart the conventional structures that are inappropriate for us as women, and transform the dominant discourse. The Lolita-fantasy guides us. If we dare to make the step and let the secret become public, liberate ourselves from guilt without having to atone for it, throw over board the old dualistic patterns and open up the space for the 'in-between', the utopian vision can find its space in the future.

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Appendix: Lolita-Fantasies

1. (female, 24 years)

*Lolita, that made Luna think of the film by Adrian Lyne. A story of the
relationship of two people who are obviously not destined for each other
and yet they are connected by an overpowering fascination. Lolita, a
young girl who is presented as on the one hand victim and on the other
hand a strategist who consciously uses her feminine allurement. As Luna
thought about the film she came to the conclusion that she associates
more with Lolita than the name of a film or a girl. Lolita for her depicts a
subject-position, an attribution and a judgement. Luna finds the film
presentation twisted and perverted. The film presents an image of
women or girls that distinguishes the virgin and the whore, and it
describes a male perspective that, if taken as starting point, sees the girl*

Lolita being dominated by power and powerlessness of the older admirer. This, and the topic of paedophilia that is touched on in the film, is not what Luna associates with the notion of Lolita.

It is a while now that Luna watched the movie, and at the time when she saw it she did not assign it such a significance. When Luna was working as a waitress in a café there was a male colleague who always spoke of her as a Lolita-type. Back then she did not have an idea what that in fact should mean. She only knew that in a certain way she could seduce some men. She could play with them. Play, by consciously taking advantage of her charisma for steering certain things. She could dominate the men, not them dominating her. Another experience that Luna remembers is about an older man who wanted to seduce Luna. He wanted to buy her expensive and beautiful clothes, take her out on a date and afterwards spend the night together. This story was quite disgraceful for Luna. Until then she had never considered an older man having sexual intentions directed at her. She was disgusted and could not understand the intention of this man. At the time she was angry, and at the same time this anger made her stronger. If something similar was to happen today she would no longer feel helpless. Today Luna plays her knowledge. Today Luna feels the power when she purposefully uses the Lolita in herself for making men do what she wants. Probably by way of playing Lolita achieve her aim. Use a man for her purposes, just as the older man wanted to use her back then.

2. (female, 33 years)

Slowly she passed by the house.
The skirt short as always.
The child-like suntanned legs gleaming in the sunlight.
Wooden sandals.
The hips rhythmically swinging with each step. The sound of the sandals should in fact lure him out of the house—or at least to the window.
Carla stood still and winked towards the window. Awkwardly she played around with her school bag to pass time. If he didn't appear at the window, maybe she should simply go to the hay shed and make him follow her by a seductive wink.
Maybe she should simply go in and he was already there working. And they would stare at each other. Long. Carla would let the school bag

slowly slide from her hands to the floor. Very slowly. Her gaze fixed on him the whole time. And he would not turn his eyes away from her either. And at some stage he would simply drop his tool and come close. Very close. She would feel his breath on her lips and his hand between her legs. She would not resist. Quite the opposite. She would stand a little more apart to make it easier for the hand.

He would press his lips onto hers and in no time his tongue had filled her entire mouth. He would like it. He would like it especially because it was prohibited. She would play the same games with her tongue and, her body pressed closely against his, feel how the desire came up in him. How it became more and more intense and how he could hardly hold back any more.

Not yet. No. He had to be patient for a little bit longer. For some time she wanted the upcoming lust to become pain. And then, when she decided they should fall into the soft, freshly brought in grass and do it. First quick and hasty. All at once. Now and here. Instantly …

And then slowly. Calm. Enjoy the sensual orgy to the limit. To the last drop.

His trousers below the knees. Her skirt pushed up over the belly button. The knickers beside her face in the green grass. It had to happen fast. If somebody came? And discovered them? What would the parents say? What his son who during school time sat right behind her …

Author

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Chapter 15

COLLECTIVE MEMORY WORK WITH OLDER MEN: AGEING, GENDER POLITICS AND MASCULINITIES

Vic Blake, Jeff Hearn, David Jackson, Randy Barber, Richard Johnson, and Zbyszek Luczynski

Beginnings

Over a thirteen-year period, between 2002 and 2015, we were part of what we now call the Older Men's Memory Work Group (hereafter the group). During our final three years together, we also collaboratively produced and edited a collective book, *Men's Stories for a Change: Ageing Men Remember* (Barber et al., 2016; also Blake et al., 2016, 2018) – though it should be said, at the outset, that this was not at all part of our initial agenda, with the idea only emerging late in the process.

Memory work is work on memories, usually though not necessarily collective, and usually also focused on and about some agreed issue(s) of concern. In our case, these memories were about the making and unmaking of older men and masculinities through age, ageing, gender, gendering, and other intersections. Indeed, from the very beginning the group was part of a personal-political project of changing older men and masculinities against patriarchal and sexist ways and relations, and towards feminist and profeminist ways and relations. Here, in this contribution, we first describe the practicalities and the process of our memory work before placing the method itself in its broader framework, and considering its potential for working with older people, and specifically with older men, and with certain implications for practice.

Process

It was actually in the early 1990s when a few of us first discussed the idea for a memory work group of older men to examine the parts played by ageing and gender in our own lives. We had already been involved in

various broadly anti-sexist, profeminist activities around changing men and masculinities, and we were keen to try for ourselves the methods of feminist memory work, inspired initially by the work of Frigga Haug and colleagues in *Female Sexualization* (1987). Haug and her colleagues pioneered collective memory work in exploring what it is that makes girls and women who and what they are. In the event, it took us ten years to get around to setting up our own group. We should add here that when we first discussed the idea for such a collective memory work group, (pro)feminist discussion on men, masculinities, ageing and gender was limited. Over the course of the life of the group, both popular debate and critical and feminist research have grown considerably (see, for example, Calasanti, 2004; Jackson, 2016; Thompson, 2019).

Our first meeting was in April 2002 when seven of us gathered, after which we went on to meet at least twice a year until February 2015, with another five attending at different times over that period, and ending with an overlapping, but different, seven, which then, through the death of one of us, became six in the final months.

Our meetings were almost always away from our homes and usually and deliberately in a 'neutral space'. We generally began at half past nine or ten o'clock in the morning with greetings, tea and coffee, and then there would be a quick go-round of updates in order to catch up on how we were at the time and what had happened to each of us since the last meeting. This was a valuable process, firstly in allowing us to 'regroup' since our previous meeting, but also because it helped us in responding more sensitively, where need be, to each other's individual situation during the day.

We would then finalise agreement on a specific common theme or topic for us to write on – within the broader arc of age, ageing, men, masculinities and intersectional gender relations. In the same or a nearby space, participants would then choose a memory, or some episode or episodes in their lives relevant to the chosen topic and begin writing spontaneously, usually for between 50 and 60 minutes. There was often a keen sense of urgency in all of this process.

It was important that we should give focused attention to working hard on and remembering the details of the memory or episode and that we should be specific and concrete, and not allow ourselves to become too 'detached'. Our personal feelings about our recollections and writings became very important in the discussion that followed. In practice, there

were many different ways of establishing a theme and agreeing a topic: often, the theme was either agreed or provisionally agreed before the meeting; sometimes it was agreed at one meeting for the following meeting; sometimes through email discussions; sometimes with more than one option on the table and any disagreement resolved by compromise, and on one occasion by voting. Focusing on the specific wording of the theme, and not allowing ourselves to be too broad or vague, was often an important part of the process.

An ongoing and often very powerful discussion on themes, both within and between meetings, was often a key motivation in the writing that followed. Writing by hand, rather than via a keyboard, and doing so spontaneously, at speed and in certain definite ways, and within certain time and other limits, produced texts which could then be critically and reflexively interrogated, both by the writers themselves and by the rest of the group. Writing in the first person seemed to be the preferred method, but sometimes some of us would use the third person.

These written memories would then, first, be read out by each of us in turn, without comment from the others. Then, after a shared lunch, we would each read our memories out again, and then discuss them, what they were saying and what they might be telling us – or not, especially in terms of our broad interests in the making and unmaking of older men and masculinities through ageing processes, gendering, and other intersections. Listening attentively to others' reading out of their written stories was a central part of the process, as was the feedback and comments that we gave to each other. Early on we developed rules of confidentiality and a sense of trust that made for a safe and an invigorating space to work in.

At times, some of us would have to take rest breaks during the day or would need to have shortened meetings for health reasons. After the meetings, we each typed up our memories and circulated these to each other. Sometimes as well we discussed and analysed, in writing, by email, and/or verbally, written memories from the previous or earlier meetings by way of a consideration of further possible interpretations of the stories. We also occasionally experimented with other ways of working, such as use of photographs from our earlier lives.

Our individual and collective critically-reflective processes, both within and outside the group meetings, became an important way of engaging with the content of the memory work. Especially important too was the

development of mutual trust between us and our growing affection for one another, so that the mode became one of care and critique – and not therapy. We also at times supported each other in reflecting on how our lives were changing as ageing men, helping us to sustain our friendships and resolve any conflicts in other parts of our lives. While we developed some shared analysis, this could be quite difficult at times, not least because of differences of approach between us, so that, at some points, we downplayed possible attempts at a common or joint analysis and interpretation.

  Importantly, in the embodied and collective moments of writing and the associated reflection process within the group, everyone becomes a writer, an author, and a listener, a reader, a discussant, a critic, a commentator … and often, also, a friend and support. In our case, this also required some division of labour, especially in the final stages of the group when preparing a book on the stories and memories that we generated. But perhaps above all, it would be fair to describe our group as a leaderless group. This non-hierarchical characterisation was maintained even whilst different members at different times took on different aspects of leadership, for example when arranging the venue, clarifying the theme, taking the lead in discussion, creating the archive of memories, and later editing the book.

Locating memory work

One of the fascinating things about memory work is that it is so hard to categorise. In making writers into both subjects and objects, it cuts across established traditions and divisions and modes of analysis. Similarly, what is produced, even if tidied up to some extent, can be located in various ways and traditions, and forms of writing (Haug, 1987; Hyle et al., 2008; Livholts and Tamboukou, 2015; Pease, 2000; Radstone, 2000). It also raises certain questions, for example: how one's memories relate to what "actually" happened in the past; how we and others experienced them then; to what extent these memories might be said to be accurate and, indeed, whether accuracy is at all the most appropriate way to think of these writings, rather than, say, positioning.

  Collective memory work of this kind has developed from several different sources: from feminist consciousness-raising; collective study and auto/biography; from the Worker Writer movement; from oral and

community history; from reminiscence work; from qualitative social inquiry, and, most generally perhaps, from the need to reach beneath the public narratives so as to place subjective feelings and experiences of everyday life into their broader historical and social contexts. It is just such subjective feelings and experiences of everyday life, taken within their broader historical and social contexts, that ultimately make us who and what we are. The collective nature of the process is especially important as it maximises opportunities for reflection, comparison, analysis and challenge. As Frigga Haug puts it:

> Experiences are both the quicksand on which we cannot build and the material with which we do build. We cannot therefore simply rest content with collecting experiences and claiming that these are women's socialization ... . A method has to be found that makes it possible to *work on experiences*, and to *learn from them*. (Haug, 2000, p. 156, our emphases)

Memory work can be used in a variety of contexts, including research and theory development, experimental writing, personal development, politics, and teaching and learning. It can often be hard to pigeonhole under one simple label. For feminist activists and researchers, the method has had a particular salience, women's experience being so often in tension with, or at odds with, dominant masculine ways of defining and producing what counts as public knowledge, as elaborated at length by Dorothy E. Smith (1987) and many more. The method has also gained impetus from the growing interest in all forms of memory, recollection, commemoration and forgetting, particularly from the 1980s onwards. Here, though, our emphasis shifted from memory and oral history with a view to uncovering hidden voices, facts and subordinated experiences, to the actual stories themselves as a way of forming subjective identities and anchoring personal change.

  There are several notable differences, too, between our memory work and that of both auto/biography and oral history interviewing. In our case the short pieces of writing we produced were written 'on the spot' and could therefore be read and analysed more intensively and with greater immediacy than might a long written personal narrative, an extended transcript, or a literary work. The very 'public-ness' and immediacy of our

stories, their recollection and their commitment to the page, was present there in the room with us – as were the risks taken by the writers themselves. Feedback, and interrogation, while being more or less immediate, could, however, also be returned to and more prolonged and detailed after the event. So, the actual experience of writing and its reception can, in themselves, be very formative. During these processes, the meaning of the story for its author can also change, sometimes with significant implications for behaviour or identity, for their understanding the past, the present and perhaps the future. Crucially, however, unlike interviewing, or even most forms of ethnography, there is no formal split between 'source' and analyst: everyone is a source, everyone comments.

  Even though the methodology we used and developed took its initial cue from feminism, what kind of changes were envisaged by us? What kinds of men were we striving to be? And why? Bob Pease (2000) speaks of this in terms of the process of dialogue, discussion, argumentation, critical reflection, theorising from experience, and using feminist standpoint epistemology to research men's lives. But what exactly is the 'standpoint' implicit in or developed in such work as ours, and how does it relate to existing feminist standpoints and epistemologies? Our work, even though it sought to align itself to feminist and profeminist outlooks and principles, could also be characterised as masculine, however critical, as male, or as something else. There are certainly instances where the writer becomes quite assertively male. Then again, perhaps it was not exactly any of these but something more ambiguous, more age-specific, more uncertain, both affirming and subverting. Moreover, we were self-selected, articulate, already committed to gender change, and, perhaps, more mindful than many of the importance of our situatedness and our changing masculinities.

The potential in doing memory work with older men

Reflecting back now, we feel that our age in particular, and our engagement with age, significantly enriched what this project became. As David Jackson (2016) notes 'ageing men are changing men', that is, not just declining men, but embodying a more varied and complex, even positive set of changes. A breadth of experience and our preparedness to confront candidly and critically the accumulated mistakes and errors of judgement from our pasts provided a rich field for analysis and re-

learning. This made possible, we believe, a new kind of 'internal conversation' (see Archer, 2003) in which our individually reflective deliberations, often obscured, incomplete, even self-deceptive, can be recovered, put to the test, and given a new sense of purpose and direction.

While memory work can be used in working with older people more generally, our personal and overarching commitment to change lent itself especially to this form of inquiry. The many marked silences around men, and around masculinity and ageing could be interrupted, perhaps broken, by careful co-operative group work, with each of us learning to trust each other and not to compete with, nor unnecessarily criticise each other in a destructive way.

In the actual writing, we used diverse forms and techniques, some more factually based, some more descriptive, some autobiographical in tone, some more as storytelling, some more literary in style. Sometimes, the emphasis was placed more explicitly on the social conditions and sources of the writing and knowledge; at other times, the writing might be more directed towards the construction of identity and identity change. Thus, there are differences in how our memories were conceived, framed, and expressed. These writings varied from fragments and shards of memory to well-formed and written-out stories, from recollections from long ago to contemporary experiences. In general, in our group, there was more attention paid to memories of childhood and growing up, teenage years and young adulthood, on one hand, and then recent ageing, on the other – rather than those in-between periods of middle-years adulthood (see Hearn and Parkin, 2021, ch. 3).

This method might also bring up memories and things unconscious or forgotten, not fully worked out or consciously planned in advance, even where the topic was known beforehand. Thus, where such memories may be recalled, wholly or partially, clearly or otherwise, they may not be so easily reified or seen as 'the truth', let alone the whole truth or the only truth. But since we were (and still are in our different ways) searching for new ways of interpreting and inhabiting contradictory gender and age relations, the changeful, critically-self-reflective nature of the method, along with the positive support that we afforded each other, allowed us at times to turn such doubts around, even, sometimes, with positive outcomes for change.

Over time, as we drew on our various personal experiences, our memories and dialogues (or metalogues), we became more confident and practiced in exploring, as individuals and as a collective, the gendered ageing of men and masculinities (or aged gendering of men and masculinities) and how these processes constructed and affected us personally. Though our initial focus was more on the making and unmaking of old(er) men and masculinities through, for example, age, ageing processes, gender, gendering, and other intersections, other social divisions and experiences as well began to feature more prominently in our stories and discussions, including around disability, nation and sexuality. Within this broadened approach, we sometimes found ourselves engaging with topics and themes that could be deeply emotive for us.

One notable area where there was not an extended discussion was the intersecting effects of social class and gender. This was especially significant for those with working-class backgrounds. One member found, on later reflection, that he was particularly affected by this. While the group could justifiably be described as 'middle class' in present-day terms, this member came from a poor and troubled, unskilled working class background and, although this featured as a consistent backdrop to his stories, it was never really taken up for detailed discussion. Another member from a 'more respectable' working-class background was also concerned with how to convey early experiences that have strongly stayed with him into adult middle-classness. The implications for the group's wider understanding of class-based masculinities and cultures of ageing are certainly significant; this area deserves greater attention in this kind of collective memory work.

For the remainder of this chapter, we stand back and consider some more general questions and what may have been learnt in reflecting on this process over the 15 or so years. We may wonder what, if anything, we have achieved working together as ageing men, now in our 70s and 80s. We address the main issues that we grappled with, the impact of age, gender and the intersections of age and gender, and what we have learnt about memory work.

Issues and themes

The main topic themes we wrote memories on, in their approximate order, were: ageing; hair; clothes; peeing; school and schooling; disruptive bodily changes; sport; sisters; food; intimacy with men; love; saying goodbye to mothers; political moments; power; violence; fathers and fathering; work; sexuality and relationships; and, finally, ending the group.

  In some cases, we wrote on certain topics more than once, and on a few occasions, where one of us was absent from the original meeting, their stories were written up and submitted later. In practice, the exact specifying of the topic was undertaken with care, for example the first topic, ageing, was phrased "a time when you were conscious of your age". Many of the topics were predictable enough. Some more difficult topics, especially power, violence, and sexuality, were addressed towards the end of the group after a high level of intimacy and trust had been established. Previous raw and undigested material was also critically re-visited, helping to come to terms with some of its troubling effects. More surprisingly, some topics, notably death and relations within the group, were not addressed, at least not explicitly, as writing topics.

  We tried to work through consensus and generally we succeeded, but disagreements sometimes arose in deciding the topic, how it should be worded, interpretations of particular pieces of writing, and the general orientations of the group: therapeutic, experimental, political, supportive, deconstructive, and so on, in various combinations, for different individuals, for different purposes, at different times. We also disagreed towards the end of the group whether or not to invite more members and, for some time, when and how to end the group. The group went through many shifts and contradictions during its own processes of change. Change was never linear or hierarchical, but erratic and fragmentary, more about a zig-zagging disorder than a coherent 'onwards-and-upwards' (or downwards) progression.

  Over time, and as we each got older, health issues became increasingly prominent in our discussions as some of us found ourselves physically less able to travel or cope with our whole-day meetings. In some cases, chronic pain was the problem, causing us to think more carefully about seating arrangements and the like; in others, more general age-related health issues encroached, for example, as one member found he needed

to take a lunch-time nap. In addition, we were increasingly affected by our need to care for ageing partners, family members and/or friends; the issue of caring became a much more significant element in our discussions and the subject of a more focused, ongoing gender analysis.

These processes were never purely (inter)personal or inward-looking, or only relevant for ourselves, but were reflective of wider social, economic and political changes. So, while attempting to address the need for gender change and the means by which we might achieve this, our own bodies and the world around us were also changing, presenting us with fresh surprises, challenges and issues to be addressed. As the signs of ageing took their toll upon some of us and those close to us, the declining state of care for older people, specifically in the UK, became a worrying political backdrop. We and our lives, and those of our partners, were changing, like it or not; the question became how we could best facilitate and accommodate to this. Taking full account of these changing realities was to become a significant meta-theme in our later work.

Awareness of gender power and (in)equalities

None of us came into this project 'raw', in that we were all already committed to a wider emancipatory project, especially in terms of (pro)feminism and anti-sexism. Many but not all of us, for example, had academic, professional and/or activist backgrounds reflecting this commitment, and this informed the original selections for potential membership. As a self-selected group of men, the objective of 'changing men' had already been taken on board to some extent.

Inevitably, in our written stories and the discussions arising from these, there was much opportunity to identify and re-evaluate our past and present lives. In doing so, a further locus of change was opened up, namely that of changing our masculinities in the present, in the here and now. Listening to someone telling their story, not interrupting, waiting one's turn, complementing or criticising the teller in non-competitive, non-damaging ways when the time arose, 'holding' and supporting them during difficult moments, and then putting oneself through the same process, all require interpersonal qualities and social skills not widely associated with men – but, arguably, necessary in changing men. The memory-writing, combined with critical discussion, helped to cast a more critical eye over our pasts and challenged our taken-for-granted

assumptions on our gendered life stories. Personal awakenings to gender-awareness were revisited in seemingly 'safe' accounts relating, for example, to clothes, hair or food, as well as more difficult areas. The basic issue of gender power was put clearly by one group member:

> I know that down the years this [memories and feelings of early subordination] has made it difficult for me to see my own power so that I have imagined myself to be power-less when in fact I may have been in a very powerful situation.

To illustrate the twists and turns of some of such changes, we just take one extended example of one member, writing on domesticity. This begins with the ignorance and selfishness of his youth, and shows how those early tendencies and crude insights became disrupted and overturned over time:

> When I was young I avoided all household tasks like the plague. Somehow, they had become associated with a dull, tedious and apparently meaningless world that belonged to adults – especially my parents. Domesticity seemed to 'bring you down' even though at another level I fantasised about a better life with a better house which was bigger and more luxurious but which was also clean, tidy, warm, comfortable etc., completely failing to appreciate the reality that such things actually depended on functioning levels of tedious domesticity being applied to them.

Ironically, it was when he was in the army that these assumptions first began to change:

> There I was expected – on pain of severe punishment – to wash and iron clothes meticulously, make my bed, keep my bed space and room spotlessly clean and tidy, and so on.

On reflection, the writer later commented that, on leaving the army during his early twenties:

> I was an ordinary civilian again and on a steep learning curve. At this time I wasn't really aware of the gender debate: feminists were bra-burning women's-libbers and were there to be ridiculed and mocked; gay men were still 'queers' or 'poofs' – predatory (or pathetic) and (either way) dangerous, and lesbian women just hadn't met the right man yet. In spite of my still-gnawing, deep-down sense of inadequacy and failure and my wish to become a more modern, peaceful and 'liberated' kind of male, it seems that the various cultural process of 'masculinisation' had actually done a pretty thorough job on me without my even realising it.

Thereafter, he writes of needing to look after himself, but the most significant transition comes after he gets married, when he is looking after his son. Until then, he had been concerned with his own responses to domestic labour in terms of 'personal pride' and 'independent self-respect', but in his newly married state he begins to become more other-directed, more gender-aware, conscious of the need for a more equal partnership. What his partner was doing for him and his son was something he felt unable to ignore:

> … it became a matter of personal pride that I shouldn't need or expect a woman to take on primary domestic responsibility for me or my son.

The possibility that this may have been in part a control mechanism or masculine defence against feelings of vulnerability that can accompany dependency was not lost on the group. Awakening to gendered power and difference, and their often both blatant and subtle workings, is not easy and may involve contradictions and paradoxes.

Learning from past experiences and leaving established gender assumptions behind us were common themes in our writings, but this was not always easy. Gender and gender differentiation are deeply rooted in powerful cultural forces and are a fundamental organising principle for our sense of who we are. Gender situates us and our view of ourselves in the social order, so it is not surprising that so many of us invest so much in it. Even when we are committed to the need for change and are

positive about changing personally, it can be hard to get our heads around, difficult to know how exactly to go about this. Political willingness to change, however sincere, is only part of the equation; for doing gender change, we need to become aware of what this means and all that this requires. In the memory work group, we took up the collective task of critical self-reflexivity to address these questions in our own and others' lives. These experiences fed, albeit unevenly, into developing an awareness of and enacting a wider culture of gender equality and respect for women.

Age, ageing and ageism

Our memory work experiences provided much first-hand material on age, ageing, ageism, embodiment, bodily change, loss, as well as the contradictions of ageing, gendering and power, then to be reflected upon, personally, politically, theoretically. As we tried to understand our pasts more clearly and critically, the dynamic interactions between individual life histories and wider shifts in gender politics over the last 50 to 60 years came into sharper focus. As we looked back, individually and collectively, we were reminded that time is running out, even more so after the sudden, deeply saddening death of one of our group. Inevitably, our sense of our own physical and emotional vulnerabilities became increasingly prominent and important.
  One member wrote,

> It's true that with medication things are much better now and I have had no accidents for a year or more. Yet my body is no longer the one I was in my forties. It is ageing. I am ageing, which is more difficult to realise.

Another member struggled to cope with hearing problems, respiratory problems and chest infections, skin cancer and skin graft operations and blurred vision. These physical and emotional struggles made him much more aware of his own limitations, particularly in relation to his participation in the group – thus near the end of group he sent this email around the group:

> First I want to acknowledge that I can't keep on doing a 10-4 commitment to this group. Instead I'm trying to forge new, realistic limits for myself, and I hope for others in this group. Now I can manage the morning session (say, 3-4 hours) but I need to rest and sleep in the afternoon.

Others have had to cope variously with the traumatic effects of breakdown, prostate cancer, chronic pain and chest infections, as well as with the emotional, health and physical needs of loved ones. This highlighted the importance of self-caring, caring for others, and caring masculinities (Hanlon, 2012; Kramer and Thompson, 2005). Accordingly, we have endeavoured to create an anti-ageist and anti-sexist space that has been nurturing and caring in ways that are unusual in dominant forms of men's relations with others. We are sure our lost member would very much have wanted to emphasise this sentiment.

  Inevitably, any misconceptions we may have been harbouring about just how robust we really were in our masculine selves needed to be re-thought and come to terms with, as did our changing feelings and concerns for one another as the need to support each other increased. As we aged and reflected differently, some of us became more conscious of popular stereotypes about older men, for example, in relation to sexuality, changing attitudes, or toileting, as in: 'dirty', 'smelly' or 'grumpy' old man. On occasions, this awareness surfaced in our stories, on peeing, for example, while at times a more assertive edge to ageing took hold in discussions. Stagnant, ageist representations and media stereotypes of ageing men do not do justice to older men generally. Indeed, these may do much to stultify the actual potential of their later lives and experiences. Such images are contradicted by the energy and vitality of the variety of representations of ageing men found in some of our stories.
  We also became aware of how the ageing process can lead to a relaxing of the more arduous performative aspects of masculinity. Our increased longevity, compared with that of our fathers, for example, opened up a space in which we were able to let go many of the pressing concerns of our earlier masculine selves. We found ourselves working through the complicated balance between a sense of loss and sense of a release that had the potential at least for opening up a fresh sense of perspective on masculinity, especially in its more hegemonic forms. While some of us

became noticeably more frail as time wore on, there was no sense whatsoever of our conceding to wider processes of being demeaned or 'frailed' (Higgs and Gilleard, 2015; Jackson, 2016; King et al., 2021; Sandberg, 2011) by others' attitudes or practices. Indeed, some of us would say we became more radicalised by the experience, even more determined to play our full part in social change.

Older men are not worn-out, passive, static subjects. Although from a distance their lives may seem to be hardly moving, they are sometimes, in fact, characterised by rapid shifts and changes in their bodies and their personal circumstances, thus promoting ambivalent and newly emerging selves. Frequent life events, such as severe illness, breakdown, hospitalisation, loss of job security and status, or the infirmity or death of a spouse, force adjustments in later life. Alongside the uneven processes of ageing and bodily adaptations go changes in the meanings and experiences of masculinity. In conceiving ageing men as being in constant motion and movement, we begin to appreciate more fully their complex subjectivities and catch further glimpses of a surprising richness in the complex and contradictory lives of some.

Loss of physical function can seriously destabilise performative masculine identities and assist critical re-assessment of what kind of men we are in a shifting, sometimes bewildering world. Decline of former social power and status, economic productivity, bodily strength and sexual potency that ageing men encounter in their later years, may weaken at least some men's attachments to patriarchal relations (Silver, 2003). While some ageing men may cling onto old, defensive routines and identities and refuse to acknowledge their increasing fragility and vulnerability, this can also make for emancipatory possibilities, beyond a reliance on former obsessive concerns with work, success, ambition, competition, individualism, and selfish sexualities, sustaining their belief in robust 'masculinity'. In contrast, ageing men can develop a critical, self-reflexivity with regard to how gender power relations operate (Meadows and Davidson, 2006). From this perspective a tentative movement may be discerned in some ageing men, towards an "ageing men's anti-patriarchal standpoint" (cf. Calasanti and Slevin, 2006; Hearn, 1994; Jackson, 2001, 2003). Perhaps through the process of critically re-examining our lives, past and present and self-reflexively, this potential for moving forward was enhanced for us.

Learning from memory work

Reading back over the memories written over 13 years (Barber et al., 2016) leaves us with mixed feelings. On one hand, there are stories that are (pro)feminist(ic) and/or can be moving to read; on the other, there seem to be recurring themes that can re-instance gender inequalities. Sometimes the moving and the disturbing are in the same moment. Early blinkering to gender and age issues created at some points a form of collusion with taken-for-granted, patriarchal or ageist norms that might well have prevented a gendered, anti-ageist awareness developing in our memory work. At the same time, the fact that these particular stories were recalled and written in the first place, and the very context in which this happened, suggests some prior awareness of or concern with these issues.

Nonetheless, various alternative readings of these written stories are possible and can show them to be more complex and multi-layered than at first appears, or than the writer intended. Thus, one writer warns about too much complacency in these matters, considering what a feminist perspective might have made of our memory work:

> One feminist reading of these stories might conclude that they show how unconscious many men are of the power which they themselves exercise, especially in relationships with women, unconscious too of the systemic nature of male privilege.

A possible criticism of our memory work is that we may not have been quite as challenging as we could have been. Sometimes we were probably anxious not to damage the group with its warmth and support, a feature often all too absent among groups of men. Might this same warm and supportive ambience have served to reduce our attempts to be more candidly gender-critical? Perhaps the choice of certain stories may have been bit 'safe' for those reasons? For example, even though being a relatively privileged group, quite a few of the memories concern our being on the 'receiving end of gendered power', rather than concentrating on early, taken-for-granted, male-dominant actions. But, then, the stories themselves are only one part of the process of memory work, of understanding the past and imagining the future differently. Bob

Pease (2000, p. 75) observes: "Remembering is not only an attempt 'to understand the past better but to understand it differently'". One member later reflected on how difficult this process of moving on from past mistakes could be:

> Naïve and unworldly, I didn't know where to begin and so made a real hash of it while desperately wanting to learn from [his father's] mistakes and be a kind and loving – truly fulfilling father to my own children. Instead, and in spite of myself, I became angry, selfish, domineering and even heavy-handed, just like him. *'The bee stings and then dies itself,'* I wrote many years later in a poem.

This writer does talk of changing, of being more reflexive and less hard on himself, but the process of change is never complete. We are, and to an extent remain, our pasts, even if we can become more than that by learning to forge a different and better future for ourselves and others. Critiquing the past is one thing; it is another thing entirely to carry lessons learnt into the present and translate these into present and future practice. In critically examining our pasts, we not only opened up past errors but also took on board vulnerabilities and contradictions for our changing relationships with one another, women and further genders.

Some implications for practice

The experience of memory work and its potential for effecting change is bound to be very different from one group to another, where differences such as age, gender, class, ethnicity and life experience can have a radical impact on both group identity and outlook. Whereas, in its inception, the collective memory work of Frigga Haug and colleagues had a great deal to do with consciousness-raising for women with clear potential for their empowerment, using these same methods for men – the already culturally empowered – is a different undertaking, raising obvious questions, and perhaps even a sceptical eyebrow about what we were really up to.

  We suggest that a number of key points should be considered when using memory work, especially with reference to men:

- It is difficult to imagine a successful project of this kind without genuine, collective commitment to substantive change, both personally and at wider social/political/cultural levels.
- Similarly, no such project can succeed without a willingness to trust implicitly in the other group members, something that may be difficult for some men.
- For this to be possible, and the project to progress, those involved need to be committed to caring for one another, especially in moments of greatest vulnerability, alongside their self-critical and mutually critical practice.

The degree of critical public exposure we subjected ourselves to, facilitated by our members' backgrounds in anti-sexist activity and development work, along with their analytical and life experiences, meant there were few places for any of us to hide, even if we wanted to. In the immediate group, this was public within the bounds of agreed confidentiality (or at least anonymisation), but there were also degrees of publicness in doing workshops, being open to visitors to sessions, and in the subsequent publishing of a collective book, even if that was not part of any original plan. If at times this made for an uncomfortable, even disturbing, experience, it was held together by the collective commitment of the group and the emotionally 'holding' environment we were able to develop. Without this, many of the intimate disclosures – what we might call, the soft and contradictory underbelly of masculinity – as in our book, *Men's Stories for a Change* (Barber et al., 2016), might never have been possible.

So, what about other ageing men who may not share such a profile? How might collective memory work be of practical use for them? How might they be able to work critically if they have little experience of this kind of work, or may even lack the capacity or inclination? In reflecting on these questions, some key points may be considered:

- Collective memory work might be especially useful with groups of older men whose lives may have been disrupted through transition or crisis. They might, for example, have experienced a health or relationship crisis, or have become

unemployed/unemployable, or be experiencing a difficult retirement. Some men may find themselves, perhaps through retirement or unemployment, thrown suddenly into a world of domesticity, with all of its 'feminine' associations, but for which they may feel ill-equipped, requiring different kinds of personal/domestic skills and relationships. Others may be dealing with loneliness, lack of self-worth or new disabilities. Such men might well benefit from collective critical reflection as a catalyst for dealing with real and practical changes in their lives, in their personal circumstances, and in wider society.

- Memory work with such groups of men might require input from a convenor figure, which in turn would suggest a familiarity with the process and certain group facilitation skills. However, the existence of a person in the group in a position of authority might well create certain tensions and, perhaps, mistrust and conflict among members, as noted by Mariette Clare and Richard Johnson (2000).

- Getting a group of, say, eight men who are strangers to work candidly, openly, to learn to listen, share, trust – all this often an anathema to some men – may take a great deal of time, effort, commitment and practice. Just learning to work non-competitively can in itself be a significant hurdle to be overcome.

- Recognition of social situatedness is basic for groups doing memory work. In our work together, we aimed to recognise, theoretically and practically, how we are located in the gender order, and how our masculine subjectivities are constructed and, therefore, might be deconstructed and even reconstructed. The impact of wider social conditions and social divisions, such as class, and their implications for change, were equally important. Accordingly, we needed to identify and take full account of our situatedness, structurally within the status quo, and dynamically within social changes, with a view to different futures.

So, is political change the object of memory work? In part, maybe it is, and one group member noted what this could mean:

> I don't see memory work as primarily about reflecting on one's own life; that is one of millions. I remain much more interested in changing men generally rather than seeing the memory group as a question of individual therapeutic change. This is a political position – the search for the loss of ego towards the great struggle, or if you prefer the Great Struggle.

We all would agree with this emphasis on wider political change, as opposed to a narrower concern with the purely individual or 'therapeutic'. Memory work can make an important contribution to wider gender political change, as well as for ageing men. By its nature, it has potential to increase possibilities of individual and collective agency and change, in critically reflecting upon past experiences and learning to re-evaluate them in the light of the group process. Were we, however, to reach out further with the memory work method, we would need to consider that the capacity or desire for critical self-reflection and change is not universally shared, and can be diminished by, for example, lack of confidence in oneself, or even over-confidence.

  Although the process of change begins for us with making visible to ourselves and others how we became the men we are, it is through deepening our understanding of ageing processes and masculinities that we can become aware of how to *un*-make and/or move on from the past. This includes moving on from those emotional investments and practices that encouraged clumsy, sometimes damaging, commitment to dominant masculine identities. If we can learn to understand how it is and why it was that we have actively bound ourselves into particular masculine cultures, then real change becomes possible, not just for ourselves but for others with whom we come into contact. When *we* change, others may need to deal with the implications of this. This process necessarily involves degrees of intimacy, self-examination and critical self-exposure that, arguably, many men might find daunting. As one participant wrote, in reflecting on this: "There seem to be rules about this kind of stuff, rules that have dark origins that are dangerous to explore." And this example from an early story …

> I am resisting adding this, but dammit I trust you. As a youngish teenager I found a woman's swimsuit that my mother never wore. I put it on occasionally when I was at home alone. Once I did it when my sister was there and went to show her. As I remember it there was no hint of condemnation from her. I look back on it as an important moment of trust between us.

Trying to effect political change raises the risk of it becoming disingenuous and hypocritical if it is not equally borne out in our personal lives. If real meaningful change in our gender practices is to come about, we have to be able to demonstrate that it can indeed be done, that it works as a better way forward, for others too. Struggle for change at the political, structural, economic and ideological levels continues, but we have to do more than this. The personal and the political are interconnected; if men could learn to acknowledge their inner vulnerability to one another, and learn to trust each other more with this, then it raises at least a possibility that there might be less conflict in the world. The change over time in the nature, intimacy and depth – and tenderness – of some of our stories testifies not only to the presence of some inhibitions early on, but also the extent to which the group members learned to face it, and so change.

  Another important point to add here is that although the group comprised men, it was not closed to women and further genders. Exclusionary men-only groups should certainly be viewed with great caution and not be a model or mode for longer-term public politics. Group activity does not exist out of context, and accountability is key. In our case here, we tried to be open to what we were doing, even if we were sometimes unsure what exactly that was. For example, at one point, a woman film-maker wanted to come along and film the group which we happily agreed to; on another occasion, a feminist researcher joined the group for one of the sessions, with further subsequent contacts; also, various of us, individually or together, ran workshops at 'mixed' public events; and now of course the written stories and memories are available for all to see in the book, and to use, as wished.

  Any such exercise as we have described is bound to have limitations. Most obviously, these were partly to do with the size of the group and, its

relatively restricted range of membership in terms of societal range, along with the extent to which one might make broader sense of the experiences, memories and written texts gathered. In other words, how could this process become more than just a disconnected collection of memories and stories and, if so, how?

 In fact, the two interconnected themes identified in the group, namely 'being men'/'masculinity' and 'ageing', necessarily located its members within far wider, complex and dynamic social, cultural and political processes. Additionally, the group's focus on and appetite for change assisted in locating the project in theory and theorising, as well as locating theory and theorising in the project. As Haraway (1988) noted, all knowledge is 'situated' or 'views from somewhere'. If these stories articulated *only* a disparate collection of *individual* 'somewheres' they might amount, in practice, to little of substance, or perhaps 'nowhere' in particular. What Haraway calls for instead is: "... *simultaneously* an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects ... *and* a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a "real" world." (emphases in original) (p. 579). It was in the intimate process of individual exposure and critique that the group members sought simultaneously to comment radically on that "real world", so that, through examining what was often a difficult struggle for change in our own lives, we might begin to expose the potential for changing that world, perhaps for the better.

 Finally, we note something easily glossed over as insignificant, namely, that we were able *at all* to meet in the way we did for an entire day. Yet, we were able not only to work through our agenda productively, but do so in a climate of critical support, without hierarchical structure, competition or conflict, at least not to any appreciable degree. The collective process of critical exposure is not, perhaps should not be, confined to personal criticism in the negative sense. It would be unlikely for trust to grow in a narrowly judgmental environment. While always critical, the process has helped us in coming to terms more caringly with ourselves, our personal histories, as well as in our relationships and in wider politics. One member summed this up for him personally:

> We were an actively change-orientated group, supportive, challenging, learning together. We were cooperatively critical and tried to translate that to our relationships with family

friends and others. The group fed our relationships and it showed to us that men can support each other without having to rely on partners for emotional and practical problem solving using the reflective methods of memory work. It has made me a stronger and independent man ready to confront ageing.

This is a project that is both finished and unfinished.

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Authors

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Randy Barber is a seventy-something man working part-time as a manual therapist. Originally from Canada, he spent many years in Australia before moving to the UK in 2003. He has a special interest in ageing and health.

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All six were long-term members of the Older Men's Memory Work Group 2002 to 2015, which produced, with the late Dan McEwan, *Men's Stories for a Change: Ageing Men Remember*, published by Aging & Society/Common Ground in 2016.

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Chapter 16

EXPLORING COLLECTIVE MEMORY-WORK IN SERBIA: CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER AND ETHNICITY IN POST-CONFLICT CONTEXT[1]

Ana Đorđević and Zorana Antonijević

Introduction

The text explains the application of the Collective Memory-Work (CMW) method in two projects in Serbia, considering the authors' original fields – gender studies and psychology, as well as the objectives of their individual research projects. The paper also observes ways to make CMW useful for understanding socialization through gender and ethnic identities, both at the micro plane of the individual, and on the collective plane of the social group. Both approaches help improve understanding of the ways in which gender patterns and regimes, as well as nationalistic identity politics, multiply and perpetuate.

  To understand both approaches, project contexts should be considered, as well as their purpose. The context is post-conflict, post-socialist Serbia, one of the former Yugoslav republics, and one of the main actors of the 1990s nationalist and pro-war politics. The participants of the project that uses gender as basis for CMW belong to the middle generation of women who still remember living in their former homeland – once a single country, who have the experience as refugees, anti-war and feminist activists, as well as direct experience with bombing. The generation participating in ethnic identity-related CMW is the generation that does not remember the former shared country, nor has direct experience of war – other than through their parents' stories and symbolic and often political (distorted) representation of the causes and effects of the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The text further elaborates on the importance of CMW by introducing an interdisciplinary approach to the authors' fields, although their ambitions regarding the use of the method in their projects were different. The first is used for a doctoral dissertation, to establish interdisciplinary dialogue, but also break down certain prejudices against different methodological approaches in mainstream psychology. The second is driven by the need to use activism and social experiment to establish dialogue among different methods in the memory work area predominant within gender studies in Serbia – such as oral history (Leavy 2011).

It is also interesting that we conducted our projects in solitude and silence, away from the activist and academic communities, unaware that the other one existed working on something similar. However, we were brought together by "chance, the comedian"[2], and this text is the result of this serendipitous encounter. We start with Ana's project.

Collective Memory-Work: Ethnicity

Intro

The main question that struck me at the beginning of my PhD studies was *What does it mean to be Serb?* This is not a self-evident nor an abstract question, so what follows is a social and academic contextualization of the research itself.

Being born and raised in post-Yugoslav Republic of Serbia brought up different opportunities and challenges for my generation, comparing to the one who lived during Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Even though the societal changes after the Yugoslav wars (1991-2001) were profound, the change from socialism to ethnic nationalism was among the most radical ones. That comes as no surprise, given the fact that the war actions of all sides were legitimized by ethnic nationalism. Not only that, but the violent conflict was also presented as preferable, if need be, to defend one's own nation or fight for its independence. Serbian nationalism was prevailing in the Serbian public sphere, reinforced by its national leader and prominent Serbian intellectuals (Tomić 2014).

Few decades after the dissolution of SFR Yugoslavia, nationalism is still a powerful discursive means in hands of political and religious authorities,

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2   "Slučaj komedijant" – expression coined by Serbian author, Miloš Crnjanski.

for binding together the citizens of Serbia. However, it is also deeply entwined in the structural institutions of the society, such as police, military, education[3], and even culture, which is why sociologists claim that we live in an ethno-nationalized society (Bolčić 2019). In short, nationalism and ethnocentrism dominate over Serbian society in both symbolic and structural ways. Based on research which shows a widespread importance of national/ethnic group for self-identification among Serbian people (Kalaba 2013; Stjepanović Zaharijevski 2008) it is reasonable to assume that they also dominate over individual experience in some way.

However, most of the research takes this as evidence, without trying to investigate the mechanisms by which ethnic belonging becomes a strong attachment point, the one to "die for," especially among youth. Serious attempts at social critique of the status quo usually take place in theory, while empirical research mostly accumulates evidence.

Being trained in psychology, me and some other colleagues who are also interested in the psychology of ethnicity and national belonging, were taught to approach the problem from the viewpoint of social psychology, which is highly influenced by positivism, individualism, and experimentalism (Greenwood 2004). As young scholars, we took issue with that because we considered it a highly restrictive research environment, especially when it comes to methodological approaches, and the lack of scientific self-reflection. What are we doing research for, if not for the betterment of society and its members?

The project

On one side, what was interesting to me, given the subject of my doctoral thesis – ethnic identification – were not general and fundamental psychological processes, but situated personal experience in relation to social practices, and the dynamics between experience and discourse. More specifically, some of the questions were: *How do we come to understand and experience self as member of an ethnic community*? *What social practices give substance to personal meaning of ethnic belonging*? And *how come* that we speak in terms of ethnic or national *identity* when the only thing we can see around ourselves are different,

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3   Research shows that national history education is ethnocentric, as is high school students' knowledge in history (Stojanović 1994, 2010).

mostly anonymous, sometimes even strange people... Are we just an *imagined community*, as Benedict Anderson put it (1983), and if so, *by what cultural means and practices do we become attached to that which we imagine*?

At the time of crystallization of my idea for the PhD research back in 2017, two significant events took place. First, I met Frigga Haug at the PhD course in critical psychology in Copenhagen and was introduced to Collective Memory-Work. Second, a group of undergraduate students approached me with the idea to qualitatively explore the construction of national identity of, or rather *for*, the people in Serbia.

That is how the six of us, three female and three male psychology students, started our memory-work project.

Two significant features of this research, one might say, compromised the traditional practice of Collective Memory-Work, as introduced by Frigga Haug and her colleagues (1999). One of them is the fact that the research idea was already thought through before the gathering of the group. I had the role of primary researcher, someone to provide knowledge on almost entirely unknown methodology, someone to promote the idea, organize the research, but mostly to *animate* other members. Also, I was afraid that if the whole project were collective based, I would not be allowed to defend my thesis... Therefore, due to assumed institutional restrictions, the project was only partly collective.

The other feature is that this research has not dealt with an oppressed or marginalized group, as many Collective Memory-Work projects have. However, it has dealt with a certain kind of submission to power, namely *submission to certain forms of subjection*, as Foucault would say, but also Bronwyn Davies (Foucault 1982; Davies 2008). In other words, I wanted to explore how we become subjects of ethnic socialization, which is part of the dominant normality taken for granted in Serbia. Practical purpose of the study was questioning the hegemonic discourse of ethnocentrism and nationalism, or the conceited idea that "we" are superior or better than other nations. Furthermore, I wanted to explore the possibility of individual emancipation from the collectively based and reinforced *identity logic* and *hatred* of the, imagined, but also real – Other. Or at least, to interrupt it together with my colleagues, which is ambitious enough, if emancipation sounds too utopian (Hyle, Montgomery, and Kaufman 2020).

The Collective Memory-Work project took place in the institutional setting of our faculty, over a period of two months with weekly gatherings. We mostly did memory-work with the aim to explore how it works, and to obtain an empirical basis for my PhD. Practical or political goals were important, but secondary. Therefore, we only did memory writing on one cue, and one round of collective analysis of each memory. Then I turned to another group to do the same. The other group was made of three male history students and myself, and the cue for both groups was the same: "When I felt the most as Serb."

In using this cue, we have not dislocated the research subject, as Frigga Haug and her co-workers did – from sexuality to body parts. We only *transferred*[4] it to a certain situation or a context, similar to Karin Widerberg's project where she asked students to write memories on when they felt like a man or a woman (Widerberg 1998). Transferring here is to explore how people construct themselves, and how they are constructed *to fit a category*, while dislocating would be to explore seemingly banal everyday objects and practices which are related to implicit ethno-national feelings, such as flags, traditional food, clothes, songs etc. However, some of those appeared in our project as well, as important parts of self-construction as member of Serbian ethnic group.

First, both groups gathered to talk about what does it mean to be Serb in general terms, when do we usually feel as Serbs, what kinds of situations evoke our sense of ethnicity, what is the personal and political significance of this subject in our society, and especially for our generation; us who are born during the troubled nineties full of conflicts, exoduses and economic challenges, but who do not have personal memories on them, since we were just babies or toddlers back then. Also, we discussed symbolic and ideological hybridization of Serbian society in transition, in terms of heterogeneous discourses – from monarchism to liberalism, socialism to nationalism – where it is difficult to orient and position oneself.

After all these different aspects which we first tried to explicate in everyday terms – how we perceive the problem of ethnicity in Serbia today – we proceeded to writing our personal memories, each of us for her or himself in their own pace and peace. We used the suggestions for

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4   The distinction between transferring and dislocating the research problem in collective memory work was discussed by Nordic researcher Maria Jansson and her colleagues (Jansson et al., 2008).

writing based on Frigga Haug's chapter on detailed rendering of the method (2008): a specific situation, in third person perspective, in as much detail as possible, and on one typed page. Then we gathered once per week to analyze each memory text, trying to follow the procedure as suggested in the chapter. I admit that, at first, I insisted on following the instructions, because, initially, I lacked experience with the method, and the rest of the group expected that I provide the structure and say what we *should* do. I wanted to see how the method works, what can arise from this type of peculiar and detailed analysis that we could not have seen before – both in theory and in everyday life. That is how new insights began to emerge, while the group started to feel more relaxed and competent, and the process was more flexible, as we headed towards the last gathering. The analyses were exhausting, lasting up to three hours; sometimes they were trivial, sometimes brilliant, but each of us gained something from it: be it a positive experience, a new methodological knowledge, reflection on one's own ethnic belonging or ethnocentrism, or even of one's own egocentrism. Some of us were more than others challenged to learn something new about ourselves – while there were those who refused to accept the challenge[5].

  Unfortunately, we did not go through the comparative analyses and collective theorizing similarities and differences. One reason was that the exam period started, and they all had to study; the other was utter exhaustion from the whole process, since we took as much time as possible for each memory to analyze it thoroughly; the third was my decision to take some time off, take distance, and then compare and theorize on my own, but based on the collective analyses which I later transcribed. After all, we all had in mind that it was my idea for the PhD project, and that it was for the sake of my academic title that we conducted Collective Memory-Work. Because of that, much of the decisions made about this research were driven by the fact that I had to defend the thesis at the Department of Psychology in Belgrade, which, as mentioned before, is mostly positivistic oriented. Apart from the scientific

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5   There was a young man in the group of history students, who was the most nationalistically oriented. He was defending his strong attachment to Serbian people, and he expressed discontent due to his perception that there are no more "genuine nationalists" in Serbia, those who genuinely care for Serbs and are willing to commit themselves to that cause. At the last meeting of the group, he said that he does not want to change his attitude, and that he will certainly raise his children to become nationalists.

and practical matter, which were the most important for my thesis, I had to think about my original contribution as single author, as well as the questions about procedural steps, validity and reliability of the method and generalizability of the research findings.

Key results

In the last analytical steps, I used a theoretical model from cultural psychology (Zittoun 2012) to explore how does the subjectivity of a person evolve within specific social practices and discourses, or by which socialization and subjectification processes does a person emerge as "Serb." Sometimes, that question referred to the process of marking and discursive positioning of a person, within the Us-Them dichotomy and the feeling of *collective threat* and the *need to defend oneself*. Other times, the processes of personal identification with either *collective suffering* or *collective violence*, resulted in feelings of *empathy* and *guilt* (respectively). However, there were processes of *performing* (presenting, hosting) as member of ethnic group, which resulted in the feeling of *pride*; conversely, there were those when a person felt *betrayed and rejected* by other Serbs, as someone who is "not a real Serb," based on his geographical background[6]. Most memories expressed deep concerns for one's place in society which is marked by ambivalence and confusion between feeling that we *need to belong somewhere* and feeling that *belonging should not be taken for granted* and defined by current political, religious, or any, social authority. Most of us took this research as an opportunity to express our *autonomy* regarding the question "what does it mean to be Serb."

Autonomy was one of the main concerns of the original Collective Memory-Work project by Frigga Haug and her group, even though it was based on women's experiences, and not those of the dominant group in society. Here, the resistance to dominant normality was based on *personal and generational* belonging, as opposed to ethnic or national.

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6   The ancestors of a person were settled in places that are or were not historically part of Serbia.

Reflections on the theoretic and practical potentials of CMW for post-grad ethnicity studies

The paradox is that even though the co-researchers were affiliated to the dominant ethnic group, the results show that for some of us, that affiliation or identification provokes uncomfortable feelings and unease, but also resistance towards dominant socialization practices. Some of us felt guilty, angry, lonely, and even depressed, within practices of predominant ethnic identification, and refused to settle on those feelings. Some of us even refused to participate in the processes of ethnic identification, thereby expressing dis(s)identification. Therefore, belonging and acting in society, even within practices of dominant normality, can be defined by personal or alternative collective resistance, and not by subordination to the dominant normative in which a person is socialized.

  In this research, memory-work exposed the dominant practices of ethnic socialization and identification that shape personal experience, but it also made visible the resistance against social normativity. It maybe even *provoked* that resistance... We can consider that potential of Collective Memory-Work its comparative advantage to other methods used in psychology for this subject, which only provide evidence of these processes, thereby reinforcing the status quo.

  In the end, Collective Memory-Work can also be considered a method with broader practical relevance for studying various forms of domination over subjects, and for more subtle forms of self-reflection. However, it should be done not only within, but outside of post-grad studies, due to formal restrictions of various institutional bodies included in the decision on the suitability of the research for the given academic framework. Less restrictive research context can lead to more relevant practical and political outcomes, by providing alternative forms of collectivization.

With this in mind we move on to Zorana's project.

Collective Memory-Work: Gender

The project "Women's Memories": how and why we started

It is unusual to start writing about a project from the end, rather than the beginning. Still, nothing about this project was "usual", and this is also true for its end. The last meeting of the small group under the name "Women's Memories" occurred in January 2020. It was held in the festive atmosphere of Orthodox Christmas, without the burden of everyday concerns and tasks. We brought each other little gifts and wrote down a memory on a "gift" to someone or from someone, sometime. By chance, or not, this last meeting, which we did not know would be the last, occurred exactly three years after the first meeting in January 2017.

   Following this, in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic started, and we did not meet any more for the project, either virtually or in person. In December 2020, the group–composed (mainly) of feminist activists–split over disagreements around whether to adopt more or less radical resistance strategies to anti-feminist tendencies in Serbia. Two participants left the group. This also tore the fragile friendship ties that had formed among us while working on the project. Therefore, this text, as a form of summary, also has a healing role – to remember how we started and lasted, and less how we ended our project.

   The first application of Collective Memory-Work has been in discovering the processes influencing women's gender socialisation, the creation of their gender identities and roles in the given society (Haug 2008). This was also the intent of our group in Serbia. The initial idea came after a conversation with Professor Jeff Hearn, during my time at the Örebro University in Sweden as gender studies exchange student. The cause was a book by a group of authors, including Hearn, on CMW and ageing men (Barber et al. 2016). On the road between Örebro and Karlstad, finishing the final review of the manuscript, Professor Hearn and I talked about different feminist methods for the collection of memories and experiences and to which extent they related to CMW. One of those methods was oral history (OH), which I had already implemented, and knew a lot about. The OH method was theoretically covered in detail and practically implemented throughout gender studies at Novi Sad University. I learned about the method thoroughly attending the non-academic women's studies program in the early 2000s (Savić 2001), after

which, due to the institutionalisation of gender studies, the method was often used in master and doctoral theses. This was not always welcomed by university structures, namely, in the case of two doctoral dissertations, which were ultimately not accepted for defence, the method was evaluated as non-scientific, and therefore irrelevant for serious research of social phenomena, such as inequality, for example (Antonijević 2020).

I was drawn to CMW by the possibility to learn about other methods focusing on recording "experience" as relevant and important for understanding, on one hand women's socialisation, and on the other multiple inequalities perpetuating and deepening their unequal position in society (Scott 1991). In this respect, the intent of the "Women's Memories" project, was to record and study multiple narratives through personal memories and experiences of being women in turbulent historical times for Serbia, the region, and the world (the break-up of Yugoslavia, the fall of the Berlin wall, Serbia's economic and political transition). We wanted to make our experiences visible, our memories relevant for a better understanding of the social phenomena that influenced and still influence our lives. I believed that CMW as method can respond to that challenge and provide insights into women's socialisation during historical events that changed the geography and social circumstances of an entire region. "For feminist activists and researchers, the method had a particular salience, for women's experience was often in tension with the preferred masculine forms of public knowledge" (Barber et al. 2016: xxii).

In December 2016, I sent emails to a broader group of friends and acquaintances inviting them to join the project. The call presented the project as "informal, personal, non-academic, volunteer memory project" (Antonijević 2016) referring to the foreword in the book on CMW and ageing (Barber et al. 2016). However, the proposal also acknowledged considerable differences between that project and the planned "Women's Memories" project, primarily in the knowledge of the circumstances of life of women in Serbia, European semi-periphery, and the lives of older men in the UK. The call was sent to younger and middle-aged women (ranging between 35 and 55 years of age), who, understandably, had young children or older parents to care for, and in addition were activists and workers with demanding jobs, with much travel and long working hours. In a word, it took balancing the most difficult area for women in Serbia: private and public spheres, finding enough free time to engage in

personal development. Therefore, the call proposed to hold meetings online, over a (then) available online platform. Writing this in the summer of 2021, after nearly two years working in the online regime under COVID-19, this proposal seems both rational and revolutionary! It was understood that only women could participate in the project.

Nine women responded to the call, two of whom withdrew because they were busy and unable to travel to meetings, as the final decision was made to organise the meetings not virtually, but in person. Due to various living conditions, we decided to make our meetings shorter (between three and four hours) and organise them mainly in the evenings. That was when most of us had free time. This also meant that one of us always had to spend extra time travelling to Belgrade where most of the meetings were held. It was nearly impossible to organise that all of us be there at each meeting, so the number of recorded memories varies from one topic to another. Finally, seven women, myself excluded, agreed to participate, and remained active in the project until its end.

All of us who participated in the project: Aleksandra, Biljana, Jelena, Sanja, Sofija, Višnja, Zorica and Zorana had known one another from before, declared ourselves as feminists and had been active in the women's movement and the human rights movement in Serbia. Also, we all had very firm and clear anti-war and anti-nationalistic attitudes, and as professionals or activists we had been, and still are contributing to further advance women's and human rights in Serbia. An important characteristic is that we are all highly educated, in the fields of law, sociology and economy, languages and literature. Two of us had the academic experience of gender studies (master and doctoral levels). The group dynamics were also considerably influenced by the fact that we were not part of any academic or activist project, thus being able to place our gatherings and CMW somewhere between personal empowerment and awareness-raising, certainly not group therapy, although the work itself did have significant therapeutic effects.

Equality among group members was implied. Within the call for participation in the project, but later also during the work itself, the adopted practice was that each group member had the opportunity to propose the topic, time, and place for the meeting. We also rotated as meeting organisers. Our intent was to meet once in three months, which we were only able to do during the first year of the project, 2017, when we met a total of three times. One of the main challenges was to find

time and space for our meetings. Times were difficult to coordinate, and space needed to be quiet, isolated, private, but it should not be in the house or apartment of one of the participants. The gatherings most often took place in the business premises of one of the participants after business hours and late into the evening.

The issue of voluntary participation was also very important. All group members were from the start informed that they could leave the group whenever they wanted to (which two members did towards the end of 2020), as well as pass on writing on certain topics that they did not agree to, or "veto" a topic, as happened for instance with the topic "Mother". Confidentiality and the need to feel safe were among the most important principles, as well as to feel free, content, and relaxed while doing CMW. An integral part of the meetings was also going for drinks or dinner after writing, reading, and analysing. It is better to say that the analysis went on, sometimes even late into the night. "The changeful, self-reflective nature of the method, and also the support it gave, was appropriate and welcome" (Barber et al. 2016: xxiii) for our entire group.

Between January 2017 and January 2020, seven meetings were held on the following topics: "I, female", "Hair", "The man I do not wish to remember", "Dance", "Tits", "The move" and "Gift". Memory topics were set at the meetings and often the discussion on the choice went on for longer than the writing itself. Sometimes because we lacked ideas, and sometimes because we postponed some ideas (such as the topic "Tits", for example) or we could never write about them, such as for example about parents, especially mothers.

The process itself had several stages: 1) the selection of the topic of memories, 2) writing around 45 minutes up to 1 hour in the first person, rather than the third, 3) reading all memories and talking about them. We did not have strict rules of analysis, nor did we structure it in any way as suggested by Haug (2008). The discussion was mainly on similarities and differences among the memories on specific topics, finding patterns or deviations. An advantage of the CMW method compared to the OH method is in the intensity and brief form of the narrative, as well as in the fact that it is presented, read publicly immediately after writing, getting direct feedback without time gaps or delays. In other words, "the publicness of the story is immediately present in the room" (Barber et al. 2016: xxii). Special attention was dedicated to ensuring the comments were not judgemental, referring to the text rather than the person, as

well as not asking additional questions about the details of events, some of which were very unpleasant and painful for the participants.

Becoming a woman in the post-conflict, post-socialist context[7]

The selection of topics was a particularly challenging part of our CMW. The first topic we choose and spent more than two hours negotiating, was the memory of a situation when we first became aware we were women. The title was "I, female". The majority of narratives related to adolescence and concrete physical changes or hints of changes (not only of our own bodies, but also in the treatment by others, most often men, but also other family members, friends), which happened at that age, and which separated women from men.

> *The game started in the evenings, at dusk, when the sun starts setting, and ended when it was already dark. This was particularly exciting because it was even harder to find players in the dark. We hid in the barn, the tractor parking garage, workshop, mill, behind the tree, the "other yard" (where the pigs, hens and cows were kept). It was endlessly exciting! Each evening a new place to hide, remain not been found ... That was my favourite part.* [memory story 1]

> *The problem began rolling and by far exceeded its initial dimensions: a broken board that needed fixing, turned into there being something wrong with the whole bed, this furniture storm caught up the entire room and unveiled the carefully kept secret about wolves (under the bed, note by Z. A.) and culminated in the terrible judgement: "someone should move out". Someone should find their way in the wasteland of the new room with oversized furniture. I could not remember if my brother said anything to this sudden change and if he was there at all, present in the drama under the flat roof of the five-floor building with French balconies. My parents were whispering in secret between them and made the decision by consensus: "YOU SHOULD HAVE YOUR OWN ROOM. AFTER ALL, YOU'RE A GIRL.".* [memory story 2]

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7   All memory texts reproduced with consent of authors.

The predominant feelings and experiences related to changes in bodies, awakening of sexuality were shame, fear, uneasiness about changes to the body, as well as the feeling of alienation and loneliness, without the possibility to get support or advice from other women (friends, sisters, mothers). Complete abandonment in one's own agony of being a woman.

> *The knickers were soaked in blood. I was looking at it from above, the knickers stretching between two ankles forming a bridge from which I thought it would spill over and leak all the way to the kitchen, warm with work and smells and worry. I didn't know whence it came and how. My jaw was numb with fear. The plastic had cut into my thighs and my feet were numb after sitting so long. I was nauseous and cold.* [memory story 3]

> *This feeling stays with me, the feeling of complete exposure, as if my skin were turned inside out. And then he said something so horrible, it devastated me completely, and opened my eyes in a way. He asked me if I wanted to be his boyfriend. Not girlfriend, but boyfriend! This absolutely devastated me and startled me. Suddenly, I started yelling inside, but I'm not a boy! I'm a girl, a woman, pining over a boy like a proper woman, having the sexual experience of her own sex. I was horrified he didn't see me that way and suddenly it was all clear, all that was written, all these stories and poems, they weren't me! I had to find a way to express myself, this woman inside me..* [memory story 4]

> *Let's say it's like that, now it's coming back, in a blur. Having written something, getting up during the break and leaving the notebook somewhere, and when I got back, she had it. But I'm not sure. Anyhow, I remember she was reading parts of my diary to the whole class, including how, I don't know, I think it was C., grabbed my ass and I wasn't sure what to think about it, or whether I liked it. That's what it said. I don't want to embellish it now 25 years later and lie, saying something else was written in it and to relativise my own*

feelings. So, she read it in front of the entire class. And I
remember only I was terribly ashamed. [memory story 5]

Another topic that particularly stood out were feelings about tits. Within this topic too, the predominant feeling and experience were those of losing control and autonomy over one's own body (breastfeeding, childbearing, physical changes in puberty, examinations by gynaecologists and operation) and shame that this body part does not match some ideas, some images about the way ideal tits should look. As we remembered them, they were either too small, like little nuts, or strikingly hairy. They did not give milk when they were supposed to, we had to hide them with clothes because they were too big, we had to slouch, hide from these new growths on the body. But also, we had to learn to love them and be on good terms with one's own tits when they decided to fall ill.

> *The examination looks like this: you go into the changing*
> *room and strip to the waste and then go into the office with*
> *your tits out. There are two changing rooms, so your tits are*
> *not alone. Rather, you stand there next to another woman*
> *with naked breasts, and the doctor stands facing you. A.M.,*
> *beautiful and arrogant. Then you raise your arms, and he*
> *grabs these tits like holding apples. Then he squeezes them a*
> *little. Just to be clear, I've always found tit-squeezing rather*
> *disgusting. And there's always a sort of attack against them.*
> *"A-ha, you have a fibroadenoma" – the doctor says. "4x5*
> *tissue. You need surgery."* [memory story 6]

> *The nurse, who I had seen for the first (and the last) time,*
> *came into the hospital room and asked me and the women I*
> *shared the room with – if we had milk. The three of us looked*
> *at one another and tried hard to answer this important*
> *question. But essentially, we had no idea if the answer to this*
> *question was YES or NO. That's why the nurse came to the*
> *closest new mother – in this case me – and without a word*
> *pushed her hand under my hospital gown, three sizes too*
> *big. She squeezed the first tit she got hold of very hard. As if*

> *it were a thing and what's more, her thing, with which she could do as she pleased.* [memory story 7]
>
> *So, at some point the first bra/brassiere was to be bought, to tame those frolicking tits, which, by the way, also itched as frolicsome as they were, because they were growing and hurting, and bouncing. I remember my mum always worried repeating how I should be careful so I don't get hit with an elbow in the tits in P.E. or if I did get hit I should make sure to tell her (I think this was her way of talking to me about sex). And so, the day for the bra came. I don't remember how, nor where, nor when, only that it was white, it looked like a top part of a t-shirt, tight, so you could actually see I was wearing a bra. It was very similar to what they sell today for athletes.* [memory story 8]

It is interesting that the topic of "Tits" also found its way into the topic of "Hair" and came together in one great big uneasiness and shame, but also the first time accepting one's own body as it was.

> *Then R. was born, I was in the maternity ward, they were supposed to teach me to breastfeed, and again there was hair on my breasts. I'm ashamed, and actually I don't really care, because if I did, I wouldn't have hair on my tits. Then I say like, oh, I feel awkward, so she doesn't think that I think that it's normal to have hair. I know they shouldn't be there, but I don't care. And the midwife says, doesn't matter, it's great that it is there, it's ticklish, so it can keep him awake. I don't know if I find this disgusting or not. And it is not short, but long, like mouse's whiskers, only jagged. .*[memory story 9]

The CMW method allowed us to get to know each other better, but also to get to know ourselves better. Many of us remembered things we didn't really want to remember (as the title of one of our memories says: *Remembering a man I don't want to remember*). CMW gatherings evoked events that, thanks to interpretation, were rationalized, analyzed. The loneliness and isolation of women's lives is gone. Moreover, the

similarities between us, our experiences of growing up, maturing and being a woman, pointed us to the existence of patterns of patriarchy that shape us from childhood and affect our lives to its very end. Perhaps the biggest advantage of CMW over OH is the closeness and connection that is created not only between the research participants themselves, but also between the research subject and the research topic.

What and how next?

When two group members decided to leave the group in December 2020, the question arose of what next. It seemed to us who stayed that we could not move on without those with whom the project had started. On the other hand, we spoke about continuing to write down memories on the topics we had not been able to write about, or for which we had not been there, and maybe make a collection of it, a little book of experiences. Or just keep going with new topics. Or gather together one last time and in some way "close down" the project. We still have not decided.

In the meantime, I am thinking about trying to form new groups, with different women from the margins or from the women's movement – pacifist and ecofeminist initiatives. I still believe that the collective CMW process increases opportunities for reflection, comparison, even challenging someone's attitudes. Working on one's experience enables learning from it (Barber et al. 2016: xxii).

The project "Women's Memories" is unique in both activist and academic circles. In the context of academic disciplines, recording women's experiences becomes a new, critical perspective in the production of knowledge about genderedness and crisis. Recording and discussing memories would help better understand how power structures, sexuality, gender, and violence formed us as women, activists, and feminists. CMW opens the possibility to initiate, through the process of self-learning through emancipation, the processes of unlearning and deconstructing harmful practices of gender socialisation in a violent and patriarchal society, such as Serbia is.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to outline the ways in which the CMW method can be used in the context of Serbia as a country in transition, given the fact that most CMW projects have been done in developed countries such as Germany, UK, and Australia. The issues raised and explored are the ones we recognized as not only consistent with CMW tradition, but also highly relevant in the context of still patriarchal and nationalistically oriented Serbia.

  The two projects described seemingly have two things in common: the social context and the method. However, the research presented show that those are only formal similarities, yet on a more substantial level represent sources of difference. Ana`s project is academic, more formal, more structured, and less egalitarian, given her role as a primary researcher and a PhD student back then; Zorana`s project is personal, informal, and almost entirely egalitarian, given the roles within a group as friends and activists. Ana`s project lasted shorter, was more to the point, analytical and in-depth; Zorana`s project lasted much longer, was around many issues regarding the construction of femininity, the analyses were immediate and more extensive. The ways in which the two projects differ expose the multitude of ways in which CMW method can be used, together with its flexibility and heterogeneity, given the various techniques and procedures as resources for tackling the subtle nature of personal experience within the common social structures. We intentionally presented them together to show that how we use CMW in the same context and at the same time can differ so much as to provide a plentitude of new insights into patterns of socialization.

  On the other hand, what presents as the same context of the two *projects*, are different contexts of the *memories*. Women's Memories project is about memories of a different historical and political period, than the project on ethnicity in the generation born during the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Some of the women from Zorana's project could even be mothers of the participants in Ana's project. By presenting them together, we connect not only two different topics which are central for socialization in Serbia, but also two historical periods, two generations, and two collections of surprisingly comparable experiences: uneasiness, shame and guilt, alienation and loneliness, the urge for autonomy. From two distinctive generational and disciplinary grounds, we see our projects

as converging towards situated knowledge on personal experience as evidence of (long lasting) faulty social and political regimes of Serbia, in which the quest for personal fulfilment is marked by continuous struggle.

Our common ground is seeking for alternatives, both in society and in social science.

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Chapter 17

A MEMORY WORK ON LONGINGS
FOR FEMINIST ACTIVISM

Christina Hee Pedersen

In this chapter I invite the reader into a small memory work on longing. I will illustrate one of the many possible ways of carrying out a memory work analysis and give examples of some of its inbuilt strengths, dilemmas, and paradoxes as I see them. Some ten years ago, my group of 'old' feminists set out to examine Danish Redstocking movement of the mid-1970s. We did our collective analysis on four written memories one long Saturday, - later I have done further analysis in this text as you will see.

  Our consciousness-raising group has actually existed for more than 40 years now, so one can say that we know each other, we trust our relationship and carry with us a heavy suitcase filled with a commonly shared history of joys, pains, changes, leaps and losses. Through sharing with you this memory work, I wish to point to some of the possibilities embedded in this highly evocative way of approaching a topic that has been used by so many in so many different ways, situations and contexts. The memory work we did shows the ways in which nostalgic longings for political activism and community are intimately connected to life conditions and the ruling norms in the moment of remembering. They also point to how situated perceptions interact when we communicate and analyse each other's small memories from, in this case, a shared past.

  Let me begin with a presentation of the first four small memory texts and then share with you our first reading of them. The initial reflections were mostly based on observations about which common traits we identified and what had surprised us when we read out the four texts aloud. Thereafter I will demonstrate how an analysis of one single memory can be carried out in a group by using the template developed by Frigga Haug and her colleagues and further disseminated by Schratz and Walker (Haug 1987, 1992, 1999, 2008; Hyle et al. 2008; Olesen &

Pedersen 2013; Pedersen 2021; Schratz and Walker 1995). I will systematically follow the steps included in the template. The template has proved a helpful railing to hold on to for the groups I have worked with over many years, when we entered a strictly analytical mode of our conversations. It has even been a helpful framing for me when I, in other studies, wanted to take a first analytical look at many written empirical materials.

Looking back on activist practices

To construct a contextual backcloth for the reading of this specific memory work session, the following small section provides a brief 'background' account of the Danish women's movement, The Redstockings. The peak of Redstocking activism was from the early 1970s until the mid-1980s.[1] Although the movement was active for just under 15 years (1970–1985), it nevertheless left lasting traces in Danish society.[2] As other western feminist movements in the 1970s and 1980s, central political struggles included: the fight for equal wages; the right to abortion and maternity leave; sexuality; and fights for rights and social justice in general. Examples of laws pushed forward by the Redstockings include abortion (1973), the equal pay act (1976) and improvements in the maternity leave laws in 1980. Women were participating in all areas of life, demonstrating their ability to do everything without men's participation. The numerous organizing of festivals, women's bands, women's shelters, women's art and literature, feminist summer camps, summer camps for lesbians only, a women's museum, a folk high school for women only were all activities, among many, seen as oppositional responses to what was identified as a patriarchal and capitalist culture. The movement in Denmark was closely connected to socialist ideas and Marxist thought exemplified in the famous and always present

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1   According to Andreassen, the Danish mass media has collectively declared the women´s movement dead from the mid-1980s. In the public discourse, this death has been explained by arguing that since women now have received equality with men! (Here Andreassen deliberately puts an exclamation mark!), there no longer is a need for a social movement (Andreassen, 2004, p. 73)

2   According to Drude Dahlerup, the decrease of the women's movement from the second half of the mid-1980s was connected to the general decline in left politics and the expansion of the new neo-liberal discourse (Andreassen, 2004, p.73).

emblematic slogan, "No women's struggle – without class struggle – no class struggle without women's struggle." This slogan was a dynamic collective, identity-creating force within the movement, heading all events, embodying the political strategies, collective norms, the understandings of women's oppression and the ideals for a radically different society for women and men with a just redistribution of goods and resources (Rødstrømpebevægelsen 1975).

  The utopian horizon was, in these years, considered within historical reach. The insistence on non-hierarchical structures with a principle of rotation in relation to central activities in the movement was a notorious feature of the Redstockings (Dahlerup 1998). Drude Dahlerup's extensive work on the movement underlines that a main debate among Danish feminists was whether women should rebel or adapt to existing structures and ideologies in society (Dahlerup 1998). In the Redstockings there was never a nominated formal leadership or the adoption of an overarching programme of central principles. Therefore, each consciousness-raising group [*basisgruppe*] was autonomous, self-defined in its purpose and only accountable to itself. Small groups of feminists could be found all over the country, but it was in the big cities that the most ambitious and radical events took place. Within the movement, several lesbian members felt invisible, marginalized and sometimes even unwelcome. Consequently, a larger group of lesbians broke with the Redstockings and formed their own lesbian movement in 1972. Andreassen mentions that quite early in the story of the Redstockings there was an awareness and an effort not to essentialize the category 'women'. Solidarity work with working-class women on strike and international solidarity work were integral to the Redstockings (Andreassen 2004: 72).[3] The Redstockings of the 1970s was a social movement consisting of mostly white, young, middle-class women, many of them first-generation university students at a time in Danish history when the presence of very few migrants had only just begun to modify such a small nation as Denmark with its strong monoculture.

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3   An example is 'Kampfondgruppen', a group within the Redstockings that
    worked in collaboration with women's labour unions and did solidarity work
    in relation to the many labour disputes of the 1970s.

Group 49 do memory work: research question, stories and first shared analytical reflections

The consciousness-raising group, group 49, was formed in 1975. One group member worked as a housewife, two were teachers, and I worked at a factory (as did many middle-class socialists at the time). The four of us had five children between us. Two lived lesbian lives, two heterosexual lives. Today we are all retired and between 66 and 73 years old. The two retired teachers engage in activism – teaching Syrian Refugees Danish. We are still feminists; we meet every six weeks and mostly share what has happened in our lives since we last saw each other. We belong to each other's lives and history – today more as a special kind of family an imaginary political community as we are not activists together anymore.

  For some years, we had longed for our 'old' identities and actions. Eventually, we would read and discuss public debates about gender perspectives and feminism, or we would go to the movies when gender topics were on the list. However, that was all we did together for at least 20 years. The present memory work is an example of one of our 'special activities'. As also suggested by Haug, we took weeks before we decided on the topic we would explore before we meeting up. The question that guided our looking back and writing before we met was:

> *What was the energy we felt when the women's movement was at its peak? What has been lost? What is it that we long for today?*

We wrote our stories in the third person to create distance from the idea of biography as singular and personal. Then we read out loud the stories and worked through them, one by one, and shared our immediate common-sense reflections on each text. We gathered striking common features and talked about the short written stories in light of our question. The normative celebration of community at the centre of our longings was such a common feature but so was the embodied celebratory uplifted energy, which pushed forward our immediate common-sense reflections right after having read the texts out loud. When we talked about the four texts, their content crossed into each other and made co-constructed the sense of what seemed to be the everyday philosophies or discourses that all four memories shared.

Obviously, in the communication about the stories the individual memory blended into the others and led to new associations, new interpretations and a cascade of new memories in the group.

Following the first writing and reading session, we then wrote a second text about exactly the same situation, now stimulated and informed by our first discussions.[4] To give the reader an idea of the material produced, I present the four first stories, our initial joint reflections and some of the common traits we found in them. The first story is Marianne's. Hers is about the time when the group was responsible for the introduction to the Redstocking movement – this activity was an activity that took place every month in the women's house in Copenhagen making it possible for women in Copenhagen and its surroundings to join the movement and enter a basisgroup. The already existing groups took turns when it came to writing the newsletter and introducing new women to the movement.

Marianne's[5] first memory text

> *She stood in the doorway saying: Hello and welcome. One woman after the other entered the room. She saw their open faces. Their eyes filled with curiosity and their colourful clothes. She had distributed the chairs around the tables and had made refreshments with the three others. It was time to start. The questioning began. Questions about where the women lived. She saw how many of them had grouped in geographical order. She began telling them about how their own group, group 49, had started and the three others joined in. Everything had been agreed upon beforehand. Who should talk, and what should be said. What she and the other three had achieved until now. The movement had given her a sensation of wholeness to her life and a breadth which had not been there before she joined it. It was her job to tell about the value of being heard and seen. Even the smallest problem was worthy of getting attention and it was like that for everyone. The personal was political. She talked about the value of getting feedback from the others in the group. The break was held and there was buzzing and happy*

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4   As mentioned in the introduction, I have chosen one of these stories to illustrate Frigga Haug's template of analysis.

5   Marianne is an anonymized name as are all the rest.

laughter throughout the room. The groups were formed. Kisses and hugs distributed. She had enjoyed the evening.

Initial joint reflections on Marianne's memory

Talking about this first memory, we took notice of how openness is a framing value in the story, 'the open door and the open faces'. The description underlines that the author and the three others are in this venture together and how they back up each other's actions. The political principle in the women's movement about the personal being political is highlighted and a key value – even the smallest problems should be considered important, and feedback from the other women was essential. What was felt by one woman reflected the experience of the many. All individual experiences seemed to be placed within a collective context and framed by the visions of the Redstockings. The sensation of a clear orientation provided feelings of wholeness, width, and joy. An observation related to this text was the central featuring of the agreements between the four about the actions planned to the very last detail.

  The second story describes how Karin arrives from Copenhagen to the first women's cultural festival in Denmark's second largest city, Aarhus.

Karin's first memory text

She is standing up overlooking the entire festival site. She feels proud and happy. So many people have shown up. She is looking forward to hearing Sonja's Sisters (a feminist rock band) play. They are fantastic – and from Jutland.[6] She knows them a little personally. When they head towards 'Tangkrogen'[7] from the railway station, she is filled with expectations. The weather was perfect. The sun was shining from a cloudless sky. She was wearing the cropped sailor pants and the faded denim jacket – short hair and straight back. Stands situated around in a semicircle from the scene where different groups of women sold posters and materials while telling the public about their work. You could get a

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6   Jutland is the main part of Denmark, a peninsula. The capital Copenhagen is situated on the island of Zealand.
7   The area where the festival took place.

glimpse of the sea. It was a success. So many people that had flowed out to the festival and, although she herself had not participated in the preparations, it felt like it too was a result of her contribution.

Initial joint reflections on Karin's memory

This story makes a very clear reference to the affective dimension of the remembering of the situation. The protagonist describes herself as happy and proud, filled with expectations surrounded by the women from the movement in dialogue with the public. People seem to be inside her and around her at the same time. This woman feels at home in Jutland and proud on behalf of the rock band from Jutland. Here the binary capital (Copenhagen) versus province (Århus) is at play. In the description, there is a merging of nature and culture and a merging of an individual person and the social; the women's movement. It creates a feeling of pride that so many people have been attracted to this feminist event. She describes this as her merit too, despite her not having been part of the preparation. She belongs to the movement; therefore, it is also her success. She describes herself wearing 'the uniform' of those times – referring to how many women cut their hair short using masculine connoted clothes such as blue jeans and small denim jackets.

  Lesbianism is not mentioned explicitly in the text but during the discussion of Karin's story, unexpected sensations of exclusion related to the relationship between lesbian and heterosexual women in the Redstockings surfaces pointing towards before lived tensions. Emotional reactions like 'yes, this was how it was' and 'why did she not write about our group and what we did together?' emerged. It suddenly became noticeable during the reflections on Karin's memory that she, due to sexual orientation, had participated in activities and actions outside the group; activities with other lesbians which had meant a lot to her and which had constructed particular kinds of belongings to the movement for her, outside group 49 – a fact that, at times had made the heterosexual women in the group feel excluded. The difference between the stories recreated this very same emotional reaction and made the two heterosexual women in the group recall feelings of unease and tension very vividly during the initial reflections related to Karin's text.

Mette's memory is about one of the other collective obligations the group had taken on as part of taking turns with the organizational tasks in the Redstocking movement. For a year the group was responsible for getting the monthly newsletter together and distributed to all members of the movement.

Mette's first memory text

> *She caught the train from Roskilde to Nørreport. In Taastrup, Anne Mette joined her, and then they talked the whole way to Copenhagen. They walked down Gothersgade and into the women's house. It was evening, but there were activities taking place all over the house. Up the stairs and into the editorial room: First an informal chat among the four of them, and then they started to make 'Internt Blad'.[8] Cutting and pasting – drawing and decorating – in the small, semi-dark room. It must have been a monthly activity. When the newsletter was ready they sat there, a little proud of the product and felt that they had contributed their part to the movement.*

Initial joint reflections on Mette's memory

While entering the talk about the situation chosen by Mette we touched upon the importance and joy connected to the talking together, 'we talked the whole way to Copenhagen', 'first an informal chat'. The text is framed by the joy of expectation. Mette depicts an image of a house filled with women doing things and she is on her way to do things with her group: cutting, pasting, drawing, decorating. She talks about this activity as an activity that naturally goes with being part of the movement, a personal or a civil duty. The story is also framed within a classic narrative structure, the journey. Mette is on her way and reaches her longed for destination, the group, the movement, women's liberation.

The women's house in Copenhagen is also at the centre of Anne Mette's story. She, as Marianne, has chosen the situation of an introduction to new women to join the Redstockings.

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8   The newsletter in the Redstocking movement.

Anne Mette's first memory text

> *She arrived along with the others. Up into the Coordination room, 'Koo-rummet' in the women's house. Up the narrow staircase and into the big empty white room. They were all a little anxious – would anyone show up? They were to introduce new women to how to establish a consciousness-raising group. New faces showed up, women who had dared to come, women who wanted to challenge their ways of being a woman. It was a wonderful thing to be part of. It felt nice to be able to pass on something she herself was fond of. She felt somewhat proud to stand there with her own consciousness-raising group. The joint presentation went ok – and each of them joined one of the tables. She was sitting at the head of the table. She loved the presentation rounds. To listen to the stories of new women. To feel community around women's identity and at the same time to feel the support of the movement.*

Initial joint reflections on Anne Mette's memory

Arriving together is the meaning of the opening phrase in Anne Mette's story. It seems easy to visualize the entrance in the women's house and see them going up the narrow stairways until opening the door and entering the big white empty room. Place and space are central here and give a sensation of opening up a space where weighty and serious political processes take place. The space is little by little filled up with women. In the story, expectations and insecurity are present: 'will anyone show up?' The courageous women show up, here described as determined to challenge the past and their understanding of themselves as women. Anne Mette wants to give to other women what she herself has received and holds dear from being a feminist activist in the Redstockings – feelings of connection, recognition, and identification with the new women. She expresses love, proudness and feelings of sameness, enjoyed community, she gives and receives this sense of community and the movement ('the others') is described as one entity that gives support in what is not considered an easy personal endeavour.

Longing for belonging – interpretations crossing the four texts

The closing of this first round of initial joint reflection had produced such an overspill of joy and positive feelings in the group, which honestly surprised us. The stories and our work with them had actually produced the intensity that we longed for in our daily lives. Anne Mette's outburst said it all: 'I feel a roar of joy and bobbles within my whole body. A sensation of being able to do whatever we want.'

  It seemed clear that the underlying ideology and the confidence in its legitimacy gave a sense of security and self-reliance. Political slogans such as 'The private is political' and 'Women's struggle is class struggle – class struggle is women's struggle' functioned as constructors of communality or a truth – also in the memory work session – that ascribed meaning to the sharing of experiences and gave direction to the many activities. All stories relate to 'doings', and specifically 'doings' done with other women in apparently horizontal relations. These mundane and practical 'doings' produced joy. The celebrated norms are strictly related to collectivity, actions, the group, the movement, 'the many'. Some of the activities are described in almost trivial detail and could easily produce wonder in younger generations where these types of activities are taken for granted as activities taken on by and driven forward by 'women alone'. This 'taken for grantedness' did not exist in the 1970s, which is one of the reasons why this produced feeling of being proud of not only of oneself but proud on behalf of the whole movement and even 'all women in the world' in some situations. Staying with this positive image of process and political engagement for some time made us talk about what was absent in the stories and how dilemmas, paradoxes and contradictions are silenced and become invisible when you focus on what you long for in the here and now. None of us wrote about longings for meaningful conversations, about the dilemmas of being in intimate relationships despite of the centrality of this topic in many of the conversations in the consciousness-raising groups – spinning around jealousy, monogamy, sexuality and sexual division of work. In our stories we did not raise critical questions – as we looked for the good, we seemed to have lost. What came up was the romanticized descriptions of openness and shared needs constructed as norms related to consensus and the obvious monoculture of the movement at that time.

The ability to act in contradictory structures

If we then enter now a closer examination of one of the memory work texts, namely Marianne's rewriting, this inclination towards a description without ambiguity gets even stronger. This can of course be seen as a result of the collaboration in the first round of joint analytical reflection, the reliving of the lost and the interpretations made. However, it can also be understood as what Frigga Haug talks about as the effort of the subject to act in contradictory structures, find functional ways of reacting and to become readable in the social. This process is not far from what Dorte Marie Søndergaard underlines as a key feature in a poststructuralist understanding of subjectification – your struggle to construct a dignified position for yourself where you are recognized by others and by yourself in a social situation.

> We compare the single experience against the potential of a single person in the world. It seems possible to assume that every single person has a need to escape from the conditions in which she is acting and to reach competence, autonomy, and co-determination in every important question. [...] Each woman in the research group can examine her own texts, how she makes compromises, how she falls into line or submits so that she does not lose her ability to act in contradictory structures. The way of life, attitude and pattern of processing conflict become readable as a solution that was functional. (Haug in Hyle et.al. 2008: 40)

When I use the template and conduct the process of analysis suggested by Frigga Haug (here on my own for the purpose of this chapter), I will be pointing to even more of the 'old' norms connected to the meanings that seem to be at work in the writings. These norms suggest that the function of nostalgia can simultaneously promise new political openings and cement old powerful imaginaries.

Taking on analysis – holding on to the template

As anticipated, I now move on from our collaborative work in group 49 to illustrate the use of the template by single-handedly conducting an

analysis.[9] I have chosen Marianne's memory in its second version, written after our first round of analytical reflections. The aim is to demonstrate *how* one can systematically, step by step go about a deconstruction of the meanings present in a memory text. I will of course consider the obvious limitations involved when a single person does the analysis.

Marianne's second story

> *They came swarming up the stairways and looked through the door into the Coordination room [Ko-rummet]. Women filled with expectations, with happy faces, colourful clothing and some with 'divorce perm'.[10] They had all been seated in geographical order and the story of her and the others about how to work in consciousness-raising groups could get started. Each of them had their specific task to do. Lessons learned from their experiences were presented for common benefit. Her job was to tell that even the slightest problem was important and something to say about the value of being listened to without being interrupted. The women got together and agreed to meet, and then return the following week. It was important that no one got lost in the process.*

I will now go through a reading of the text using the template. I will be moving row by row from left to right. By doing so, I convert a process meant to be collaborative and verbal into an analysis done by me alone for the sake of exemplification of how to go about an analysis guided by the template. Memory work demands time and we did not have time to pass through all the phases proposed by Haug that Saturday in 2009.

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9   This has been necessary for the illustrative purpose of the chapter. I did discuss and co-produce parts of the analysis with my good colleague Birgitte Ravn Olesen. I want to extend my thanks for her valuable contributions! However, the template is useful in many other situations when you enter the initial stage in processes of analysis as it sharpens your gaze on yourself as a researcher and on the impact of your own norms in interpretation.

10 A fashion at the beginning of the 1980s but in Marianne's stories curiously connected to memories from the mid-1970s

  Therefore, this analysis was done isolated from my group and through the lens of an academic interested in disseminating memory work as a methodology. It would most likely have taken a different direction if we had all worked with the template in the group. And it should not be forgotten that memory work was never meant to be a sole standing academic exercise in the first place. The process of questioning and deconstruction of taken-for-granted norms will always be radically different and much richer and tensional when more heads and hearts are involved. Having chosen Marianne's story also represents an ethical dilemma as I am conducting the analysis without her presence.[11]

The template

Message of the author	How does the author understand the topic? His/her everyday philosophies/logics	
Author	**Others**	**Noticeable/ surprising/meanings between lines**
Interests/wishes Actions Emotions	Interests/wishes Actions Emotions	Language Contradictions Surprises Silences
Construction of the 'I'	Construction of others	New meaning of the scene/situation

Source: Schratz and Walker (1995)

11　In the process of searching for possible answers to the question of how we as feminist researchers include ourselves in our accounts and the paradoxes this represents to us is bound to connect us to disputes concerning research ethics and research relationships. The reason for this has once again become clear to me while writing this text born out of a collective memory work done with group 49 since the last writing once again was done from the perspective of 'the lonesome researcher'. I have constantly encountered disturbing questions related to relevance, values and ethics in this process. I see my dissemination of the methodology as ethically sound, and Marianne agrees.

In Marianne's second description of her memory, she writes, as we remember, about an institutionalized activity in the Redstocking movement: the introduction of new feminists into the movement. The *message* of the short text seems to be that it was a meaningful and important task to carry out the introduction and by doing so to participate actively in the construction of a growing feminist movement. In the *everyday life philosophy* of the protagonist the enrolment into the women's movement is described to be an important and necessary task that any existing group in Redstockings both could and should be able to take on. At first glance, this naturalized way of describing the activities as something that the movement does for all women indicates in a striking way a universalization of what it is that all women need in their lives. I will expand on this analytical point below.

The author *wishes* to live up to her specific task: to talk about how even the smallest problem should be considered relevant to talk about and share with other women. She also wishes to respond adequately to the collective norms of the movement, the principle of rotation and the seemingly institutionalized just distribution of responsibilities within the movement. When it comes to the concrete *actions* of the author, the only verb used directly relates to the 'telling' and to carrying out the specific tasks related to the event. As readers we indirectly learn that an important activity is to facilitate and ensure that the newcomers are placed geographically correctly at the tables and that no one gets left out. There is a clear concern related to producing feelings of social inclusion. When it comes to *feelings* there are no references to feelings neither of the protagonist in the text nor of her fellow group members.

The *actions* of the protagonist are actions shared by her group, but they are implicitly described. In the text it is assumed that the group shares wishes, visions, actions and responsibilities. *The others* in the text are the many colourful women arriving to be introduced by group 49. They have come to get together to find their own consciousness-raising group. They find one another and agree on meeting and they are described as having emotions; they are filled with expectations and their happy faces imply joy, in contrast to the practical and rather 'dry' descriptions of the members of group 49.

After having systematically identified *wishes*, *actions* and *feelings* of all protagonists in the text, the next step of what ideally should have been a co-produced analysis is to turn the attention towards elements or

meanings (this includes meanings you think you can read in between the lines) in the text *that surprise* you. These could be *linguistic peculiarities*, *contradictions*, *gaps* or *silences*. Especially in relation to this step, I have experienced that productive interpretations, encounters, conflicts and rich negotiations about how to understand the text and read the relationship between content and form unfold dynamically in a group. This step opens up to differences in interpretation and often brings new topics to the table.

Frigga Haug writes about the column of silences:

> Elimination of contradictions is a well-known psychological process. We see this process in actions in the narratives. [...] The search for silence and vacancies has by now become a recognised scientific method. In the narratives, we recognize that we use this technique in everyday life. Detecting these peculiarities, we are able to question the narrative without questioning the credibility of the writer. (Haug 1999: 18)

What caught my attention here is that neither the author nor her fellow Redstockings are described with feelings but with mere actions connected to the 'obligation' to facilitate the introduction. The group has an important task and they carry it out as they are supposed to and on an equal footing. This stands in strong contrast to the feelings of bubbling joy at the writings, readings and reflections in the actual memory work session of our group, but is also a contrast to Marianne's first story. The 'we' produced through language is a collective body that almost leads our thoughts to strong working parts of machinery, where each part does 'her thing', but where none of the parts can be left out. The group seems to relate to the women arriving as someone that they have to inform and place in a certain, already detailed, described and established correct way. It seems like the ideology is structured and organized in detail. In the Redstocking movement, a collectively produced manual rightly existed about how to start a consciousness-raising group (Redstockings [Rødstrømperne] 1975) and I remember this booklet to be key material during the late 1970s.

One should not ignore that the experience of responsibility, leadership, self-organizing of a larger group of people must have been a very new experience for many women in the 1970s. It was for us. Therefore, I read

between the lines an air of importance and proudness surrounding the situation. The description of the women coming up the stairs stands in strong contrast to group 49, which is 'objectively' described as working women carrying out a practical task, which could in fact be done by any feminist activist from the movement. The 'about to become Redstockings' are swarming up the stairways, getting divorced, getting curly hair, wearing colourful clothes and with happy faces. We almost see an emblematic photo from the 1970s before our eyes. For the many of us who know the fear and insecurity that an individual woman could feel when approaching the women's house alone, this story can be said to produce an exaggerated romantic image nurtured by a nostalgic longing for the activities in the past. Differences between the women, conflicts in the formation of groups, complexities and difficulties in the life stories the women brought with them are not present in the text. They are somewhat silenced but have not been asked for either in the trigger question. It seems to be all about a longing for organizing and participating in the strengthening of a feminist movement. What is remembered as desirable to long for is framed as a process that unfolds smoothly within an environment of inclusion, equality and openness towards all women. I think there is a strong norm related to thinking/believing that the new women all would have the same wishes, hopes and commitments in relation to the movement – hence the norm of sameness and womanhood is assigned to the newcomers.

The last steps in the last row in the template ask us to describe the constructions of *I* and *Others* in the text. I perceive a protagonist - an *I* – who knows what she does and why she does it. The women become the embodiment of the ideas of a feminist movement in that specific historical moment and it is through the values of this big political project of a social movement that all knowledges are assessed. The subject in the text is a subject fully conscious of her responsibilities in the movement. She is furthermore confident that other women can learn from her experiences. She belongs to a strongly organized 'we' and she experiences accomplishment, not only her own accomplishment, but that of a political and gendered collective body. The others in her group are constructed as persons with exactly the same interests. Described as a loyal and experienced group of 'party-soldiers', they do what they have to do, and succeed. The women arriving from all parts of the city and the surrounding areas of Copenhagen are constructed somewhat

stereotypically – hair and clothes making allusion to a stereotypical image of a hippie – as persons with great expectations at a moment in their lives when fundamental changes are about to take place.

Concluding the work with the template, an analysing group should discuss the last step: the *meaning of the scene*. In some texts about memory work this step is called *Thesis Statement based on deconstruction and reconstruction*; in others, *Shifting the problem* or *Seeing other perspectives*. As underlined by Haug, the work with this column in the group is the most difficult one, and this is also my experience. This step is not meant to dismiss nor substitute the first step, *Message of the author* (see Schratz and Walker's use of Haug's template), nor to conduct a before and after reading of the meaning of the text. Rather it can be described as a shift in perspective leading to a condensation of the central insights produced through the joint analysis or the meaning co-created through 'the deconstruction of the narrative and latent praxis connections' (Haug 2008: 23). It is not that the message of the text suddenly disappears because you discover other layers of meaning that grew out of the collaborative process. This closing part of the collectively made analysis produces answers to the question 'What is this text also about?' Haug talks about this shift as a move towards statements or meanings that 'have not yet been said but have been wanted to be said' (ibid.: 23).

The ambition in memory work is that the memory texts should lead on to joint reflection and the encounter should open up possibilities for new interpretations and be an inspiration to seek out other texts. The focus on the concrete in the writing of the memories as a production of empirical material means that it is not possible in advance to determine where an analysis will lead a group of 'memory workers' and what theoretical connections become relevant to turn to for further analysis. Consequently, an opportunity is provided for reality to surpass text – or, more precisely, to gain insights beyond concrete, experienced experiences and events and beyond, or alongside, taken-for-granted and well-known explanatory models.

When I now turn towards the task of *the shifting of perspective*, in the template I mourn to be alone. This is, as mentioned, the most challenging part of the analysis and this is where you need the others and the collaboration for interpretation, discussion, tinting. I give it a try here though.

I read the text also as an unspoken yearning for a renaissance of the women's movement, the longing for being politically active and belonging to something more – as a way to talk about what was not said but wanted to be said. What did motivate our longings were the everyday life conditions of the first decade in the new century, characterized by lack of political direction, fragmentation, individualization, a low point in the ebbs and flows of gender discussions in Denmark, and even loneliness.

Considering this, the memories we wrote can also be read as grieving – as longings and sadness about not being important in the same way as in the 1970s and 1980s when we felt empowered through the mundane actions of our social movement. A moment in which we experienced a higher degree of autonomy and self-determination, optimism and clear visions about the need for a redistribution of resources than in the moment of doing the memory work. A longing back to a historical moment when the individual woman was as important as crucial actors in the formation of something new – a forming of a collective body – a social movement. Alongside the feelings of loss, you can read joy and pride for having been part of those years. The protagonist writes in detail what she considers to be 'good' political work. The implicit norms relate to democratic, horizontal political practices and structures that guarantee participation and equal access to decision-making. In between the lines, a 'wrapped in' criticism can be read of how politics unfold in complex, contemporary global power structures distant from everyday experiences of the protagonist and her group (Andreassen 2004: 74).

To me, what also stands out as some meanings I discovered through the analysis are the complexities involved when we consider how to react to complex, everyday life challenges as individuals. Haug recommends that you should only, as a very last accomplishment in the analysis, revisit the initial message, and she makes this comment:

> One often will be surprised by how poor and also how ideological the earlier intended message was, compared to the new meaning elicited after the deconstruction process. This does not mean that one is true and the other invalid. Both messages are from the author. The circumstances that produced the one at the cost of the other show how strange our dealings are with ourselves, and how we struggle with ambiguity and knowledge in everyday life. (Haug, 2008: 24)

Summing up the analysis, what it seemed that we longed for is represented by the obvious and quite simple actions in an activist community and the clearly defined political organizing of these activities and divisions of labour. As I see it, this is the emotional energy that generated our stories about what we lost and still long for: Belonging and a clearly defined political orientation. It is also a text about a longing for a different type of everyday practice and for being part of larger and more committed political community.

Looking back over our shoulders – closing remarks on storytelling and nostalgia

To work with memories can potentially erupt into situations here and now and reveal the affective dimensions of the interplay of knowledge, power and politics – and therefore the norms that so effectively influence what we say and feel in different situations and contexts.

> Histories of the landscape unfolded as we walked. Yet they also revealed a haunting sense of loss, a fragmented remembering and forgetting that was unsettled by ghosts from the past. For memory is born of strange and uncanny associations, inexplicable connections between times and places, that erupt into the present without warning. (Hill 2013: 380)

Closing this account, I still walk the memories of landscapes in the Redstockings. It seems easy to pose suspicious questions to the constructed idea of unity, community and democracy that come forward in my analysis, especially if you look through a poststructuralist analytical lens. As readers we read the memory texts as an outlining of a 'we' free of contradictions and complexity. A unified 'we' – a collective subject – the Redstockings - who envision the same utopian places, motivated by the same interests. Nobody should stick out or be different, as that would threaten the idea of sisterhood, solidarity and community. The lively arguments and vibrant conflicts when debating the slogans for 8 March, the tensions between the Redstockings and the Lesbian movement or the troubled individualized sentiments produced by class or race – are differences which did not enter our nostalgic gaze in 2009. They are

absent and roaringly silent when you read these texts in 2021. This might always happen when you write about longing because why long for the complicated?

> In the context of qualitative research ethics, we see nostalgia as the desire for a simpler way to say what is right and what is wrong, a desire for the comfort of procedure as prescription. There is evidence in this nostalgia, a clinging or desire to remain undisturbed and self-adjusted. This clinging for many of us is as tenacious as our cling to life itself. (Brogden and Patterson 2007: 22)

When we long for something and ask ourselves what has been lost, we part from and relate to our life situation in the here and now, and we move in intensities related to norms and affects of the present. We also present our life and constructs of self through narratives much more coherent and univocal than how our lives are/were led, as there is always an imaginary listener present when we tell our stories.

  In our memory texts, the tensional dimension was absent as they were framed by a longing for what we lost, but these tensions nevertheless emerged in the analysis. I suggest that a rereading of our feminist pasts should be shared to a much larger extent while my generation of feminists is still alive and while these diverse versions of history might inspire political dialogue and the courage to invest in letting their stories and their struggles open to community building in political spaces (Hemmings 2012; Larsen, Phillips and Pedersen 2021). Here, memory work with its creative co-working of imagination and memory, its striving for social change and its integration of activism and knowledge production can be of much help.

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Chapter 18

USING COLLECTIVE MEMORY WORK IN DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

Nita Mishra, Jenny Onyx and Trees McCormick

This article captures aspects of community responses to COVID-19 through a participatory and interdisciplinary approach, namely collective memory-work (CMW). Using an autoethnographic CMW, we share experiences on the theme of solidarity in the backdrop of a global health pandemic and 'black lives matter' across continents. As a methodology CMW has been adapted and adjusted by scholars informed by the purpose of its application, institutional frameworks, and organisational necessities.

 In the summer of 2020, a CMW symposium was scheduled in an Irish university but postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions. The scholars, however, decided to go online and work on the symposium. This article provides insights into the impact of the two events on the lives of four women scholars aged between 51 and 79 years who formed one of the discussant groups. The unfolding of the two global pandemics, namely racism and COVID-19, leads to reflections upon the conflicts experienced around solidarity, especially between participating in demonstrations in solidarity with #blacklivesmatter, and distancing ourselves in solidarity with all risk groups for COVID-19. One group's right to breathe stood in opposition to another group's right to breathe. The process of writing this piece on CMW also taught us to collectively own our final thoughts and words in this article.

Introduction

The importance of development education (DE) in engaging critically with communities has been an area of interest in the sector of international development for over three decades. At various intervals, scholars and practitioners have stressed the need to re-invent processes of public

engagement to embrace diversity and emerging challenges in social consciousness. This article addresses the above concern through insights gained from a collective memory work of four scholars across three countries in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and #blacklivesmatter.

Theoretically, we have framed our arguments on the emerging multifaceted nature of solidarity using the concept of alienation. Methodologically, we argue that the use of collective memory work with its aspects of timeliness, its variations, the potential fields of application, its value in teaching, learning, research, and social activism supports the building of networks for cooperation and knowledge exchange across geographical and disciplinary boundaries. More importantly, the transfer of the collective memory work into non-academic arenas sets it out as an important development education tool.

In this article, we have first explored the connections between the methods of collective memory work and development education. We then focus on the process of collectivising and discuss how we (four strangers) proceeded with the project. Starting with the common theme of 'solidarity' we, then, move onto emerging themes in our memory work traversing through awareness, homes and homelessness, racism, the new normal, linking the idea of 'control' with the concept of alienation, human agency, and learning how to focus from the act of breathing. We deliberate upon COVID-19 as an art and a portal between different worlds and conclude with the contention that CMW is a useful interdisciplinary tool to facilitate discussions and actions on emerging social tensions.

The aim is to advocate the use of memory work to bring development education into ordinary use, within control of citizens' action. With a focus on our discussions related to agency, control, and alienation, we argue that development education facilitators could use memory work to support learners collectively to explore and still retain agency.

Understanding Collective Memory Work

Memory work is an open methodology (Haug, 2008) which offers the possibility of reinterpretation on an individual case basis and create different forms of knowledge leading to new ways of learning. Scholars such as Jansson, Wendt and Åse (2009) argue that through an analysis of reactions of participants in a collective memory work, and [new]

processes initiated thereof, critical discussions emerge which help locate ruptures and ambivalences in the already known, and open-up for understandings and interpretations that takes the scholar beyond the discursively given. In the same vein, Onyx and Small (2001) contend that our construction of the self continuously influences the construction of the event, and collective memory work enables us to understand each others' construction of a specific event and allows participants to be both the subject and the object of the constructed event. 'Because the self is socially constructed through reflection...' (Ibid.: 774). Thus, as Onyx and Small (Ibid.) remind us, as a feminist social constructionist method, memory work breaks barriers between the subject and object of research collapsing the researcher with the research and making everyday experience as the basis of knowledge. Questions on relationships emerge, including those based on power. As co-researchers in a collective memory work, the participants, now have the same tools at their disposal to question inequalities and relationships based on unequal power. And this is where, we argue, collective memory work and its search for not only 'how it really happened' but also in its search for moments where in 'the process of creating an image, memory becomes a tool for the dominant class' (Haug 2008: 538) resonates with the goal of development education.

  At the core of development education is the mandate to question inequalities, injustices, and existing power structures. According to a leading development education proponent, McCloskey, development education has 'a commitment to critical enquiry and action'. Linking it to the COVID-19 context, McCloskey further states that the DE sector 'has an opportunity and, perhaps, a responsibility, to debate how the coronavirus crisis should be negotiated over the short and long-term' (McCloskey 2020: 174). In other words, DE must adopt and embrace different forms of public engagement for such a public discussion of pandemics. Collective memory workshop is one such route where learners can be trusted to design and follow their own forms of active engagement to critically reflect upon a subject of collective interest. As such, CMW ties up neatly with Oliveira and Skinner's concern (2014) of enabling Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) practitioners to conceptualise citizen engagement in a more meaningful way by taking into consideration its broad context (2014: 9, cited in McCloskey 2016: 129).

In fact, McCloskey had earlier voiced concerns that development education had been unable to enhance citizenship engagement with international development issues through sustained action outcomes, and argued for 'supporting learners in designing their own forms of active engagement' with greater clarity and openness (McCloskey 2016: 110). We contend that the role of collective memory work in engaging the public to collectively sustain action outcomes arising from such questioning and sharing of memories of inequalities and experiences must be adequately researched. This will lead to meaningful conversations amongst diverse and smaller groups of people and communities for the public good. It is this gap we aim to fill through this article.

The process: how it really happened

In the summer of 2020, a CMW symposium was scheduled to be held in an Irish university but postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions. The scholars, however, decided to go online and work on the symposium. Our host, Robert Hamm, sent out emails to all participants enquiring if we were keen to participate in an online meeting to take the symposium forward. Twenty-five of us agreed to do so. Owing to the huge numbers and, to facilitate meaningful discussions, we agreed to be divided into smaller groups depending on our time zones and availability. The first meeting was difficult for some of our participants. It was especially difficult to accommodate Australian and American participants at the same time, for example. It was either early morning hours, or late night. After the first meeting of all participants, we met three times on Zoom. Between the four of us in our group, we were an eclectic mix of women scholars between the years 51 and 79, of Swedish, Indian-Irish, Indonesian-Australian, and Australian backgrounds. Other groups had scholars from Germany, Pakistan, the Americas, Brazil, the UK, and elsewhere whom we met online for a second time at the end of the project. The starting point for this collective memory work was the concept of solidarity and how this was actualised during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In our first online group-meeting, we decided to go back to our desks between meetings to write on what emerged in our lives during the first lockdown in March 2020. We discussed how lockdowns varied in Sweden,

Ireland and Australia, and how these experiences varied with ethnicity. We shared those stories through group emails. A narrative was emerging following which we decided to dig into the main conflict we experienced around solidarity, between participating in demonstrations in solidarity with #blacklivesmatter, and distancing ourselves in solidarity with all risk groups for COVID-19. There was a contradiction between our own comfort and sense of solidarity and the wider injustices based on race and class. One group's right to breathe stands in opposition to another group's right to breathe. As a trigger word for our memory pieces, we therefore used George Floyd's last words: 'I can't breathe' (Singh, 2020).

COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

12/03/2020- ....

MEMORY WORK GROUP 4
(Jenny, Karin, Nita, Trees)
"I can't breathe"

Theories&Themes emerging from texts/discussions/reflections

Complexity Theory
Arundhati Roy's.   Marx' theories of alienation

-Borders closed
-Social restrictions.
-People vulnerable to virus resulting in death
     Elderly.
     Disabled.
     Poor/Homeless.
     Marginal groups.
-Economic fallout: jobs lost.
     Businesses closed.
     Economic hardship
     Mental health issues
     Uncertain future

Portals.   **No control.**   **Having control**

-Injustice   -Daily lives dictated.   -Privilege of being able to breathe
-Inequalities.   by Covid restrictions.   - Importance of nature. We are part of
- Anxiety.   our universe.
-Fear of the unknown.   -Communities reaching out.
  -Commonalities.   - Closeness with family and friends
  -Connections

ADAPTING to the NEW NORMAL

Social distancing
Work from home
Masks and hand sanitisers
Using on line technology
instead of face to face communication

Arrest and **death of.**
GEORGE FLOYD 25/05/2020.

US protests/demonstrations against
Police brutality 26/05/20 - continuing
Black Lives Matter BLM

Demonstrations BLM, Racism, Injustice,
In UK, Australia, France, Germany, Spain

EMERGENCE of Solidarity and Collective conscience
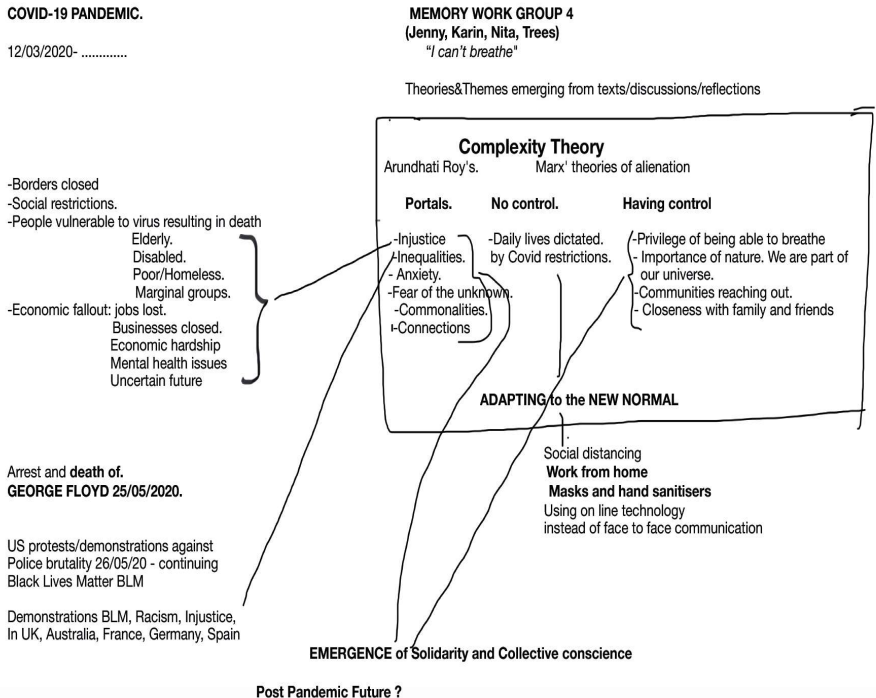
Post Pandemic Future ?

Figure 1: Memory Work (McCormick et al., 2020)

Keeping this in mind, we decided to select two memories; one a positive memory, and the other a more unpleasant one, to bring to our collective memory work. After discussing these memories through emails and Zoominars, we felt an urge to go deeper into the concept of solidarity,

and in our last memory pieces we described how we encountered solidarity in our everyday life. Through a series of online meetings, learning from each other, forging a friendship based on trust and shared memories, we collectively produced this document at the end of the process. The following image (Figure 1) emerged from our memories. It provides a summary of our texts and discussion, and our conceptualisation of how these are connected.

Situating Ourselves

All four of us were aware of our backgrounds as privileged women with education mostly modelled on Western concepts. Two of us are 'women of colour', and two are white women. Two of us retired from paid university work, and the other two currently work in universities. Using a qualitative feminist method of Memory-Work, two of us, with others, explored (Onyx et al. 2020) a collective experience of ageing after retirement in which, following Freire (1970), we argued for a humanising pedagogy wherein 'we' control 'our' own learning, we argue for the voice of older women as agents of their own well-being, and what we found challenges the current script of ageing and social control that defines and limits who older women can be.

  Similarly, we are aware of a tendency in the mainstream discourse on 'gender and development (and/or DE)' for example, to bring in the voice of 'Third World women' or women from 'the global South' or 'disadvantaged people' with 'the implication being that Third World women speak so that 'Western' women-qua-'developed' may speak to one another about 'them' (Lazreg 2002: 127). Working with Lazreg's (Ibid.: 143) contention that the responsibility to engage with a reflexive methodology 'which constructs itself as it constructs the subject matter' is a task fraught with unspoken assumptions, we offer our experiences as a bridge between 'the self' ['us' reflecting as women scholars from varied backgrounds] and 'the other' ['us' again as women who are impacted by the two pandemics differently because of age and colour] by situating ourselves in the two pandemics. 'The other' here is our alienated self. We are women, considered 'privileged' and yet racialised in our everyday lives. As such we are acutely aware of the lives of the 'disadvantaged' sections [as it is 'us' also], and this is the strength of this article.

Solidarity

Our last and first question was about solidarity. What is it really? Where is it? While trying to grasp it through memory pieces, we realised that although it was fundamental to our collective work, it was something we took for granted. Without solidarity, and its accompanying aspects such as trust, empathy, love, there can be no society. Solidarity is an essential condition for humanity.

> "...all stood in solidarity
> each
> meaningless without the other
> a moment
> incomplete without the other..."

Solidarity can be expressed in our daily contact with strangers as we walk through the park or just around the block. During the special circumstances of COVID-19, perhaps we smiled more, engaged in light conversation, and realised that we were together in our individual isolation. We offered kind words of comfort, small acts of kindness. We could not hug our grandchildren and friends, but we could call and text and show our concern for each other. We were unable to directly help those in intensive care at hospitals, but we as a collective adjusted to the situation, cared through small acts of solidarity, by keeping acceptable social distance as seen in public spaces when people interact carefully:

> "On the subway people were sitting with distance, the informal rule seemed to be one person on every set of two pairs of chairs facing each other. The remaining people standing picked places 1-1.5 meters away from each other. She had seen no signboards or heard on social media recommending this public behavior and was amazed that everyone seemed to have figured out the same system."

This is a quiet solidarity, largely unsung, but a very effective base for dealing with the pandemic crisis. We were separated but with a shared understanding of friendship. We also seem to be returning to a more peaceful lifestyle, while creating new ways of being part of the

community. We were doing more for each other. Our sense of safety depended on 'the other' sharing the same urgency to be safe. In some places, community-based groups emerged to encourage people in their neighborhoods to connect with each other.

> "Taara downloaded the Nextdoor app on her phone and soon received greetings and messages of welcome from people who live around her. A lady wrote 'Say Hi when you see me walk past with my two yellow Labradors. I'd love to get to know you'. Another posted 'Is anyone interested to go bushwalking on Sunday mornings?' And 'I can help do the shopping for you'. 'I can walk your dog'. 'My daughter is making cloth masks. She accepts orders. 'Does anyone know a reliable gardener?' 'I am giving away a small fridge', and so on."

Neighbours invited each other to join walking groups and book clubs, offer their unwanted goods free of charge and share information about reliable trades-people and handymen. Actions such as these indicate that there is a sense of solidarity within communities. There is a willingness to regard the lives and safety of fellow human beings as equal to our own. Religious and community organisations have pulled together and offer food and support to those in need.

> "This is solidarity, this is normal.
> The new normal: anxiety, adaption, emergence."

Awareness

We became aware that when COVID-19 was declared a pandemic on 12 March 2020, it not only unleashed a wave of sickness and death, but in the process exposed inequality, prejudice and discrimination experienced by minorities, indigenous people, as well as refugees and immigrants. The poor, homeless, disabled and dispossessed were also experiencing discrimination, and a greater vulnerability to COVID-19. Awareness of acute schisms in our society and environment had become apparent with the unfolding of events globally. This was reflected in our discussions and our writing.

We were also becoming more acutely aware of the contradictions between our own personal comfort and the wider fear and hardship around us. We felt, more sharply, the joys that were enhanced by our experience, especially the comforting presence of nature, and the value of our human connections with friends and family. We were walking outdoors more. We noticed the terrible injustices imposed by humans on nature. We were having evening tea everyday with overseas siblings and parents over WhatsApp. Suddenly we had more time to complete tasks we had postponed. At the same time, we also felt more sharply our own anxieties, the social distancing that alienated us from friends and family at an immediate level, and the terrible injustices made visible. We began to question the solidarity we wanted to feel. There was a contradiction in articulating 'we are all in this together', except that we were not in it together!

This awareness which existed within us in a latent form manifests in our collective memory work because we as society were forced by the lockdowns to pause and reflect on our lives. Participating in the workshop allowed us to express our deepest thoughts on the two pandemics of 2020, to dwell on the possibilities of becoming overwhelmed or to be able to overcome the crises, to reach out to others, and to collectively deal with the enormity of the problem we faced as a global society. As such, CMW has enormous potential as a tool for development education practitioners in communities facing similar difficulties in dealing with other crises. Older hitherto hidden patterns of structural inequalities between groups, classes, communities, and continents emerge and can be collectively challenged without leaving anyone behind.

We, therefore, argue that through our collective memory work on the experience of solidarity during periods of social crises we provide key lessons to development education in different contexts.

> "Key in the analysis of remembered history are contradictions. In turn, these are a methodological tool that must permeate and complicate the linear search for truth 'as it actually happened'. The result of such Memory Work is thus not rectifying or establishing the correct image; neither is it advice on how to get to the correct perspective or how far removed one is from it. Perhaps it is more than anything restless people with new questions, who are in a process

> with the intention of moving themselves out of a position of subalternity." (Haug, 2008: 538)

Central to collective memory work has been the presence of contradictions or different truths from different perspectives of all participating agents in the process. All truths have equal weight in the final analysis. Emerging features of trust, empathy, kindness, neighborhoods, collectiveness, bridging the self with the other through 'social distancing' amongst others have vast potential as transformatory tools which development education needs to equip itself with.

Racism

Racism was laid bare by COVID-19. In one memory when shopping for toilet paper, the author becomes acutely aware of a perception, a stereotype of a Chinese hoarding toilet paper. The racism is subtle, and maybe only in the author's imagination, but still very real and present. It affects us all. Subtle moments of discomfort in public spaces needed to be called out. We were four women of different ethnicities and of different ages, and experienced racist discrimination differently.

> "As Taara rounded the corner where tissues and toilet paper were kept, she spotted one lonely packet of toilet paper on the top of three rows of empty shelves. As she put the last of the six packets in her trolley, Taara noticed that a few customers turned their heads and watched her. She was aware of a video that had gone viral on social media of an Asian man running in and out of a supermarket buying toilet paper. She also heard in the news on television that people from Chinese descent have been abused and harassed during this time. Taara felt her heart thumping away and willed herself to breathe calmly as she stared straight ahead and walked with 'unseeing eyes' to the checkout."

COVID-19 fear reveals racism in unexpected spaces. Racism is quite banal sometimes especially when it is about fear of the un-known. People who do not mirror you become a threat. The crisis revealed our deepest fears and long forgotten biases. Our discussions revealed that this basic fear of

what doesn't look familiar, later, reproduces structural discrimination embedded in the foundation of our societies.

Homes and Homelessness

In this case, the problem of homelessness stared at us. Home quarantine requires a home! At the peak of the pandemic, the city centers were desolate, and those who remained out on the streets were those who had nowhere else to go. Those who were usually in the periphery, hidden away in the darkness of the night, suddenly were a majority in the city's outdoor spaces. The homeless claimed our streets. A second realisation dawned that we, the authors of this text, all have homes! We had options earlier, to go out to work and come back home in the evening. We faced a new challenge - now our homes have also become our offices.

> "Stuck in our homes we have begun to rely much more on online communication, and tools like Zoom in combination with the pandemic sometimes creates an unexpected intimacy. You stare at these tiny moving portraits of people in their home environment, and phrases such as 'how are you'' or 'hope you are well' aren't empty phrases any more. Everyone is happy to share all the details of their sore throat."

One of the first things I thought when I heard of a lockdown was:

> *"Oh gosh! This means all 4 of us will be in the house 24/7 ...This was going to be the end of us."*

This intimacy, sharing personal environments and bodily sensations, also points out the differences. When meeting outside neutral offices, we encounter personal home environments, filled with strange colors, sounds and animals. We became aware of the differences in our group, geographically, historically, socially. Even if we believe this virus unites us, it also reveals the differences in our realities, differences that were not obvious at international conferences and meetings. Earlier our designations and roles represented us in meetings, not what we had in the backdrop of our screens in the living room or study. And then how

many of us in a family can share a study while at work? These were unique issues which led us to think of the importance of collective memory work, and therefore as a tool for development education, to reflect on shared spaces in communities without hesitation. We worked on this piece together from kitchens, living rooms, attics, and cars.

Fear, anxiety and risk

One of the important findings of our collective memory work was the recognition of a fear, an anxiety, and possible risks in stepping out of homes, or connecting with people outside our homes. As we share the experience of the pandemic with others in our society, it does not automatically lead to solidarity. Many of us hid indoors (if we have a home), and focused on our individual health and happiness, facing the risk and anxiety of our own death in isolation. The recognition and acceptance of such an anxiety was not possible without collectively writing and sharing our memories of the pandemic. And hence, we strongly advocate its use as a development education tool to be used in contexts where the aim is to delve deeper into people's psyche to understand what holds them back, and what, for example, perpetuates conflicts. It has the potential to bring people together through a collective dialogue to reflect upon the others' actions which may be perceived as taking risk or avoiding a risk in a situation of sudden change.

Interestingly, the words 'fear', 'anxiety' and 'stress' did not appear in any of our written memories. Nevertheless, the emotion that these words convey were woven throughout our writings as we described what we did, saw, heard, smelled and felt. Reading through our memories, one can feel the sense of unease, of not being completely comfortable, of being on edge. It was a feeling of uneasiness, nervousness and anxiety in all of us. A perplexity about how this pandemic had suddenly changed our daily lives! Our worlds had changed, and we were unsure about how to handle the new normal. We did our best to adapt to our new circumstances by making new routines to normalise what was clearly abnormal to us. We now keep hand sanitisers in our handbags, wear masks, maintain social distance of 1.5 meters from our friends, and refrain from visiting crowded places. We participate in meetings and concerts online instead of attending in person. We cancel dinner parties, holidays etc. It is a bit like the first scene in a horror movie, where subtle details reveal that not

everything is alright and what follows has the possibility of becoming the unexpected and terrifying. A slow realisation dawns upon us that one is never in total control, and that a situation we take for granted can change quickly.

Losing control versus alienation

A theme that emerged in our memory work was the contradiction in the texts between situations of control, such as being a determined individual in one's own context acting in the world, and with situations without control, especially of being stereotyped, de-individualised and having to submit to a larger system upon which we have no influence. This paradox of being in control and yet not having control in many other ways, corresponds to a kind of 'alienation' discussed by Hegel and Marx (see Byron 2013, and Sayers 2011 for a detailed discussion on Hegel and Marx's concept of alienation). According to Marx, in a capitalist economy, individuals become alienated from their product of labour, the labour process, others around them, and from their selves. For Hegel, alienation was more of an estrangement of the spirit in the life of a human. Elsewhere, taking cue from Hegel, Sayers argues that all human phenomena follow a path beginning with 'an initial condition of immediacy and simple unity' to 'a stage of division and alienation' culminating 'in a higher form of unity, a mediated and concrete unity which includes difference within it' (Sayer 2011: 289).

Our emerging theme shows a similar process arising during COVID-19 where we hope humanity reaches a stage of 'adult maturity and self-acceptance' (Ibid.). Additionally, for this project of healing, maturity and acceptance of contradictions and conflicts within society, a step forward would be to blend Aristotle's concept of good and happiness with Marx's theory of alienation as contended by Byron. Byron argues that 'it is normatively satisfactory to restructure the forces that give rise to alienation' (2013: 434). Thus, our contention that the concept of alienation is useful to understand people's conflict with their selves and with others while at the same time expressing solidarity, in the COVID-19 context holds ground. We further include arguments made by Raekstad:

> "Marx's theory of alienation is of great importance to contemporary political developments, due both to the re-

> emergence of anti-capitalist struggle in Zapatismo, 21st
> Century Socialism, and the New Democracy Movement, and
> to the fact that the most important theorists of these
> movements single out Marx's theory of alienation as critical
> to their concerns." (2015: 300)

Having human control over our own conditions enables expressing oneself, leading to self-realisation, and being in direct relation with oneself and others. The opposite of this relational individual, is an interchangeable pre-programmed and un-creative person, alienated from itself and its fellow human beings, alienated in relation to its living conditions, at best a cog in the machinery. An example of losing control over your own narrative, being stereotyped and therefore de-individualised is in the memory of buying toilet paper (above), where the main character experiences a notion of racial profiling, suddenly fearing people categorising and labelling her as 'Asian' in a white-man's country. 'Without control: stereotyped, de-individualized, out of breath.'

  Losing control over one's life was apparent in another memory piece. We found another example of losing control, becoming de-individualised, and categorised, as old (over 70 years), and therefore treated as potentially sick and in need of care (rather than being an actor with multiple capabilities).

> "Then news of a planned demonstration in Sydney. It was
> lockdown. People, especially those over 70, like Jo, were told
> not to leave the house. It was too dangerous. The authorities
> tried to ban the proposed (anti-racism) demonstration for
> health reasons."

Without much thought, we realised, that certain groups of people were 'advised' to stay indoors while others could step out. The intentions behind such policies were driven by a notion of public good which was perhaps not based on evidence from the public (the over 70's age group in this case) it tried to protect. Ultimately, this is what COVID-19 was doing. We lose control, we can't breathe without assistance, we are no longer in charge:

> "Jo remembered a documentary on COVID-19 and how it causes death. Apparently, in the final stages, it affects the lungs, which is why there was a desperate call for ventilators for hospital intensive care units. The person may still breathe, but the carbon dioxide is no longer expelled, oxygen no longer absorbed. Basically, the person suffocates."

Without being able to control our breathing we will ultimately die, figuratively as well as literally.

> "Couldn't breathe
> Barely out of the emergency
> Out of the ambulance..."

In sharing these memories, we want to argue that in situations of losing control or having no control over one's life conditions, as communities living in poverty will give testimony to, using the tool of memory work collectively will throw a beacon of light on different dimensions of poverty and inequalities.

Having control and human agency

In contrast to losing control and becoming alienated, our memory work also elicited examples of having control. These memories were about being in nature, meditating, yoga, and participating in public demonstrations in solidarity with 'the other'. Our memory about nature is a beautiful example of being an individual in a certain context, about being special, situated, with a history and belonging, very much alive and breathing:

> "She picked a twig lying on the ground and breathed in the familiar fragrance of the most iconic Australian tree. It's a smell that directly transports her to this park, to Australia, to home."

In another piece on meditation, the main character becomes aware of her special breath, and announces that being her, being human, is also about being in control. To control breathing is to be empowered, aware and

therefore in control while also embracing what is outside our control, which becomes a way of controlling one's reactions towards the unknown.

> "But gradually Jo became aware that this breath was rather special. In fact, it was life. Without breath, she would be dead. Breath is simply taken for granted, that is until it stops. We all breathe constantly, usually without effort, without thought. To focus on breath, to really focus, is to fully appreciate the sanctity of life."

Similar in this memory piece where yoga is about taking action, regaining control:

> "Yoga
> It is time to re-start
> ... So, I started yoga
> Slowly but surely…"

The memory-piece describing public demonstrations in solidarity with #blacklivesmatter was also very much about being able to take action, regain control, and to assert the right to breathe.

> "But ordinary citizens around the world had had enough of these deaths of unarmed black people. The demonstration was going ahead regardless of its legality. Black lives matter. They have the right to breathe. We as citizens must stand in solidarity with them."

Thus, as we note from the above examples, in memory-work, agency of participants is central to the method where participants:

> "…spin the web of themselves and find themselves in the act of that spinning, in the process of making sense out of the cultural threads through which lives are made…" (Davies, 1994: 83 cited in Onyx and Small, 2001: 782)

The crisis revealed the presence of conflicting rights within society. To emphasise one's right to express oneself or to follow the authority's recommendation to ensure others' rights to breathe. The crisis also showed that we can take control. Either we fall victims of the pandemic within ourselves, and outside ourselves, or we use it as an opportunity to rise above the pandemic to reveal our higher selves, to take responsibility, collectively and socially. One memory piece noted:

> "Wondering how ordinary patients cope [in the red zone of government hospitals]
> She [COVID-19 patient, lawyer sister] sent in a written complaint to the courts
> Evidence-based proof of mismanagement
> Unhygienic, water starved toilets
> Helplessness of patients
> Walled in the red zone..."

Thus, our memory work reflects upon ordinary lives taking cognisance of a (utopian) society where one is active and creative within existing life (threatening) conditions alongside others. As such, it holds immense potential for development education as a means to rise above our immediate conditions. For this notion of control should not be mistaken for selfish individual freedoms which leads to alienation from relations but as being connected and responsible for each other. Similar to breathing in meditation, as noted in our work, where equal 'focus' to all thoughts crossing our mind to create a higher awareness is encouraged, the two pandemics become tools to reflect on society in a different light, perhaps with all its faults and strengths. In this sense 'the COVID-19 crisis' is a bit like art, as it frames and highlights what is important. At best it makes us acutely aware of something that we mostly ignore as being banal, or so obvious that we can't see it without help.

> "*Prana*, my breath called me out
> ...To understand the breath
> The very essence of life
> '*prana*' my breath..."

The new normal

The writing process brought acceptance of the 'new normal' albeit marked by anxiety, for us. The term was like a *mantra* to convince ourselves that we are perhaps coping or should be coping. There is a kind of feeling that 'this is the new reality and it's not going away...so get over it'. Public dialogue increasingly begins to focus on mental health of all people, and not only of those who could afford paid services. Suddenly well-being became a household word. It was about our coping or not being able to cope with the pandemics, and not just about some 'other' in a faraway global South context.

  The 'new normal' aptly illustrates the process of our own memory work. We describe our own pain, the loss of routine, the anxiety, and the threat of the unknown. We then reflect on our experience, search for, find and deliberate upon deeper meaning. Some of this reflection leads to a heightened awareness of the injustices in our societies.

> "calling, cajoling, coaxing all she knew in high-places
> ...Courts set up an investigation committee
> matters set in motion by
> a COVID-19 survivor."

A reflection

We are in the process of engaging in the production of knowledge [about development], and instead of 'collecting witness accounts about development' (Lazreg 2002: 127), we offer to be the subject as well as the object. This is in itself a powerful tool, facilitated by CMW, which we argue could be used in DE to roll out the 'transformatory changes' it purports to. Borrowing from Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), we contend that to be transformatory, we must go beyond conventional models of pedagogy, in favour of a more humanising pedagogy that challenges the status quo between the learner and the teacher, and between the oppressed and oppressor. As co-producers of knowledge we have shown that the production of knowledge is a combination of serious reflection and action between equals, a horizontal dialogue guided by love, humility, faith and mutual trust.

Some of our deliberations lead us to a new mindfulness of our own good fortune, of the healing properties of nature, of the sanctity of life-giving breath. We are left with many unresolved questions: how to redefine friendships, how to heal nature, how to support each other, how to earn a living, how to restore social justice, for example. There is a sharper awareness. Rather than tracing a linear process of causality, we seek to identify myriad decision-making moments of individuals, communities, and the institutions. Situations are constantly emerging out of this interaction as a co-creation of people and external conditions. This process has no finite ending. It can lead to destructive outcomes, but also to personal growth and new societal patterns to support greater fairness. Through a process of disruption, anxiety, reflection, of finding new positives and adopting new practices, the 'new normal' offers itself as a tool or method to development education processes. The 'new normal' has the potential to facilitate the interrogation of layered memories of participants because:

> "Many of these layered stories can be seen as evidence of the everydayness of crisis, and of the frightening power of 'the general training in the normality of heteronomy' — the normality of external control, of other people's rules." (Johnston 2001: 36 cited in Onyx and Small 2001: 781)

Understanding this 'new normal' becomes easier through the tool of collective memory writing process which captures an essential aspect of development education where educators are fumbling for newer and more effective methods of documenting and analysing societal anxiety. This can be observed below:

> "Momentum and movements for change are quietly (and sometimes loudly) occurring, across the many spaces and places where justice remains denied. If you care to look and listen, you will see and hear them. Looking beyond the fatigue of the 24-news cycle and a hardening indifference to images of suffering, you will see these moments in the volunteer search and rescue White Helmet workers in Syria, the Fairtrade towns and school committees, the divestment in fossil fuels campaigns, the indigenous communities and

> women's rights groups challenging traditional land and inheritance laws and customs in places like Kenya and India and in the onward journey of the human rights movement worldwide." (Daly, Regan and Regan 2016: 9)

Furthermore, the use of new means of online communication to bridge distances mixes our private and public self which sometimes creates awkward situations, where the private domain is juxtaposed by one's public role creating an awareness of the subtle but strict borders between different social worlds. In an interview, Arundhati Roy suggested that we should look at COVID-19 as 'a portal between different worlds'. Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew (Roy, 2020).

The idea of COVID-19 as a portal between worlds is a useful image which directs attention to the potential of the crisis to bring us together, de-alienating us by making us lose control over our petty lives and facilitating opportunities where we are interested in finding alternative sustainable means of 'control' than reproducing existing unequal social lives. As such, this portal summarises some of our discussions on how the pandemic reveals inequalities (between different worlds) but also commonalities and connections (portals). This learning through our collective memory work, brings focus to the importance of all voices as all are affected by the pandemic, though differently, while agreeing that the method is ideal for extending the findings to other voices. The contrast of the two pandemics for us 'privileged' authors represented important learning for us, as growing awareness of the injustice of black lives matters.

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Chapter 19

PUSHING BOUNDARIES:
EMANCIPATORY COLLECTIVE MEMORY WORK AND
ENTANGLED POETIC ASSEMBLAGES

Daisy Pillay, Jennifer Charteris, Adele Nye, Ruth Foulkes

In this conversational piece we, four women academics discuss memory work and, in the process, juxtapose conversational text with poetry. We are four teacher educator-researchers who work in higher education institutions across Aotearoa, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa. Our conversations are memory making – a form of process philosophy.

Part 1: Zoom Conversation 1

Daisy: I like memory writing as it helps us to surface hidden voices and talk about surprising incidents, moments, anxieties, wishes, others – in Corona times.

Adele: They are memories of our lived experiences that we expressed through our stories.

Daisy: They are an experience that can never be reproduced but we can reflect on the meanings of these experiences.

Jennifer: It is a chance to see the political in the personal. They allow for conscientization[1]. You know, where we can problematise the themes of what is repressive, to identify it and offer a critical analysis.

Adele: Through the analysis there is liberation.

Ruth: Hopefully. (Group laugh)

Jennifer: Our memory work research can produce new knowledge and bring about a change in consciousness. I think our weekly meetings are

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1   See Freire, 1970.

important – how we come together to share memories, inviting each other into our temporal spaces.

Daisy: The memories are infused everywhere, even in our Zoom backgrounds that show the special places we have been.

Jennifer: Remember, we started with our prose writing- detailing the frustrations, isolation and perplexities. And then, through our Zoom conversations, we shared these experiences as a group. We storied our memories, and our learnings, and our understandings.

Ruth: Yes, it felt a bit chaotic at first. Yet this process has offered us a chance to collaborate across our different countries. It gave us a mandate to come together and find the synergies between us. Instead of writing in a solitary vacuum, we write together, and we are energized through sharing our lived experiences

Daisy: We opened up poetically. Poetry says things that prose can't. It creates an experiential happening. It is not just flat or 2 dimensional.

Adele: Yes, and it opens up politically. Thinking about the power relations of class and race associated with this experience of the COVID-19 moment. It is always the political in the personal. It is not just navel gazing.

Jennifer: I see that the poetic writing offers an alternative to conventional academic work. It is a push back against fast scholarship and the isolated academic because it is so relational. It speaks back to that solitary and individualist scholar, beavering away in a monastic cell.

Adele: I see it as a chance to collectively enact process philosophy. That is how I see this memory work. It addresses the post-human merging of selves, objects, other species, and discourses so there is no individual sovereign self in the stories and a coherent linear narrative of their production is not just epistemologically flawed it is fraudulent.

Daisy: That is why memory work as a form of poetic inquiry is so powerful. We're deepening with difference- we deepening our understanding at the same time that we are performing the poetry. The format is allowing us to create and the art is in the act.

Jennifer: The poetic format, opens up as its as it crystallized. It does not distil or reduce our, our learnings and our understandings.

Adele: It creates openings and invites others -different kinds of audiences to participate and to enjoy. There are multiple entry and exist portals afforded through the poetry and a proliferation of meanings, places to connect and resonate and also points for departure.

Jennifer: When we latch on to formulaic approaches to memory work, possibilities are reduced.... like concrete solidifying or a tree branch breaking and so there is less movement and growth. We limit the process.

Ruth: There are different iterations of memory work and you can write possibilities into the text and the lines of flight, but readers will take it how they choose.

Jennifer: So this way is different to interpretivist memory work. With that there is an assumption that people will 'get' what you write – you have an intended meaning and a coherent conception of the authors as individuals.

Daisy: When we turn memory stories into poetic texts, we create something new.

Adele: There are invitations throughout our poems - that produce affect and new possibilities. It facilitates multiple ways for thinking and being – even creates a hybridity of third spaces, through the blending of ontologies.

Ruth: Welcome to the incoherent self...the partial selves, and fractional stories

(Silence)

Adele: We are writing a rhizome! At that point, what are we? Who are we? We are fluid and who we are is immaterial. The only thing that matters is what is produced in the moment the text is created and when the reader entangles with it.

Ruth: It is a 'singing together'. I'm using singing like a medley. It is singing together about our different understandings as a group.

Jennifer: Poems unfold. They deepen the expression of our ideas.

Daisy: Yes and this is how our memory stories branch out into poetic lines of flights.

Ruth: Our flights are not new stories. They are transformed stories - deepened- enriched and made more complex. The poems offer a multiplicity, a plurality.

Jennifer: They highlight the precarity of academic work and how to sustain work flow through the experience of lockdowns.

Adele: The unease was surprising as was the 'incessant' ongoing workflow.

Ruth: I found our memory work connections that create this ongoing friendship and academic partnership such a pleasure.

Daisy: I think it was the opportunity to re-set, to listen, to share memories, to write, and to console.

Jennifer: It is a treasured entanglement.

Adele: It think whoever reads our 4 rhizovocal poems will create their own understandings.

Part 2: Rhizo-vocal free-form poetry

Moving forward or simply pacing?

Academic and administrative work is bustling and bristling.

Work is an incessant flow, with irregular barbs

Catching me unexpectedly breaking

My skin, my tempo, my confidence. I lose track of time and days.

Barbs continue to snare my arms - on the odd occasion I see ahead.

Slipping in/through...safe spaces?

Moments of tension/creativity /oppressive-conservative positionings.

Sometimes happening simultaneously and accompanied by mixed emotions.

What to be? How to be? Where to go and when?

Emails seep in endlessly... Workshops for academics on using the technologies

How do I experience and express care for what I am?

University pressures are overwhelming? Why the frenzy to tick the boxes?

Dismantle rotten institutional structures

Colleagues pressing work loneliness, alone!

It is intoxicating, relationalities and circulations of power...

We depend on each other to isolate !

My Pakeha identity to dismantle rotten institutional structures?

Is this a chance for a reset?

Our learning moral-mindful ...

Embrace pre-Covid with a greater respect.

Equitable families bonded and learned?

My trolley of unease, banding together as a team

Unusual decisions slipped into a gentle routine!

Time for daily journaling, listening briefing, listening to the world.

Part 3: Zoom Conversation 2

Adele: You know, I think that writing, storying and collaborating in this poetic endeavour made the COVID moment tangible.

Daisy: There is a spirit of love enshrouded in our tanka poems. Through creating a shared analysis, they help us to create an unexpected collegiality and care.

Ruth: These tankas poems that we created from our first poems, although short and dense, are not diluted or condensed.

Jennifer: These tankas are a polyvocality, a multiplicity, a plurality because our readers are all going to create and feel something new.

Adele: The readers' ideas can become entangled with ours, about these short poetic stories of perplexity.

Ruth: Yet there is a line of flight.

Daisy: A catalytic validity[2]**

Adele: Is this an activism?

Jennifer: It is catalytic validity and actually powerful. It catapults and gains momentum. It reaches out.

Adele: It produces flows of affect.

Daisy: It makes things happen.

Part 4: Rhizovocal tanka poems

> ***Unusual decisions...***

> Intoxicating!
> Work is an incessant flow
>   experience care...
>   Unusual decisions...
>   bustling and bristling!

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2   See Lather, 1986.

A chance for reset?

Trolley of unease!
> The odd occasion ahead
> Embrace with respect...
>> This is a chance for reset?
>> Slipping in-through safe spaces

We made memory stories of our perplexities. In sharing those memories, we captured them in conversational prose and in poetry. The spirit of love enshrouded in the tanka poems, enabled us to shift "care from an individualistic practice to a reciprocal, responsible, and communitarian practice" (Gómez Becerra & Muneri-Wangari, 2021, p. 3). Inviting others into this experience of our writing, talking, thinking, we make sense of complexities and perplexities. Making memories of moments, making memories together during this particular global trauma, illuminates a sense of surprise in the connections created. There is relationship building, emotional sustenance and intellectual nurturing that emerged through Zoom dialogues when we were invited into each other's homes. Memory work that enacts catalytic solidarity activates activism. Pushing boundaries of how we experience the COVID-19 moment and undertake the storying of memory work, we are emancipated through poetry making in ways that activate new work, new ideas, new hopes, new forms of solidarity, and new connections.

  This is a process of creating openings through the embodied Zoom talk, and the words that we use to make sense of our own lives, and share those meanings with others. Storying in fresh ways helps us to reconcile what it means to live in COVID times. We experience a sense of a crisp, crystallizing opportunity to know our surprise, even caught up as we are in the COVID pandemic. There is dis-ease alongside the desire to source solace, comfort, joy and mindful connection.

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Chapter 20

MEMORY TRACES IN
SOCIETY-TECHNOLOGY RELATIONS.
HOW TO PRODUCE CRACKS
IN INFRASTRUCTURAL POWER

Doris Allhutter

Memory – the pattern of sedimented enfoldings of iterative intra-activity – is written into the fabric of the world. The world 'holds' the memory of all traces; or rather, the world *is* its memory (enfolded materialisation)."
(Karen Barad 2010, 261)

Abstract

Debates on cognitive capitalism, surveillance capitalism or techno-scientific capitalism have in different ways highlighted the importance of society-technology formations and their co-emergence with structural inequality, social exclusion and economic injustice. (Feminist) Studies of Science and Technology (STS) as well as scholarship on Design Justice provide a rich body of research on the multi-layered entrenchment of technologies in power relations.

  On this background, my paper presents an adaptation of collective-memory-work (CMW) that shows how practices of computing intra-act with ideologies, hegemonies and affective materialities. They feed on epistemic claims of computer science and material work practices, as well as on everyday practices and mundane discourse. Using this version of CMW called "mind scripting", my research focuses on how social inequalities and ideologies of human difference co-emerge with onto-epistemic practices of developing sociotechnical systems and thus, on how society-technology relations enact infrastructures of power.

  Starting with a consideration of CMW's theoretical origins in ideology critique and the politics of language, I integrate concepts of queer-

feminist studies of affect and feminist new materialism and present two examples of how to apply these methodologically. I suggest that linking these approaches helps us understand the grip that even technologies and technological practices that we reject may have on us, and thus, in a wider sense, subjects' affective entanglements in capitalist society-technology relations.

In this vein, the emancipative and ideology-critical trajectory of CMW extends to how processes of embodiment and materialization as well as the workings of affects in sociotechnical practices are invested in power relations. In this way, the multi-layeredness and intersection of modes of subjectivation with co-emergent phenomena of materialization becomes visible to inspire political interventions into mundane (work) practices as well as politico-theoretical transformations.

1. Researching Power in Society-Technology Relations

Debates on cognitive capitalism, surveillance capitalism or techno-scientific capitalism have in different ways highlighted the importance of society-technology formations and their co-emergence with structural inequality, social exclusion and economic injustice. (Feminist) Studies of Science and Technology (STS) as well as scholarship on design justice provide a rich body of research on the multi-layered entrenchment of technologies in power relations. However, as users of digital technologies we often find ourselves in a paradox: we struggle with how they endanger our privacy, restrict our agency and how they materialize discriminatory worldviews - at the same time, we might love engaging with tech that inspires new ways of sociality, co-creation and collectivity. When creating systems, critical developers encounter a similar conundrum: they are urged to capitalize on the available data to make decision processes more efficient and to generate economic prosperity; they want to develop sound technical methods and deliver elegant solutions to real-world problems - at the same time, norms of technical feasibility and single-minded business framings limit their inventiveness on how computing can contribute to social change and equality.

Society-technology relations are (re)configured and materially produced not only in socioeconomic and political structures, but also in people's actions - in everyday practices of developing and appropriating technologies. In these sociotechnical micro-practices, embodied

experiences, discourses, and material phenomena become (affectively) productive and simultaneously produced. Digital systems are designed in specific research and development contexts and are thus the result of social negotiation processes, discursive productions of meaning, and the material relations within which they emerge. At the same time, cultural meanings, social, economic, and material relations are also (re-)produced, stabilized, and changed in these processes. In this sense, technological artifacts and social power relations are co-emergent.[1]

I therefore suggest that, to understand the grip that even technologies that we reject and technological practices that we find questionable may have on us, we need to research our own embeddedness in systemic power relations. While this embeddedness often leaves us puzzled and paralyzed, such exploration aims at developing collective agency and activisms in everyday life as well as in epistemic communities and communities-of-practice.

On this background, my paper presents an adaptation of collective-memory-work (CMW) that shows how practices of computing intra-act with ideologies, hegemonies and affective materialities. They feed on epistemic claims of computer science and material work practices, as well as on everyday practices and mundane discourse. Using this version of CMW called "mind scripting", my research focuses on how social inequalities and ideologies of human difference co-emerge with practices of computing and thus, on how society-technology relations enact *infrastructures of power* (Allhutter 2019).

Starting with a consideration of CMW's theoretical origins in ideology critique and the politics of language, my adaptation integrates concepts of queer-feminist studies of affect and feminist new materialism.[2] Queer-feminist studies of affect conceptualize affects and emotions as transindividual and historical modes of how subjects and institutions are affectively invested with power relations (Bargetz 2014a). Feminist new materialism(s) emphasize the agential capacities of intertwined discursive and material relations that come to bear in processes of "mattering", signification and embodiment (Barad 2003).

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1   The concept of co-emergence emphasizes that materialities such as programs, algorithms, but also bodies are agentive in sociotechnical practices, i.e. that they play an active role in the process of their materialization (Barad 2003).

2   For a critique on the founding gestures related to the term *new* materialism see Ahmed (2008) and Rosiek et al. (2020).

After providing a guide to the methodical changes that linking these approaches inspired, I present two empirical examples of how to apply them. The first study focuses on how gender-technology relations inform computational concepts and practices and how gender and technology continuously emerge in relation to each other (see van der Velden/Mörtberg 2012). The second study researches the persistence of ideological epistemic ideals in computer science and the ways in which computational concepts, methods and practices are implicitly normative. Eventually, the paper discusses how using CMW/mind scripting to research subjects' affective entanglements in capitalist society-technology relations works towards trans- and interdisciplinary collective agency and a transformation of social power relations.

2. Memories, Materialities and Affects

Challenging the idea that scientific knowledge is separate from everyday experience, Haug et al. (1999, 34) inspire to "demand the right to use experience as a basis for knowledge". CMW relates to ideology critique and inquires the politics of language (Haug 2008, 22):

> "Language is a slippery instrument. The language of science in particular floats far above our everyday consciousness; abstracted from the concrete, it pretends to neutral objectivity. It is therefore particularly important to establish precisely what is being abstracted from, whose interests are being represented, whose side is being taken, under the cloak of 'scientific' generalization. If I speak in scientific terms of 'strata', I remain silent on the question of class; if I speak of class, I ignore gender, and so on. [....] [E]veryday language is packed with preconceived opinions and value judgements that act as an obstacle to understanding. We only have to look at well known proverbs [...] to see for example how the impression is created that individual advancement is merely a matter of personal effort."

Examining the use of language in written memories and thereby questioning social conditions and ideologies that colonize a field, participants can find how they "fall in line or submit" so that they do not

lose their "ability to act in contradictory structures" (ibid., 40). What CMW strives for, however, is the "ability to create a living culture of contradiction instead of a culture of inequality" (ibid.).

In my research, Haug's unique approach of bringing to use theories of ideology and the politics of language, helped me to methodologically grasp that technology is not only developed in social contexts and the result of social and political negotiation processes, but how the genesis of technology relies on technical concepts and methods that are intrinsically intertwined with everyday practices and discourse. However, focusing on the co-emergence of social inequalities with sociotechnical processes of developing and using technologies, proceeds from an understanding of technical objects and systems as performative. This raises questions with regard to the relationality of discourse and materiality as well as of human agency and agentive objects.

Extending on Michel Foucault's and Judith Butler's poststructuralist conceptualizations of performativity, Karen Barad insists on the materiality of meaning making and emphasizes that meaning emerges through specific material practices (Barad 2012, 35). Meaning is not only produced through language but is a multisensory entanglement with materialities. Barad asserts a profound productive effect of techno-scientific practices on human bodies, and focuses on the ways in which these practices are deeply implicated in the constitution of subjects and more generally in the workings of power (ibid., 30). "Things do not have inherently determinate boundaries or properties, and words do not have inherently determinate meanings" (Barad 2003, 813). Things and meanings depend on the relation between them and these relations are dynamic. Materiality and meaning therefore emerge relationally and temporally. This also means that culture and nature have no relation of mutual exteriority but a relation of "exteriority-within", in particular of "exteriority-within-phenomena" (ibid., 815). This relation is dynamic - an activity, an enactment of boundaries that performs constitutive exclusions (ibid., 803).

Agent ontologies (Rosiek et al. 2020) and new materialisms (Barad 2003), thus, emphasize the agentive capacities of matter. Discourse and materiality as well as society and technology co-emerge in an ongoing process of entangled becoming, in which not only discourse but also matter has historicity and plays an active role (Barad 2012, 73). The intensities at work here are captured in terms of the performativity and

agency of material forces. According to Barad (2012, 70) subjects are intra-actively co-constituted by the material-discursive practices in which they participate. Affects point to such a confluence of corporeality, discursivity, and materiality. Referring to Massumi, Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari, Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2010) describes affects as diffuse immediate bodily (re)actions on energies, sensations and intensities. Affects are not autonomous and ontologically located in the subject, says Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2011, 219), but they are expressions and effects of a power structure. They are an expression of a becoming and, when theorizing society-technical relations, they can contribute to access the micropolitical power (Bargetz 2013, 205) of sociotechnical practices through their affective modes of action (ibid., 204).

  In her theorization of the political, Brigitte Bargetz (2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2019) develops an affect-theoretical concept of power in which she conceptualizes affect and emotion as a mode of power through which difference and inequality become effective and power relations can be both perpetuated and challenged (ibid. 2013, 204). Affect and emotion are analytically not to be equated, but rather describe different dimensions and forms of hierarchical and hierarchizing relations (ibid., 216). As effects and modes of action of entangled processes of embodiment and meaning production, they are, however, also interwoven. Affects are relationally produced and embodied, they are made emotionally intelligible and brought into social relations. Affects do not index a subjective state, they do not stand outside the social, Bargetz explains (ibid., 212). They describe a way in which people are imbricated in power - how power relations are affectively enacted in everyday practices (ibid., 217) and how this process produces specifically feeling subjects (ibid., 207). Bargetz elaborates on two specific aspects: the *transindividual* and the *historical* dimension of affect and emotion.

  Speaking with Gutiérrez Rodríguez, she understands affects as a social binding agent (ibid., 217). They are not only individual, but they circulate and describe a complex social context. People affect each other and they are differentially affected by specific power structures. In this sense, affects and emotions are to be understood as transindividual. Sara Ahmed (2010) points out that affects and emotions make us acquire certain tendencies in material encounters. In her essay "Orientations matter", she discusses "how the world acquires a certain shape through contact between bodies" (ibid., 234). *Orientations* shape "how the world coheres

around me", "how certain things come to be significant, come to be objects *for me*" (ibid., 235). "Orientations affect how subjects and objects materialize." (ibid.) They reiterate what subjects tend to - tendencies that bring some things within their reach but not others. We tend towards some objects more than others (ibid., 247). This applies not only to physical objects, but also to objects of thought, feeling, aspirations, and objectives. The proximity of things to one another shapes the form of each thing, and this orientation towards an object defines the space that we inhabit or occupy. For Susan Kozel (2007) this *resonance* between people and objects illustrates how sensory experiences are shared through empathy and imagination.

  "Orientations are how we begin, how we proceed from 'here'" (Ahmed 2010, 236). For Bargetz (2014, 123), affects evoke and actualize the past and thus are also productive in the present. The past inscribes itself as a memory trace into the bodies, into the affective registers, and thus also into the everyday actions of people: the notion of "memory traces" illustrates the corporeal-affective transmission of moods and intensities within a structure of hierarchies and differences (ibid.). Memory is not a storage of what actually happened, but remembering is a dynamic material-discursive relation. Memories are reconfigured in our everyday actions and are therefore also fragmented and contradictory. From such a perspective, then, remembering is not a cognitive activity, but embodied historicity that is deeply rooted in our embodied becoming (Barad 2007, 393). Donna Haraway's (1995) concept of situated knowledge links this becoming to the social position, historicity, and contextuality of knowledge production and epistemic practices. Haraway describes knowledge as embodied, local, and always limited, as well as permanently undergoing change. Barad elaborates on the dimension of embodiment. According to Barad (2012, 73) bodies, whether human or otherwise, are integral constituents or dynamic reconfigurations of what exists. That means, subjects are not simply situated in particular environments. Rather, environments and bodies are intraactively constituted (ibid.). Thinking, observing, and theorizing are practices of engagement with the world in which we exist (ibid., 9). Highlighting the materiality of practices, Barad's onto-epistemological orientation argues that

> "[t]here is an important sense in which practices of knowing
> cannot be fully claimed as human practices, not simply

because we use nonhuman elements in our practices but because knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part. Practices of knowing and being are not isolatable, but rather they are mutually implicated. We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because "we" are *of* the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming. The separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and non human, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse. *Onto-epistem-ology*—the study of practices of knowing in being—is probably a better way to think about the kind of understandings that are needed to come to terms with how specific intra-actions matter." (Barad 2003, 829)

In these practices, the boundaries and properties of bodies and (knowledge) objects materialize and certain embodied concepts thus acquire meaning (ibid., 815).

3. Methodological Adaptations

My initial adaptation of CMW aimed to analyze processes of meaning construction that inform sociotechnological practices. Using mind scripting in cooperation with software development teams in different areas, I integrated Frigga Haug's focus on processes of subjectivation as well as her ideology-critical and emancipative goals with the objective of strengthening cooperative work practices. My first take on this endeavor was to ask "how developers construct themselves into educational and professional structures and cultures and how these subjectivation processes translate into inherent professional self-conceptions and into work practices" (Allhutter 2012, 689). While gendered power relations remained an important part of my use of CMW, rather than focusing on the politics of language that give insight into the experiences of male and female developers, mind scripting strived to research the "discursive hegemonies that are coproduced through the developers practices and objectifications" (ibid., 689). Tracing "the performativity of gender discourses in sociotechnological practices and theories" (ibid., 691), mind

scripting integrated research with a reflective learning process (Allhutter & Hofmann 2010): "Ideally, the gained insights result in software that embodies cultural critique in that it is designed by deconstructing its inscribing normativity. More importantly, reflecting established ways of doing initiates a learning process within development teams that enhances their knowledge on the entanglement of societal hegemonies and sociotechnological processes." (Allhutter 2012, 686)

In practical terms, the adaptations entailed the following methodical changes: to work with communities-of-practice (software developers) and epistemic communities (computer scientists) some of the collective elements of memory work had to be taken over by the researchers; first, we conducted individual ethnographic interviews with each of the participants to gain an understanding about their work content and practices; from this we suggested a headline for the written memories that we then collectively adapted and agreed on in a first group meeting; after our co-researchers had written the memory texts, we prepared a guide for the deconstruction including general questions (as suggested by Haug et al. 1999) and a set of questions specific to their respective work content. The deconstruction was a collective process. In contrast to (my understanding of) Haug's way of reconstructing the sessions and of going forward with a collective analysis, when working with developers and scientists the researchers conducted the analysis to minimize the work-load for those who had agreed to participate in this time intense process. Yet, to capture the process of collectively negotiating constructions[3], we did not only use the memory texts but also audio recordings of the deconstruction sessions as an analytical source.

While this first adaptation centered on tracing how societal discourse unfolds in design practices, thinking with new materialism and queer-feminist affect studies shifted the analytical focus further to how hegemonic discourses co-materialize with normative technological phenomena. This emphasizes ideologies and normativities inherent in computational approaches, concepts, methods and practices and asks who (in/formal hierarchies, structural inequalities) and what (ideological framings, discursive hegemonies, epistemic norms, material-discursive relationalities) is given normative power on the basis of which societal values and techno-epistemic imaginaries (e.g. re-enactments of

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3   Deconstruction investigates the formation of constructs and not their final effects.

ideologies of human difference and epistemic dichotomies, such as the objective/subjective divide or the separation of social and epistemic values). The idea to apply a materialist account of performativity in CMW extended the method by tracing the participants collective storying of materiality[4] and, in particular, the agential cuts they make between the technical/matter and the social. The notion of mattering implied includes materializations such as technical artifacts and technological phenomena emerging through computational practices as well as processes of embodiment or becoming-with technology. Methodically this entails yet some more changes in both the deconstruction and the reconstruction.[5] For the reconstruction the set of questions specific to the respective computational practices are rephrased to grasp their sociomaterial nature.[6] How are materialities/objects constructed in the memory and in what way are they agentive? Exploring the agency of matter and reconstructing the cuts enacted between the technical and the social makes visible how practices of computing are implicitly normative and which dichotomies they re-enact (see section 3.2). What affective resonances did the memories trigger during the collective deconstruction? Resonances combine emotional and cognitive aspects as well as the sensory and the affective. During the deconstruction, these affective resonances can be experienced as pleasant or as disturbing and unpleasant, i.e. dissonant, or as both at the same time. Resonances can occur collectively or individually and are often indicated by a certain rousing around a memory, which may be expressed in terms of excitement or irritation. Affective resonances are moments and experiences of being moved. They create memory traces that change over time in the way and intensity in which they occur (see section 3.1). The following two case studies exemplify and detail the described methodological changes.

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4   This idea was inspired by a conversation between Donna Haraway, Karen Barad and Lucy Suchman in a seminar on Feminist Technoscience Studies at Lancaster University in May 2011.

5   Haug (1999) suggests two analytical steps: first, the deconstruction of processes of meaning making based on a collective analysis of the participants' memory texts and, second, the reconstruction of how participants mobilize hegemonic discourses in the interpretation of their everyday experiences.

6   These questions are an addition to Haug's questions on self-construction, construction of others, message of the story, language specificities, omissions, contradictions, and causalities.

3.1 Affective Materialities in Gender-Technology Relations

For an example of how memories and gendered experiences inform the work of technology design, I revisit a mind scripting process with a team of ten computer game developers (see also Allhutter & Hofmann 2014). This example dives into the temporal and transindividual dimensions of affects. It shows how affective resonances and dissonances with a memory can be used as an analytical resource to trace gendered processes of embodiment and signification informing work practices. The empirical study started from an exploration into how concepts of computing are intertwined with gender discourses. To examine concepts of game 'quality' and 'user experience' each of the developers wrote down a memory on 'trying out a computer game'. The mind scripting was carried out in the developers' working environment. Clearly, deconstructing a user experience in this context means that participants have a professional knowledge of technical concepts such as usability and user experience (UX). Against this background, we can further inquire on how technical concepts are affective and embodied, and how they materialize in development practices. The memory texts were collectively deconstructed and, eventually, analyzed with regard to the authors' constructions of objectified quality criteria versus subjectified preferences that "actually make a game good" (Allhutter & Hanappi-Egger 2006; Allhutter 2012). Based on these findings, I then had a deeper look into gendered processes of appropriating technology and the genderedness of technical concepts. For this purpose, I re-engaged with the recollected perspectives and emotions found in the recorded deconstruction process. This extract presents a snippet from one of the developer's user experiences:

> The PSP [i.e. PlayStation Portable] was on the table in front of her. .... So she grabbed the new game ... The first try was just *shameful*. She liked rally games during her college days, but *they were often a little too hard for her*. *The PSP felt big and unwieldy*, and playing a racing game without a decent analog stick was also suboptimal. The next attempt brought the realization that braking more often would certainly help with not overshooting the track limits so often. Then, on the third try, the game started to be fun. *She took off her jacket*

and hung it wrinkle-free over the back of her chair. ... The seventh attempt then brought *an acceptable result* for the first time - third is not a great placing, but *not embarrassing and good enough* to try the next track. .... The first attempt is *again completely embarrassing*, but *basically she has already learned a lot about the handling of the car*.
She and the rally games. That had always been a *love-hate relationship*. Having *little natural talent* for this type of game, it always took her a multitude of tries to master a game *that her buddies just picked up and played*. So what – it's just a game. Fortunately, at some point she had stopped taking it too personally and stopped *swearing and cursing wildly* when she messed up the same race the tenth time in a row. (memory 1: game developer trying out a racing game; translated from German, emphasis added)

The highlighted text passages express a multisensory affective involvement into materialities. Using Ahmed's concept of orientations, inspired me to zoom-in on the historicity and transindividual dimensions of the described relation to technology: How is materiality remembered and felt in the text? How does the writer reminisce about corporeality and processes of embodiment? What emotions, affects, and actions occur in the memory? And more specifically, who or what is remembered as agentive and what affective resonances does the text trigger during the collective deconstruction?

A summary of the memory's narrative could sound like this: The developer decides to try out a racing game. After a first failed attempt, there is a flashback to her student days. A haptic memory of the PSP affectively brings the reader back to the current point in time. The next attempt is commented with the self-deprecating "realization that braking more often would certainly help". Then the game starts to be fun and the next attempt - the seventh - brings an "acceptable result", then another "completely embarrassing" one. The end of the text presents another retrospect of how the author's relationship to racing games has developed in the past.

The exact enumerations of the individual "attempts" paint a picture of an action space in which the developer makes an effort to achieve something. And eventually, "basically she has already learned a lot". This

self-construction is linked to haptic expressions that combine embodiment and symbolism. During the deconstruction, we (the collective) or our bodies can - collectively and individually – create an affective resonance or dissonance with some of the figurative memories. For example, we may imagine a haptic perception such as "the PSP felt big and unwieldy" - this haptic empathy may convey a sense of unfamiliarity. With Sara Ahmed, we can ask what happens when an object does not (longer) seem familiar, and when this account faces the fact that "her buddies just picked up and played" racing games. While the author's actions at times fade into the background, materialities appear as agentive at crucial text passages, e.g. in the introduction to the text or at the end of a retrospect. In other passages, their symbolic meaning figures a change in the author's attitude and posture. For example, when she takes off her jacket, hangs "it wrinkle-free over the back of her chair" and thus, in a professional manner, turns her full attention to the game. The developer brings feelings of shame and embarrassment into play, combines them with self-irony and recalls the handling of the vehicle as a learning process. She does not feel at home in this technology relationship and has to acquire the skills, the "natural talent" that her male connotated "buddies" simply have, through concentrated practice, in the past and every time. How the game ends, however, remains open and the result is ultimately given little meaning.

  As Ahmed (2010) explains, the development of orientations takes time and is shaped by what lies behind. Ahmed thus illustrates that we have already inherited a proximity to certain objects, such as the proximity to the gendered spaces we inhabit or, indeed, to technical artifacts. Refusing or breaking through this inheritance marks the queer-feminist potential of engaging with affects, memory, embodied knowledge, and onto-epistemic practices. Orientations are an effect of where we tend to, but they are also a starting point (ibid., 235). Memories merge different temporalities into material-discursive "patterns of relevance" (Barad 2012, 15). In two places, the text mentions a background to the remembered technology relation. The author relates her distance to the object rally game to her time as a student. She evokes memories of the time of her technical education, which was also the subject of a previous interview, and thus relates it to the gendered space of the IT college she attended. In the final paragraph, she brings the time levels together because "[s]he and the rally games", that "had always been a love-hate

relationship". The developer attributes her game performance to a lack in "natural talent" rather than to the quality of the game. In contrast, she does not describe a problematic relation to technology when it comes to her former and (implicitly) current colleagues. Indeed, none of the memories of her nine male colleagues[7] problematized their own gaming skills; rather, they presented narratives of *just picking a game up and playing it* and of assessing the quality of the game from a professional perspective instead.

It was not the aim of this mind scripting to compare women's memories with men's memories, but to trace how technical concepts materialize as gendered practices. These practices are to some extent formalized through technical approaches and methods which are inherently gendered (regardless of the developers' gender). 'Women' and 'men', or game developers do not generally relate to technology in a problematizing or non-problematizing way. The described gender-technology relation is not generalizable. However, the orientations in this specific technology relation represent a tendency in which gender becomes visible as relational, temporary and situated. The construction of an unproblematized relation between masculinity and technology also owns itself to the memories' spacetimemattering: there is hardly any reference to the past, i.e. to the emergence of the male colleagues' relationship with computer games. The historicity of their embodied relation to technology is erased and, thus, their relation to technology is naturalized and re-enacts a male (white, able-bodied, heterosexual) gender performance. As numerous post-structural thinkers have argued, bodies materialize through a repetition of practices (e.g. Young 2005; Butler 1995). Ahmed (2010, 247) refers to this repetition as a form of labor in which familiarity with objects or their simple "givenness" becomes invisible and the labor of repetition itself becomes effortless. At the moment of re-enactment, the historicity of the development of (gendered) orientations thus disappears.

My methodological suggestion to include affective encounters with the recollected perspectives and emotions points to naturalized causalities that reveal gendered processes of embodiment and signification. Subjects are affectively imbricated in differential ways in concrete power relations.

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7   The research sample is a 'natural' group, specifically a team whose members worked on the design of a computer game. The gender ratio corresponds to the composition of teams often found in this industry.

Against the background of Ahmed's concept of orientations, my analysis of affective resonances with memories traces how participants are affected differentially and shows that affective immersion in society-technology relations is multiple and does not stay within coherent dichotomous gender boundaries. "She and the rally games. That had always been a love-hate relationship." "Love-hate relationship" stands as an expression of strong emotional and physical involvement of the developer, as a way of how racing games have an affective grip on her. But, "[s]o what - it's just a game. Fortunately, at some point she had stopped taking it too personally and stopped swearing and cursing wildly". The author puts the game into perspective and, with this, hints to a change of orientation in her relation to technology. However, immediately her affective immersion is re-affirmed by doubling the highly emotional verbs. At this point, the deconstruction easily evokes an affective resonance, an emphatic memory. The transindividual and historical dimension of affects and emotions raises the question of how the collective relates affectively to this embodied memory. Does a resonance emerge with the rage, with a suppressed rage, with serenity, or with the attempt to maintain serenity and the ensuing explosion? And how does the collective resonate with the author's emotions in terms of gender?

  Within a historically specific society-technology relation, the emotions described can be read as carrying 'feminine' and 'masculine' connotations. However, affective resonances do not remain within dichotomous gender boundaries. They are multiple, i.e. their intensity and meaning are temporally multi-layered, and above all they are also inconsistent when invoking gendered memory traces.

  Collectively deconstructing this user experience revealed how technology use is a temporally complex process of becoming-with technology and transindividual appropriation. The mind scripting did not assume a coherent gender position or continuity in dichotomously gendered technology relations. Rather, working with memories evokes affective, temporary situatednesses within a specific gender-technology relationship. This directs the analytical lens to simultaneities and discontinuities in a process that, in Barad's (2012, 20) terms, engenders patterns of relevance on and in bodies. The affective resonances that occur in the collective deconstruction point to a transindividual

involvement into gender-technology relations, and thus methodologically add another analytical layer or knowledge mode.

  Where does the world tend to from the starting point of the developers' orientations, I want to further ask with Ahmed. In technical concepts, user experience (UX) is commonly understood as a consequence of an interaction with a product. However, analyzing orientations in user experiences shows that UX is not a mere technical or socio-technical concept. UX is an embodied concept that emerges as a phenomenon in a specific socio-material relation and implies a historicity of gendered subjects. Technology development can thus be understood as a process of materialization in which gender-technology relations are differentially enacted.

3.2 Ideological Practices: the onto-epistemology of 'accurate' and 'just' computing

The second example aims at analyzing epistemic practices of computer scientist in the field of machine learning. In the past couple of years bias in machine learning and artificial intelligence and the discriminatory effects of respective systems have raised growing awareness amongst critical computer scientists. Biased systems (re-)produce structural discrimination such as classism, racism, ableism, genderism, and heteronormativity. They generate stereotypical representations of groups subject to these forms of discrimination and may objectify discriminatory outcomes in domains such as education, employment, health, banking, and policing. The following reconstruction of a mind scripting process deals with practices of discrimination-awareness in predictive modelling and machine learning. It focuses on the construction of core concepts in this field of research and their implicit normativities. Writing down memories on 'when she/he/they operationalized discrimination', a collective of eight computer scientists (quoted as com1-8) and two social scientists (quoted as soc1-2) deconstructed the so-called 'accuracy-fairness trade-off'. Predictive accuracy is a performance measure which represents the percentage of correct predictions a decision support system generates for an individual person. Discrimination-aware machine learning studies how to make predictive models free from discrimination. The objective is "to develop algorithmic techniques for incorporating [...] non-discriminatory constraints into predictive models" (Žliobaitė 2015,

para. 1). A new materialist lens sheds light on the construction of the social and the techno-epistemic as separate from each other.

The deconstruction started off with the general assumption that modelers aim at maximizing predictive accuracy because it is a valid and objective measure of the extent to which a model makes correct predictions, e.g. on whether a loan recipient with certain characteristics (such as gender, age, etc.) will pay the loan back to the bank or not. In her memory, a computer scientist explains to legal and social scientists that even if a "computational process is transparent and well-intended, the resulting models may be biased because data used for model calibration is incomplete, sampled in a biased way or describes a population whose characteristics have changed over time" (memory 1). The writer describes the effort of explaining this to people not familiar with computational thinking and their reaction as well. This implicitly brings up the trade-off between predictive accuracy and non-discrimination. The following text passage raised intense discussions of how the notion of accuracy is used within computer science and in interdisciplinary contexts:

> She was trying to explain algorithmic discrimination that can happen when predictive models are used for decision support in every-day life situations. She explained the premises, that even if the computational process is transparent and well-intended, the resulting models may be biased because data used for model calibration is incomplete, sampled in a biased way or describes a population whose characteristics have changed over time. They asked, why would modelers want such a biased model. She explained that this is because modelers aim at *maximizing predictive accuracy*. She further explained that controlling for discrimination in predictive models *comes at a price of accuracy*, that is, accuracy goes down if we want to remove biases. They could not understand this. They said – if we think that biases are unjustified, that they are resulting from artefacts in data, shouldn't removing discrimination improve accuracy? (memory 1: computer scientist explaining algorithmic discrimination to legal and social scientists; emphasis added)

The writer introduces and specifies the technical notion of predictive accuracy. The respondents counter with a social or moral understanding of accuracy as making right and thus unbiased decisions. In the deconstruction, one of the participants argued that the respondents' notion of accuracy is "relative to the ideal world instead of relative to ground truth" (com5). The concept of 'ground truth' generally refers to information generated from direct observation. In machine learning, the term refers to data that are considered as, and treated as, representing reality objectively and correctly, and that are used for determining the accuracy of a training set's classification for supervised learning techniques.

In the perception of the participants, the legal and social scientists "disconnected [accuracy] from the model, but connected it with society" (com5). In the further discussion, this interpretation was confirmed by extending the notion of ground truth: 'It's a hypothetical ground truth, it's some kind of ideal' (com4). The "misunderstanding" of the legal and social scientists introduces the "moral" statement that in real life no discriminatory decisions shall be taken even if they are due to discriminatory correlations in data. Subsequently, the participants delved into the deconstruction of the apparent contradiction between the "moral" and the "technical" understanding of accuracy.

"Accuracy is not a term that modelers use with each other very much because there are other performance metrics that are more faithful. But there is also an awareness that it's a useful boundary or translation tool, people usually understand what it means. The narrator [of memory 1] is already translating things for the language of the legal and social scientists" (com7). In this and other statements, accuracy was described as something that tries to communicate the objectives and relevance of this research to wider society. Eventually, the deconstruction showed that computer scientists make sense of accuracy as a principle that is mathematically or statistically defined in a clear manner. At the same time, it carries a dual meaning (as defined principle and vague translation tool) that hints to the way that they mobilize the concept and its ambivalent and affective nature in their analytical and conceptual practices and use it as a boundary object that builds a bridge to social or ethical concerns.

Another memory describes a situation in which the writer discusses "fairness", thinking with different cases of discrimination and raises the

question of "how to determine what are acceptable grounds to justify differences in treatment" (memory 2). He reflects upon these cases from different perspectives and gets "hopeless" (ibid.) over the complexity of the issue. When "he decided ... to discuss things over a beer with a colleague" (ibid.), they reverse this thought experiment by trying to find arguments against this kind of research:

> Mockingly they decided, just for the fun of it, to engage in building up a strong case against discrimination-aware machine learning. Is it desirable, they argued, or even ethical to require fairness in treatment between ethnic groups, genders, religions, etc. if there is strong statistical evidence for correlation between minority group membership and risk? Disregarding such correlations, they argued, is inherently discriminatory as it probably, in a mathematical sense, leads to less accurate models, where the loss in accuracy will be imbalanced and mostly affecting the privileged groups. As a perverse effect, hence, fairness-aware machine learning is moving away from the *gender- and ethnicity-neutral principle of building the most accurate classifier*, towards a decision affected by gender and ethnicity. (memory 2: computer scientist discussing with colleague, emphasis added)

In a first reading of this memory the participants widely agreed that contrary to the previous text, which opens a dichotomy between a technical and a moral understanding of accuracy, in this text the technical and the social were "kind of coherent" (com5). "They are linked together" and "connected in a meaningful way" (com1). However, the last sentence explicitly states what was implicit to the previous text, namely that "building the most accurate classifier" is seen as a "gender- and ethnicity-neutral principle" (memory 2). Despite the initial perception that the technical and the social are interwoven, a participant explains why the claim of neutrality, and thus the separation of the social from the technical makes sense: "So, I see it as a technical formulation that the idea is to be able to learn models which are independent, which do not use information of gender or any other sensitive information" (com5). This statement caused confusion at first and another participant replied that "gender and ethnicity-neutral principles to me is not the same as not

using" gender and ethnicity as attributes (com1). "Yes, correct, yes", the conversation goes on (com5). "No, but I think in the sense that before this whole movement came up, nobody thought about it and people thought okay, you know if I'm just using attributes as they come I'm being neutral" (com5). Eventually one of the social scientists reframed the previous reconstitution of neutrality: "So, if you lower accuracy, you have an effect that disadvantages privileged groups. And this is seen to be ... political [and also called a movement rather than a research approach]. Changing the status quo of privilege seems to be politically questionable from a technical perspective. But, leaving the underprivileged status quo as it is, seems to be neutral" (soc1). This interpretation is countered by a computer scientist: "Well, in a way it questions the problem formulation and approach. So, I assume that the original idea was it was fine to consider just a trade-off between some measure of discrimination and accuracy. And then through the analysis researchers came up with an understanding that it's not just about accuracy overall, but accuracy that may change disproportionately for different groups" (com5).

In fact, the practice of generalizing the assertion that "accuracy goes down if we want to remove biases" (memory 1) has been actualized in research by introducing "more faithful performance metrics", as a participant mentioned earlier (com7). These metrics, for instance, consider the overall accuracy of a predictive model for each group (i.e. "accuracy equity") or the accuracy for each group, conditional on their predicted class (i.e. "conditional accuracy equity") (see e.g. Binns 2017). This research shows that if biases are removed, accuracy goes down for the group of people that is usually not subject to structural discrimination, because the prediction might produce more false positives or false negatives for individuals from this group. For groups who are subject to structural discrimination however, accuracy is lower to start with, if biases are not removed. So, the question ultimately is for whom the relation between accuracy and fairness has been a trade-off after all. For underprivileged groups there is no trade-off because debiasing should actually lead to fewer discriminatory decisions and a rise in accuracy. The construction of a causality between lower accuracy and non-discrimination in the memory texts is therefore based on the assumption that predictive accuracy is a general, objective concept, while aiming for non-discrimination is normative.

The normative trajectory that is given to a practice that was earlier seen as neutral creates a dilemma. The practice of considering different accuracy rates for groups subject or not subject to structural discrimination is becoming integral to the analysis of accuracy-fairness trade-offs. However, in practice the question of who decides on the basis of what mandate whether or not to incorporate non-discriminatory constraints into predictive models, and how to choose the parameters, remains open. When deconstructing memory 2, participants noticed that not only does controlling for non-discrimination "come at a price" (memory 1), but there might also be a "strong statistical evidence for correlation between minority group membership and risk" (memory 2). Considering accuracy-fairness trade-offs in a differentiated way comes at a price, and this price is metaphorical but also material. The cost associated with non-discrimination is articulated as a risk: e.g., the risk of a bank to give a loan to elderly women or the risk of insuring someone's car that might be subject to vandalism because they live in a particular neighborhood. The risk that is implied in memory 2 was deconstructed as an economic or actuarial risk of companies to suffer financial loss when they rely on discrimination-aware decisions support systems. The economic framing of the problem and the hegemonic perspective that comes with it seem to create an undecidable situation. As frequently emphasized during the deconstruction, this dilemma mirrors the pressure of justification that computer science is under. In research and publications, computer scientists are required to prove the practical relevance of their work in economic terms and to produce cost-saving solutions. The deconstruction of these discursive entanglements showed that – even though better performance metrics exist – when arguments on practical relevance and risk come into play, the narrative of the objectivity of generalizations is revived. Accuracy in its generalized version is reconstructed as an objectified epistemic ideal. At the same time discrimination is reconstituted as a problem of the social realm that computer scientists are neither accountable for nor equipped to solve.

The memories that this deconstruction was based on, are narratives of inter- and trans-disciplinary encounters that articulate and negotiate epistemic norms, which indeed are more differentiated within critical computing communities. The analysis shows how the reconstitution of the objectified epistemic ideal of building the most accurate classifier implies and reconfigures a certain perspective: it naturalizes the group

whose characteristics do (commonly) not entail discrimination and enacts its privilege as a norm. This norm colludes with the reconfiguration of a techno-epistemic ideal that objectifies this normalization.

4. Collective Agency and Emancipative Computing

Research on material-discursive reconfigurings of society-technology relations refers to the ongoing co-emergence of social categories such as class, age, gender, ethnicity, ability, of related subjectivities, practices and power relations. Sociotechnical development processes can be understood as material-discursive phenomena in Barad's sense. As work processes, they are ideologically embedded, materially articulated, and implicitly informed by social discourses. The development of information systems is a situated and multidimensional process in which the relationship between meaning and material phenomena is constantly (re)configured. Political-economic structures, ideological framings, organizational hierarchies, hegemonic discourses, normative computational concepts and methods, software and code, algorithms, embodied knowledge, gendered relations of technology (and more) co-emerge and are active in the world's differential becoming. In Barad's words, it is not an interaction of material and cultural entities that are separate from each other, but a process of "intra-action" in which relational forces materialize and create relevance.

  The first example has demonstrated how memories allow us to access the transindividual and historical modes of affects and emotions as well as the historicity of materialities. It showed how processes of embodiment, signification and materialization are subtly and differentially imbricated in power relations. In development practice, thus, the way in which concepts such as user experience (UX) are translated to specific design decisions is entangled with how society-technology relations accommodate some bodies more than others (Allhutter 2014). The study suggests that conceptualizing UX as an embodied concept and striving for a deconstructivist sociotechnical practice marks a queer-feminist potential for transformation. The second case study pointed out how the idea that computer scientists are not accountable for the state of power relations in society and their co-emergence with epistemic practices and algorithmic systems translates into technical concepts and methods. It suggests that it is crucial to question the normativity of computational

approaches and the epistemic norms of the field in a fundamental manner (Allhutter & Berendt 2020).

By bringing CMW into conversation with Barad's agential realism and queer-feminist approaches to affect, the emancipative and ideology-critical trajectory of the method extends to how processes of embodiment and materialization as well as the workings of affects in sociotechnical practices (re-)enact power relations. In this way, the multi-layeredness and intersection of modes of subjectivation with co-emergent phenomena of materialization become visible and inspire political interventions into mundane (work) practices as well as politico-theoretical transformations. In my research, I have been using mind scripting as part of ethnographic research into how social inequalities and ideologies of human difference co-emerge with encompassing sociotechnical infrastructures. The power relations (re-)enacted by these entanglements can themselves be described as *infrastructural* in the way they imply processes of mattering, embodiment and signification. The infrastructural workings of power suggest an empirically informed concept of power that helps to address socio-material relations of computing not only as onto-epistemic phenomena and in terms of micro-level practices, but as entangled with intermediate structures of political economy and macro-level systems (see Allhutter 2019). In combination with other ethnographic methods, mind scripting has been an extremely rich analytical tool for me to explore intra-acting modes of infrastructural power and to take account of the multi-layered and dynamic socio-material entanglement of practices that incorporate emergent as well as structural power relations. Most importantly, thinking together socio-material and transitional elements, the notion of infrastructural power that materializes in emergent society-technology formations carries a potential for agency and political resistance. In this spirit, the objectives of this research are twofold: to generate theoretical and empirical insights into the entanglement of onto-epistemic practices and societal power relations in the aspirations and approaches of critical computing communities and to offer a methodological approach to reconfigure concepts and methods applied in these fields. Both objectives invest in an interdisciplinary effort to transform disciplinary knowledges towards response-able collective agency. In reference to Haug et al. (1999, 43), the goal of mind scripting is to find ways to articulate techno-scientific objectives and sociotechnical practices in political terms. In this spirit,

mind scripting suggests establishing critique as a political mode (Bargetz & Sanos 2020) in computing which aims at revealing the mechanisms and social antagonisms that obscure the workings of power relations in onto-epistemic norms, values and practices that are central to the field.

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Chapter 21

TENDING TO THE FEMINIST ACADEMIC SELF

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Feminist academics as minority scholars and teachers engage in practices to cultivate and sustain a particular form of the self. These practices work not only to challenge existing sets of power relations that govern and are reproduced within academic institutions, but also to identify, shape, establish, and reinforce other sets of relations that make room for feminists in academia. Through a collective memory-work project focused on joy, we identified specific practices that, for us, have cultivated a particular assemblage of relations to facilitate the emergence of feminist academic selves and to nourish us as feminist academics. We use *care of the self* to conceptualize the attention we give to the activities we engage in that enable movement toward an *affirmative politics*, one that assists us in enacting and sustaining the kind of academic feminists we aspire to be. We use care of the self as part of a sustainable ethics comprising a set of practices through which a feminist academic self can take form. Our research illustrates how mundane acts in our own lives facilitate the work that we can do on ourselves that, beyond permitting our survival, feed our aspirations for feminism, academia, and the type of feminist academic self we want to become.

Introduction

As in other areas of feminist and gender studies, feminism in geography is under attack from both inside and outside the academy (Sultana, 2018). Enacting a feminist academic self in this milieu can sometimes be challenging. We found ourselves asking: what spaces, relationships, connections, and embodiments enable feminists to pursue meaningful and affirming academic work? How do feminist academics use these to cultivate and sustain a self that can aspire to a feminist ethics in the

academy? What activities can we engage in to enhance our capacity to act in ways that contribute to creating a supportive environment to foster the enactment of a feminist academic self? In pursuing these questions we undertook a collective memory-work project, that of collective biography, to explore moments in our careers when we were joyful about our work. In our research, we identified practices that, for us, have helped particular forms of a feminist academic self to form and have steadied us in our own work as feminist academics. We use the term *feminist academic self* as conceptual shorthand to foreground a particular assemblage of relations, even if only temporary or fleeting, organized around various engagements with feminist undertakings of academic tasks. We maintain that the feminist academic self, expressed both individually and collectively, must be tended to and looked after through various kinds of practices.

We position our arguments vis-à-vis Foucault's work on *care of the self* to tease out a selection of mundane practices that bring feminist academic selves into being and into action. Our work is not about practices of self-care for feminist academics. Like Foucault, we use care of the self as an ethics, as a way to understand the self as brought into being and nurtured by a set of practices. This self is not "clothing, tools or possessions; it is the principle that uses these tools" whereby the principle is that of the "soul" – not the body – and the "tools" are resources to draw on (Foucault 1997, p. 230). These practices are ordinary, oriented toward bringing an ethical self to the fore, as a specific, concrete, and unique self that may be inhabited at various times by different subjects. Of interest to us are those practices that tend to the activities that utilize the tools and resources available to feminists in academia. This ethical self does not rest on a set of substantive feminist principles or political strategies; rather, the self emerges through the everyday banality of academic tasks. We are intrigued by the complex ways feminists coax, express, nurture, and attend to the feminist academic self, a self that enables them to do the work of a feminist academic. Thus, after Moss (2014), we seek to engage in a sustainable ethics and *affirmative politics*: While collectively "cultivating the art of living intensely in the pursuit of change" (Braidotti, 2011, p. 323), we act to sustain our selves and, equally important, in the process, others' selves as feminist academics.

In this chapter, we offer a framing that can assist in talking about the type of feminist academic self we can enact. We first situate our project within the feminist geography literature and with respect to Michel Foucault's care of the self and Rosi Braidotti's affirmative politics. We then describe our use of collective biography for generating data. Next, we present an analysis of five memories that illustrates modes of tending to the feminist academic self. We conclude by emphasizing that tending to the feminist academic self involves directing attention toward the routine and commonplace activities that feed into the practices feminists engage in so as to flourish in the academy.

Searching for the Feminist Academic Self in Geography

Feminist geographers have written moving accounts of the connections and relationships that shape their identities as feminist academics and their modes of both surviving and prospering in the academy. The examples we found appear from different times and places and include reflections on research practices, records of feminist gatherings, writing on care and care ethics, and critiques of the job market and academic workplaces.

Feminist research is a critical site for cultivating the potential emergence of feminist academic selves. Research teams and shared projects can encourage feminist academics to engage in activities that foster conditions wherein relationships, emotions, and bonds are valued (e.g. Falconer Al-Hindi, Moss, Kern, and Hawkins 2017; Fertaly and Fluri 2019; Blazek and Askins 2020). These research sites for feminist geography scholars are not always celebratory, however. Dombroski, et al. (2018) point out that the impetus for their own collectivizing while working on doctorates was the devastating Christchurch, New Zealand, earthquakes in 2011. In order to survive in the academy, they moved away from the notion of the autonomous scholar fostered through the supervisor-student style of training, toward a caring collective distributed across relationships, institutional processes, and wider technological networks. Gatherings too are academic sites that are open up possibilities for feminist academics. Smith, Jamison, and Dwyer (2008: 537) reflect on a feminist reading weekend that offered "a moment outside the day-to-day focus of academic work where normal constraints are, at least temporarily, suspended, and where a more collective form of encounter is

possible." A meeting of the Great Lakes Feminist Geography Collective provided a different kind of gathering space, one without an agenda that allowed participants to step away from their frazzled lives, and eventually led to a publication on slow scholarship as a collective feminist strategy (Mountz et al. 2015).

The significance of self-reflection, sustainability, care, and valuing human and non-human relationships is apparent throughout this published archive. Dowling (2008) argues that care-based identities rooted in personal and professional relationships could transform the discipline. This care-based approach shows how the personal and professional are entwined throughout academic and non-academic professional career paths (see e.g. Droogleever Fortuijn 2008; Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda 2014). Intentionally valuing relationships, bodies, and the emotions associated with caring is a central part of any feminist geography project to change the academy, whether it be shifting work practices (Akinleye 2006), maneuvring through the technical aspects of being in an academic position (Crooks and Castleden 2012), or developing a sustainable academic self (Moss 2014).

These examples do not form a field of literature *per se*. Nor do they share a common conceptual framing around understanding feminist academic selves. Nonetheless, our reading suggests that feminist geographers are interested in how one can tend to the feminist academic self, that is, how to care for the activities feminist academics engage in to practice a feminist ethics as an academic. Care here is not just, nor even predominantly, an emotion or affect; the care we are talking about concerns being attentive to what a self needs to form, about cultivating conditions for the self to emerge, and about engaging in activities to reproduce and sustain that self. Although these examples in the literature highlight the importance of critically engaged self-reflection in terms of problematizing personal experience and making links with wider social relations of power, reflexivity and positioning are not the only ways to access experience analytically or methodologically through or within a feminist politics. Analytically, our reading of this disparate body of work revealed resonances with Foucault's *care of the self* and Braidotti's *affirmative politics*. Methodologically we turned to a type of collective memory-work to explore specific activities that might facilitate the emergence of a feminist academic self.

Foucault's care of the self

Foucault's notion of care of the self, as a technology of the self, is a useful way to think about how people undertake specific *self-directed* acts so that they can become the person they need to be in order to pursue their goals of effecting change in the world (Foucault 1997, 2005). Technologies are matrices of reason that people engage in to negotiate truth and knowledge claims (Foucault 1997: 224-225). *Technologies of the self* are those practices that assist people to understand themselves and to conduct the life they would like to live. Technologies of the self focus on how souls are sustained through individuals adjudicating various realms of life including politics, learning, and knowledge. They work in tandem with other technologies, which express fluctuating temporal and spatial dominance, such as production, sign systems, and power.

  Using this idea of technologies of the self is relevant in sorting through how a feminist academic self emerges as well as how it can be sustained. One specific type of technology, the *care of the self*, is especially useful because it focuses on care of the activities that can bring a self into existence and shape the type of actions that the self can undertake. *Care of the self* "permit[s] individuals to effect *by their own means, or with the help of others*, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault 1997: 225; our emphasis). Self-direction involves *degrees of freedom* in one's own actions wherein agentic acts are restricted in some way by social, cultural, political, and economic constructs. Moss and Prince (2017) extend this idea to include bodily constructs. They show that military psychologists in the First World War who did not use talk therapy (psychoanalysis) relied on bodily signs to determine whether or not a soldier was a malingerer. In this context, the body was used *against* the emergence of a military self where psychology as a knowledge system defined what was true. Degrees of freedom can however be liberating in that acting on one's self can go against the grain. As Grosz (2011) posits, these degrees of freedom are "a positive conception of freedom, freedom as the ability to act and in acting to *make oneself* even as one is made by external forces" (p. 62; our emphasis).

In other words, the care of the self is an ethics through which individuals produce a self by acting on the effects of processes that problematize and adjudicate truth and knowledge claims. This ethics does not suggest that an intact, enduring self emerges seamlessly on demand (see Kern, Hawkins, Falconer Al-Hindi, and Moss 2014). Rather, a self needs attention in order to form and, subsequently, to be maintained. In order to enhance self-direction, Foucault suggests that care of the self involve a set of bodily (material) practices. In addition to his most famous illustration, confession, examples include: preparing for life, training for careers, maintaining one's health, and exercising power. This collection of complex tasks as part of the materiality of living shows that the self is not a solitary or singular activity, nor can it be reduced to self-knowledge or self-care. Rather, care of the self is an ethics that involves and values connections and relations. These practices actively foster a self that moves between liberation, as the envisioned state of how one would like to live life, and correction, manifest as material and discursive restrictions on agentic potential. Because these practices of the self, and on the self, are circumscribed by both the contemporary and historical contexts within which one lives, they are necessarily limited in scope. As possibilities, agentic moments show that the self has some degree of freedom to direct its own constitution and thus act as a generative force in effecting change both on itself and on the environments it lives in (see essays in Taylor and Vintges 2004). Through dedicated preparation and repeated attempts people are able to generate, and then grasp, the possibilities of the self that emerge that can serve to build one's capacity to sustain one's self and to endure (Foucault 2005).

Care of the self in feminist geography

In feminist geography, scholars have taken up the concept of care of the self in different ways. We distinguish between feminist geographers' scholarly work that is concerned with the *self*, as discussed above, and work that engages directly with Foucault's *care of the self*. Care of the body was a common theme in the latter category, where scholars argue that health and body-centred practices tend to the self by enhancing the body's capacities. The idea of self-care as part of the care of the self has also been taken up. Atkinson (2011) differentiates between self-care and care of the self, while recognizing that women seeking plastic surgery

rarely do so. Similarly, Straughan (2010) uses care of the self to show how the beauty salon works to fragment bodies and identities. Enhancing capacity of the body sets up the self one desires as something that is attainable. Little's work (2015, 2017) on exercise, health, and well-being is important in recognizing various ways in which care of the self captures a range of practices women carry out on their bodies as means to bring a self into being. In exploring fitness holidays, Little (2015) shows how care of the self does not happen in isolation, either individually or in individualized spaces. Fitness practices, including running, emphasize the need for repetition in actively cultivating a self (Little, 2017).

In contrast to these works, we do not focus on addressing links between the body and the self. Our interest in care of the self requires an explicit engagement with the ethics and practices that generate and nurture the emergence of a self, that is, a feminist academic self. In feminist geography scholarship concerned with governing and disciplining bodies, there is more direct engagement with Foucault's concepts of liberation and correction. Liberation and correction serve to capture those practices that individuals engage in to free themselves from societal restrictions. Liberation as a practice of freedom, however, is not without limiting conditions (Lea 2009). In bringing a desired self into being, including both a body and worldview, some form of training is necessary. Yet at the point at which one becomes liberated from society's constraints, one can slide into other practices of domination, such as the management of the experience of one's own body and control over expressing a self that one desires.

Selves and bodies are similarly foregrounded in Evans and Colls' (2009) investigation of policies related to obesity and their implementation around children's bodies and activity levels through the standardized tool of body mass index. They found that corrective disciplinary power in the institution, masked as care of the self, reinforced measurement as the key mechanism to understand (and stand in for) health status. This kind of reductionist practice as a technology of the self brings into being selves that are cast as already abnormal and in need of correction. It is important to note that not all sets of activities are either corrective or liberatory. Longhurst (2012) negotiates the tension among self, bodily self-discipline, and freedom from others' judgement in an exegesis of her own weight loss. Her autobiographical narrative brings out the fraught relationship between feeling liberated by shedding pounds and eating

healthier, and feeling constrained by her body's appearance while being enmeshed within discourses of normality. All these works show that liberation is not the goal in the care of the self; rather, liberation must serve a critical purpose so that individuals can grasp, form, inhabit, and then maintain a particular self.

Our Need for Affirmative Politics

This literature about the care of the self in feminist geography underscores the salience of particular sets of practices in the cultivation of a particular self. In our work, we chose not to focus on the restrictive practices of an institution generating a neoliberal subject that shape the boundaries of and limitations on what type of feminist academic we can enact (for such work see e.g. Taylor & Lahad 2018). Nor did we ground our work in a set of principles from which feminists act (cf. Ahmed, 2017). Instead, we focused on the joyful feminist academic self. We found many instances where we attempted to cultivate a feminist academic self while enmeshed in the network of relations that comprise the university as part of academia. We became interested in what sorts of practices sustain the feminist academic self once it emerged. We asked what sort of things one needs to do to tend to the joyful feminist academic self to keep it intact, to keep it going, and to keep it engaged in an institution that values individualism, rule-following, and conformity.

Although critical to understanding the emergence of the feminist academic self, identifying our individual pursuits of our degrees of freedom as a means through which to get out from under the restrictions within academia was not enough. We turned to Braidotti (2011, 2013), who extended Foucault's ideas about care of the self. For her, the work one does on the self must be a *collective project* rather than an individual ethics. Part of her collective project is to engage in an affirmative politics where affirmation is a mechanism through which one acts to uphold, reinforce, and sustain life-enhancing practices (Braidotti 2013: 192–97). Affirmation is not linked to 'positive' at the expense of 'negative' emotions, as in privileging joy over hate or complacency over anger. Affirmation is about immanent interventions into processes of becoming to direct the flow of power in ways that will open up possibilities to generate a world other than the one we live in. Care of the self needs to be rooted in a sustainable ethics, one where care of the self necessarily

involves relationality and embodiment manifest across uneven terrains of time and space. Flows of power can account for this unevenness: *potentia* (enhancing) and *potestas* (restrictive) are aligned neither with positivity nor negativity. *Potentia* can facilitate the dominant, major status quo just as *potestas* can enliven resistance and foster social change. What matters is the capacity to understand these flows so as to best intervene in ways that assist feminist academic selves to take form and to provide space to maintain those selves (see Moss, Kern, Hawkins, and Falconer Al-Hindi 2018).

Informed by these literatures and framings of the care of the self and affirmative politics, we used collective biography—a type of collective memory-work—as a methodology to learn more about how one tends to a feminist academic self. Through collective biography, we explored some of the practices we engaged in order to access the cultivation and sustaining of a feminist academic self in our own lives.

A Collective Biography Approach

Collective biography is a feminist research method and type of collective memory-work that involves analysing, together, a set of systematically-recalled memories written by the researchers in response to a carefully constructed prompt designed to elicit a memory about a specific topic (see Onyx and Small 2001; Davies and Gannon 2006). Like other auto-methods, including autobiographical writing and autoethnography, collective biography draws on researchers' own experiences to gain insight into particular issues theoretically, conceptually, and empirically (Moss and Besio 2019). Collective biography can be used to recover silenced voices, transform intimacy into a collective politics, and disclose the effects of the practice of power (pp. 315-16).

In their collective memory-work, Haug and colleagues (1999) focus on the process of female socialization. They studied specific aspects of the body, such as hairstyle, length and shape of legs, bust-size, and body movement, to demonstrate how girls become sexualized into women. Their work showed that investigating experiences at a micro-scale, conceptually below the level of identity, reveals how power works at this most intimate scale. Although the experiences of each researcher-participant are unique differing in nuance or minutiae, they are remarkably similar concerning the workings of power. Upon reflection we

realized that this is exactly what one would expect, as participants' experiences are the outcomes of the structural effects of power in light of their choices constrained by degrees of freedom.

Researchers interested in subject formation have also used written memories generated through collective biography to better understand its systemic, embodied, and affective aspects of experience (see Hawkins, Falconer Al-Hindi, Moss, and Kern 2016). For example, Davies and her colleagues (2001) explore the ambivalent aspects of subjectification, that is, the ways in which one actively constitutes a subject. They recall their first memories in school settings about how they felt constrained by external forces governing their understandings of being a girl as well as how they were able to act autonomously within those constraints. In addition to subjectification, researchers using collective biography have drawn on various theoretical traditions in a wide range of settings through a variety of topics (e.g. Gannon, Walsh, Byers and Rajiva 2014; Philips, Johnson, Misra and Zavros-Orr, 2020)

Unlike many collective biographies, in which members (ranging in number from 3 to 15) usually come together for one workshop to write one or two memories each, our group was constant over the course of eight years and focused on an emotion as a topic. We wrote 57 memories recalling moments where we experienced joy as feminist academics. An unexpected outcome of our collective memory work was that for us collective biography became a way to tend to the feminist academic self: the process of undertaking the research became a practice of that which we were researching. Generating what we refer to as written memories (cf. memory-scenes in Hamm, 2018) required that we be present to and for one another, which translated into in-person writing retreats (funded by pooling grant and professional development monies) nearly every year. The retreats, while intense with very hard work, acted as respite from the other commitments of our personal and professional lives. Our shared agreement that we would all participate evenly in the preparation, writing, and other tasks around our work together meant that each of us was challenged by unfamiliar aspects of scholarly work. Nevertheless, we were encouraged and supported as we tackled these in an environment of informal mentoring across our differences. Given that our collective biography work rested on a long-term commitment to collaboration, we were able to pursue various types of connections and relationships throughout the span of the project. Our systematic implementation of

collective biography as research method meant that each group member enjoyed an attentive and appreciative audience to their experiences and ideas. Imagination and creativity were part of the process of considering potential memories for development into data. We even began occupying each other's memories, recalling experiences in their analytical forms, and developing extended analyses of flows of power. Through being engaged in collective biography, we were cultivating a set of generative conditions through which a feminist academic self could form, take hold, and be sustained. (See Hawkins, Kern, Moss, and Falconer Al-Hindi, 2020, for insights into this collaboration.)

The feminist academic self that interests us in this chapter is manifest in our memories not as a fully formed, functioning entity, but as bits and pieces that make each of us who we are as feminists in our jobs. These rather incongruous and ambiguous conceptions and acts that permit a self to manifest are the most interesting part of coaxing a feminist academic self into being. We are interested in what sorts of activities, expressed through affect, gestures, words, facial expressions, and comportment, define the precarious boundaries of a self that holds together a diverse set of elements that not only make a feminist academic self possible, but also create a space where we would like to stay, at least for a while. In our analysis of these activities as captured in these memories, we show some of the complex ways we tend to the feminist academic self by our own means and with assistance from other people and things as part of our practice of affirmative politics.

Thus, all the memories we generated involve cultivating and sustaining feminist academic selves to some extent. Sometimes cultivating the self is more prominent, as for example, when new and unique experiences present themselves that can enhance our expression as a feminist academic self; and sometimes sustaining is more prominent, when daily personal and workplace routines are refined and become ensconced in habitual practices that maintain a feminist academic self. Here we explore those memories that depict the practices most associated with the idea of using self-direction as agentic potential, to establish or nourish a space for the feminist academic subject to exist, whether that be more liberatory or corrective, while being sustaining and affirmative at the same time. In this sense, what we offer is meant to be neither prescriptive nor proscriptive. Rather, we seek to highlight but a handful of a plethora of ways one can tend to the feminist academic self.

Tending to the Feminist Academic Self

We explore selected memories (in abridged form) through the concept of care of the self as part of an affirmative politics. The memories we have chosen to discuss in detail are exemplars, depictions of themes we found across all 57 of the memories we created through collective biography. The feminist academic self portrayed here, an assemblage of a particularized set of relations, is manifest as partially formed, imprinted from the assortment of acts and activities that make us who we are as feminists in our jobs. The memory-work has exposed a feminist academic self either at the moment of its recognition or while fully engaged in a sustaining activity. We signal the attention we give to the activities that enable the generation of the feminist academic self. Each memory illustrates a different set of activities that establishes or nurtures a space for the feminist academic subject to take hold, via liberatory or corrective measures, while being sustaining and affirmative at the same time.

 We organized the presentation of these exemplars by empirical themes evident across our archive of memories. Digging into our memories as analytical data has shown us that tending to the feminist academic self takes effort, happens in relation, requires commitment, involves routine, and includes making decisions. We recognize that these descriptors are not mutually exclusive and, in fact, overlap and feed into one another. Our discussion of each theme attempts to focus on one aspect of this kaleidoscopic view of activities that tend to the feminist academic self.

Tending takes effort

Effort is embedded in the exercise of degrees of freedom in enacting a particular self. Part of the effort of tending to a feminist academic self requires intention. And while we wish it were true that enacting a feminist academic self is second nature, it is not (see Akinleye 2006; Moss 2014). Expressing intention through particular activities is part of the freedom we practice in directing the formation of a self we aspire to. In our work, we found that our efforts were rarely individual endeavours. Our memories revealed a dense network of relations. The relations themselves were embedded in various types of power, kin, workplace, and social systems structuring the parameters within which we could act.

In the following memory, the narrator (we refer to the author of each memory as 'the narrator' and use 'she' and 'her' as personal pronouns to maintain our anonymity and that of the people mentioned in the memories) inhabits the moment of awakening, a semi-conscious state, with the work of tending to the self having already begun. Her awakening is accompanied by a hope that it is Friday, the day for writing with the collective biography group.

> I turn over on my side and kick my legs out across the other side the bed. I scrunch up my eyes and nose, hold them for a moment, and then relax them. As I guardedly flutter my eyes half-open, I see the vertical bar of light from the door left ajar. Okay, so it is morning. I let my eyes close all the way again. As I roll over on my back, I draw my knees to my chest. What is today? Friday? I hope so. I rotate my ankles, first to the left, then to the right, and shuffle my shoulders into the bedding. I flop to my other side, stretch out my legs, and point my toes. I lift my eyebrows, pulling my lids apart enough for a sliver of vision. I notice bright light creeping in around the edges of the curtains. I squint a bit and rub my eyes, three circles to the left, and then to the right. I shove the covers to my knees and disentangle my legs. I use both arms to push myself up, and dangle my feet over the frame of the bed. I do a couple of neck rolls and stretch my arms overhead. Side to side, opening up my ribcage. I shake my head quickly, almost like a vibration. I try again to open my eyes—not yet ready—so I close them. I sit there for a moment longer, letting my breath wend its way through my lungs. I try once more to open my eyes. Okay, that's better. I grab a glimpse of the nightstand. Aah, fresh lemon water! As I reach for the tumbler the chimes begin on my phone. Words flash: "Yay, it's time to write!" So it is Friday! I place the cool rim of the glass on my lips and steadily drain it, with a few short pauses while my stomach adjusts to the day.

This memory highlights the point that much of the effort of tending to the feminist academic self is invisible. Little (2015) notes that tending to the body is part of the work one does on the self so that one can enact a

particular self, in the sense of not only health and well-being, but also in the sense of conforming to what a particular self, a feminist academic self, might look like. Awakening involves the habitual act of exercise and stretching, perhaps as a way to ward off pain or maybe as a modest act simply to shake off sleep. The surprise of fresh lemon water on the nightstand shows that there is someone else who cares and supports the narrator in tending to the self even before she awakes. The small daily rituals are purposeful: they are part of the slow, repetitive, micro-scale work of tending to the body through practices of nourishing the body and the soul that allow the feminist academic self to recharge and to prepare for, in this case, the act of writing. Only when there is recognition that the day is Friday do her beaboured movements loosen. Effort is embedded in the act of awakening on a workday and expressed through bodily maintenance and a partner's thoughtful attention. Far from the physical space of the academic institution, away from colleagues, students, and administrators, the narrator uses those greater liberatory degrees of freedom in her actions as part of tending to a self to which she aspires, offering possibilities for the writing, the day, and potentially beyond.

The effort of continually monitoring the boundaries of a self is part of the work one does in the care of the self, whether this be arranging for a student's oral thesis examination, coming to imagine the possibilities of effecting change, supporting a colleague's rights in the workplace, or the ordinary, seemingly normalized act of preparing for a workday. Yet it is writing that is a central mode of expression for the feminist academic self and Friday is special in that she gets to write with the collective biography group. Tending to the body, mind, and soul means making an effort to foster an environment where writing is a joy and not a struggle, such that the joyful anticipation of activities reinforces the feminist academic self she aspires to be.

Tending happens in relation

The feminist academic self does not take shape solely through separate, individual practices. Feminists may seek out one another across disciplines or attempt to institutionalize feminist relationality through academic programs such as gender studies, via mentoring networks, and within bureaucratic structures (see Dombroski et al. 2018; Taylor and Lahad 2018). At other times, encounters in informal spaces like hallways,

restrooms, and cafés serve to reaffirm already existing connections. Fleeting moments like eye contact during a meeting or an invitation to lunch after class may also encourage relations that sustain us, that keep us hanging in there, working to build something different. In most of our memories, interactions, and relationships with others—often other feminist academics—were vital to the moments we recalled as joyful.

In this memory, the narrator meets with a colleague from a different university to chat about new research projects and tenure documents. Through this encounter the feminist academic self for both takes shape in the space between them.

> "Would it be weird if I took out my notebook here?" she asks, reaching into her bag. "Please repeat what you just said." I launch into my reflections again; gesturing with my cracker and sprinkling crumbs onto her black wrap sweater. Why did the gallery put this little cube bench in such a crowded place? Our legs are almost touching and we can't really turn to talk face-to-face. I guess this is just for looking at the art. It was a nice idea to meet somewhere new this time. Her membership got us in and I took the bus for way too long in the commuter traffic creeping into the city. I am so glad I didn't cancel again. The people and photographs blur at the edge of my vision, as I turn a little more to face Alanna pushing my shoulders back to adjust my posture. I shake my head slowly, eyes widening as I think of the pain some of the women endured. "The writing was so raw…I'm so grateful you shared it with me…so different than your other research." Her eyes pierce through her glasses taking in my words, a smile on her lips. "The style reminds me of this novel I just read – have you heard of it?" She scribbles the name down in her illegible handwriting that minutes ago I had been trying to decipher on my draft tenure documents. My face is flushed and my mouth dry as we brainstorm together. "Wouldn't it be cool to meld together our 'pet project' findings? What would we learn?" The weight of assignments left to grade and lecture notes to review for tomorrow lifts off my shoulders with each new idea. Laughter. Eyes twinkling. Our animated voices carry through the silent gallery bouncing off the white walls and sharp corners.

Tenure is a marker for all academics in universities, and is especially important for feminists who challenge the institutions from which they seek job security. Sculpting vita is in itself an important activity that permits space for feminist academic selves to exist. The narrator's feminist academic self is tended to in this encounter, but not just through the advice she receives from a new mentor. A feminist academic self emerges through being trusted to give feedback on new ideas shared by the more senior colleague. The mentoring relationship is mutually sustaining: she is energized by the shared exchange, highlighting the role of generosity and openness in generating a space for feminist academic selves and time for shared reflection. The narrator thinks to herself, "I am so glad I didn't cancel again," a reminder that carving out time must be a deliberate act. It requires an effort to set aside the "weight of assignments left to grade and lecture notes to review."

  Transcending a conventional understanding of mentorship as training, their interaction is less constrained by corrective measures and is more open to more self-directed acts. Meeting off-campus in a non-traditional academic place, being flexible with time during usual work hours, and adjusting preset agendas in the face of opportunities permit an awareness of the possible ways to tend to the feminist academic self. In this instance, like many in our memories, they co-create a space for an affirmative politics, one that is grounded in sentient regard and respect for one another *as scholars* and *as people*. While pushing back against institutional constraints in these contexts is not always possible, and certainly never easy, the feminist academic self emerges through the manner in which individual feminists undertake the banality of academic tasks. The relationality of a feminist academic self is the cornerstone of sustaining the existence of feminists in the academy and of the practice of nurturing those spaces—both private and public—where the feminist academics can act.

Tending requires commitment

Tending to this relationality needs considerable commitment to activities that sustain and affirm the feminist academic self. Only through a steadfast and sustained intention can one maintain a feminist academic self. This rests on tenacity: a willingness to persist in the face of multiple forces that seek to diminish, dismantle, and undermine efforts to enact a

feminist academic self. The kind of commitment we are talking about involves a firmness of purpose to those activities that foster opportunities, nourish the possibility of affirmation, and sustain the form of a feminist academic self. Commitment entails a steadfast determination to defend, expand, and continually reinvigorate the conditions for the emergence of feminist academic self. In our work, this manifests through activities that nourish the soul beyond its substance, that is, activities that foster the self that you want to be to effect change so that you can live in a world you want to live in.

  In this memory, the narrator is resolved to a cause, one that for her, nurtures her soul. She joins a large protest march alongside friends and colleagues, seeking to renew her determination to persist.

> A police officer stops me as I approach the park from the northwest corner. "Just need to check your bag, miss." I unzip my shoulder bag and hand it to him wordlessly. Sunscreen, camera, cell phone, water bottle, granola bar. I choke back the impulse to insist on my right to pass without a street search. The temporary laws in place for the international summit are so unclear, I know the police officer will feel empowered to do as he wishes, and I want to make it into the park to join the crowd gathering for the second day of protest. Taking my bag back, I step out of the midday sun into the shade of the park. I fan my blue shirt over my sticky stomach, the same shirt I bought for my dissertation defense two years ago. I tuck some loose hair into the purple silk scarf tied around my head. I'll soak it in the water if there's tear gas today. Oh look, there's Ana, some other friends from grad school. Of course they're here. Other familiar faces, the usual signs and banners are scattered throughout the park. That skinny socialist guy who follows me around sometimes, he smells a bit, I look away quickly. My friends wave me over, and I make my way, pausing briefly to take pictures of the young feminists painting bright coffin shaped placards with fierce reproductive justice messages. Hugs with the grad school folks, all of us weary veterans of the recent strike, still unused to seeing each other off the picket line. Trading stories of police searches on the way in, "fucking cops, what

> do you think will happen today?" "I don't know, but all the bike cops have riot masks hanging off their handlebars." "Of course, of course." Shaking heads, strangled laughs. I pass the sunscreen around, grab a handful of juicy raisins from a shared paper bag. A group is gathering in the open area of the park, drawn by an organizer with a megaphone. [...] We're not moving yet, but I'm bouncing up and down on my toes, twisting my neck to see how far in front and behind the march will stretch. Sun shining, hearts pounding, drums beating.

Although not an everyday event, the narrator's familiarity with the routine of a big protest in her city provides stability for the form her feminist academic self takes. She knows what to expect, as in preparing for street checks, tear gas, and riot police as well as irritating fellow protesters, and what to do, to bring sunscreen, food, water, and a scarf. The actions based on expectations are symbolic of the readiness and unwavering resolve undergirding the activities of a feminist academic self in a hostile world. In tending to this self, the familiarity sets up the conditions for her own revitalization. She tends to her self via engagement with political activities through interactions, conversations, and the bodily act of marching that then push back against unjust attitudes, systems, and structures. Rather than being universally draining, this memory suggests that persistence can be an emergent and sustaining practice, as the energy from the crowd and drums edges the narrator closer to the change that would help create the world she wants to live in.

A protest is perhaps a heightened example of the many kinds of tenacious moments where the feminist academic self resists and, in the process, shores herself up. In this memory, the state, embodied by the police, is a reminder of powerful institutional constraints, limiting the freedom to act even where the right to protest is ostensibly protected. We found in our work that this type of commitment was wrapped up in the way we maneuvered through the toil of the everyday as well as through conflict and hostility. While many feminist academics seek to delineate a set of principles that individual feminist academic subjects act from, such as those that seek to dismantle systems of oppression like racism, misogyny, ableism, and colonialism (Davis 2016), to act in empathetic and compassionate ways (e.g. Laliberté, Bain, Lankenau, and

Bolduc et al. 2017; Adams-Hutcheson and Johnston 2019), and to make space for the voices of marginalized people (e.g. Gökariksel and Smith 2017; Mollett and Faria 2018; Torres, 2019), it is not the principles here that lead to the emergence or nourishment of a feminist academic self. Rather, it is the engagement with the activities that use the available tools and resources as we seek to undermine the restrictive aspects of the daily demands of feminist work in the academy. These moments are energizing enactments of how the feminist academic self aspires to be in the world in a way she wants the world to be.

Tending involves routine

Patterns and habits, as we have already noted in the discussion, have a role in tending to the feminist academic self. They help keep the self intact, even as pressure and stress fray the edges. Routines in academic life include the regularities of terms beginning and ending, punctuated with a seemingly endless set of meetings, and permeated by a continuous cycle of deadlines. As much as routines structure time, habitual practices provide a form for a feminist academic self to inhabit. This form can provide stability, as repeated practices generate a secure, competent flow to step into. The stability, even if only in a transitory space or a fleeting moment, provides an opportunity to exercise agentic potential, or the capacity to act in a particular way. What we found in our memories reflects what we found in the literature: not all the usual academic practices associated with research, publishing, or teaching give certainty to a feminist academic self. We still sometimes feel like imposters, fail in our mentoring relationships, and mask our emotions (q.v. Fem-Mentee Collective 2017; Laliberté and Bain 2018).

  In this memory, the narrator describes the first day of class for a course she co-teaches with two colleagues. Confirming a collectively-devised plan used previously, they introduce the course for a new group of students and get into the groove of the semester.

> Laila, Shona, and I gather at the front of the lecture theatre. We make a plan. Same routine: first, go over the course details—Shona; icebreaker—me; lead discussion—Laila. I distribute the few paper copies of the syllabus as Shona begins. The top of my foot burns, I adjust my sandal strap. "I

will talk about accessing the readings." I blink several times. Wow, my eyelids are getting heavy. I decide to walk around the class. I misjudged the temperature. I pull my hair back and wad it up on top of my head, holding it tightly. I fan the back of my damp neck with the remaining course outlines as I make another loop around the room. The sweat keeps dripping. Oh, my turn. "Would you rather be a valley or a mountain? A river or a lake? Mingle. Find someone like you." So many mountains. Here's another river. And another.

  Laila introduces the film. The chatter transitions to hushed tones, and then, silence. I walk up the steps, scanning each row, eyes wide open, looking for, I don't know what. I slide into the next vacant seat, two-thirds up from the front. I lean forward, perching my chin on the heel of both palms, elbows on the desk. My heart flutters. I hold my breath. I look around the room—computers closed, students writing. That strand of hair—in my mouth again. This time I take it out, rake it in with the rest, and pull it with both hands. I breathe out, smile, and let my hair fall down my back.

The routinized act of reviewing the course structure, even though broken up by a brief icebreaker and film, provides form for a feminist academic self. Although subtle, the routine fosters a supportive space to coax out the self safely harbored in the soul. This forum, the first day of teaching, offers a flow for the feminist academic self to step into, one that facilitates social contact to build relationships and to support colleagues as they do their work. This familiar activity positions her in a relatively protected space for feeling, thinking, and acting. Poised in this way, she is able to savour the generative space she has sought to create with both her close, feminist colleagues and a group of new students.

  Although prepared for the corrective measures of the institution through careful planning, the affective and embodied character of these forces betrays the comfort of that space through the perfunctory response in an icebreaker activity. She must cajole the feminist academic self into existence through the eagerness to accommodate student requests, a nervousness around not letting her colleagues down, and an irritating strand of hair that won't stay put. As the class session unfolds, the ease the narrator feels from years of tending to her feminist academic

self slowly ascends. Within the habituation of these ordinary and somewhat monotonous academic tasks, a different space appears. This emergent space is an effect of the practices that tend, and have tended, to the feminist academic self, having been coaxed into becoming through lots of effort, attention to relationality, and a commitment to the manner in which to nourish that particular self. These types of spaces, scattered across the terrains a feminist academic traverses, hold the potential to be affirming. And when knitted together they lay the groundwork for generating alternative structures organized around a sustainable ethics that in turn may be able to challenge the institutional forces of the status quo.

Tending requires making decisions

Thoughtful attention to the decisions feminist academics make, often on a daily basis, offers moments for reflection and action as part of tending to the self. The scope and context of these choices vary widely concerning the extent to which one confronts the institution with its expectations and constraints. For example, publishing research about sexual and personal harassment, mental health challenges, and non-white bodies in the academy can be perilous for feminist academics, especially for more precarious workers (e.g. Mullings, Peake, and Parizeau 2016; Mansfield et al. 2019; Johnson 2019). Yet choosing not to publish, or even talk, about these topics dampens the conditions within which a feminist academic self can be maintained.

  In this memory, the narrator decides to accept the task of translating a non-conventional tenure dossier into a framework and language that will be considered legitimate by the institution. She understands that her colleague's future is at stake, and with the weight of this work sitting heavily, she strives to craft the perfect letter.

> I stride down the long corridor to Tracy's office. Two weeks prior, Tracy assented to my request that she read the draft, but she warned me against transmitting it via email: "Insecure," she said, her eyes holding mine for an extra moment. Following weeks of regular work, the letter in support of Helen's promotion and tenure, written per the dean's request, took on weight and depth. As I crafted each

> new sentence, wordsmithing each line, I felt the responsibility for Helen, the college, and myself across the front of my ribs. Her many contributions and accomplishments in visual art, presentations, teaching and community service don't fit neatly into the expectations, written and unwritten, of this college. The associate dean engaged me, a novice translator, to make sense of Helen's record of accomplishment for the college tenure committee.
>
> Tracy looks up from her desk and waves me in. Well done, she says. Exactly what we look for. I ask, but she has no changes to recommend. As she hands me the letter our eyes meet. Thank you, I say. I exit her department without speaking to anyone else.

With the corrective, disciplinary nature of the institution pressing down on them both, the narrator has chosen to engage in this process of translation to support a feminist colleague. Tenure denotes permanency, security, and stability, and is, among the many contested sites of academia, especially for marginalized faculty members (e.g. Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012; Cole and Hassel 2017). Despite not having written such a letter before, the narrator is aware that there are many institutional rules—written and unwritten—around tenure cases, and worries that her work will not be sufficient. The stealthy nature of the interactions with Tracy remind us that the work of the feminist academic is often done in the shadows, or the nooks and crannies of the institution.

The care of the self involves a complex array of decisions that draws on the narrator's own resources at having been able to attend to the activities that brought her as a feminist academic self to this juncture in her career. She is enlisted by a colleague to rebuff the traditional model of scholarship favoured in the tenure process, one which often works to the detriment of marginalized faculty. By carefully negotiating the confines of this process, the narrator makes space for feminist academic selves to remain in the academy. In the process, she tends to her feminist academic self by using the tools available to her to enact a self that can ever-so-slightly shift the fixity of conventional institutional dynamics. Yet she also works within her capacity to affirm the existence of additional feminist academic and assists in sustaining those selves. The narrator experiences shifting degrees of freedom within each step of her journey.

Though bound by rules (a letter must be written), she is able to translate the dossier into institutionally-established terms through careful attention to the language in the letter. This memory illustrates that as feminist academics we cannot take our roles in institutional practices for granted, nor can we assume that we have no influence on institutional processes. In fact, we can exercise degrees of freedom through self-direction in situations where we can act. Tending to the feminist academic self primes us to recognize such moments. We affirm our presence by not squandering these opportunities.

To Flourish

In this chapter, we used Foucault's care of the self to explore a data set of memories created through a specific type of collective memory-work, that is, collective biography. We identified practices that generated particular assemblages of relations that take form as a feminist academic self. The memories we shared here show but a few of the types of liberatory and corrective practices that could tend to the activities that cultivate and sustain a feminist academic self. When we teach, publish, and evaluate each other's work, we arrange our academic lives in ways that maintain the systems of power within academia. At the same time, we can find places in academic work where we exercise agency and then intervene in university processes as we mediate the tension between our aspirations to be a feminist in the academy and what is possible. By theorizing the agentic potential individuals hold in negotiating liberation and restriction, via *degrees of freedom* within the *care of the self*, our work addresses the all-important capacity to act in material ways. Through our research, we were able to show how we exercised agency to permit a feminist academic self to take hold, to inhabit that self, and then to tend to those activities that brought that self into existence.

We maintain that a key challenge feminist academics face each and every day is to tend to the "micro-political modes of daily activism or interventions" as practices in the work we do *on ourselves* to "get us through the day" (Braidotti, 2006: 205; our emphasis). As a regular part of daily regimens, feminist academics engage in a range of activities that permit the feminist academic self to emerge, from nurturing our souls to conducting ourselves in ways that support others in their efforts. The self responds to and flowers in the sunshine of continuous effort. And, with

patterned reoccurrence, the conditions to foster this blossoming can feed into a sustainable ethics that keeps feminism in the academy embodied and alive. We chose to access some of these "micro-political modes" through collective biography. As research, the process of collective biography soundly resonates with the very practices that sustain us and have permitted us to cultivate a self that can highlight the work we do on ourselves to be the kind of feminist academic we want to be.

  For us, then, the care of the self as an ethics must be accompanied by an affirmative politics. Although our work focuses on the joyful feminist academic self, we by no means reduce the feminist academic to an emotional entity, nor do we focus on conventionally positive things. Braidotti's (2011: 162-63) ideas of shifting away from negations toward affirmations to enact life-enhancing practices show that the feminist academic self is *aspirational*, an ongoing project, and an attempt to live by enacting a sustainable ethics. Thus, the contribution of our paper is *not* a checklist of a set of practices, including research ones, on how to *be(come)* a feminist academic. Instead we have shown that there are various agentic ways to tend to the feminist academic self while maintaining a commitment to a sustainable ethics of affirmation. In other words, our collective memory-work highlights the special relationship between form and content in research wherein our research process itself affirms the feminist academic self we aspire to be. With painstaking attention to the activities we undertake, within and outside the academy, we offer hope that feminist academics can move beyond survival and engage in the collective project of building affirmative relations so that feminist academics can flourish.

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Karen Falconer Al-Hindi, Pamela Moss, Leslie Kern, and Roberta Hawkins began to explore collective memory work together as a feminist research methodology in 2013. They started with the premise that academic work can offer scholar-teachers a space to step outside the prescribed normative values of research, teaching and service in order to explore less acclaimed dimensions of living and working as an academic. As an unconventional yet pervasive personal aspiration, they landed on joy. Their investigation of joy in academia unfolded alongside a shared, expanding understanding of collective biography as a particular type of memory work. As their collaborative practices developed, they recognized that the collective biography approach itself, including active listening as a way to get to know one another, gentle curiosity about each other's experiences, and unforeseen intervention into one another's written memories, were consistent with a care of the self and the affirmative

politics they sought. Their previous work on this topic appears in the journals of *Social & Cultural Geography* (2014), *Geography Compass* (2016), and *Emotion, Space and Society* (2018 and 2020) and in an edited collection, *Writing Intimacy into Feminist Geography* (2017, Routledge).

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Chapter 22

COLLECTIVE MEMORY-WORK WITH REFUGEE WOMEN WHO DON'T HAVE A COMMON LANGUAGE

Bianca Fiedler

With my PhD project and the method of Collective Memory-Work, I often feel like an exotic foreigner. When I present my doctoral project, which I will outline in more detail later in this text, at conferences in German-speaking countries, it is especially the topic of Collective Memory-Work that raises many questions. Collective Memory-Work often seems unknown or perhaps forgotten. Through my involvement with the method and its possible application for women who had to take refuge and don't have a shared written language, I had to realise that I was entering new territory here as well. Not only, as far as I know, that there has been no implementation of Collective Memory-Work with people who do not have a common language, but it is pointed out that the method is not suitable for a group: " that does not have at least one language in which everyone can communicate confidently and secure enough to enter into reflexive discussions" (Hamm, 2021, 83). The aspect of expression is reduced to language in this context.

In this paper I will report of my experience of Collective Memory-Work with women who do not have a common written language. I will first present a briefing on my research project and the related research questions, followed by a consideration of aspects of language and furthermore the implementation of the method itself.

In 2017, when I first started to plan my research more concretely, many things were still uncertain. It was like a complex picture that would emerge over the years. I carefully drew the first contours. It was clear that I would write about women who had to take refuge in Germany from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia or Turkey. In my psychosocial counselling practice, I had already met women who reported experiences of violence within their relationships, partnership or marriage. They also told me about the differences and how their situation in Germany had changed. For example, in Germany it is forbidden for their man/husband to beat

them. They now feel free, save and protected by the law. The main sentence spoken by one of the women that became the working title of my doctorate was: "When I realised that I was getting stronger!" This sentence expressed a feeling that was mentioned in the course of the counselling processes in connection with the word "change". To the women in the counselling sessions change often seemed diffuse, not (yet) tangible. From the origin of this sentence to the point where I knew that Collective Memory-Work would be the preferred method in my research project a period of about two years passed. During this time, I formulated the central research question, as a reaction to the statements and findings in the counselling consultations: "(How) do refugee women in Germany, who have experienced violence and coercion in the partnership context, describe and shape processes of change?" Another question is: "'What are the roles of agency and self-empowerment in this context?" In that way, having identified the focus for my research some questions regarding the methodological approach arose.

I was looking for a method to shed light on the aspect of change through qualitative research. Language occurred as a major obstruction in the middle of the whole process. The women I worked with did not speak enough German to be able to work through their issues together with me. The question of translation possibilities arose. My first idea for the research design was interpreter-assisted interviews, but I later rejected the idea again. On the one hand it would have meant to have another person in the room, on the other hand it would have been connected to the question of what would have been translated of what was being said? Or what was understood because of the background of the cultural entanglements of the interpreters? What were the consequences for my PhD project, in which agency in the sense of actively influencing one's own situation was such an important subject? In my opinion having one's word being translated always has a passive aspect. I "am being" translated, not I am translating. I feel helpless because I have no influence on how I am translated. I cannot control it. All that remains is the hope that what I have tried to express is what the other person hears as well.

Through my practical work in psychosocial counselling, in which translators were always part of the conversation setting, I knew about the complexity of the topic. Translating languages involves more than just transferring words from one language to another. One word can have many different meanings and people use expressions in different ways. I

learned over time that translators are more than a means to an end. They are not language computers that you programme and then they spit out what is wanted or said. They are individuals who stand between me and the person whose language I do not understand and vice versa. In this context trust is a central moment. This is also supported by one of the translating women with whom I later implemented Collective Memory-Work in a pilot project. She mentioned in the discussion: "We translators are under general suspicion!" I will come back to this point soon again, but first I am going to turn to Collective Memory-Work as the method that I eventually choose.

The first time I had come upon Frigga Haug and her theses was in conversation with a friend who told me about "Victims or Culprits? Reflections on women's behaviour." that Haug had published in 1981[1]. In the conversation I told her about the issues, desires and fears I had encountered through my psychosocial work and about what was on my mind in relation to a possible PhD project. She then suggested Collective Memory-Work to me as a way of working with women. She had been actively involved in the so-called "new" or also "second" German women's movement in discussion groups from the late 1960s/ early 1970s and then got to know Collective Memory-Work in the context of Women's Foundational Studies in the early 1980s. In her remarks, she reported that in the context of the discussion groups, one repeatedly dealt with one's role as a woman and with a view that was characterised by perceiving the oppressive man as the enemy, combined with the question, what do we do now with this realisation and the image of the enemy? She described "Victims or Culprits" as a kind of answer to this question and Collective Memory-Work as a tool to make sure that intervention possibilities can be made visible. The resulting central change would then be linked to a different perception, away from the point of view that "we are victims of the situation".

Studying Haug's theses, I initially reacted with strong resistance to the seemingly clear categorization of "victims" and "culprits". Especially when I understood that women are no longer viewed only as victims but also as culprits, or rather, that they should understand themselves as culprits. I remember clearly how my stomach tightened and how it felt when I perceived this. Women who have experienced massive violence, who may have been forced into a marriage, as culprits? A big stop sign flashed up

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1   see reprint in Volume 1 of the Reader CMW

in my head. At the same time, I had a feeling that I had not yet really understood what this was all about. When I then looked more closely at the theory, I discovered that the reactions to Haug's explanations were diverse. Her theses were strongly criticised and discussed controversially. This occurred on different levels such as the moral one, which Haug herself introduced through the word "culprit" (see Löw 2005 p. 151).

 I increasingly realised that an understanding of the theory involves defining women in an active role as doers of, and actors in their own subordination (cf. Haug 1981). The aim is for them to be able to perceive themselves in this way too. Agency is a central aspect that I eventually placed at the centre of my PhD project. The focus is on points of intervention, self-efficacy and self-empowerment.

 Collective Memory-Work is a theory that has caused so much excitement and a lot of texts have been written about it by Frigga Haug and others over time. Here, I am not discussing Collective Memory-Work in a manner that would do justice to the many sides of the method, and it is certainly difficult to break everything down to a central core aspect. But I have come to believe that for my understanding and adaptations of Collective Memory-Work, the "victim-culprits theory" is the foundation. This perspective brings into focus the depiction of refugee women as a vulnerable target group, as persons who are often perceived as helpless and defenceless. The public discourse seems to be shaped by this narrative. In contrast to that my perception emerging from my work in the context of social psychiatric refugee aid was different. I met women who had experienced a lot of violence and yet were full of courage and strength to face life. Many found themselves in coerced relationships. At the same time, they felt the desire to break free from it and to change something about their situation. Sometimes they could already feel the change, but could not yet grasp it, like a ghost of which they did not know whether it really existed.

 In light of this, Collective Memory-Work–which is about finding blank spaces and contradictions–increasingly seemed to me to be my method of choice. In my research, I did not want to work in the "classical" setting of researcher and researched. The women at the centre of my project were not exclusively research objects. Rather, I saw the possibility to embody the aspect of agency through the method itself. It is assumed that Collective Memory Work is intervention and research method at the same time. But the problem of translation was still on my mind. The

statement of the translator quoted above, who referred to the "general suspicion" she experiences in her practice, speaks of a great mistrust, which on the other hand would be fatal in a process that should ultimately contribute to questioning what is said and written (as is the case in Collective Memory-Work).

Prior to starting a Collective Memory-Work group with the refugee women I conducted the pilot project mentioned already, together with women who were later to take on a kind of bridging function as interpreters[2]. The decision to include this preparatory step was based on the assumption that they must have tried the method at least once in order to teach it to others. In the course of the pilot project, the interpreters were critical in regard to the envisaged implementation of Collective Memory-Work with the refugee women. "If you demand that I do this in Dari, then I'm out. I don't think the Afghan woman without schooling understands what I want her to do," was one quote that occurred in this context.

I became increasingly aware of the complexity of my project. In the preparation for adapting the method in this context, I developed the following basic assumption: "Collective Memory -Work is not exclusively textual work, it is rather a creative work of expression." I allowed myself in advance to think of "language" not only in terms of speaking and writing, but also non-verbally, figuratively and creatively.

In the second step in the summer of 2021, the actual implementation of the method took place. The final group consisted of a total of eight women, including me. Two women in the group were interpreters who had participated in the pilot project, five were refugee women from Turkey, Syria and Afghanistan who had been affected by intimate partner violence. Five different languages were spoken: Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Dari and German. Some of the participants spoke several languages and were therefore able to communicate and translate with and for each other.

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2   These are three women of different ages who translate in a semi-professional setting in different contexts. None of them has any training as an interpreter or a diploma. They work as translators in connection with doctor's visits, appointments with authorities or on similar occasions. They were chosen for the Collective Memory Work project even though they have not experienced flight themselves. They knew the refugee women in the project already, so a basis of trust had been established.

When the translator for Arabic couldn't take part, it seemed very problematic at first, as one of the women spoke only Arabic. But it turned out to be an opportunity: A Kurdish woman stepped in and not only told her own story in German, but also translated into Arabic, which happened to be a language she had learned. The translation process became more and more part of the collective work as we searched for expressions and words together. Sometimes a sketch helped. Often arms and legs or a smile were used.

At the time of writing this paper three sessions of the group took place, starting with an intensive weekend with five-hour time slots each day. The first step was a thematic introduction and a joint brainstorming session.

I think it is important to point out that the group already knew each other in this constellation. In the context of my psychosocial counselling practice they had already worked together on various topics, also with reference to their own refugee and life story. During one of the participants' narrations of her escape route and the associated feeling of change the sentence was expressed that would later be used as a narrative trigger in our Collective Memory-Work: "I'm no longer the women that I once was!"

The way the stories were told turned out to be a particular challenge. At the beginning, it was difficult for the women to understand why they should not tell a story about their own experiences in the first person. The request to give the central character a different name was a difficulty for the women. During the implementation, I realised that I would have to explain and tell more about the background of the method and the historical origins than I had previously planned. I left it up to the women whether they wanted to write, paint, tell or express their stories in another form. They could choose the language in which they shared their story.

The first stories were written during the intensive weekend in which three of the refugee women took part. All three initially opted for a purely verbal form of expression. In concrete terms, this meant that they told the stories in Turkish, Arabic and German. At the same time, a dictaphone was used to record the first version of the story in this chosen language. In a second step, the respective interpreters were asked to summarise the story in German. I outlined the most important points in form of a picture story with stick figures for everyone to see. The different parts of the picture story were collected by the whole group, including

the author of the story. The next step was to translate the story again into another foreign language, e.g. Arabic, if the original story was told in Kurdish.

The deconstruction of the first story, which was originally told in Turkish, took place in the follow-up sessions. Because the group constellation changed in these two subsequent meetings, the core points of the story were told again and again. One of the most important findings from this process is that the group found a common language in the course of the work with the story - I consider this to be central.

While I would agree with the proposition mentioned at the beginning that a criterion for the implementation of Collective Memory-Work is a group that has "at least one language in which everyone can communicate confidently and secure enough to enter into reflexive discussions" (Hamm, 2021, 83), I would also develop some further ideas as well. Central to the implementation of Collective Memory-Work is a common language, but language in this context should be defined as common means of expression. I am sure that the translation had gaps in the course of our procedure and yet, or perhaps because of this, I already see the process of working out translation together as a result of the joint work with the method. The implementation with this group is not yet finished and it is the wish of the women –and mine as well– to continue working with more of our stories. I am convinced that Collective Memory-Work in connection with the topics of flight, violence and coercion is a very good way to work on and develop changes in a process together.

I am looking forward to reporting further on this project in the future.

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Chapter 23

THINKING BEYOND STORYTELLING …

Ulli Lipp and Philip Taucher

Storytelling works! No surprise, didn't we go to sleep as children only after hearing a story? Today, if we remember experiences from the past, we automatically fabricate our own stories. Storytelling moves not only the head, it also moves the heart, our emotions. Thus, can storytelling be a method for critical education? We suggest: Just to put a message into the form of an exciting and thrilling story does not yet suffice for a method that supports critical thinking. But stories offer entry points for critical learning.

Why is storytelling a powerful tool?

Strengths of storytelling

Two scenarios:

> **Scenario 1:** Expert Eric explains the increase in precarious labour relations and the effects on society by means of painstakingly collected figures, data, statistics.

> **Scenario 2:** Speaker Samantha describes the same facts by telling the story of Barbara Z. who works extra hours everyday and yet struggles to meet ends with her family of six. The small flat, the children who are on top of each other and fight constantly because there is not space enough, all that is part of the story.

We know the effect. If presented by Eric we struggle to grasp the subject matter although it is clear and well presented, it still remains abstract, alien and without great effect. Once Samantha packs the matter into a story, that changes. Empathy, excitement, maybe anger arise, the listeners feel with Barbara in her situation.

  Not only emotions make storytelling a powerful tool. Stories were told to all of us when we were children. We remember stories, whether we want it or not. It is part of the development of each individual, but even more it is also part of the development of humanity at large.

  In human history stories played an important role for passing on knowledge. It is an ancient "teaching method" from times long before the establishment of schools, or the development of writing. During the Stone Age already children most likely listened to the adults telling fascinating hunting stories before the children ever took part in the hunt themselves. This trained and developed an "episodic memory" in which stories, sequences, events can be stored effectively, and at any rate better than in an "abstract memory."

  Even master minds of mnemonics use the power of stories by packing facts and terms which they want to keep in their memory into a story. In this manner it is easier to retrieve the content.

  Storytelling isn't new at all – in spite of the "hype" that is created around storytelling in recent years. The internet is full of offers and publications concerning storytelling. Why is that? Of course the effectiveness of storytelling is one reason, at the same time as a method it is easy to learn. And there is also the advertising where we are told glossy stories

and heroic epics. Sure, we will use stories in adult education and all will be fine?

Stories and History
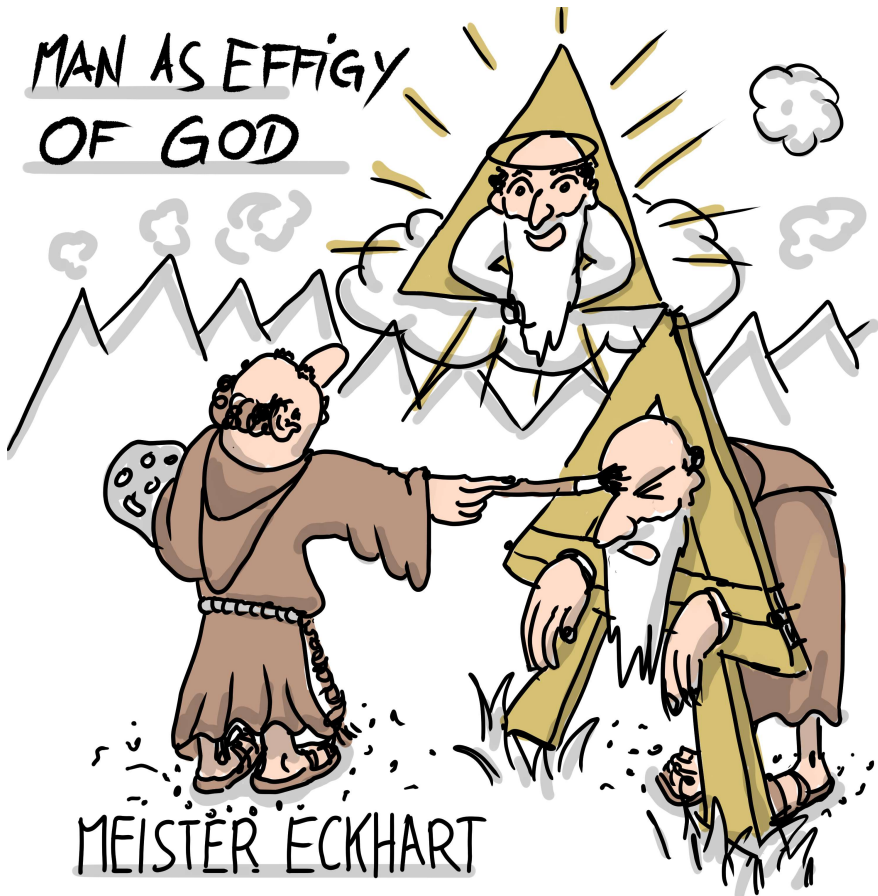
The concept of education as "Bildung" originates in the middle ages. It has a wider scope than, e.g. education, training, instruction, or learning. It includes the idea of (self-)formation, cultivation. Humans were supposed to form as effigy of god, hence function as part of a big story.

The mega-story at the time was the bible. It was used to explain literally everything.

Bourgeois enlightenment however developed a critical concept of "Bildung". Here the means used were sensuous experience, measuring, facts, methods of natural science; truth was no longer sought in the bible.

That does not mean there were less stories told. Quite the opposite. In the cultural struggle for domination in society elite education was meant to justify the bourgeois claim for power. Knowing the great mystical stories from ancient history became the status symbol of humanist bourgeois education, and a means of demarcation against the supposedly non-educated (aristocrats, peasants, workers).

For the working class movement during the 19th century–still illegal for long times–the everyday stories and songs of resistance were a starting point for a collective empowerment against the yoke of bourgeois domination. Books were rarely got, and if there were some, only few people could read them. The own everyday experiences and stories provided the basis for a critical appropriation of the world, also by learning to read, write and calculate.

RULER
SPIRIT
CULTURE
REASON

cogito ergo sum!

RULED
BODY
NATURE
EMOTION

UNIVERSAL

NORMAL

PARTICULAR

DIFFERENT
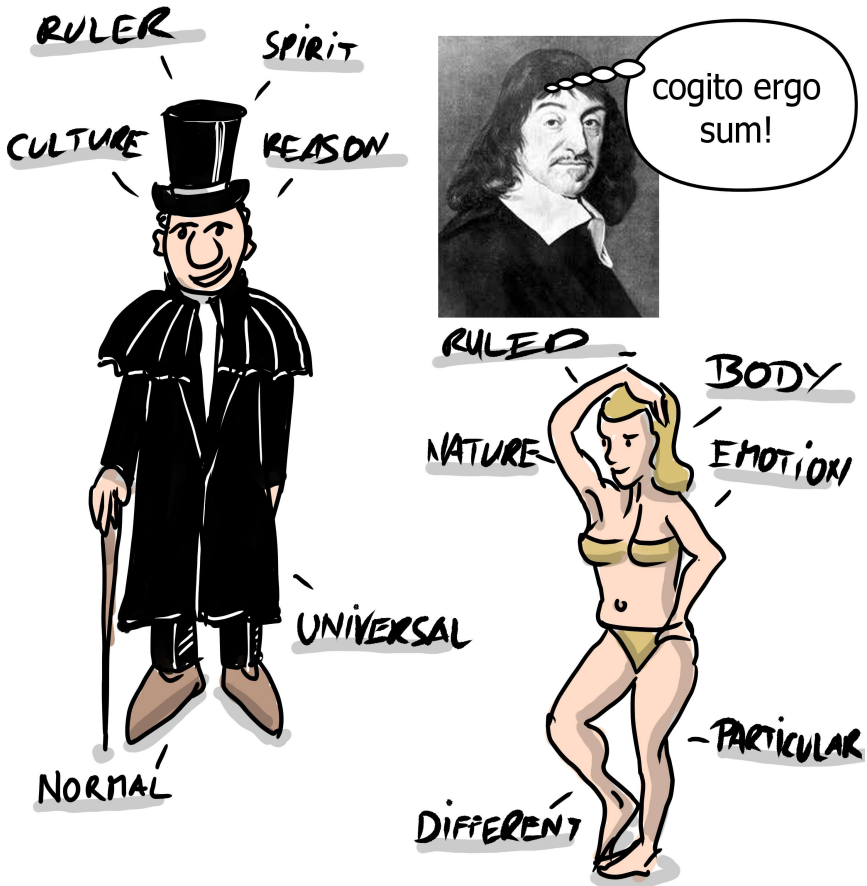
The feminist movement of the 20th century in turn criticised the bourgeois separation of society in a dominant masculine, rational, universal, spiritual world of culture and a subordinated feminine, emotional, mundane, physical world of nature.
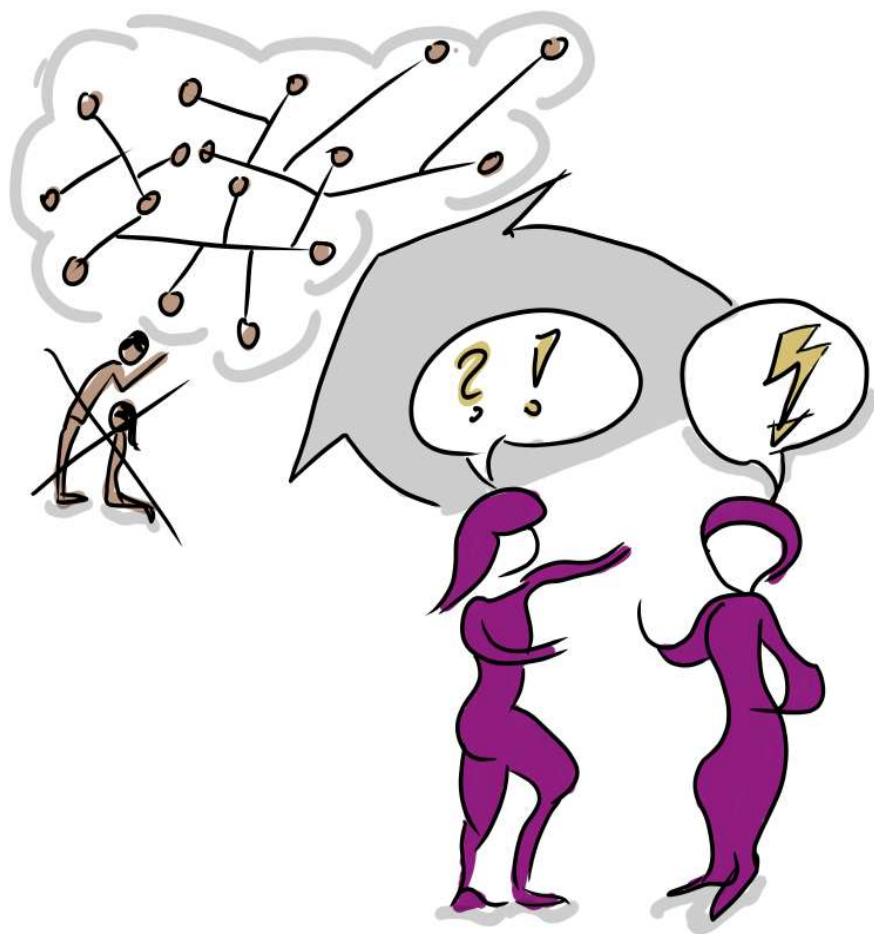
As the knowledge of women was hardly valued feminists employed stories from everyday life to explicate a critical standpoint. Beginning with the own mundane stories rather than the grandiose male sagas male dominance was going to be studied and criticised "from below." These stories of the own life are a portal for a collective analysis and struggle against relations of domination.

The crux of truth and reality

In storytelling truth and reality are of minor importance. Stories are "didactically condensed." Punch lines and details in the stories are by times creatively made up for intended effects. Stories can connect learning processes with practical life experiences. But empirical evidence, they are not.

It is not a new achievement of the "post-factual politics" with its fake news that stories are sometimes invented or tweaked. That was always the case when people told stories. There is the one of the Bavarian robber Mathias Kneissl who supposedly on his way to the guillotine–on a Monday–said to the executioner: "Well, that's a good start of a week!" A nice story for the common people with whom Kneissl supposedly shared his booty. He was beheaded on February 21st, 1902, which was a Friday. Like many other stories the tale of Kneissl is prone to building myths, for those the question of truth, or even more a critical perspective is irrelevant.

For an old robber tale that may be entertaining. If we think of the stories that are circulated by the right about refugees, people of diverse sexual orientation, or people of colour ... it is bitterly serious.
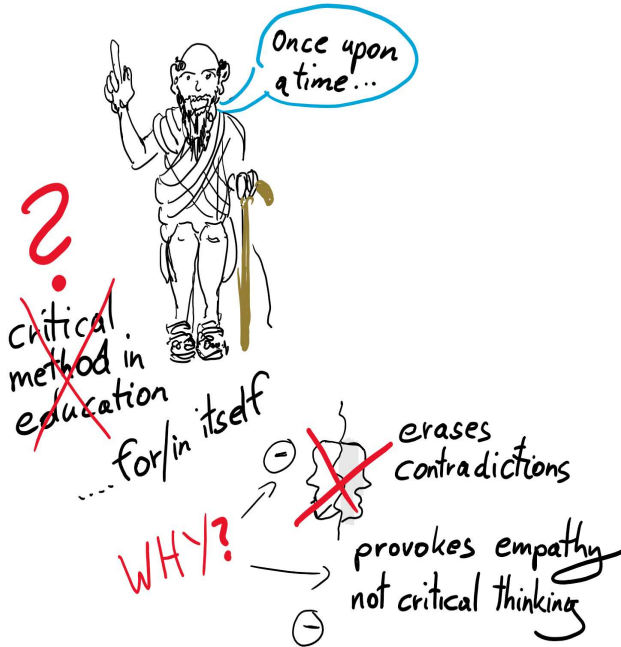
Storytelling is not per se critical education!

Storytelling can be abused – this it has in common with other methods. In the first instance they are rather "tools" that can be used for different purposes. But then there are specific characteristics for each method that make it more or less useful for specific learning objectives, as for example critical thinking and posing critical questions.

Critical thinking starts with contradiction. A good story blends out contradiction, stories need to be consistent for being effective. Whatever disturbs consistency is bent to fit and thus contradiction is erased.

Storytelling affects emotions, triggers empathy and identification. We put ourselves in the shoes of the "hero" or in those of the adversary. We are straight in it. Critical thinking and education however need distance. A subject matter needs to be seen from an outside perspective, as an object, for being "appropriated" in a learning process. What happens here? And most importantly: why? What are the contexts, the

contradictions? How does it appear if I look at it from a different perspective?

Stories – used differently

Now one might say, storytelling cannot at all be combined with a critical notion of education and all we need to furnish is facts, facts, facts. Off the mark! For processes of critical education stories are indispensable, not because they are "authentic", but rather engraved in our stories and memories are societal relations of domination, common sense ideologies and world views. Hence they provide a fabulous window for a critical perspective on the individual, the personal and the societal, and therefore our actions in the world. And there are in fact a lot of ideas and experiences how storytelling can be connected to the objective of "critical consciousness."

Two examples:

1. Stories as entry point for learning processes

We activate participants and ask them to tell their story about a concrete experience they had themselves with a particular topic.

In our seminars this could be, for example:

Topic	Trigger for the story...
Train-the-Trainer	The moment when I "got it"...
Solidarity	The moment when I experienced concrete solidarity...
Labour legislation	A time when I experienced the limits of law...
Racism	A moment when I caught myself...

In this manner we put the topic into a relation with reality and lived experience of the participants (not an effigy!). At the same time emotions are evoked. But now the level of critical thinking is needed also.

For solidarity this can be questions like: What does solidarity mean for us today? Did that change, and if so, why? What are the public debates about solidarity (e.g. during Corona lock-down)? How can we enact solidarity in the workplace? And it could lead to the question towards the end of the learning process of: What story about solidarity do I wish to tell in the future?

The topic of racism also needs to be extended beyond stories. That entails–besides an analysis of societal conditions for latent racism–a self-critical questioning: How much racism do I carry inside me and where does it come from?

2. Stories as material for Collective Memory-Work

In the feminist movement the format of Collective Memory-Work was developed. Here stories are of central importance. Stories written by participants are used as material for an extensive process of working and learning together:

- **Step 1:** The group agrees on a topic, e.g. "That annoyed me in the course..."
- **Step 2:** Everyone writes a page (A4) about a particular situation that they relate to the topic.
- **Step 3:** The story is re-written in third person narrative. That creates distance. From this moment on the group works with the text to investigate societal relations; it is not an analysis of a particular person.
- **Step 4:** Everyone reads out their story to the group and collectively one of the stories is chosen for a first analysis.
- **Step 5:** The story is analysed by using the following questions:

1. What does the author want to tell us? ("... and the moral of it is?")
2. How can we express the author's message in a proverb?
3. What other well known fairy-tales, stories, films, myths... come to our mind?
4. How are the persons in the story described (e.g. passive, active, visible, invisible, direct, indirect, acting/suffering ...)?
5. What is missing in the story that would be needed to make it work in reality? (Voids)
6. What contradictions, what fields of tension arise?
7. How are individual action and societal relations interlinked here?
8. After finishing the analysis: What is the (new) message that the text contains?
9. What theories and scientific insights exist on it?
10. How would the story have to be revised for increasing the actors' capacity for action?

Tips to think further

We know that storytelling can lead to the spread of messages that we do not wish to spread at all. Nevertheless in our seminars we like to use the power of stories because there are few other methods that create similarly sustainable learning.

Making use of stories beyond the simple reaffirmative story-telling is also part of other trade union education programs. For example, with the scenario-technique ideas for possible "futures" can be developed. We don't leave this to the corporations only. The scenarios of desirable future/s become alive by way of stories.

The Hans Böckler Foundation[1] has developed four scenarios of digital futures and the role of trade unions in adult education. Sascha Meinert and Michael Stollt explain scenarios:

> Frequently, we have a limited view of the future and our options for affecting it. All too often we are overwhelmed by haste and multifarious everyday demands, a narrow view of the evidence and the mere extrapolation of current trends. Only when people's backs are up against the wall does anything get done and even then only reactively and under pressure. Using scenarios we can extend our gaze to take in longer-term opportunities and risks and thus to integrate our activities more closely. Good scenarios are plausible, but at the same time also novel and challenging. They open up new perspectives.
>
> (...) [S]cenarios are not about predicting the future. Apart from anything else, the fact that there are several possible scenarios for every question distinguishes them from forecasting. Scenarios also differ from utopias, which are usually played out in 'a distant land at some indeterminate time'. This is because scenarios take the present day into account, as well as the path dependencies that go with it and thus establish a clear link to the present situation. They lie somewhere between what we already know about the future in all probability and what is still entirely unknown. Instead of giving an unambiguous answer to the question about the future, like a forecast, key uncertainties are identified. What factors will exert a decisive influence, even though today we can scarcely imagine how they will turn out in the future. Which causal connections could bring about one development or another? What would be the relevant effects in that case? An important aspect of all this is that one is almost compelled to think about what really counts with regard to the underlying question. After all, we have to simplify reality in order to be able to act. The question is,

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1   The Hans Böckler Foundation deals with co-determination, research linked to the world of work and the support of students on behalf of the DGB, the Confederation of German Trade Unions.

therefore, what do we take into account and what do we leave out? It is not a matter of completeness but of relevance – and that means of our mental models, with which we (unconsciously) explain the world. By tackling these questions intensively various theories arise concerning the fundamental alternatives harboured by the future.

The scenarios arising from this approach illustrate the development alternatives we have identified, with their respective challenges. This is for the purpose of exploration, sounding out and evaluation. (...) Scenarios help us to pass from passive mode – 'hopefully nothing terrible will happen' – to an attitude that puts room to manoeuvre centre-stage: what are our options if this or that happens? Or: what can we do to promote or hinder this development?

In the scenario overview a frame of reference therefore emerges, a 'time map', which also serves to enable constructive exchange with others. Communication with and about scenarios is also favoured by the fact that it generally involves stories that address not only our analytical understanding but our emotions. Scenarios are multi-layered and ambiguous and have both light and shade – like real life. Scenarios can easily be distributed; people pass them on. (https://www.mitbestimmung.de/html/what-are-scenarios-12572.html)

There are many other ways how stories can be utilised for critical thinking and self-reflection. A lot of the material explaining these methods is readily available online. For example, Margret Steixner uses storytelling for self-reflection in a format called story harvesting[2], a method developed by the "Art of Hosting Community." Frigga Haug has made a guide to Collective Memory-Work accessible[3], and Robert Hamm provides a detailed description (and discussion) of the use of Collective Memory-Work in training courses for educators.[4]

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2   https://blog.refak.at/blog/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Collective-Harvesting-of-AoH-Practice-Stories-2.0.pdf
3   http://www.friggahaug.inkrit.de/documents/memorywork-researchguidei7.pdf
4   https://collectivememorywork.net/?page_id=974

Last not least we have also made available a documentation of the REFAK-Seminars on the topic of "storytelling" which can be accessed online: (https://blog.refak.at/seminardokumentation-trilogie-i-storytelling-in-der-gewerkschaftlichen-bildungsarbeit/)

Authors

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Chapter 24

PLAYING GAMES WITH THEORY:
COLLECTIVE MEMORY WORK AND GAME THEORY
IN POST-QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Keitha-Gail Martin-Kerr and Colleen Clements

Introduction

In the early spring of 2021, we (Keitha-Gail and Colleen) came together to revisit a paper we had written (with a third author, Erin Stutelberg) that used Collective Memory Work (CMW) (Haug 1987, 1999) as an approach to creating an interactive presentation for the International Collective Memory Work Conference that was originally to take place in Ireland in the summer of 2020. But, alas, as the world now knows, the COVID-19 pandemic upended so many planned events, and this conference was no exception. We did, however, present via Zoom, in May of 2021, and to our surprise and deep delight, had one of the most satisfying conference experiences that either of us have ever had.

  As a part of that experience, we traced our collective experiences with CMW as well as the ways in which CMW informs our current approach to inquiry. For Colleen, whose work has moved more in the direction of historical and philosophical research, the similarities lay mainly in the critical perspective on historical and contemporary dominant narratives, which has continued to be a vital element of inquiry in her work. For Keitha-Gail, her work has taken a different trajectory, in that she has become interested in game theory, and how it relates to CMW. We gave a brief overview of this thinking in our presentation, and some of those in attendance expressed an interest in thinking more about how these two theories might be connected than time would allow in that format. So, this paper is the result of wanting to engage with others more deeply in sharing these ideas.

  In this paper, we will begin by illuminating the tenets of CMW that have been particularly important to us in helping us engage in critical inquiry,

which necessarily includes an examination of power. We will then turn to a discussion of the ways in which CMW can inform game theory, and vice versa. Finally, we will think about possible applications for CMW-informed game theory in critical post-qualitative research, using educational research as a specific example. We hope that by providing this tracing of our thinking and suggesting potential applications, it might inspire others to take up and expand on this work.

CMW and critical feminism

As mentioned above, our work with CMW has given us important tools for unearthing the dominant narratives, both historical and contemporary, that shape the way we experience and story our lives. This kind of analysis of our stories helps us see how power is always operating, which grounds us in the critical work to which we are committed.

  Our engagement with CMW began as doctoral students in an education department at a large R1 state university. I, Colleen, was part of an independent study with three other Ph.D. students (Angela Coffee, Erin Dyke, and Erin Stutelberg) that had as its focus feminist theory in education. As if to illustrate the persistent hegemonic powers of the academy, we had come together in this independent study because there was no formal course that took as its topic feminist theory in education. We constructed the course ourselves, and chose as one of our texts Frigga Haug's *Female sexualization: A collective work of memory* (1987). We were deeply inspired by this text and by Haug and her collective. We decided to incorporate CMW into our work of the course, and we found it to be a very liberating experience, turning our individual stories into more collective memories that were deeply intertwined with dominant cultural narratives and discourses.

  As we wrapped up the independent study, we wanted to have something to show for it beyond our work. We wanted to carve a space for future students who, like us, might be looking for the opportunity to take up these theories. We were encouraged by the professor who advised us in our study (Timothy Lensmire) to develop our independent study into a full-fledged course and propose it to the department chair as a special topics course we could co-teach. Unfortunately, we were told this was not something that graduate students usually did, so we reluctantly accepted that our course would not come to fruition, and

turned our attention to making our collective more visible, in part by offering workshops at conferences and writing about our collective work.

During that time, another of our professors (Mary Fong Hermes) heard about our work and invited us to meet with her on a course she was developing on feminist and queer theory in education. Given her institutional authority, she was able to get a course on the books for the following year, with the goal of inviting a small group to participate in co-creating the course, including the four of us who had done the independent study and other collective memory work.

It was in this more formal course that Keitha-Gail, Colleen, and Erin Stutelberg began writing together using CMW as a tool for guiding our inquiry. We began by sharing our memories with each other during a retreat that was part of the course, and eventually we decided to focus on Keitha-Gail's memory for a manuscript we would write together. This is the piece we shared at the Collective Memory Work Conference in May of 2021.

While we have both used CMW to guide our inquiry process, our work has also led us in other directions. The one constant, however, is a desire and drive to apply a critical feminist perspective (Ahmed 2012; Davis 1983; Hill Collins 2009, 2016; Kumashiro 2000; Labaton and Martin 2004; Smith 1998, 2000; Taylor 2017) in our approach to inquiry and analysis. Put simply, what this means is that we center an examination of power and how it is operating to marginalize and oppress some while privileging others. To approach justice-oriented post-qualitative educational research without this perspective would be impossible.

At first blush, game theory might not seem to align with these commitments. After all, the original theorists were white men in the positivistic scientific fields in the 1950's. Keitha-Gail, at the urging of a mentor, took up game theory (Edsall 2019; Elstad 2002; Hardy 2015; Klein 2018; Patton 2014) as a critical mode of inquiry allowing for a powerful and potentially radical tool for addressing questions of power, and doing so in an intentionally playful way.

What is Game Theory?

Game theory was born out of the mathematical analysis of gambling, where there are rewards and losses. Participants in a game are trying to minimize their losses and maximize their rewards. The reward or loss is

known as the pay-off. The moves that one participant in a game does affect other players. Participants are trying to balance the risk and the magnitude of the reward (Pitt 2000). At the heart of Game theory is strategic decision making (McCannon 2007). Game theory is a way to analyze interaction among groups of rational people who behave strategically (Campbell 2004).

Central tenets and ideas from within game theory relate to concepts of game board, players, context, strategies, tools, and interconnectedness. In a very brief overview questions that can be addressed using these concepts and ideas include:

- *Game board* - What is the game? What are the rules of the game? Game theory allows for systematically yet playfully collecting data to answer a research question.
- *Players* - Who are the players? What roles are the players playing in this particular game? Players can be researchers, students, professors, community members, anyone who makes sense of their research questions via game theory and others who are "playing the game."
- *Context* - What is the context of the game? How is cooperation/conflict occurring in the game? What are the power dynamics of the context in which people/players are playing? Understanding power structures and dynamics depends on analysis of the contexts, the players, and the way the "game board" is set up.
- *Strategies* - What are the goals of the game? What strategies are best implemented in order to accomplish the goals for the game? Understanding strategies can reveal details and nuances about power structures and dynamics.
- *Tools* - What tools are available for the game? How are the players using (or not using) available tools? The players in the game need to think through how they are using the tools of the game, and by gaining this understanding, the power dynamics are made clearer.
- *Interconnectedness* - How are the players paying attention to the (mis)alignment of the games, players, strategies, tools, and context?

Game theory was developed and used primarily in the field of mathematics; it has been sparsely used in education. Some education scholars have used game theory to make meaning of teaching and learning. For example, Mejbri, Khemaja, and Braham (2013) used game theory to frame game based learning as a way to formalize an ontology of game theory which might be used to validate game based learning. Pitt (2000) applied game theory to better understand group project assessments and concluded that placing students in groups might inadvertently disadvantage some students producing unfairness in assessment. Pitt stated, "group work is commonly a game of chance which can actually produce educational results opposite to those which are intended and marks which are fundamentally unfair." McCannon (2007) designed a course using game theory to help students study the Bible and the common economic concepts. The purpose of using game theory to design the study was to further develop students' critical thinking skills. Elbeck, DeLong, and Zank (2016) applied game theory to students' motivation for learning. They used game theory principles as an intervention to inspire student engagement and motivation. Even though game theory is rarely used in the field of education, its application offers educational researchers myriad opportunities for critical examination and analysis.

How might game theory and CMW be put in conversation?

In *Thinking with theory in qualitative research: Viewing data across multiple perspectives*, Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei (2011) explicate the need to use theory to inform data by plugging data into theory to see what might be produced and plugging theory into data to see how the theory might shape the data. In expanding the notion of thinking with theory, in this paper, we plug the tenets of collective memory work into the framework of game theory to see how together they might offer a methodological perspective in ways that have not been examined before. It is pertinent to explain that this is not a critique of CMW in and of itself. We are of the belief that if we overlay CMW on top of game theory it will push our thinking further. It is also important to note that we are not viewing CMW as a static methodology that users of the method follow the design step by step. As CMW researchers, we are grounded in the principles of CMW, and we use our agency as researchers

to have flexibility with the theory while upholding our commitments to an examination of power. Being malleable with how we implement CMW aligns with Haug's suggestions to the users of the process she created (Haug 1987).

The major tenets of game theory are: 1) games are happening all the time; however not everything is a game 2) games have players, 3) players in a game use strategies to win the game, 4) games are played in an environment or specific context, 5) there is an interconnectedness among the elements of the game including the players, strategies, and the environment. The principle that grounds game theory is that players in a game are rational and they are playing the game to win. There are three types of games that players engage in 1) collaborative games, where players are working together for all to win, 2) competitive games, where players are opposing each other, trying to win the game, 3) hybrid games, where there is a mixture of collaboration and competition. For this paper, the type of game that we are interested in is collaborative because that form of game aligns with the principles of CMW, where a group of feminists comes together around a burning question to make meaning of their experiences (Haug 1987, 1999).

The tenets of game theory can help to deepen understanding of CMW if we consider Jackson and Mazzei's (2011) call for "thinking with theory." The first tenet of game theory espouses that games are happening all the time; however, not everything is a game. Many scholars who utilize game theory believe that games are usually happening in daily life. Most things that we partake in and engage in have rules and we live by these rules in order to function effectively in society. Many people might not realize that they are in the middle of a game; however, the game is being played. People can be active players in a game or passive players, irrespective of this fact, there are games that are taking place. Game theory does not assume that games are fun-filled experiences. The theoretical underpinning of game theory is that life is a game board and we are playing the game of life as we make rational decisions and moves on the game board. Readers might not agree that life is a game; however, life can be framed through the lens of game theory. Horrible things happen in life daily. We are not suggesting that horrific experiences are games. However, we put forth that in life experiences people are making decisions, making moves, that positively or adversely affect each other because we are all players on the game board.

Game theory is only one of the many theories that might be used to make meaning of lived experiences. We are taking up game theory similar to how theories such as critical race theory, queer theory, and critical disability theory has been taken up, where theories are used to categorize knowledge, analyze concepts, and serve as guiding principle for how one thinks about issues of the world. Similarly to how queer theory does not necessarily have to do with sexual orientation; it has to do with questioning and seeing things differently. Game theory does not only relate to playing fun games; it is about making rational decisions and intentional moves.

Regarding CMW, the questions might be asked, what is the game of CMW? What are the rules of the game of CMW? What are the objectives of the game of CMW? It would be remiss to ask these questions and not think of answering them in terms of power and privilege. To begin, the game of CMW is riddled with the power and privilege of the researcher and the researcher's affiliated university or institution that is sanctioned to conduct research. The rules of the game were designed with a particular audience in mind, one who can read and write proficiently. One objective of the game of collective memory work is to produce and share empirical knowledge that has been approved by a research institution. We are aware that not every reader will agree with our ideas of the game, rules, and objectives of CMW. Based on how one experiences CMW, they will probably get a different interpretation of the game, rules, and objective of CMW. We write in the spirit of CMW, where we share our lived experiences of CMW, which might be translatable; however, not generalizable. On the surface, CMW might be read as the research methodology that gives feminists agency and voice to share research about a burning question that is relevant to them (Haug 1987, 1999). However, when viewed through the lens of game theory and overlaid with power and privilege, it shows that CMW would benefit from further theorization (some tentative suggestions of potential benefits are addressed below).

Another tenet of game theory is that all games have players. As it relates to CMW, who are the players of the game? Why are the players playing the game? How do the rules impact the players? The players in the game are the researcher and the participants. The players are playing the game for varying reasons. The researcher more than likely is playing the game to publish the findings of the research to improve their scholarship and

probably to place themselves in a better position for a different job or to get tenured. The researcher might also be playing the game as a professor to teach a course to explore CMW with their students. The participants might be playing the game to be part of a collective, to share their stories, to be with like minded people or people who have similar experiences. Some participants might play the game to engage in a learning experience to better understand themselves and others. The rules of the game are working on and through the players of the game because they are working in the confines of the game.

  It is imperative that users of CMW know that the players of the game will affect the data that is collected. Hence, we suggest that researchers be cognizant of how power and privilege are acting on and through the players through the process of the research. CMW is known as a feminist methodology that is liberatory for those involved in the process. However, Black and queer feminists have been fighting for decades to be understood throughout the feminist movement based on their varying and intersecting identities. Although CMW is a feminist methodology, not all feminists have the power in the game. With CMW, the researcher is an active player in the game. Therefore, the researcher has the power to influence who is part of the game and how the players are interacting in the game. It is common knowledge that most researchers are white and have the power as the players in the game of CMW.

  Game theory is based on the assumption that players use strategies to win a game. If players use strategies to win a game, what strategies are the players of CMW using to win, to be successful, at CMW? In terms of game theory, strategies can be defined as skills being used to accomplish the goals of the game (Elbeck, DeLong, and Zank 2016). Hence if the goal of the game is to share a memory and analyze the memory; the strategies needed in CMW will depend heavily on the participants' literacy skills. The main strategies that the players of CMW employ are speaking, reading, and writing. The players of CMW have to be proficient with these literacy skills to be part of the game because these are the competencies needed to have an advantage in the game. If speaking, reading, and writing are essential skills needed to compete in the game of CMW, who are the people capable of taking part in the game? Who are the people that are excluded from the game? How are power and privilege taking shape as it relates to the strategies that are used in the game of CMW? Because CMW relies on literacy skills to accomplish the game, people

who are illiterate, not functionally literate, or who are developing literacy skills might not be able to take part in the game. More than likely the way the game of CMW is designed one might argue that it is created to be played by people who are proficient in reading, writing, listening, and speaking the language that the researcher and participants decide to use to play the game.

Game theory is less about games in the traditional sense and more about "an exact science of strategy" (Klei, 2018: 438) Game theory examines how rational adversaries make decisions knowing that their opponents are trying to second guess them or double-cross them. Let's connect the idea of second-guessing to the analysis used in CMW. During the analysis of a written story, the group shares their idea of the initial thesis of the story. The group discusses the common-sense narrative in the story. The story is analyzed for linguistic peculiarities. After detailed analysis, the group re-thinks the initial thesis statement through a process of deconstruction and reconstruction of the initial thesis. One might argue that during this process the group is engaging in second-guessing what the author of the story intended. The group is not an adversary of the author because CMW is a collaborative game; however, the group is playing a rational game as they go through the process of analyzing a written memory.

All games are played in a particular environment or in a specific context. The game of CMW is typically played in settings such as universities, schools, or at times in organized community spaces. There is a structure that is required for the game of CMW as it relates to the place and space where the game will be played. Due to the nature of the game, the setting requires a level of quietness and even moments of stillness and silence. The environment might be considered one of power and privilege based on the need for structured quietness, a space to sit in community to speak, read, and write.

To reiterate, as far as we are aware, no other paper has been written that has placed CMW in conversation with game theory. The insights of plugging in CMW into game theory are not fully developed. However, we suggest three gains from looking at CMW through the lens of game theory. First, game theory might assist researchers and participants to better understand the nuances of the methodology because game theory helps one to analyze CMW in new ways. Second, game theory explicates the power relations in CMW because power is at play in every

methodology, even in feminist methodologies such as CMW that tries to flatten power and how power operates. Finally, game theory might be used to see CMW for the strategic moves that the participants and the researcher make when they analyze a memory through the deconstruction and reconstruction stages of the analysis. We are not making a claim that these insights are new. We are suggesting that game theory might be used to make sense of CMW and analyze CMW for the users of the methodology to get a deeper understanding of CMW and how it is practised.

How might thinking with game theory strategically advance CMW as a critical research approach?

In this section of the paper, we aim to answer the question--How might collective memory work methodologists envision this research using CMW through game theory in order to advance the ways that CMW might be seen as a methodology situated in the field of social science research? Two secondary questions that we propose are: 1) Where does CMW fit in social science research and, 2) how might we strategically place collective memory work at a higher value in the field of social science research utilizing game theory? To answer these questions, we revert to the tenets of game theory—the game, players, strategies, context, and the interconnectedness of all the tenets to intentionally write about ways in which game theory might be used to advance collective memory work in the field of post-qualitative research.

  Game theory is about using the "exact science of strategy" to win. While we would trouble the notion of "exact science" as it relates to post-qualitative work, for the purpose of this exercise of "plugging in" game theory, we can use the ideas that "winning" in this context means elevating CMW in the field of social science to expose graduate students, beginning researchers, seasoned researchers, and community members to utilize this methodology to produce new knowledge as they make meaning of their stories. Winning might also manifest in more courses being offered on CMW, which would expose more researchers to the theory, hence giving them an option for use as they design their research. Winning as it relates to CMW could mean getting grant-funded research to get the time to invest in the process. Lastly, winning might be in the production of more CMW research being published in top-tiered journals.

Currently, CMW is underutilized as a viable research approach; since games are happening at all times, game theory might shed light on the advancement of CMW in the field of post-qualitative research.

The field of post-qualitative research is the game board that CWM is situated in. CMW is a tool on the gameboard. There are other tools on the game board such as ethnography, phenomenology, narrative inquiry, case study, and grounded theory, to name just a few. Some tools have a higher ranking in the realm of academic research than others on the game board. CMW sits on the margins of the gameboard because it is rarely mentioned in research methods courses. It is possible for a graduate student to finish their studies and have never heard of CMW as an option to choose for their research.

How might CMW win on the gameboard of post-qualitative research methods? One strategy that might be employed is to require institutions of higher education to offer feminist theory-informed research courses. CMW fits under the category of feminist theory-informed research approach, and if feminist theory is taught more regularly, it becomes more likely that students might get the opportunity to explore CMW in such courses. In many graduate programs, feminist theory-informed research courses are only taught in the College of Gender and Women's Studies. Only offering feminist theory in one department limits students' exposure and access to approaches such as CMW, which they might otherwise utilize if they were afforded the opportunity to explore the process. Offering feminist theory-informed research perspectives, such as CMW, in departments other than Gender Studies is one way to advance CMW on the gameboard.

One tenet of game theory is that players are thinking rationally and strategically, making moves to win the game. In institutional contexts of academia the players of CMW are the researchers, the participants, and institutional review board (IRB) personnel. Of these players, the main one is the researcher because the researcher is the one who makes the decision to choose CMW from the tools of methodologies available to them on the gameboard. Choosing CMW is a win on the gameboard. Securing participants and getting IRB approval is a win for the researcher, which in turn advances CMW.

Players of CMW can utilize strategies to elevate the approach by presenting at conferences, not only feminist theory-oriented conferences but conferences where attendees might not be familiar with CMW or

might not have considered CMW an option in their field of study. Apart from presenting at conferences, another way to elevate CMW is to publish research that utilizes the approach. The more people read about CMW, the more opportunities people will have to better understand the possibilities offered by the process. Given the limited number of people who have access to reading research papers and academic journals, another way in which the players of CMW might advance this approach is through the use of social media. Spreading the word about CMW on social media will reach a wide range of people and the language used to share about CMW on social media will make the process and potential more accessible to many people.

Game theory might help researchers think about how they can elevate CMW in the field of post-qualitative research by making strategic decisions to push the approach one step further on the gameboard of post-qualitative research. The time is prime to begin making these strategic moves as the world is on the tipping point of change after going through the COVID-19 pandemic, the racial uprising with the killing of George Floyd, and the effects of global warming. Many more people in the world are realizing that change needs to happen in many sectors of life. Academics need to drive the changes that we need to see in the world. One research approach that is positioned to elevate the voices of women, feminists, and people who live at the margins of society is CMW. Marginalized and oppressed people's stories need to be heard and be honored. The knowledge that these people have needs to be shared. Many people who live at the edge of society have to be in community to survive the daily atrocities that they face. CMW is a methodology designed with community at the forefront. The methodology aligns with the way traditionally disenfranchised people moved in and through the world. CMW needs to move up on the gameboard so that people who live at the edges of society can be knowledge producers. When CMW is elevated, marginalized voices will be heard.

We are aware that many who utilize CMW might not be able to conceptualize CMW with winning because the methodology seems to have nothing to do with winning. However, in the broad field of qualitative research, CMW is not situated as a top-tiered methodology. It is not widely known or used in the USA. We are advocating for CMW to be a more recognized and utilized methodology; that's how we describe winning.

Conclusion

We hope to promote the notion of taking up a critical, CMW-informed game theory approach, collectively seeking to define and create more equitable and just practices in educational spaces. We contend that a more radical and critical approach to game theory must incorporate the critical perspective and values of feminist theories, including the centering of personal narrative and counter-narrative, as well as an analysis of cultural and social narratives that are embedded in personal narratives, all of which which is at the core of CMW. This approach to critical game theory offers a unique opportunity in critical research, in that it allows all parties involved in the research project to interrupt dominant discourses and practices through a sense of intentional play.

We imagine this intentional playfulness as conceived in this iteration of game theory as giving agency to participants of "the game" by laying bare the underlying elements at play. These elements include all the tenets of game theory: the game board, the players, the context, the strategies and tools, and the interconnectedness of all the other elements. By including a critical examination of power, this approach can lead to transformative and liberatory possibilities for significant insights about contexts and situations that seem on the surface to "make sense" and may be taken for granted, but, when seen through a more critical lens, in fact are shown to have an underlying ridiculousness, whether merely problematic or outright dangerous. This approach to game theory offers an avenue for revealing those underlying "rules of the game," while simultaneously offering a framework for understanding the rules in a new and more critical way and revealing them for the construct that they are. In this way, participants in this form of inquiry are granted agency as they recognize and liberate themselves from those problematic rules and attempt to re-write the rules for themselves and others in "the game."

We contend that this mischievous and intentionally playful approach to critical post-qualitative research actively and deliberately subverts traditional power roles, structures, and relations in educational spaces, in the spirit of Bhaktin's *carnival* (Schechner 2004). Here, we are thinking explicitly of the problematic historical (and contemporary) dynamics described in Erica Meiners work on "white lady bountiful" as a classroom presence (Meiners 2002). We seek to offer a critical and radical theoretical approach to educational research that allows us to imagine

more just educational spaces for all students, free from the disciplining and policing presence of "white lady bountiful," and instead filled with the liberatory thinking and practices necessary for creating the recognition of the full humanity of all participants in a movement towards a more expansive approach and future for all of us.

Collective Memory Work has proven to be a useful tool for the kind of critical approach to research that we advocate in this paper. Some helpful examples of what it might be like to take this critical approach include Erin Stutelberg's work (e.g., "Teaching as invasion: emotions, boundaries and entanglements", 2020.) and Robert Hamm's (2018) piece: "Collective Memory-Work–a Method Under the Radar?" We argue that, while CMW is historically grounded in a critical (i.e., examination of power) perspective, it has been taken up in ways that fail to challenge not only problematic and violent discourses, but also our complicity in those discourses.

Finally, we open the invitation to join us to consider ways in which the tenets of game theory might be coupled with CMW to create new possibilities for education research. While we take Elizabeth St. Pierre's (2018) perspective on post-qualitative research, which challenges traditional, humanist notions of qualitative research "methods," we believe that our work is more interested in theory and the thinking that it enables. Most of us in academic fields will have to reckon with the notion of research in some form or another; and while St. Pierre's critique is meaningful and significant, we recognize that not all academic researchers will find themselves in the privileged position of being able to reject an engagement with method entirely. We also recognize that marginalized students, families, and communities need critical researchers to continue to find ways to use academic research in action and change-oriented ways. For this reason, we hew closer to the notion of "methodological promiscuity" (Andersen and O'Brien 2016), in which we seek to push forward thinking about critical research and the liberatory potential of such approaches.

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Chapter 25

THE ASSUMPTIONS ON WHICH
COLLECTIVE MEMORY WORK IS BASED

Jenny Onyx

Collective Memory Work (CMW) has already proved itself to be a useful learning method and research tool. It is one example of a qualitative research methodology. However, its significance is far greater than that would imply. In fact CMW represents a move towards a different form of knowledge, and a different way of doing "science". If is one of a family of new approaches to research that have rejected the tenets of positivism. To better understand the underlying methodological basis of CMW I find it useful to analyse its significance within the frame of Complexity Theory, which itself is a refinement of General Systems Theory.

  Today much of social science still adopts the basic assumptions of positivism as the (only) correct basis for doing, and evaluating research projects. Positivism has served science well in the past. But it is unable to respond to an increasingly complex, chaotic world with its constant and unpredictable emergence of new phenomena. It is unable to deal with "the unknown unknowns" (Turner and Baker 2019). Positivism rests on reductionism: all entities and processes can be explained in terms of their component or antecedent variables. What is required is a carefully controlled measure of those component parts, and their causal link to the product, analysed in terms of linear causal models. Once correctly identified, the product or outcome can be predicted. It is the sum of its parts. Except that increasingly the outcome cannot be predicted!

  In today's complex, chaotic social world, and even within the natural world, variables not only operate in a causal chain, but they interact with each other in complex ways. Indeed, every entity on the planet is connected to and interacts in some way with every other entity, directly or indirectly. What's more, these interactions are in a constant state of movement. The outcome or observable product is emergent, not fixed. Some variable interactions may be determined by relatively fixed

predetermined patterns, but others are at least partly subject to human agent conscious decision making. The ultimate outcome of any given phenomenon is constantly emerging; it can be understood in broad terms but it cannot be predicted.

General Systems Theory (GST) provides an alternative philosophical base for doing research. GST is relatively well established within some social disciplines. Kast and Rosenzweig (1972) defined a system as an entity "composed of interrelated parts or elements" (p. 450). This is already moving the research focus away from a reductionist series of isolated elements towards a more complex interrelationship between component parts. The "gestalt" recognizes that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. But a system may be open or closed. A closed system is identified in terms of its boundaries, and the interactions within those boundaries. An open system also includes those interactions between elements of the system and the broader environment in which the system occurs. An analysis of the system often includes feedback loops, in which case causality is no longer linear. We are now dealing with far more complex systems in which a reductionist analysis misses the essential qualities of the process. However, as Kast and Rosenzweig argue, boundaries, particularly of open systems, can be hard to identify. Social systems are composed of humans who have purpose and whose actions are meaningful both to themselves and to those with whom they interact within the system. The particular purpose of the group is located within the material reality of their occurrence and not any abstract specification of the system. This interaction between humans may well cause the system to evolve beyond its boundaries.

The concept of Complex Adaptive Systems takes the argument one step further. We are now dealing with open dynamic systems that are able to self-organize by exchanging information, and other resources from the environment in order to support or modify action consistent with their purpose. Action is then "emergent" rather than fixed or predetermined (Turner and Baker 2019). This argument forms the basis of complexity theory. As noted by Uhl-Bien et al. (2007), a complex system is not merely complicated; it is complex because "the system as a whole cannot be fully understood simply by analysing its components" (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007: 302). Individual humans are only partly bounded by their family or friendship group or organisational context in which they are embedded. In the case of local organisations, multiple and overlapping complex

systems may be partly, but never totally, bounded by a geographical area such as a community. The systems are not only overlapping, but open, thus adding to the levels of complexity. Nonetheless each social system has meaning to their participants, and these participants are capable of generating creative new outcomes.

Assumptions behind complexity theory

Collective Memory Work itself is one example of an application of complexity theory, and as such draws on a similar set of ontological and epistemological assumptions. Ontology asks questions about the nature of reality, while epistemology asks questions about how we know that reality.

Positivism fails to account for the fundamental process of emergence. Social life has many characteristics that better fit a complexity paradigm. We need to shift our thinking from assumptions of institutionalised structure and stability to one of flux, in which "all things flow" in a continuous process of becoming, in which what is now contains the traces of what was, and the seeds of what is yet to be, that is, the principle of immanence (Chia 1999). Causality cannot be understood as a linear process. Networks and organisations are malleable, interconnected and framed within the context of their emergence. System-level order spontaneously arises from the action and repeated interaction of lower level system components including the actions of individuals, without intervention by a central controller (Chiles et al. 2004: 501). This theoretical approach can be applied to emergent self-organising forms of action within the social world. Most importantly, complexity theory brings into central focus the action of individual agents in negotiation with other agents within a shifting socio-economic context. To understand the process of emergence requires the employment of qualitative methods.

Complexity theory has gained considerable interest and wide application in many disciplines over the past few years. That interest brings with it the inevitable debates over key concepts, definitions and applications. For a review of these see Turner and Baker (2019). While there are several versions of complexity theory as applied in different disciplines, I am adopting that developed by Goldstein, Hazy and others as most relevant to civil society and organisational theory, and that specifically consider human agency (Goldstein, 2011; Goldstein and Hazy, 2006; Goldstein,

Hazy, and Silberstang, 2008). There are a number of key features that can be summarized as follows:

Complex systems self-organise

Social systems of all types have the capacity to self-organise regardless of the intent of any higher order authority. This holds true for small friendship groups, including young children, but equally true for large bureaucratic business or government organisations. For this reason, complex social problems cannot be solved by bureaucratic order; public policy actions do not necessarily follow the intent of government. Policy systems emerge and self-organise. This is because individual agents constituting any social system are self-conscious and have self-organising capabilities (Morcol 2020).

Emergence

New and novel patterns, structures and properties arise out of the multiple interaction of agents within the existing conditions. The focus is on the interactions among semi-autonomous actors and seeks to understand the emergence of adaptive structures from these interactions. Emergent phenomena can never be reduced to the product of lower level components. Explanation fundamentally shifts the traditional, reductionist concept of causality, towards a greater focus on interactions.

Complex dynamic systems are unstable

Change emerges out of states of disequilibrium, or a tension between disequilibrium and equilibrium in the wider context (Plowman et al. 2007). The early stages of emergence within human systems, are likely to be marked by conflict, not only between the member agents and some wider social or political issue or event, but also between the member agents themselves. From tension and conflict, new creative

solutions can emerge, to perceived problems. The instability generated from the ongoing interaction of emergent processes mean that higher order patterns or outcomes can never be completely predicted from existing conditions.

Key role of social networks

Social networks are composed of persons and organisations forming nodes that are linked together in some fashion. These may form hubs or clusters that are information rich, and provide the potential for social connectivity and new learning. "Learning is a nonlinear multi-level emergent property of the collective that occurs as individuals interact with others and with their environment in a group or networked setting" (Goldstein et al. 2008: 14). Within the context of society, relationships coalesce between individuals who may be operating as individuals or as members of organisations. This coalescing of relationships creates a fertile milieu out of which may emerge new ideas, formations, and intentions for collaborative action. An emergency or perceived crisis of some sort may then be enough to trigger the rapid formation of a new organisational form, or collective action of some sort. As such, understanding relationships and how these respond to external stimuli is also key to understanding the behaviour of complex dynamic systems.

Heterarchy

In contrast to the command and control of hierarchical structures, heterarchy refers to a distributed network of decision making without a central controller, where the information flows in lateral directions, thus encouraging cooperative or collective contributions by participating members.

Leadership

Leaders remain important but they are embedded within the network, and serve to enable emergent perspectives and action, while encouraging cooperative engagement (Plowman et al. 2007; Onyx and Leonard 2011).

Positive feedback

Positive or amplifying feedback serves to encourage convergence towards new solutions and therefore new, (partial) levels of stability. Dynamic systems are likely to move through regions of stability and instability as new solutions are created in a constant adaptive process... Within an organisational context, regeneration may occur through four stages: disequilibrium, amplifying alternative actions, recombination/ self-organisation, and stabilizing feedback (Plowman et al. 2007; Goldstein 2011, Onyx and Leonard 2011).

How does Collective Memory Work relate to complexity theory?

Collective Memory Work has a number of distinctive features, which from the perspective of positivism render it an inappropriate research method. It is avowedly intersubjective rather than objective in its approach, it is non-reductionist, and cannot serve to confirm any hypothesis. Its results cannot be generalised in the normal positivist sense. However, from the perspective of complexity theory, these features provide an essential and refreshing alternative way of doing social research.

  While there exist several different versions of Collective Memory Work as the method itself has evolved, the underlying assumptions remain the same for all. For purposes of analysis of these assumptions, I here refer to the method of CMW as summarized by Onyx and Small (2001). Briefly that method requires three phases;

  Phase one: Each member of the collective group (usually 5-7 people) writes one or more memory about a specific trigger topic.

  Phase two: The memories are shared among all members of the collective. The group meets for a discussion of the memories. The

discussion is structured such that each member contributes to the discussion of similarities and differences between the memories, and identifies emerging themes as well as contradictions. The discussion aims to uncover the common social understanding of each event, the social meanings embodied in the actions described in the written accounts, and how these meanings are arrived at. The collective discussion is recorded and transcribed...

  Phase 3: The material from both the written memories and the collective discussion is further theorised, sometimes by one or two members of the collective. This phase is essentially a recursive process, in which the insights concerning the 'common sense' of each set of memories is related back to the collective discussion and to theoretical discussions within the wider academic literature.

  With this understanding in mind, I now examine each of the features identified above for complexity theory as it relates to Collective Memory Work, with examples from specific CMW projects.

Self organizing

The participants of the CMW group come together voluntarily. The memory work group is self-organising, and without a central controller. Usually the overall topic, the reason to begin the CMW process occurs because of a perceived wider issue or problem. Very often this is an issue effecting the everyday lives of the participants. The broad topic may be presented by a single researcher, or may arrive out of a discussion of two or more of the participants. Where the initiative comes from a single researcher, issues of leadership may arise. The issue may be the social construction of women's sexuality, or the social construction of girls' emotion, the adequacy of housing policy, or the social construction of ageing. While most of the early work using CMW concerned women, later work has involved different kinds of participants. Once the broad topic is identified, one or more specific trigger topics may be determined from within the group itself. Each participant writes her own memories in her own style. The most important phase of the whole process is the collective discussion of the whole group. This discussion is not directed apart from the broad rules of procedure. What is said and any consensus reached is entirely up to the participants.

Emergent

This is perhaps the most amazing feature of CMW; it allows the emergence of themes and ideas that are unique. The outcome or results of the memory work process cannot be predicted. The outcome is emergent. That is, the final insights of the research process arise out of the complex interaction of the memories, the authors' reflection of those memories and the way they are reconstructed in writing, as well as the collective discussion of both the individual memories and the broader social context in which they are constructed. Everyday experience is the basis of knowledge. Crawford et al. (1992) explained, "This collapsing of the subject and object of research, the 'knower' and the 'known', constitutes or sets aside a space where the experiential can be placed in relation to the theoretical" (p. 41). It is not a matter of confirming a hypothesis but of allowing the unexpected to emerge. For this reason, the outcomes of CMW are not only unpredictable, but are likely to seriously challenge the status quo as identified in the existing literature. Certainly, the process of CMW provides a very different perspective on the topic in question.

A good example of this is provided in the study of ageing (Onyx et al, 2020). This group of retired older women explored their experience of ageing over a three-year period, addressing such topics as "bodies maintenance", "fear", "connectedness" and "new challenges". While the participants began with expectations of collectively bemoaning the difficulties of ageing and the inevitable decline in abilities, they discovered quite the contrary. While ageing certainly produced many difficulties and loss, each challenge provided an incentive for new learning. As noted by the women, "What we found challenges the current script of ageing and social control that defines and limits who older women can be. For us, growing old is a privilege, full of richness. We reject the contemporary medical model of ageing in favour of a more nuanced model of both loss but also of personal growth in a changing landscape". (Onyx et al 2020, abstract)

Feedback

Feedback forms an important aspect of Complex Adaptive Systems, particularly involving open systems. Within CMW, a feedback loop is

deliberately created when a participant reflects on a past event, writes a memory of it, and then the wider group also reflects of that memory in the context of the other memories around the same topic. This feedback process enables the individual to reassess the meaning embedded in that memory, and the group to reassess the wider meaning behind the assigned topic.

An interesting example of the feedback process is found in Frost et al. (2012). This project provides a very good example of the interwovenness of 'individual' and 'group' learning. In that project, a collective of professional women explored memories of loss of faith. The memories were shared online and the collective discussion occurred with not all members able to be present. The collective discussed one memory of an absent member, who took great exception to the kind of interpretation the collective took of her memory in her absence, and without understanding the cultural context in which it was written. At a subsequent collective meeting, with the member present, the cultural context of the memory was explained and that memory was revisited with the realization that all members need to be part of the collective discussion in order to include knowledge of the specific cultural context of each memory. Thus, the collective process experienced a destabilization which led both to an individual but also a collective reassessment both of the specific memory but also of the CMW process itself.

Heterarchy

To the extent that the CMW process is self-organizing and without a central controller, then any form of hierarchy disappears. Memory Work breaks down the barriers between the subject and object of research. The researched became researchers, thus eliminating the hierarchy of "experimenter" and "subject". Members of the group are co-researchers. Most of the published work of CMW therefore involves multiple authors, as participants contribute to various aspects, perhaps contributing individual chapters (Crawford et al. 1992) or otherwise contributing to the whole.

A good example of this process can be found in the reflections produced in the online workshop concerning reactions to the Covid pandemic (see the contribution by Mishra, Onyx and McCormick in this collection), the

pandemic as "a portal between different worlds" (Hansson et al.). This group consisted of four women in the ages 50-79 years and originated/positioned in Europe, Asia, Australia. Participants were mostly strangers to each other, and not all were experienced with using Memory Work. Their common interest lay in exploring the potential use of Memory Work in a variety of contexts. The group could only communicate online, by email and Zoom. They set their own timeline for tasks, within the broader frame of the overall online conference. Initially the group spent time on Zoom, "meeting" each other, gaining some understanding of the women's various backgrounds, and developing a sense of mutual trust. Over the following months, they wrote three memories on two trigger topics, shared the memories by email, met collectively online by Zoom for collective discussions, transcribed the discussions and one or other then summarized the emerging themes. Although the group was concerned with formal international health issues, they rapidly learned a great deal about each other's personal circumstances and responses to the pandemic. Each took a leadership role at different points, volunteering to carry out a specific task, or contribute to a collective written report. They discussed the meaning of "authorship" deciding that while each was the author of their own written memory, any collective written paper had a collective authorship. There was no central controller.

Leadership

As a consequence of heterarchy, and self-organizing, there should be no leader. In the case of participants with a common social identity, this is not a problem. But in the typical example of a lead researcher wishing to explore an issue with CMW, she is naturally seen as the leader. The academic researcher then attempts to position herself with the group and becomes an embedded member, perhaps supportive leader of the research group. While an important aspect of CMW, leadership is also the most problematic. Very often the academic leader has a personal stake in the product, particularly if the project forms part of a PhD or intended publication. In this case it is difficult for the leader to remain in the background. It is also common for the other participants to look to the leader for instructions and directions, particularly in the formation of the project. However, with the development of trust and the realisation by

participants that they do have something to contribute, the issue of leadership becomes less important.

It is indeed possible for the collective to actually usurp the leaders initial authority, as happened in one project that was exploring gender and sexual identities (Easpaig 2017). Difficulties emerged for the author when she attempted to impose a more structured analysis of memories on the collective process. She notes: "Overall, this stage was characterised by disjointedness between an organic emerging form of collaborative exploration and the pursuit of a more structured process. A breakthrough presented itself in the participatory work when the difficulties that were being encountered ....were explicitly discussed in the group. ....This opened up discussion amongst group members about various strategies in relation to how to proceed in order to make sense of the data. This explicit and frank discussion meant that the academic researcher had to relinquish some control and further share the research process" (Easpaig 2017: 55). Basically, at this point the academic researcher had to relinquish leadership for a more organic, but dynamic collective process.

The issues of heterarchy, power and leadership remain some of the most problematic assumptions of CMW, given that the method rests on the concept of collectivity, or equal control of the process and its outcomes.

Collectivity is not the same as homogeneity. To operate collectively does not require that all participants are the same. On the contrary, diversity of participants and their contribution greatly enhances the outcome. Some participants may speak more than others. In the ageing CMW collective, Trina often remained silent for most of the collective discussion. She was listening and reflecting. Towards the end of the discussion she often made an extremely important statement connecting and summarizing points raised thus clarifying the underlying emergent theme of the discussion ... or else she might point out some inconsistency in our discussion to that point.

What is important is that every participant is able to express their thoughts, and every participant contributes in some way, without any central controller. The researcher herself may necessarily provide information from the literature or concerning the rules of CMW, but how this information is used is up to the other participants. Often someone else will select a venue to meet, and someone else may provide food and drink. Several participants may share the stage three writing, but someone else may provide editorial comment. None of these differences

reduce the collectivity of the CMW process, but rather enhance it. Nonetheless potential power imbalance requires constant monitoring.

Network and Networked learning

A Collective Memory Work group may be seen initially as a small network of diverse autonomous individuals linking together for the purpose of sharing information. This small network is information rich in the sense that each member brings their own rich but individual experience to bear. During the collective discussion phase, this information is shared and, as commonalities in the narratives are identified, the information is coalesced into a new richer form. As the group reflects on the meaning of the individual memories, new insights emerge, insights that belong to the group as a whole and not to any individual within it. As the initial network solidifies into a single group, it may become a node within a larger network as it reaches out to draw information from the environment and in turn shares information with other groups and individuals

Because the initial group is able to share information of relevance to the topic, CMW creates an incredibly rich learning milieu. As quoted earlier, "learning is a nonlinear multi-level emergent property of the collective that occurs as individuals interact with others and with their environment in a group or networked setting" (Goldstein et al. 2008: 14). Even where the initial purpose of the CMW is not conceived as a learning but only as a research project, the individual learning involved may be the most dramatic outcome. Perhaps for this reason, CMW is rapidly becoming a favoured pedagogical method.

There are many examples of the networked learning process. Perhaps the best example of networked learning occurred with the initial development of the method by Haug and her colleagues (Haug et al. 1987). Female Sexualization was a Marxist feminist exploration of the way women's bodies are shaped and defined, and socialised into a patriarchal society. The overt intent of the project was a collective reassessment of the women's experience, and ultimate personal empowerment.

The women and ageing project (Onyx et al. 2020) provides a more recent example of collective learning. These women met for a final session reflecting on their experience. Without exception, all cited their personal learning as of greatest value. As noted in the discussion: "We're looking at ourselves but we also have to think what contribution we are

making to research on ageing? The contribution could be a model for other groups. Anyone could form these groups given our model: we get together, we do this, we do that. Like book groups where we talk about books. Here we talk about growing older. Memory work must be the centre. It is the methodology but it is also what triggers our discussion. It has two different functions here. It is a research methodology, but it is also something that we can use to understand what is going on, to feel better, a means for which we establish the context. A kind of group therapy? No. Not at all. It is therapeutic rather than therapy" (final group reflection).

Another interesting example of CMW as a deliberative learning tool concerning the issue of unequal power within the CMW process, occurred during a memory work conference held at UTS in 2000. A group of researchers who were using the method, shared their experience. The most perplexing issue arising in the conference was how to avoid the dominant voice of the leader/researcher within the collectivity of the CMW group. As noted above, in many if not most research projects, the initial researcher becomes the point of authority, the leader and organiser of the CMW process. This necessarily creates a condition of unequal power. To explore the problem, the group decided to form their own CMW, to write a personal memory involving working with a CMW group and then to share and discuss the emergent themes. Much of the discussion revolved around the difficulties of unequal power within a feminist context. The group discussed steps that can be taken to minimize or circumvent the initial power imbalance, in order to obtain genuine equality in the contribution of each member of the collective process. This process enabled all members to clarify their own approach, and in some cases to modify it. CMW process concerning "unresolved power" was subsequently published (Small et al. 2007). So, in this case, a national network of the networks was formed for purposes of sharing information now and into the future.

The issue of unequal power continues to cause concern within the collectivity of CMW. Leadership and authority continue to influence the research process within academe. While collectivity does not require homogeneity, nonetheless the authority of the lead researcher may influence the outcome of the process. Part of the solution lies in acknowledging the issue and taking steps to ameliorate it. Sometimes the collective itself takes the initiative in overriding the leader's action.

However, it is also probably best to conceptualize heterarchy and collectivity as operating on a moving continuum, between total equality as the ideal, but varying degrees of power imbalance occurring on occasion.

Concluding discussion

As noted, the methodology of Collective Memory Work rests on the assumptions behind Complexity Theory, which itself is a development of Complex Adaptive Systems Theory. This is a useful perspective because it not only enhances an understanding of CMW in practice, but illustrates an important new methodology, and a different way of doing "science". As such it not only challenges positivist assumptions, but challenges the very notion of what constitutes knowledge, and how knowledge may be conceptualised and measured.

Santos (2018) introduces the concept of an 'ecology of knowledges'. He describes this as the non-hierarchical collaboration of scientific and non-scientific 'artisanal' knowledges to achieve both social and cognitive justice (Santos 2018). Santos argues that the ecologies of knowledges demand other kinds of logic, other kinds of language, that can produce more "intelligible results" appropriate to different social/cultural contexts (Santos 2018: 187).

Complexity Theory and therefore CMW assumes that social reality is emergent, self-organizing, constantly changing as individuals negotiate their experience within a given social, cultural context. CMW provides a structured method by which this negotiation occurs. As such it provides a rich form of individual and collective learning, and the potential for personal empowerment as well as broader social change,

Almost invariably, the final report of phase three of the CMW process forms a direct challenge to the current academic literature. It provides a radically different perspective on a given topic, whether that be the medicalisation of the ageing process, the construction of emotions in girls and women, or the adequacy of housing policy (Rogers, Lilley, and Butler 2013). This latter example explored a serious conflict between state housing policy and community expectations. It demonstrates that CMW can be usefully applied in a variety of disciplines and professional contexts. In this and other examples, new and novel solutions to existing social problems become visible.

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Chapter 26

DOING COLLECTIVE BIOGRAPHY THROUGH THEORETICAL, MATERIAL, AFFECTIVE, EMBODIED ASSEMBLAGES

Susanne Gannon and Bronwyn Davies

Collective biography has been a key research methodology in our work, developing in different directions and configurations over almost three decades. For both of us it has been a remarkably capacious methodology that has opened up many adventures in thought, and in doing research differently. For Bronwyn, this fascination began with the visit of Frigga Haug to Sydney. Inspired, she began to experiment with Haug's memory-work as a way of putting theory to work in the everyday. In the decade that followed, she ran a series of collective biography workshops with postgraduate students and colleagues. Susanne participated in almost all of those early workshops, bringing to them her interest in writing and in poststructural theory, which she then further developed in her doctoral research (Gannon 2001; Gannon 2003; Gannon and Müller-Rockstroh 2004a, 2004b, 2005). We worked closely together in that first decade of collective biography workshops and in writing the papers that emerged from them. Our partnership culminated in our two edited collective biography books (Davies and Gannon 2006, 2009). Since then we have both, separately, designed and led many collective biography workshops and published papers and books from them.[1]

  The practice of collective biography as we have developed it, draws on many of the parameters that Haug and her co-researchers outlined in their groundbreaking *Female Sexualisation* (1987). Haug worked with the same group of women over an extended period of time, drawing on earliest memories of their bodies. They were concerned by the absence of women in Marxist social theory[2]. Eschewing that theory as a guiding

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1   see bibliography available on www.collectivememorywork.net
2   In my discussions with her, Haug talked to me about her resistance to her
     male colleagues' commitment to a gender blind version of Marxist theory, and

force, given its concerted ignorance of women's lives, they began with their own memories of being, highlighting the materiality of their bodies. Their intention was emancipatory—to liberate themselves from the dominant discursive constructions of womanhood and girlhood that existed in (or were absent entirely from) Marxist theory. From the outset, then, they focused on materiality, not just the materiality of their own remembered girlhood bodies, but of the material settings in which their remembered stories had taken place. They brought material items to their workshops that would evoke details of those past places and times, mobilizing the senses of sight and smell and touch. They also examined texts and media and popular culture resources. The collective met regularly to do this work for almost two years.

When we began to engage in memory work, there were practical features of our situation that meant our research strategies must evolve quite differently. Bronwyn's masters and doctoral students, and many of the colleagues who joined in her workshops, lived far apart from each other, in different states in Australia, as well as in different countries, including New Guinea, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Germany. It was impossible to know, before travelling to the workshops, what items might become relevant to the memories we would work with. We gathered together, meeting face to face at most for a week, at the doctoral "residential schools" run by Bronwyn for her students and colleagues. Bronwyn drew on her research funds to rent a house on a nearby island so that we could immerse ourselves totally in the limited time we had together. In later years, five days shrank to three, as the increasing intensification of university work made setting aside even three days for research almost impossible.

In the mid 1990s, when our work began, Marxist theory was no longer a theoretical force that impacted on our thinking, so this was another point of difference from Haug's collective. We were, rather, inspired by poststructuralist theory which we had discovered through scholars such as Barthes, Butler, Foucault, Grosz and Walkerdine. Far from wanting to depart from theory, we were eager to grapple with theory itself, with its enlivening and radical possibilities, and to do so through working with our embodied memories.

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about the way in which she sometimes turned to Freud for lines of departure. BD

Using the concept of *memory* as the leading concept was also something we departed from. Insofar as the concept of memory evoked for the workshop participants, explicitly and implicitly, psychologisms such as the assumption of the primacy of individual identity and an understanding of the stories we told as being "data" that represented original events, "memory" got in the way of the work we set out to do. While Haug's collective worked against these psychologisms, we decided to call what we did collective biography, in order to make a more evident break with the dominant research paradigms of that time. At the same time, we retained strong references to Haug's memory-work. In her book, *Poststructuralist Theory and Classroom Practice* (1994), Bronwyn wrote, for example:

> Collective biography or 'memory work' ... is a strategy that can be used by any group of people struggling to relate feminist poststructuralist theory to the experience of being gendered... It involves the writing of autobiographical stories that are, in the first instance, autobiographical, but which become the basis of collective biographies—stories which encapsulate a truth for everyone in the group, and which have moved beyond a statement about the particular individual who wrote the story, to a revelation of the social and discursive processes through which we become individuals. As Barthes says of text:
>
> *Text means Tissue; but whereas hitherto we have always take this tissue as a product, a ready made veil, behind which lies, more or less hidden, meaning (truth), we are now emphasizing, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in this tissue—this texture—the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of it's web... (Barthes 1989: 64)*
>
> Haug's strategy is one in which the students/researchers can work to see the tissue, can spin the web of themselves and find themselves in the act of that spinning, in the process of making out of the cultural threads through which lives are made. They can examine the construction of their own biography as something at the same time experienced as

personal and their own—woven out of their own body/minds—and yet visibly made out of, even determined by, materials and practices not originating from them. (Davies 1994: 83-4)

Doing Collective Biography: Investigating the Production of Subjectivity

Our edited book, *Doing Collective Biography*, included papers we had written with different, overlapping collectives. We wrote in chapter 1 about the conceptual and practical limitations that had been dogging social science research:

> In the social sciences our practices are deeply rooted in realist traditions. It is now generally assumed that discourse plays a powerful part in shaping what we take to be real, and that 'the real' is a more or less powerful set of fictions, albeit fictions with powerful effects. There are nevertheless interesting debates about whether we can afford to let on to the general public that our knowledges are not absolute – that we are not able to provide authoritative truths in the way we once thought we could (see, for example, Parker 1998). The United States government went so far recently to legislate that what would count as (fundable) research would be research carried out in realist and positivist traditions favouring scientific and quantitative paradigms (see, for example, Lather 2004). (Davies and Gannon 2006: 2)

We described collective biography as a methodology that might transcend those limitations and we quote here at some length what we wrote:

> In collective biography a group of researchers works together on a particular topic, drawing on their own memories relevant to that topic, and through the shared work of telling, listening and writing, they move beyond the clichés and usual explanations to the point where the written memories come as close as they can make them to 'an embodied sense of what happened'. In working in this way

we do not take memory to be 'reliable' in the sense of providing an unquestionable facticity, nor do we take what initially surfaces as being truer, or more valid, than the texts that are worked and reworked in this approach. We take the talk around our memories, the listening to the detail of each other's memories, as a technology for enabling us to produce, through attention to the embodied sense of being in the remembered moment, a truth in relation to what cannot actually be recovered – the moment as it was lived. This is not a naive, naturalistic truth, but a truth that is worked on through a technology of telling, listening and writing. In a sense it is the very *unreliability* of memory that enables this close discursive work.

The truth that is accomplished in this process interests us, not as a means to generate knowledge about the individual self of each storyteller, but as a means to provide knowledge about the ways in which individuals are made social, are discursively constituted in particular fleshy moments. We do not seek totalizing truths but particular, local and situated truths. Our methodological question is not whether or not truth is found but what kind of truths are produced and through what technologies. In the projects of collective biography included in this book we have been particularly concerned to interrogate the materiality of our lived experience through the conceptual apparatus enabled by post-structuralist theory...

Our theoretical framework is post-structuralist, and we take this not to be a dogmatic framework that is in need of quarrelling with. Quite the reverse; it assists us in examining those thoughts and practices that are usually taken for granted, and usually assumed not to be in need of inspection. By making the ordinary objects and subjects of everyday life worthy of inspection, we can ask what the social conditions are that hold their apparent certainty in place. Foucault works with the questions that come up for him in his everyday life (in which he includes his work). And he says that: 'in order to establish the right relationship to the present – to things, to others, to oneself – one must stay

close to events, experience them, be willing to be effected and affected by them' (Rabinow 1997: xviii). The challenge of Foucault, Rabinow adds, 'is not to replace one certitude (*évidence*) with another but to cultivate an attention to the conditions under which things become "evident" ' and in becoming evident, cease to be 'objects of our attention', becoming instead 'seemingly fixed, necessary and unchangeable' (Rabinow 1997: xix). By developing imaginative strategies of being close to events, as though we are re-experiencing them, seeing how we are effected and affected by them, and telling and writing them in the ways we have developed here through collective biography, we create our own documentary materials through which we can search out the ways in which things were made evident, fixed and apparently unchangeable. Our stories, in showing the detail of our own collective enmeshment in that fixed world, set out to make it more fluid, more open to other possibilities...

 We should caution here that embodied practices of remembering and writing do not give some direct access to 'buried' moments. In producing memories that have sensual texture as if they are happening in the moment, collective biography evokes some resonance with, or even makes visible, some trace on the body of the unrecoverable 'real'. The practices of collective biography, in Grosz's (1995: 127) words, 'have effects, produce realignments, shake things up'. The discursive and material practices of collective biography can make visible, palpable, hearable, the constitutive effects of dominant discourses. And in working post-structurally, those effects, while understood as real, are not taken to be inevitable – we are not *determined* by those dominant discourses. In examining how discourse and practice work on us, we open both ourselves and discourse to the possibility of change. (Davies and Gannon 2006: 3-5)

In the foreword to the English translation of *Female Sexualisation*, Carter (1987: 13) emphasized the importance of this open-endedness of memory-work:

> [C]hoosing a theme connected with the body . . . and calling on members of the group to write down their memories of past events that focus on this physical area, . . . the stories are circulated amongst the group, discussed, reassessed and rewritten. The group searches for absences in the text, for its internal contradictions, for clichéd formulations covering knots of emotion or painful detail. Rewritten in the light of collective critique the final version becomes a finely textured account of the process of production of the sexualized female body.

In our own work we took up that open-endedness, shifting our theoretical focus from individual selves or identities to the emergent processes of selving:

> We are interested in our research to understand the processes of selving, rather than to discover particular details about individual selves. It verges on the paradoxical, we suggest, to require a detailed and loving attention to individual selves, and their memories, in order to arrive at new understandings that do not take as their central focus those individual selves. But it is a paradox we must live with in order to do this work. (Davies and Gannon 2006: 7)

The practical strategies we developed in our workshops, given our far-flung geographical locations, involved talking to each other via email and exchanging relevant readings prior to the workshop, getting to know each other, and working together to decide on the concept we would focus on. For our first week-long workshop we chose the concept of subjectification, working with our earliest embodied memories (Davies, Dormer et al. 2001). The pattern we developed was for each participant to tell their earliest memory relevant to our chosen topic. Sometimes participants arrived having retrieved no relevant memories, but very soon, as others told their stories, memories emerged and multiplied. Each participant was tasked with not only telling her or his story, but of listening carefully to the others' stories, attempting to viscerally imagine the spaces evoked in each other's memories. We found that taking note

of where we got lost, and could not imagine the moment, the movement, of the story we were listening to, there was very often a cliché that needed to be reworked.

When the time for telling and listening to everyone's stories was done, we each retreated into a quiet space to write our stories, mindful of the injunction to avoid clichés, explanations and moral judgements, both of self and other. Given that the vast majority of participants in our collective biography work have been women, the tendency to engage in negative self-judgement was one we have continually had to work against —even in recent work (for example, Thomson, Linnell et al. 2018).

In writing our memories we enjoined ourselves not to tell a never-ending story, as we were wont to do, explaining and justifying ourselves. Rather, we encouraged ourselves to focus on one or two discrete moments and, to flesh them out in as much embodied detail as possible. We coined the term 'mo(ve)ment' in order to evoke the doubled action of dwelling in and on particular *moments of being* (Woolf 1978), and of *movement, and becoming*.

The relationship between participants and the memories evoked and written in the workshop space was thus developed through a particular kind of close attention to each other's stories, which Bronwyn has called emergent listening (Davies 2014). Through listening and questioning each other on the remembered, embodied, affective and material detail, we worked toward each story becoming imaginable with-in the minds/bodies of everyone; memory resonating with the embodied memories and experiences of others in the group, not in a static way, such that each memory was fixed, but in a diffractive way. Often, listening to each other's stories, told and written and read out loud and discussed in a flow of conversation back and forth, new details of our own memories were enlivened, and that liveliness, or intense life-fullness, resonated through the group.

Participation in collective biography extends the capacity for emergent listening, and develops a new understanding and practice of relationality. At the same time, it partially undoes the inevitability of being constituted through those discourses imposed by others and taken up without conscious reflection in our own practices of everyday life. Haug had emphasized the importance of not being methodologically rule-bound, and encouraged experimentation with new ways of working. As we have developed the possibilities of collective biographies, and as our

theoretical interests have moved in new directions, we have incorporated various experiments in how to proceed, including drama, objects, and artmaking.

Haug recommended working from earliest memories, and that was a strategy that worked well for us. But we found, as did Haug and her co-researchers, that there were times when participants came to workshops bringing recent memories that were relevant to the topic we were working on. We realized, in responding to the urgency and energy of those recent memories, that the "earliest memory" of some of the topics we were exploring were indeed from yesterday. Adult memories, we found, could be as potent as childhood memories in the investigation of discursive regimes and rationalities.

After our workshops, and our subsequent dispersal to our home locations, our processes of working with our memory stories continued over time and at a distance. Having decided on what we would focus on in the paper we would write together, we made, before parting, a collaborative plan specifying who would begin by writing the first draft, and who would write each subsequent draft, working out a timetable for each of those draftings. We agreed on a limit of 6 months to completion, obliging each participant to work promptly and concertedly when it came to their turn. We worked out a collaborative ethics which included the ways we would take care of each other in this process, swapping turns in the face of unexpected events, for example, and passing our draft on to the next person on the agreed date. We also decided in advance who would take up the responsibility of moving the drafts along and of completing the paper and getting it ready for submission to an agreed-on journal. In that process we were quite methodical, knowing how easy it is for collaborative writing, especially when it is geographically dispersed, to fall by the wayside.

In general, however, like Haug and her colleagues, we resisted rigidifying method or providing prescriptive accounts of how collective biography should be done. Rather we sought fluidity of methodic practice so that we could be responsive to the particular collective, and to the inquiry at hand. Initially, Haug's words reminded us: 'there might well be no single, 'true' method that is alone appropriate to this kind of work. What we need is imagination... the very heterogeneity of everyday life demands similarly heterogeneous methods' (Haug et al. 1987: 70-71).

A significant feature of our memory-work, from the beginning, has been the distancing of our memories from the individual psychological self as the arbiter of experience. We have been interested in making visible those processes through which we come to recognize ourselves as coherent subjects, and the gaps, fictions and habits of thought and practice that sustain those figurations. Taking up a feminist poststructuralist approach to discourse, we were interested in the deconstruction of the binaries so prevalent in everyday thought: male/female, adult/child, rational/emotional, teacher/pupil, ability/disability, and so on.

Our critiques of individualism have been extended further as our theoretical influences have shifted towards feminist new materialisms. Our focus on materialities and affects have become more important, as we worked with embodiment, situatedness and the flow in-between human bodies, and between human bodies and the materialities of worlding. The agency of matter, our own and others', has become ever more relevant in its emergent intra-activity.

A task we have turned to more than once is the critique of the commodification of labour and of thought in academia. Those critiques, we realise, now, in writing this paper, need to be extended, as it is not just neoliberalised academic institutions that work on us and through us, but the multi-national corporations that have taken over the publishing industry, turning our academic labour and desires into a lucrative business. They can do that precisely because of the neoliberalisation of universities, which makes our individual and institutional survivability dependent on our ever-increasing productivity—productivity that depends on a great deal of unpaid labour, in effect slave labour, that turns a profit for big companies. One effect of this take-over has been that we were unable to include any of our previous papers in this Collective Memory Work Reader because of the prohibitive sums demanded from those corporations for the use of the products we had so freely given.

Feminist Poststructuralism

In the projects we gathered together in *Doing Collective Biography* (Davies and Gannon 2006), we drew on feminist poststructuralism, both for the conceptual resources that we put to work, and for the ways we approached analysis of our memories. Feminist poststructuralist analysis

enabled us to move beyond the dichotomies that underlie power, gender and social change. Feminist poststructuralism draws attention to discourse and to the discursive and regulatory practices that order the world. Although human subjects may be complicit in their own subjection, momentary possibilities for resistance and agency arise within the processes of close reflexive examination of everyday life. Memories of potent moments of lived experience, felt deeply in the body, are complex, layered, and partial, and are ideal materials for interrogating these processes and possibilities.

Feminist poststructuralist analysis seeks to transcend the individual/social divide and to find the ways in which the social worlds we inhabit, and the possibilities for existence within them, are actively spoken/written/ordered/legislated into existence. Processes of gendered subjectification are of particular interest to feminist poststructuralists. Our understandings of subjectification were informed, in particular, by theoretical resources we mobilised from the writings of Foucault and Butler. We drew on different tools from each of their extensive conceptual toolkits in a number of collective biography projects. We understood subjectification to mean the historically and culturally specific processes through which one is subjected to discursive regimes and regulatory frameworks through which gendered individuals and their social contexts are also, and through the same processes, constituted. In our collective biographies we worked to collaboratively bring these constitutive processes into visibility—and revisability.

In particular we examined binary logics of genders and sexualities. We examined how oppositions of masculine/ feminine structured our being and our thinking; we explored their fragilities, contingencies and inconsistencies. We delved into relations of power and the ways in which they are constituted and maintained. One side of the binary is accorded more power, and that dominant half is seen as normal, rational and natural, while the other subordinate term is construed as its opposite, and therefore as lacking in those qualities. This attention to binary oppositions, and commitment to their interrogation, is a key tenet and practice of feminist poststructuralism. Through examining the ways the social came to be inscribed on the individual, and by calling into question the coherence and continuity of the individual in the essentializing terms of the humanist theories that our work was pushing against, we aimed to explore how power works not just to force us into particular ways of

being but to make those ways of being desirable such that we actively take them up as our own.

Butler's attention to the simultaneity of 'mastery' and 'submission' was very helpful in one of our earliest collective biographies, where we looked at gendered subjectification with/in various regimes of power and authority in the lives of schoolgirls (Davies, Dormer et al. 2001).

One of the moments of being we explored took place in a first-grade classroom. We wrote (Davies and Gannon 2006: 22-4):

> Butler argues that: 'Subjection exploits the desire for existence, where existence is always conferred from elsewhere; it marks a primary vulnerability to the Other in order to be' (1997: 20–21). In marked contrast to Butler's position humanist discourses, which are the dominant constitutive discourses in schools, locate existence 'inside' the individual. People are who they are either because they choose to be so, or because of their biological/social/economic inheritance – or some combination of both. What is generally not visible to teachers who understand themselves and their students in terms of the humanist model, is that choice stems not so much from the individual, but from the conditions of possibility – the discourses which prescribe not only what is desirable, but what is recognizable as an acceptable form of subjectivity (Laws and Davies 2000). Modern forms of schooling are understood, in humanist terms, as not shaping through coercion, but through the subject taking up for herself the desire to be appropriate. What our stories show is the implicit coercion in this benign process of shaping schoolgirls. The girl child desires the teacher's approving gaze, works hard to achieve it, and is always at risk in doing so. The 'individual', and, by extension, individuality, is taken to be highly valued within humanist discourses, yet the girl student who innovates, and in so doing challenges established practice, may always be subject to immediate correction and control:
>
> *I copied the sums off the board, ruled two straight lines underneath for the answers. I worked out the answers and*

wrote them neatly and correctly between the two straight lines. I looked up, pleased with being in school where teachers actually noticed if you did things well. Everyone else was still working. I glanced in the new teacher's direction to see if she had noticed that I had finished. She had not. I looked back at the page, at my neat answers. I saw how I could make them even better. With ruler and pencil I joined up the two straight lines to make a box for the answers. Careful, laborious. I wondered what comment she would make about these interesting boxes. Finally, when we were all finished, she told us we could line up at her desk to have our work marked. Without a word, she put a cross beside each of my sums and told me to do them again. I stared with disbelief at my page. I went back to my desk, and checked the sums. They were still correct. Confused, I asked permission to come out again to her desk. Politely, I told her I couldn't find how they were wrong. She looked for some time at the page. Then pointing to the lines I had added, she said, 'I thought they were ones. Rub them out'. But they could not be mistaken for ones! She was lying! Silently, I went back to my desk, and rubbed out the lines. It looked messy. I hated her. I longed for my real teacher to come back – the one who knew who I was.

This schoolgirl dared to innovate, because she knew she had achieved the signifiers of good student: she was obedient, quick and her answers were both correct and neat. These signifiers of good student gave her room for movement with her regular teacher. The error of judgement that she made here was to assume that a new teacher would be able and willing to read these signifiers, and to accord her the space to engage in pleasurable deviation – a deviation that quietly and unobtrusively filled the space while everyone else finished. The failure of recognition on the part of the new teacher, generated a longing for the teacher who did recognize her as correctly signifying 'good student' and who accorded her spaces for autonomy. Her longing for her regular teacher is accompanied by an emotional rejection of

her present teacher's authority *at the same time as* she obeys her commands.

  ... At the same time as she is the subordinated Other in the male–female binary, the teacher is the One in whom power is invested in the discursively constituted teacher–student binary (Davies 2000). It is the teacher who, within the discourses of schooling-as-usual, is constituted as the one with authority, who determines what will be counted as 'reason', who has knowledge and the 'objective' capacity to recognize the 'nature' of the students. It is she who will confer the rewards of schooling – not only the ability to read, write and count – but also the possibility of being – in particular of being recognizably a 'good' subject, recognizably desirable in the conditions and enabling limits of the school setting. It is the teacher's power to recognize and to constitute as desirable, and it is also sometimes her youth, her beauty and her benevolence that makes the schoolgirl 'love her'. As Erica McWilliam (1996: 374) observes, many of the conditions, contexts and practices of gender difference are held in place by the politics of desire: "an elating and elated teaching body is often the sight/site out of which future scholars are propelled into an on-going love affair with their disciplines . . . the body of the teacher is crucial inasmuch as it performs what it looks like to have a love affair with a body of knowledge and this performance is enacted and observed as erotic, a manifestation of desire which is necessarily ambiguous and duplicitous . . ." The schoolgirl's desire to occupy the ascendant subject position of good, desirable 'student' shapes her body and her perception into a conscious performance of conformity.

Agency, we argued, is always contingent on discursive formations. Through working in this way with our memories we came to see agency as the capacity to recognize that constitution as historically specific and socially regulated, and, thus, as able to be called into question. Feminist poststructuralist research is focused on the possibility of moving beyond what is already known and understood. Its task is not to document

difference, but to multiply possibilities, and de-massify ways of thinking – to understand power as discursively constituted.

The feminist poststructuralist analysis that we brought to collective biography meant we did not identify our memory stories as transparent evidence of what had been real in another space-time. Rather, gendered subjects exist or emerge at the points of intersection of multiple discursive practices; the individual is not fixed but shifts locations or positions within those discourses including the discourses we mobilized in our work together. This understanding is central to the fluidity and multiplicity of subjectivities that is central to feminist poststructuralist thinking about change and agency. Gendered experience is likewise understood as being constituted through multiple discourses, producing ambivalence and contradiction.

The memory stories aim to work into those contradictions, oppositions and multiplicities and to trace and disrupt the strategies, tactics and techniques of power. In analysing them, we produce lines of flight that produce new realities, new personal and collective understandings of the way discourse works on us and through us, historically, to produce us as certain kinds of subjects.

The philosophical provocations and dynamism of the work of Gilles Deleuze, and feminist postsructuralists inspired by him became increasingly important to our work. Collective biography investigations of relations and pedagogies of place (Davies and Gannon 2009) and girlhood (Gonick and Gannon 2014) provided extended opportunities for us to delve into the implications of experimental and practical empiricism. We began to think more affirmatively and generatively about the immense energy and vitality of dynamic notions of becoming, and more overtly about affects, ethics and relationalities. We could experiment with conceptual tools including lines of flight and deterritorializations that offered more energetic analytical possibilities, and provoked the generation of new concepts. We did not see Deleuzian thinking as superseding our earlier theoretical interests but rather as offering alternatives and adding to our conceptual apparatus. At times we made direct analytical comparisons, plugging Foucault, Butler and Deleuze in to three movements of a collective biography story to demonstrate what receded and came into sight when we worked with each of these scholars (Gonick and Gannon 2014, Chapter 2). Deleuzian thinking provoked us to work intentionally with affective flows and forces that emerged from our

memory stories and the processes we developed to work with them and with each other in collective biography workshops.

Artmaking and other in(ter)ventions in collective biography: playing with Deleuze

Art making and experiments with other modes of creativity became more important as a way of intensifying and enhancing affective flows amongst the group beyond the limits of language, through mobilizing sensation and imagination. We had always understood that art making enabled the exploration of different ways of thinking, reinventing and reassembling the memories, and of working with emergent lines of flight in memory stories. We began to work more intentionally with the expertise of artmakers and practitioners in our workshops, who were participants or guest facilitators for a section of the work. In our place pedagogies research, we undertook a day in the art class as a way of moving beyond linearity in the memory stories we had been working with, layering them with a deeper focus on sensation, intensities, and unknowing, deepening our strategies of attention and our vulnerabilities (Davies and Gannon 2009). In our investigations of places of learning, Susanne had written about her first experiences as a high school teacher in an Aboriginal school (See Chapter 4 of Davies and Gannon 2009; Gannon 2011). The art workshop provided a different entry point to the experience, and an opportunity to multiply perspectives, to tell a parallel story that was not propelled by narrative temporality. Materials became agentic in opening and closing potentialities. This is how she first wrote about the process of art-making:

> I had brought in photographs from that time, on the other side of the country when I was very young. I had also brought in four pages of thin yellowed paper, typed more than twenty years ago with class lists of names and places, headed: "Where they come from". These gave me quite a shaky start. I was constrained by the literal qualities of the real names and faces, including myself then, in these artifacts. I could have written detailed descriptions of many of these kids and episodes I remembered from when I was there with them. I had already begun to do this in the story I

had written. But I didn't want to do more of this sort of analysis. Until now, I had never written about that time. Yet it had a profound effect and shaped me as a teacher (and a person) in ways that have never been easy to articulate. The physicality of these memories astounds me—children leaning on me, touching me, dark brown skin against skin, suddenly made irrevocably white in this place. What the story told was my separation from, and difference from these kids. That story inscribed a series of binaries which kept us apart: they are students, I am teacher; they are black, I am white; they speak language, I speak English; they sit, I stand; they have trachoma, I do not.

What the photos tell me is how we were together. Many of them have my earlier self in the middle of groups of children sitting around in different locations in the school. Others are of wall displays in the "Language" classroom where I worked alongside a Christian Brother monk and an Aboriginal teaching aide from one of the communities from which the children come. In the art workshop I look over the yellowed list I had forgotten I still had. The work I do with these traces of the past in the space of the art workshop helps me to be in two places at once, to take up two positions at the same time. In the story I wrote, I have taken myself up as "she", though in my talk here and there around the story, I write in the first person as "I". Through the further work I do in the art workshop, my work with the images, the slippage between "me" and "she" that erupts through my language no longer seems aberrant, but inevitable and even natural.

In the art workshop I begin to be loosened from the literal truth of the photographic image, and of memory as veridical truth, when I start to mask the image rather than to elaborate upon it. I blow up each of the photos on a color copier. One of them is of a cave painting from the inland Kimberley. I ignore the two ancestral Wandjina figures that were the main subject of the photograph and instead wrap and glue the other half of the image across a small canvas. This is the background to the photo, the wall of the cave. It is covered with paint, layers and layers of ochres of different

shades. I can just see the outlines of hands, and a small white ghost image amongst all the fragments of other colors. I paint over it, dab by dab, with a small brush, my new teachers Alicia and Jade showing me how to mix the colors that I need. When the wall—itself already layers and layers of other people's loving labor over centuries—is entirely covered over by my own work, in shades that ghost what is underneath, I glue on a tiny cut-out image of myself sitting in the bottom left hand corner. In the original photograph this figure was sitting amongst a group of students, looking relaxed and completely immersed in the experience of being there, and in the cluster of bodies that surrounded her. They too are ghosts in the new image. The teacher's body still inclines towards them. She is still smiling at something one of them has said.

In the top right hand corner I draw a fish freehand in ink with a fine black pen copying it closely from one of the posters from the Language classroom. The photograph shows that the pinboards that surround the classroom have been divided by strips of paper into panels for each language group. Each panel carries small posters of words and images drawn by students. This fish comes from the Kija language, from Turkey Creek (now called Warmun community). The name of the fish in that language is "kuntaril". The long sweep down to his eyes and mouth suggest that he might be a freshwater barramundi—she caught them too when she lived there—but now I am not so sure and I cannot draw as accurately as the children. I copy this carefully from the poster in the photo and seal it all over with shellac which gives it a golden glow.

In this work the young teacher is part of the place, rather than separate from it. She was part of an endeavor to bring what these kids knew into the classroom and to value it. The subtlety of this image provides me with a new means of generalizing about that experience of being there—one that does not flatten out the detail but foregrounds one or two specific elements to represent it. The fish—kuntaril— operates as a sort of metonym. I draw the fish because he is

the most identifiable poster on the wall but he says something more as well about the young woman who finds herself there. Most crudely she might be a fish out of water in some ways but she is also immersed. The strangeness on my tongue now of kuntaril, reminds me that my place there was earned partly by my knowledge of language then. I had recently completed studies in Aboriginal linguistics in the final year of my undergraduate degree. The young woman in the image was not immune to the magic of language and this extraordinary place. In the art work I created, she is also part of the wall of the cave, with the white ghost haunting the underlayers of paint and shellac. (Davies and Gannon 2009: 115-118; images from this workshop are reproduced in Gannon 2008)

This detailed description traces the practices and processes of thinking with materials, of how materials themselves led thinking in different and more subtle directions that were not available to the author when she just worked with words. The memory is differently refracted (or as we have come to understand more recently – diffracted) by the stuff to hand to think with – shellac, paper, glue, pens, photographs, scissors – external to her body, prostheses for memories that thicken up and turn through the creative processes. This sort of slow deliberation and documentation of the decisions made moment by moment as a memory is realised in a visual form seemed to be important, just as it is important to document processes in collective biography telling/listening/writing workshops. The day in the art class was also a collective experience with each participant working with materials and memories. Each of us moving through and around each other's experimentations with materials and ideas, being inspired by and borrowing techniques, like metaphors, images and affects which may resonate through the stories we share in workshops.

  In artmaking experiments such as the one we have described, there is an implicit tension in making works about our own stories while in a space together with others. Despite cross-fertilisation, the artworks remained discrete and separate. Another response is to aim for a multiplication and proliferation of images, through working collaboratively and simultaneously on the same large image/text. In a workshop in Ammerdown (UK), aimed at interrogating subjectivities, discourses and

materialities of academic writing, Susanne experienced this sort of artmaking experiment. Although we all contributed memories, there were so many artists in the group that images began to overwhelm the stories, with the colour red becoming an overriding motif that pushed memories, fantasies and collective inquiry together in a sort of experimental 'intra-action' with materials (Gale, Gallant et al. 2013). The point of all these experiments is to see how far we can go, to mobilise all the resources that we can access to further our inquiries in the particular configurations and arrangements of each collective biography project.

The final creative experiment we will discuss in this section was an endeavour to intensify the collective inquiry and loosen our initial passionate attachments to our own stories, through a series of deterritorializing 'in(ter)ventions' (Gonick and Gannon 2014). These were developed in a workshop with Marnina Gonick and colleagues in Nova Scotia, Canada, where we spent a week together exploring the implications of the theoretical work of Deleuze on girlhood studies. We worked with a Boalian theatre practitioner to embody, extend and interrogate fragments from memories, juxtaposing them in novel ways enabling us to see the limits of the discursive and the conceptual (Byers, Gannon et al. 2014). We mobilized sensation, force, and intensity, by opening spaces where what could be imagined and felt extended outside the boundaries of our 'selves', our memories, our physical bodies and the written texts. We experimented further with textual interventions and activating imagination within the discursive frames of our memories, by experimenting with rewriting memory stories from the points of view of others within the scene (Gannon, Walsh, et al. 2012). This was, in Deleuzian terms, what we called a strategy of deterritorialization. Notably, Haug's original outline of memory work recommended attending to points of view, interests, and motives of others when participants revise their own memory stories (1987: 70). We took this much further by rewriting each other's stories from the imagined perspectives of another character within the memory. That is, we wrote new texts that sat alongside the original, that opened it out through the writing intervention. We described the effects of this strategy as:

> Intervening in another's text directly, taking up her memory
> and writing into it imaginatively, unhinged the writer from
> her text and allowed us to recast what subject, text, and

body/embodiment might mean in this work. Our strategies of deterritorializing the texts precluded this slippage into an individualized, psychological, linear or chronological subject. The experiences of misrecognition—of loosening the self from the story—had a powerful effect. In a Deleuzo-Guattarian sense, collective biography undoes subjectivity and disrupts temporality... enabling a shared sense of being/becoming that resonates with what Deleuze and Guattari would describe as a nomadic subjectivity: an exteriorizing of feeling so that it is no longer locked in a closed system (i.e. a subject who has feelings) but a powerful affect, multiple intensities within the pack...

Our work with art-based in(ter)ventions interrupted the limits of the discursive and the conceptual by mobilizing sensation, force and intensity, opening up spaces where we can imagine and feel outside the boundaries of our "selves," our memories, physical bodies, and also, more literally, the texts we wrote, individually, during the workshop. In doing so, we work across the body, not as an individual body, but, in Deleuzo-Guattarian terms, as a relational body, one that is affected by and affects other bodies. Against an understanding of bodies as discrete entities with proprietary histories, memories, and sensory perceptions, we intervene in texts as a way to explore bodies as "relational becomings" (Coleman 2008: 168). Memories become processes that are collective/multiple rather than individual—in space and time —through our imbrication with other bodies, subjects, and texts (Gannon, Walsh, Byers, Rajiva 2012: 185-188).

Our experimentations with form and methodic practice in collective biography have continued in each of our configurations, as we deploy images along with text, and where we creatively play with multiplicity to provoke affects and relations.

Recognition and difference

In the collective biographies conducted in Ghent, in Belgium, in which we focused on recognition and difference, our earlier work drew on Butler

(1997), and on Shildrick (2002), then later, taking a new materialist turn, drawing inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Barad (2003, 2007, 2014) and Bennett (2010). Similar to Susanne's innovation (Gannon, Walsh et al. 2012), we experimented with telling stories from more than one point of view. In this we were inspired by Barad's theorizing of the "mutual constitution of entangled agencies" (2007: 33). We illustrate this here with one of the Ghent collective's stories published in a paper we called "Recognition and difference"; it includes both the schoolgirl's perspective and her mother's:

> *Best all-round girl in the school*
>
> *Best all-round girl in the school. She walks with straight back, her shoulders square, white dress spotless, black shoes shining, and her knees shaking, up each step to the stage of the great hall, where the bishop in his purple robes stands waiting for her. He has just spoken to the assembled girls and their parents about what dreams they might have for their lives, what responsibilities. Her best friend wants to be a lady with a baby but she longs for womanliness and wisdom. Breaking into her thought comes the burst of applause, louder and going on much longer than usual. They love her, these girls. She feels amazed by that. The bishop stoops toward her with a smile, and shakes her hand. He gives her a small book covered in red leather embossed in gold, and tied together with another.*
>
> * Her mother too has dressed in white for the occasion. They meet afterwards on the front steps of the great hall and the drive home is in silence. At home her mother still remains silent. She thinks, plaintively, "don't you think this was special?" but she knows not to say it. She can't ask for attention to herself. She must not appear to think she is more clever than her older sister or her brother who has never passed a test in his life. Then she hears herself saying as she puts away the dishes, her back turned to her mother, "It's a bit disappointing to get such a prize, to be just sort of good at everything and not especially good at anything." "I know how you feel," her mother says in that familiar soft voice*

tinged with longing. "I was the same. I always wished I was especially good at something." The silence returns.

The girl is recognized by the authorities and by the other students, but she is vulnerable to her mother's silence. The moment in the Hall is part of a citational chain. Each year she has received a prize. Its repetition makes it unremarkable. It is what everyone has come to expect. In this sense this moment can be expected to mean nothing new. Yet the girl, now a woman, remembers it with a great deal of emotion as a moment of emergent difference. She repeats more than once to the others in the workshop that she is not like her mother. What continues to animate her, to send power surging through her body in rebellion, is the citational chain in which her parents had constantly reiterated that she was like her mother. The mother's certainty that they are alike, and her inability to imagine that her daughter is taking another line, could be seen as a negation to which the daughter is vulnerable. But also the girl can be seen as taking up a line of flight in which the energy of enduring life is held very certainly in her body.

At home in the kitchen, the mother had not heard the curious self-negation in the daughter's words. She heard a longing that could never be fulfilled and an affirmation of their similarity. The daughter's words, for the mother, are lodged in the citational chain that tells of that similarity. She acknowledges her daughter's longing for something more but thinks that since they are the same this will never be acted on. The mother continues to long and not act on her longing throughout her life. She is caught in citational chains she does not want to break. How might this story be told from the mother's point of view? What is it that the daughter cannot hear as she tells the story of entangled agencies and repeated moments that work to hold her mother into a life that she longs to leave?

Prize giving day. The mother sighs. She must dress conservatively enough yet smartly enough that her daughter will not be ashamed of her in front of the other girls. She must sit through all those boring speeches among people she

does not know in that stuffy Hall. No other members of the family will be there. Still she must go. The mother chooses just like her daughter a plain white dress. She hopes she will fit in with the other parents. Now sitting in the Hall she waits a long time for her daughter to finally go up and get her prize. As her daughter walks up the stairs the mother feels a dangerous swell of pride, her heart beating fast. But she rejects that pride. Her daughter is only a country girl. Just like her. Wanting more is dangerous. The bishop shakes her daughter's hand and she curtsies to the bishop. Good. All is as it should be. It's almost over. They drive home in companionable silence, the girl looking at the new books she's got. She tells her daughter regretfully of the golf match she has missed in order to come to the ceremony. She might get the championship again this year.

* As her daughter unpacks the dishwasher she says how frustrating it is to be more or less good at everything but not especially good at anything. The mother feels affection for this girl, so like her, and she tells her, sympathetically, that she understands. She too had longed to excel.*

  The mother's moment of swelling pride is quickly damped down. There is too much at risk. She is locked into a citational chain that makes her daughter's success and her pride in that success feel dangerous. She too wants to excel at her golf, but that does not exceed or spill her out from the safely circumscribed life of women in the country town they live in. At home in the kitchen, she affirms once more her daughter's similarity to her. She will repeat her mother's life and thus affirm the choices she has made. Her husband disapproves of singling one child out, or putting one above the other. As a good wife she willingly supports his view. (Davies, De Schauwer et al. 2013: 687-688)

This process of collectively imagining our way into the perspective of the other in our stories was astonishing, both in relation to what emerged, and to the impact it could have on the initial story.

  Here, the girl, now a woman, tells her own story, as she remembers it, still holding close to herself the grievance she felt at her mother's failure

to recognize her. In re-telling the story from her mother's point of view, however, the girl re-encounters the social order that made her mother's world safe and predictable. There had been no mention of the awards or the gold-embossed books at the dinner table that night, which the girl, now a woman, had, until now, forgotten. Since the girl's siblings had not won similar prizes, hers were not mentioned. The social order, in which the wife obeyed the husband, and the children followed familiar family patterns, held the mother's social world in place, quelling momentary flashes of desire that it could be otherwise. Whereas the story from the girl's point of view had been focused on herself, as a particular individual in want of recognition, the story from the mother's point of view brings back into focus the social order of rural 1950s, with their patterns of subjection and the small lines of flight that brought them into focus and sometimes shifted them.

When we began the work of re-membering the story from the other's point of view in our remembered stories, we drew on the strategies we had learned in participating in collective biographies, of embodied remembering. As well, we actively drew on the emergent listening that took place within the workshop, through which others' stories and comments and emotional responses could be brought to bear on the process of remembering differently. In this way, discovering what we knew, but didn't know we knew, we were, within the collaborative work of the collective biography workshop, able to move between a) a rendition of a story as a melancholy, Butlerian individualized subjection to discourses we did not choose, with the associated affect of grievance, and b) the more mobile and generous rendering of subjection as an ongoing "mutual constitution of entangled agencies", agencies that were not just the province of individual subjects, but of collectivities, of histories, of discourses and things (Barad 2007: 33).

Telling the stories from two points of view did not blot out the first, but made more vividly evident the desire that lived in those stories and informed the sense of self of the story-teller. The second story enriched the first, and offered a broader canvas for the work of exploring how lives are made.

A new strategy we developed in these Ghent workshops, was to write what we called "after-thoughts" to our stories. After a day spent in intense, sympathetic engagement with each other, telling our stories and deeply engaging in each other's stories—interspersed with cooking and

eating together, a great deal of laughter, and frequent tears provoked in moments of recognition (Davies 2021: 88)—we each moved into a separate space where we could re-write each of our stories in light of new details that had emerged in our talk during the day. Following the re-writing of each story we would write down our afterthoughts, drawing on whatever concepts from our preparatory readings that might fruitfully be brought to co-mingle with each story, making new aspects of our stories, and the processes we were examining, visible.

  At the beginning of each day, we read out loud our re-written stories, along with our after-thoughts, thus leading into new discussions, new tears, new capacities for sympathy, and new theoretical insights. In those discussions we also sought to make visible to ourselves the ways our stories became entangled with each other's stories, not in a way that distorted but, rather, intensifying the very specificity of each remembered moment. What emerged in our after-thoughts was that:

> ... as we told our stories of recognition and non-recognition ... any one remembered moment was never one or the other, recognition or non-recognition. There was much more *and* than *or*. Yet as the memories unfolded into the space of listening, we became vividly aware of the way each remembered moment, and the citational chains it was embedded in, had (and still) locked us into an affective commitment to who we took ourselves to be. There was no disentangling ourselves from those commitments even while we recognized other competing chains that were equally, if not more, compelling. Our stories linked over time, not in a linear way, but in multi-directional layers. There were times in the story-telling and reading when the capture in the present moment was palpable, with tears flowing, hands shaking, or voice trembling. The citational chains, as we explored them, were normative, producing a generic subject specific to that time and that place, and at the same time ontologically quite specific – lived out in and on the desiring and passionate body of each storyteller (past and present) as if she were unique. The more we moved into the detail of that specificity of each story-teller we found we had arrived, paradoxically, at an intimate sense of what it is to be human

that belonged to all of us, and that was affirmative and enlivening for all of us. Our challenge was to find a way of making sense of this doubled movement that seemed to require that we combine a Butlerian/Foucauldian analysis with a Deleuzian/Baradian one. (Davies, De Schauwer et al. 2013: 684-5)

Afterthoughts

Collective biography is a capacious and versatile methodology that can be taken up by collectives of people interested in investigating how a problem materializes in everyday life and how its logics and assumptions might be loosened. Often our work has been driven by the theoretical ideas that we have been wanting to understand not just as philosophical abstractions, but as ethico-onto-epistemologies, that is, as mobilizing an ethics that is intra-active and responsive. That ethics is not separate from our research, or from our lives, but informing them at every turn—in each emergent moment, recognizing ourselves and the others (human and non-human) that we depend on for our existence. An ethics, furthermore, that is not pre-determined through an intractable set of institutional rules, but that diffracts with all the materialities and epistemologies at play, at each moment in our lives and in our work.

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STRUGGLING FOR COHERENCE: TOWARDS A THEORY OF MEMORY-WORK AS FEMINIST PRAXIS

Frigga Haug

Of the numerous suggestions by classical Marxists that accompanied my life as compass and signposts there are at least two that similarly challenged me with the necessary urgency to constantly continue my work, albeit that at first sight they seem incompatible. One comes from Marx' *Theses on Feuerbach*, this underused resource of compact suggestions for research on one-and-a-half pages. Every time you look at it, it sheds a light on something new, reminds of something unresolved, and puts it into focus as important: From there I obtained the task to think of the coincidence of changing circumstances and self-changing as revolutionary practice. Another sentence by Marx - in the *18th Brumaire* - reassured me: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past." Rosa Luxemburg takes up this thought and puts emphasis on the first part of the sentence: the act. Men do it themselves. Hence, in the development of a method for groups of politically active women that includes their established personalities as a matter of research I started from the premise that this praxis is necessarily a political and at the same time an individual act. What was to be found out was, what in the social ensemble of their possibilities they had not put into effect, what capacities they had left lying idle.

  In Marx's fourth thesis he concludes that "the cleavages and contradictions within the secular basis" of the religious world have to lead not only into critique of theory, but turn this critique into praxis as well. In our case[1] this meant "for instance, after the earthly family is discovered to

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[1] I am changing from 'I' to 'We' in line with my approach to first present my thoughts, then report about the praxes the group adopted to whom I addressed them.

be the secret of the holy family", to fight against the patriarchal family as a form of praxis. We thought of politics for a new and different distribution of labour. The children assigned to us were to land on the desks of the fathers. But for all our radical thoughts we were unable to overcome the emotional barriers that stopped us from putting our demands into practice. In short: We experienced the "cleavages" and the practical "contradictions" not only as a method of understanding and critique of circumstances, but also as immediate pressure to render ourselves coherent, to bring our emotions and our reason together in a way that would increase our capacity for action.

The other proposition that I discovered in Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, this other great collection of suggestions and ways for understanding that urge us to continue our work, made me aware of the problem that the personalities are themselves "strangely composite". If we settle for the mindlessly adopted mélange of "Stone Age elements and principles of a more advanced science", of "prejudices from all past phases of history at the local level and intuitions of a future philosophy which will be that of a human race united the world over" we merely "belong simultaneously to a multiplicity of mass human groups." Gramsci provides the analysis and in a few sentences he drafts a program for complete change:

> When one's conception of the world is not critical and coherent but disjointed and episodic, one belongs simultaneously to a multiplicity of mass human groups. (...) To criticise one's own conception of the world means therefore to make it a coherent unity and to raise it to the level reached by the most advanced thought in the world. It therefore also means criticism of all previous philosophy, in so far as this has left stratified deposits in popular philosophy. The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces (...). (Gramsci, 1971, 324)

Gramsci's program responds to a deficiency, thus it expresses a vital requirement for a political group and movement: Men are not in a

position to productively start on the spot the journey to self-changing by way of "changing of circumstances". Prior to that there has to be a turn-around program of research and self-development.

These were the thoughts on which I - fairly excited - based a provocative intervention into the growing women's movement of the 1980s. It became known as the *victim-culprit-thesis* and it triggered protest and outrage, but most notably a lot of approval. In confident recourse on Marx, and contrary to the lamenting discourse that stood at the start of the women's movement, I branded as silly the assumption that women are simply victims of their men and/or the circumstances; because it basically excludes all women from being human. If we take it that men make their history themselves, this has to apply similarly to women. In our legitimate partisanship for the female sex, in protest against their marginalisation and oppression, we therefore would have to assume that in their own praxes they step by step consented to their social positioning. I wrote, "[b]eing a victim is also an action, not a destiny" and concluded: it is not in the first instance male dominance, the patriarchy, that needs to be investigated, it is rather the societalisation of women, their practical consent for their positioning, the process of becoming woman and their own acting in this process. As Peter Weiss, a great Marxist thinker and poet, said: "Liberation cannot be handed to us, we have to conquer it ourselves. If we fail to conquer it ourselves, it will have no consequences for us."[2]

The organisations of the labour movement based their politics concerning gender relations – in simple terms – on the view that the (against all appearances: imagined as male) proletariat would first liberate itself, and then liberate the women. Just as it is possible to derive such ideas from the language used in the *Communist Manifesto* in 1847. I was determined in my objection to that view, again building on the *Theses on Feuerbach*. Rather than dividing society into guardians on the one side who from on high educate the minors on the other side, "the coincidence

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2   This idea was formulated by Marx 1864 in the *Address and Provisional Rules of the Working Men's International Association* (MEW 16, S. 14), picked up by Lenin (LW 9, 15), and by Brecht in the *United Front* song, because "It's nobody's work but the workers' own to set the worker free", included in the *Aesthetics of resistance* by Peter Weiss (Band I, 226): "die Befreiung kann uns nicht gegeben werden, wir müssen sie selbst erobern." Volker Braun brought it into the general form: "If we don't free ourselves, it remains without consequences for us." (*Die Übergangsgesellschaft*, Berlin 1990).

of the changing of circumstances and of human activity" can only be achieved in form of "self-changing" of the subjects and thus "be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*."

  Applying this proposition to the situation of women brought me into a peculiar situation: On the one hand I was expelled and isolated from my previous (at least as I assumed) belonging to the labour movement. On the other hand I experienced massive international affirmation from women. The latter encouraged me in years onwards to successfully initiate coalitions of women, the latest being the international Marxist-Feminist conferences that are held bi-annually since 2015 (with the 2021 conference in Bilbao unfortunately curtailed to zoom-meetings).

  In earlier years I was already engaged in labour research and had founded a group that worked for more than ten years on questions of effects of automation of work processes. This had led to the conclusion that the new demands on the working subjects were to also be seized as a chance, a challenge for trade union politics[3]. On a surface level the two projects seemed to have little in common, but they were connected by a similar logic of politics: the critical engagement with the lamenting discourse. The question that arises when reading Engels' work on *The Conditions of the Working Class in England* (whose reports also determined Marx' descriptions in *Capital*) is similar to the one in relation to the lament over women's situation in society: How can such a disadvantaged and oppressed group whose "all-sided development" is restrained at the same time carry our hopes for revolutionising social relations? If we try Marx on this: His thinking is neither deterministic nor linear. He thinks in a *logic of crises and cleavages*. Progressive change is derived from old forms, overcoming of barriers, acting out contradiction. This allows for describing the misery in the factory and yet see it as basis for a generalisation and therefore a precondition for a higher form of polytechnic Bildung[4] and society, and consequently pointing towards the perspective of all-sided development of the labourers.

  The situation of the women and my commitment to women's liberation needed a similar method: it was necessary to find out what potential for a liberated society the praxes assigned to the women held. As a theorist I

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3   See the publications of the Project Automation and Qualification (PAQ) collected in *Widersprüche der Automationsarbeit*, 1987.

4   Note on translation: The German term "Bildung" is not translated here for its wider scope than, e.g. education, training, instruction, or learning. It includes the idea of (self-)formation, cultivation.

also had to look for explanations for the consent of the female sex during the manifold steps into life in spite of all marginalisation and oppression, and for the lack of resistance as a liberating praxis. The matter of research had to be the culture of everyday life and its contradictions, the solutions that individuals find, the theories and structures provided by popular culture for the female sex, and eventually what the sciences had produced for their critical sublation on a higher level.

   The departure of the women called for a method that made it possible to study how women consent to become part of society in the forms ascribed to them. This was the start of *Collective Memory-Work*: a method that allows the women to speak from a position as experts of their own situation and biography, and at the same time transform what is said from the level of chance and arbitrariness into a joint learning process based on the contradictions of everyday life. And following the *Theses on Feuerbach* this process is to be done collectively.[5] Most of the memory-work groups in which I took part developed a collective self-conception as political subjects. The participants began to intervene accordingly, for instance in women's politics, educational politics, teacher training, programmatic discussions of left wing party politics, trade union activism, even in liberation theology.

The Politics of the Cultural: Continuing to Learn from Antonio Gramsci

First to bring into the picture here is Antonio Labriola who deciphered the source code of Marxist Theory as "philosophy of praxis". Like Marx in the *Theses on Feuerbach* he suggests to take the real praxis of men as starting point. Although he is one of the founders of Marxism, for a long time he was not mentioned in the institutionalised Marxist doctrine that developed around an understanding of eternal principles, rules, laws applicable to everyone for all times, instead of change, development and pulsating life. We had not heard of him either.[6] We came to adopt him in the socialist women's group only when we engaged with his posthumous student Antonio Gramsci whose *Prison Notebooks* were published in a German translation in 10 volumes by the Argument Verlag between 1991 and 2002, years after we had started our *Collective Memory-Work* in the

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5 See also: F. Haug, *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Erinnerungsarbeit* (Berlin Hamburg, 1999) and the nine volumes of *Frauenformen*

6 See: W.F. Haug, *Zur Neuausgabe von Antonio Labriolas >Drei Versuchen<*. Einleitung, Berlin 2018

1980s. Studying the *Prison Notebooks* brings important insights about individual development and change. The impactful paragraph for *Memory-Work* is found in the first note in the *Preliminary Points of Reference* to *The Study of Philosophy* (see above).

When I read this entry on the strangely composite personality it seemed to be exactly the missing key for a theory and practice – a manual, even a calling – of *Memory-Work* as I practised it together with others for a number of years already. We had developed it on the basis of our own experiences, starting with the theoretical and emotional mess in the individual personalities, the contradictions that kept us paralysed on top of the social contradictions.

Antonio Gramsci sketched a number of propositions that 50 years later should be part of the preconditions of progressive empirical social research. But he also developed them further methodically in extraordinary political manner. From the outset he takes into account the consciousness of the researched in the research design by defining "common sense" and "good sense" as point of departure and destination of his studies at the same time. What he calls "good sense" is the "healthy nucleus that exists in 'common sense', the part of it which (...) deserves to be made more unitary and coherent" (Gramsci, 1971, 328). Here, this relates to the consciousness that results from practically acting in and upon the world. Gramsci paradoxically states that everyone is an intellectual while at the same time postulating the process of becoming an intellectual as the aim of developing common sense, as starting point and as necessary transgression. In the same vein he says "all men are philosophers" (Gramsci, 1971, 347), that "it is not possible to conceive of any man who is not also a philosopher" (Gramsci, 1971, 347) and "just as every man is a philosopher, every man is a man of science" (Gramsci, 1971, 354). The inevitable conclusion is that a

> [...] philosophy of praxis cannot but present itself at the outset in a polemical and critical guise, as superseding the existing mode of thinking and existing concrete thought (the existing cultural world). First of all, therefore, it must be a criticism of 'common sense', basing itself initially, however, on common sense in order to demonstrate that 'everyone' is a philosopher and that it is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's

individual life, but of renovating and making 'critical' an already existing activity. It must then be a criticism of the philosophy of the intellectuals out of which the history of philosophy developed [...] (Gramsci, 1971, 330f.).

These propositions clearly and dialectically explicate what is commonly, and relatively misunderstood called "politics from below". For liberating work with women a series of problems arise and together with them new kinds of solutions. First of all, there is a general lack of a history of common sense, there is no documentary material. This is all the more the case for the praxes of the women, for their labour[7] in society. Furthermore, the

> [...] philosophy of praxis does not tend to leave the 'simple' in their primitive philosophy of common sense, but rather to lead them to a higher conception of life (...) in order to construct an intellectual-moral bloc which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the mass and not only of small intellectual groups. (332 f.)

If we translate these suggestions into a politics of liberation it follows suit that it is at the same time a political-educational concept that includes teachers and students who both appear in a double function. On the one hand they are the material, the factual matter that is used to learn from and to learn with, and on the other hand they themselves teach. They don't remain unaltered, they constantly change; in teaching there are failures, relapses, critique and new beginnings. The teachers embody the lessons that are meant to enable everyone to collectively break the chains of the past and of life as before, customs and tradition, in short of the

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7   Attempts have been made to document the history of women's labour, but they are quite meagre when it comes to the real praxes. I have tried this in the Historical Critical Encyclopedia of Marxism in quite rudimentary ways for the forms of individuality *housewife* and *cook* [the German term *Köchin* has a clearly gendered connotation in which a servant status is included, this cannot be similarly expressed in English, RH]. In my attempts on these selective snippets I realised the tediousness of such an endeavour. Collectively we also began to trace back the history of *doing laundry* and the development of forces of production in this sector. A huge research effort is waiting for women who will hopefully take on the task of studying female praxes throughout history.

entire history. And they take on the role of guides, holding on to the compass to make sure to stay on track.

In the passage about the man-in-the-mass Gramsci talks about the conditions for the learning process as a relation of practical intervention and increasing knowledge.

> The active man-in-the-mass has a practical activity, but has no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity, which nonetheless involves understanding the world in so far as it transforms it. His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. (Gramsci, 1971, 333).

For the women's memory-work that calls for a search under the surface and verbal consciousness for the consciousness that is implicit in their actions. We had no better idea than calling it somehow provisional *half-consciousness*.

Many years after beginning with *memory-work*, and having introduced the method in many places around the globe with positive feedback, I read Gramsci's sentences. They seemed to give a first answer to my pressing question: For engaging in a separate political project for and with women, and spending an entire life on developing its foundations, is it not a precondition that the women's everyday praxis must have common elements that are needed for a future-to-be-won as much as they are a cause for their marginalisation in capitalist society? In other words, it should also be possible to find the lessons to be learned for a liberated society in the everyday praxes of women, even if just in form of a vision. More than only the moral of slaves there had to be also elements of a moral that is necessary for a future liberation of everyone. However, the real women including myself could not immediately bring this vision to life. What dominated instead was again and again despair, suffering, fatalism. Furthermore there was reciprocal jealousy, envy, disdain that

stood in the way of the coalition and the departure of women. Two consciousnesses came to the fore here, too. One derived from their praxis in caring for others, and another one that kept them as much in subalternity and a demanding consumer position as it also made them function in society. The daring attempt to develop a politics of women's liberation in a coalition of women was hardly possible without further critical work with the real women and their desire, and at the same time it could not ignore it either.

  At this point we find yet again useful thoughts expressed by Gramsci already: Our conception

> [...] influences moral conduct and the direction of will, with varying efficacy but often powerfully enough to produce a situation in which the contradictory state of consciousness does not permit of any action, any decision or any choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity. Critical understanding of self takes place therefore through a struggle of political 'hegemonies' and of opposing directions, first in the ethical field and then in that of politics proper, in order to arrive at the working out at a higher level of one's own conception of reality. Consciousness of being part of a particular hegemonic force (that is to say, political consciousness) is the first stage towards a further progressive selfconsciousness in which theory and practice will finally be one. Thus the unity of theory and practice is not just a matter of mechanical fact, but a part of the historical process, whose elementary and primitive phase is to be found in the sense of being 'different' and 'apart', in an instinctive feeling of independence, and which progresses to the level of real possession of a single and coherent conception of the world. (Gramsci, 1971, 333).

In our provisional terms: first it needed the movement of the women who raised their voices all around the globe in the 1970s in protest against the prohibition of abortion, i.e. the state's intrusion in reproductive behaviour, a protest that was about the relationship to one's own body and its appropriation. Eventually then, women increasingly needed to get organised and in doing so qualify as a conscious ethical-political force, in

Rosa Luxemburg's words education, in Marx' words understanding the self-contradictions, the contradictions in the secular basis for revolutionizing it. In the same vein we had postulated: »The women need to overthrow the family in order to assert their personality.«

On the praxis of Memory-Work

Memory-Work is required where everyday life is "strangely composite", just like the personalities who exist contradictorily and suffer in it. If the isolated women come together and, as said in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, change themselves by changing the circumstances of their lives together, then they imperatively need a consciousness of their becoming. Only then will they, despite all alienation, be able to get direction for paving the way for changing the world to the better for everyone from "the healthy nucleus that exists in 'common sense', the part of it which can be called 'good sense' and which deserves to be made more unitary and coherent" (Gramsci, 328). And they will want to go this way together. If everyday life is taken as point of departure gaining knowledge will go hand in hand with transformative praxis.

  Memory-Work as feminist praxis starts with the subjects and their historical becoming, their contradictions, their pathogenic adjustments, the pressure that makes the strange composition of their personalities unbearable. In this way it is an alternative to fatalism and passivity. However, a great deal of work lies ahead in every such project. It is not only about a historical-critical reworking of personalities. Once on this trail it becomes obvious that a theory and praxis of changing society and changing selves also requires a paradigmatic change in the sciences. From the perspective of human praxes the traditional theories can be identified as ideologies, speculations, and replicas of particular interests; and inversely the importance of the theories for the everyday consciousness becomes obvious.

Exemplary: Great Experiment

We have used Memory-Work with all its phases comprehensively on the problematic of women's anxiety[8], an emotional dimension that cries out

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8   F. Haug/K. Hauser (Eds.). Die andere Angst Frauenformen 6 (AS 184)
     Hamburg 1991, 1994 [see also F. Haug. 2000. "Memory Work: the Key to

for being rendered coherent. It began with a women's seminar on the topic of *anxiety* that was open to the public. Initially more than 50 women came to take part. The group was far too heterogeneous in terms of background and education to start a research process, too diverse to conduct a 'normal seminar'. And yet it was ideally suited for a women's seminar on a personally relevant topic in which all the women wanted to gain knowledge about themselves and therefore were prepared to start a huge work process of learning and changing. Their becoming as they were provided a rich set of material that was varied enough to be the basis for the research. At the same time they were ready to in the first instance become aware of their everyday consciousness about anxiety, and to create an inventory that – as sketchy as it may have been – straight away brought to light that self-contradiction was a general praxis in everyday life of the women. They recorded anxiety because of big animals and small animals, because of heights and depths, because of noise and silence, anxiety to stand out and not to be seen, anxiety about being together and being alone, anxiety because of strangers and confidants, because of speed and slowness. We could have gone on with the list forever. It was as if exactly the contrasts in the perception triggered anxiety. We remained on this phenomenological level only for a short while and moved on to gain insights into the shared culture around anxiety. We called this step *brainstorming*. Critically mindful of the superficiality of common *brainstorming* processes we allowed in our suggestion for applying the method a modest 20 minutes of a two-hour session for this phase. This takes into account that mostly projects are conducted within a limited timespan, e.g. a weekend, but not like the anxiety project over a few years. Otherwise, in a collective of learning researchers a problem can easily arise if some are continuously looking to collect more and more, insisting that not everything has been said yet. This happens most likely because they find themselves still on well-known territory which they are reluctant to leave behind. This is the only point in the method where the remembering collective is called to stick to a rule based on the economy of time.[9]

Women's Anxiety". Pp. 155-79 in *Memory and Methodology*. Edited by S. Radstone. Oxford: Berg.]

9   Years of experience suggest that working with a memory scene should not take more than two hours for not tiring out interest and curiosity, and to be able to also consider other scenes; i. e. a compromise that allows to value every single story as a possibility and at the same time work with more than

The other steps are experimental and provisional and for their improvement they await the input of everyone who dedicate themselves to Memory-Work. The second phase during which the existing theories of anxiety are to be reviewed needs a facilitator who can select the relevant literature due to her knowledge in the field. To be able to continue the work of critique it was necessary for us to ascertain the current state of scientific knowledge before moving on to self-study. For a Feminist-Marxist project that means concurrently dealing critically with gender relations, relations of production and existing relations of forces, and to consider them with a focus on contradictions.

In a simplified way our diverse material of excerpts from different theoretical schools on anxiety can be summarised as follows: In behaviourist theories anxiety is thought of as learned behaviour, and training programmes are designed for unlearning. These theories are so much intertwined with the real circumstances in capitalist societies that it requires a specific key to free oneself from these circumstances.[10] Then there was the psychoanalytic »Freudian model of contradiction«[11] that we applied productively in the chapters on *Anxiety in gender relations*, and *Anxiety in relations of production*. In the field of politics it tells us,

> "(...) that female anxiety manifests itself in a contradictory state of having no place. It was the known unknown, the searched avoided, the simultaneous inhabitability of 'home' and 'world' that posed the unresolvable problem for everyone of having no place to escape to, and thus having to retreat on the spot when they had just made the breakthrough and set off. In all cases we found a form of dealing with anxiety that at the end holds the fearful person responsible, but never the structures in which the individual

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one, thereby experiencing the multifaceted female praxes and their perception, and eventually allow for generalisations.

10 Brecht has obviously extended this methodically by, e.g. in the *Threepenny Opera*, letting many of his characters present the common commodity-money relations as subject-reversals - for instance (in the *Song of a procuress*): "Money makes a person sensuous, as we are taught by experience" [In the English version of the song the line was changed to "There's nothing quite like money as an aphrodisiac". RH] In Marx's *Capital* there are many explicit hints on how the mode of production transforms human relations into money relations, and pulls away their romantic veil.

11 Anxiety is caused by a conflict that one cannot resolve alone.

women want to be included without properly being able to do so. It is at these points that anxiety built up. And by transferring the problem onto the person it was built up further – thus we experienced the production of a fearful person. (...) Resolving the contradiction that triggers anxiety as response seems to require a liveable democracy. The peculiar double character or our political structures in which the participation of individuals is on the one hand a condition, while on the other hand there are hardly any forms in which this could happen, accounts for such social insufficiency to be interpreted as a personal shortcoming. Only now what follows is the selfmade production of the fearful person in a state of having no place." (Haug & Hauser, 1991, 202f)

(Excerpt from the summarising chapter referring to the part on *"Anxieties not to be competent in relations of politics"*, the other fields of research were *"Anxieties not to be normal in relations of production"* and *"Anxieties for the body in gender relations."*)[12]

Sketching the practical procedure of Memory-Work

At its core Memory-Work is concrete work with language. It studies how the individuals speak of themselves, how they express their actions, emotions and interests, and what words they find for *other persons* – if *others* play a role in the memory-scenes at all. For doing this work it is necessary to have the remembered stories or scenes in written format, because the words need to come "out of the heads onto the blackboard" as Brecht demands (Brecht, GW, Bd.20, 173). Here, this means on paper so that they are present for everyone and nothing can be covered up during the working process. After coming to a brief understanding what the author wants to tell us with their memory-scene (message of the story) the verbs are collected or marked, then the adjectives that express emotions and interests. In a collective discussion the author's

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12 The summarising book *Die andere Angst [The other anxiety]* was published 1991, with a second edition printed 1994. In it an abundance of experiences, analyses, investigations, theories and their critique, stories and attempts to capture lived reality are collected. The book is still available. It calls for productive remembering and in many aspects continuing work.

construction of her own person and the *others* in relation to her is detected. This seems to be a beginner's exercise in a grammar class, but time again it transpires to be a startling source of enlightening insights. And despite women supposedly being the sex full of emotions there is in most memory-scenes written by women a complete lack of emotions. Other questions concern vacuums and contradictions. In joint discussion the results of this dissecting work are brought together in a newly formulated message. In this case: "More often than not the individual women construct themselves as alone and as lone fighters in a world of enemies completely independent of their true social situation." This new message is compared to the earlier intended one. Not only does it reveal a problem transfer but mostly the author also delivers a reasoning in the written scene that is obvious and comprehensible to everyone. The author is an equal member of the Memory-Work collective, and the result is handed to her as a possibility for action, if she wants to have it. In this manner Collective Memory-Work is not intended to come up with normative demands. It rather searches for the barriers that are built up by our everyday adjustment in society, in order to loosen them, to break up the deposits of subalternity and to work against isolation by way of collective praxis, the departure into a We.[13] It strengthens the self-consciousness by taking it from its basis in common sense onto the reflected level of we-consciousness.

In reference to the Oracle of Delphi Gramsci uses the old quote of "knowing thyself" (Gramsci, 1971, 324) as guidance for this praxis. Collective Memory-Work follows this advise, with the collective debate as essential part of the method.

If we try to make fruitful for a theory of Memory-Work as feminist praxis the suggestions made so far, it will help to answer at the same time the pressing question why and how a politics with women can be made that productively includes the female becoming in its strategy. What is specific about women that they can be bearers of hope for a politics of liberation, or what is their – in Gramsci's words – rendering themselves coherent by breaking through the isolation about?

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13 We (a socialist women's group) started Collective Memory-Work at the end of the 1970s. 1980 we published our first book ─ *Frauenformen*; the method, the procedure was met immediately by a great demand, and it quickly spread also in other countries; 1983 our first larger study appeared and it was translated into English 1987 as *Female Sexualisation*.

Caring Praxes

If we start with the most obvious and try to think of a theory of care work, we come across the figure of the mother. The writers were moved by her in her chained form, as a scare and as a refuge. Just remember the tales of Medea who serves vine to the unfaithful king in cups made from the heads of her children slain by herself. Or read Maxim Gorki's novel and its continuation by Brecht who once (in *Mother Courage*) shows her sacrificing her children for the sake of business. But then (in *The Mother*) he lets the mother take the stage in liberated form as revolutionary who bears the perspective of liberation for all in the relationship between mother and son who are connected via the third cause. In antifascist literature, e.g. Tucholsky, it is always the mothers who are addressed with lament because they give birth to sons who are sent to war and therefore make their work in and for life meaningless. It is worth looking at the figures of mothers in literature whose elevation as personification of peace, love, happiness etc. is done by way of degradation of their full humanness. In feminist literature the figure of the mother also appears as inscribed in history, but differently. In Marge Piercy's work (*He, She and It*) even three mother figures of three generations come into view. One is a scientist who constructs a robot as her lover, the daughter a revolutionary who by way of in-vitro fertilisation with the sperm of an important physicist who lived a couple of centuries ago presents to the mother a granddaughter. The latter in turn becomes a scientist and mother, and mediated by the struggling parents her son becomes a token for the competing capitals. Condensed in the mother figure is the hope for simultaneously reproducing humanity and appropriating science on the most advanced stage of development of forces of production as key for liberation.

Women's Movement and Memory-Work

The twofold question as negation stands at the beginning of the second women's movement also: abortion, i.e. rejection of reproducing the human race, fighting for the freedom not to become mother and instead chose self-development over subalternity. How do the individuals make their history and in which not self-selected circumstances? Memory-Work that starts from here has learned from Marx, it proceeds from the outset

in a collective. It anticipates Gramsci without yet knowing of him and it questions the dominant culture and theories. It raises doubts about the self-evident, aims at making the habitual unfamiliar and learns from Marx to develop the appetite for contradiction to the point of contradicting oneself. With the delight over knowing thyself there was also at stake the praxis of the many consciousness raising groups that were formed at the beginning of the women's movement. They had led in circles and were abandoned after a short period of high intensity. Their strength, the joy of narration and story-telling had to be taken up critically and transformed into sources of knowledge about the transfers, repressions, self-damaging attitudes and barriers. Mostly this process creates not only surprise but also delight in producing knowledge oneself, being initiator for change and experiencing others in the collective as active collaborators, hence part of the collective research process.

What does self-development mean?

In Marxist theory, including a subject-science developed in a Marxist tradition, man is conceptualised as a being full of possibilities that are there to be seized and made real. This is substantiated and amplified into a postulate by Gramsci:

> [...] it is necessary to 'know' them, and know how to use them. (...) Men create their own personality, 1. by giving a specific and concrete ('rational') direction to their own vital impulse or will; 2. by identifying the means which will make this will concrete and specific and not arbitrary; 3. by contributing to modify the ensemble of the concrete conditions for realising this will to the extent of one's own limits and capacities and in the most fruitful form. Man is to be conceived as an historical bloc of purely individual and subjective elements and of mass and objective or material elements with which the individual is in an active relationship. (Gramsci, 1971, 360).

As a practical continuation and appropriation of the 6th thesis on Feuerbach Gramsci concludes: "For this reason one can say that man is essentially 'political' since it is through the activity of transforming and

consciously directing other men that man realises his 'humanity', his 'human nature'" (Gramsci, 1971, 360). As process of development he formulates: the political consciousness is the first phase of a progressive self-consciousness in which "theory and practice will finally be one (...) and which progresses to the level of real possession of a single and coherent conception of the world" (Gramsci, 1971, 333).

   Important is the

> [...] passage from knowing to understanding and to feeling and vice versa from feeling to understanding and to knowing. The popular element 'feels' but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element 'knows' but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel. The two extremes are therefore pedantry and philistinism on the one hand and blind passion and sectarianism on the other. Not that the pedant cannot be impassioned; far from it. Impassioned pedantry is every bit as ridiculous and dangerous as the wildest sectarianism and demagogy. The intellectual's error consists in believing that one can know without understanding and even more without feeling and being impassioned (not only for knowledge in itself but also for the object of knowledge): in other words that the intellectual can be an intellectual (and not a pure pedant) if distinct and separate from the people-nation, that is, without feeling the elementary passions of the people, understanding them and therefore explaining and justifying them in the particular historical situation and connecting them dialectically to the laws of history and to a superior conception of the world, scientifically and coherently elaborated – i.e. knowledge. (Gramsci, 1971, 418)

Where the feeling for the elementary passions of the people relations are reduced to a purely bureaucratic, formal character; what is required is the "shared life (...) which alone is a social force - with the creation of the 'historical bloc'" (Gramsci, 1971, 418). Gramsci rhetorically asks:

> [I]s it better to 'think', without having a critical awareness, in a disjointed and episodic way [... or ...] is it better to work

> out consciously and critically one's own conception of the
> world and thus (...) take an active part in the creation of the
> history of the world, be one's own guide, refusing to accept
> passively and supinely from outside the moulding of one's
> personality? (Gramsci, 1971, 323)

He writes these passages in the context of a critique of a mechanical
historical materialism that thinks of every political act as being
determined by structure. Vulgar Marxist thought perpetually nurtures
arguments against the attempts to set both the specifics and the general
of the women's question on the agenda. Hence Gramsci's suggestions are
essential for the work with and for women. Gramsci as much as the long-
standing practice of Memory-Work are concerned with gaining coherence
of affect, emotion and activity on basis of reason.

Conclusion

What is the result of this attempt to connect the suggestions for
liberation in Marx' *Theses on Feuerbach* and the development of
"increased capacity for action" (term from Critical Psychology as Marxist
subject-science) with Gramsci's theory of personality and cultural politics
in order to obtain from both a theory of Memory-Work?
  Marx writes about groups of people, classes in struggles, workers in
movement, with the perspective of writing a critique of political economy
in a way that not only makes clear the unsustainable character of
capitalist social relations, but also establishes a science for gaining
knowledge historically and critically: Marxist theory.[14] Gramsci adds a
sketch of individual personalities who need to be able to restore
themselves, expand their political consciousness for breaking free from
the web of bourgeois hegemony as precondition for working politically
with them. For this he develops the concept of the organic intellectual.
Not only does he see everyone as an intellectual, but in this manner
equipped with the ability to understand oneself and one's position in
society, every group builds up their own organic intellectuals. Gramsci
teaches: To be organic intellectual of the masses means to have "worked

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14 For the analysis of the situation of women there are a couple of starting
   points, but most of the work remains to be done still. See also my paper on
   "Marx within Feminism"
   (http://www.friggahaug.inkrit.de/documents/marxinfem.pdf)

out and made coherent the principles and the problems raised by the masses in their practical activity, thus constituting a cultural and social bloc" (Gramsci, 1971, 330).

  In Collective Memory-Work the strangely composite in the individual person appears in a manner that allows to see that Marx' idea in the *Theses on Feuerbach* that self-changing and changing of circumstances go together in collective praxis requires Collective Memory-Work as vital generalised praxis for the politics of liberation. And this with all its parts, including the critique of those theories that safeguard the bourgeois hegemony. Memory-Work is a necessary praxis for Marxist-Feminist women. Marx does not provide a strategy for the individuals to critically work on themselves in a way that enables them to collectively set off to change the circumstances. We build on Gramsci's suggestion to render oneself coherent, and his task for the intellectuals of the movement to understand and to actively support this process for themselves and for everyone. In line with Marx this takes as point of departure the real people with their sensuous activity, praxes. For the politics with and for women we thus conclude that in the class struggles we need to fight for a separate time that is devoted to individual development. It goes without further explication that taking the real situation of women and their praxes into account there is similarly a need for fighting for a separate time for caring for people on the whole. We have learned this lesson through the inadequacies that became obvious during the Corona pandemic (see, e.g. Soiland, 2021). A term coined by Rosa Luxemburg in the contradictions of everyday politics in capitalist society can give us orientation. When she speaks of *revolutionary realpolitik* it points to the linking of everyday wants of the working population with a long term objective. In the long lasting struggles for visibility of the unpaid but essential work of women, we, the Marxist-Feminist women have eventually changed the script: We no longer try to simply make housework thinkable as labour, instead we suggest the politics of the Four-in-one-perspective. This allows to put on the agenda the very different activities in both voluntary work and waged labour as a perspective and at the same time in political contest, thereby assigning them a place in the struggles of a new Left for a new time regime in which the four dimensions of labour in human life are interwoven in an alternative model: wage, reproductive, political and individual development. In this context the struggle for coherence has to be

integrated. It takes into account the development of the forces of production as well as the excessive demands in the social struggles and it makes the work on individual development more dynamic. Overall its orientation goes towards learning to appropriate and to mediate the dynamic points of change. In all aspects it is always about the relations between human beings and nature, the nature of humans and nature as condition for life of humans. In this respect the struggle for coherence is primarily political work that will invent its qualifications, its alliances, its forms while on the way.

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