



Theoretische Beiträge des Zentrums für Integrationsstudien

Mi-Cha Flubacher & Sara Hägi-Mead (Editors)

Taboo and Transgression

Transdisciplinary Perspectives on
Migration, Integration, and Diversity

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Taboo and Transgression in the Context of Migration, Integration, and Diversity

Intolerance, discourtesy and harshness... are taboo in all good society and are surely contrary to the spirit of democracy.

Mahatma Gandhi

I believe that nothing should be taboo – no theory or prejudice should close one's mind to a discovery.

Henry Moore

All that is sacred and taboo in the world are meaningless.

Anais Nin

1. Introduction

In the quotes above, taboos emerge as constitutive of democracy, as preventing knowledge production but also as meaningless social conventions. But why are the understandings of taboos thus varied? What is the meaning of taboo – then and now? What is the analytical use of turning to such a concept and its counterpart, i.e. the transgression of taboo(s)? These are some of the questions we will address not only in this introduction but in the volume as a whole, as we will see what the upholding or breaking of taboos tells us about the power structure in a society, about the underlying ideologies as well as dominant discourses.

In order to embed an otherwise rather theoretical and abstract discussion on taboo and transgression in current political economic conditions, we will briefly turn to the example of the current extreme right party *Alternative für Deutschland* ('Alternative for Germany', henceforth AfD), which has gained nation-wide momentum since its foundation in 2013, becoming the third largest party at this moment after the CDU (Christian Democratic Union of Germany, *Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands*) and the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany, *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*). 'Taboos' emerge in the context of the rise of the AfD on several levels: First, and most importantly, as a result of the dismantling of the Nazi Third Reich (1933–1945) under Adolf Hitler, it had been taboo in German politics to integrate extreme right wing ideology and narratives to official political discourse, which is exactly what representatives of the AfD have openly done (while the party's official political programme is hailing "democracy and core values"¹). Secondly, at the onset of their 'success story', the AfD was a political taboo in its own, i.e. they were considered an *enfant terrible* and, thus, unsuitable for collaboration by the other two major parties – but as the development of many taboos attest, this has changed, which is due to their success in local elections.² Thirdly, the AfD fashions itself as a 'taboo breaker', most importantly regarding the taboo of *national pride*, which, again, has been impossible to appropriate in Germany since World War II without a nationalist overtone.³ The AfD now reclaims such pride discourses, linking it to national identity with clear imageries of 'us' in which the 'others' are the immigrants, Muslims, refugees, etc.⁴ In the end, such "claims to taboo" (German: *Tabu-Anspruch*, cf. von Lucke 2010) and the political staging of taboo breaking (cf. Schröder/Mildenberg 2012) employed by the AfD (and other comparable political parties or movements) aim to reverse agency, i.e. to present one's own opinion and group as tabooed, as silenced and, finally, as victimised (cf. Hägi-Mead 2018), e.g. by agents of 'political correctness'. This becomes evident in the official political programme of AfD, which celebrates conservative, nationalist, and chauvinist ideologies. The taboos in question here can thus be summarised as connected to narratives on World War II/Nazi Germany, on immigration and integration, on the 'refugee welcome' culture promoted by German chancellor Angela Merkel, and related topics that have become inherent to the identity construction of a reunified, tolerant and open Germany.

It is important to note that there are many local grassroots initiatives and institutional efforts to counter the rise of the extreme right in the name of a tolerant Germany. Universities in particular have spearheaded such efforts, from launching anti-racist campaigns to fully-fledged research centres, of which the Centre for Integration Studies (*Zentrum für Integrationsstudien*, Zfi) is an example, located at the TU Dresden.⁵ It is not a coincidence that this centre was founded in Dresden, as this former East German town has gained notoriety as the hotbed of Pegida (short for *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*, Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West, a forerunner of the AfD) and for a high voter turnout for the AfD. This new online publication series is to be read as another counter-narrative on the hotly debated topics of migration, integration and diversity, while adhering to critical thought and intellectual rigour.

As is widely known, the shift to the right in political discourse is not restricted to Germany. Albeit the question of which taboos are 'broken' depends on the political and historical context, right wing and authoritarian tendencies have dominated the media landscape and political scene all over Europe and North America over the last few years. While the societal and political discussions about 'fake news' (*Lügenpresse* in Germany) and 'alternative facts' shed light on the negotiations on the production of knowledge and on legitimate and authoritative news production that transgress an allegedly established consensus, political initiatives of the populist right have resulted in the founding of successful political parties, separation movements or governments that constantly flirt with the breaking and transgression of taboos.

In the light of these developments, it can be useful to go back to questions on the understanding, meaning, and analytical function of taboos that were raised at the beginning of this introduction. In the following, we will give a short summary of how to tackle the concept of 'taboo' in an analytical way and how to relate it to transgression. In a second step, we will outline a programmatic approach to taboo and how to apply it in a functional perspective for the analysis of contemporary society, which is increasingly marked by debates on migration, integration policies and negotiations revolving around diversity and identity. In a final step, we will present an overview of the individual contributions.

2. What's in a taboo?

As the three quotes at the beginning of this introduction attest, taboos have different meanings in contemporary society. First, for Mahatma Gandhi (1883–1944), the famous leader of Indian independence from colonial Britain, taboos appear to be of functional value. In that sense, he relocates the unspeakable and undoable into the realm of the taboo; in this instance, he describes "intolerance, discourtesy and harshness" as detrimental to the values of a recently installed and still vulnerable democracy. In contrast, the acclaimed British sculpture artist Henry Moore (1898–1986) formulates the transgression of taboos as productive – necessary even – for personal and intellectual growth, which he sees as the fundamental basis for artist production. Finally, the controversial French-American writer Anaïs Nin (1903–1977) dismantles "all that is sacred and taboo" in not attributing any meaning to them, herself pushing boundaries and struggling with a peripheral position in society and as an artist her entire life.

Now, even in its brevity, this sketch illustrates different meanings and functions attributed to taboos and their transgressions (from taboos as necessity, to transgressions as productive, to taboos as superfluous), which are contingent on the historical and political economic background of a society, social transformations under way, or the position of an individual in a society. In the following, we want to outline – again, briefly – where 'taboo' actually comes from and why it is of conceptual relevance for the study of contemporary society and societies.

As any dictionary or lexicon attests, the term ‘taboo’ derives from Polynesian denomination of anything that is forbidden or prohibited for reasons of sanctity or danger (according to British Captain James Cook, who explored the Polynesian islands in the early 18th century).⁶ In this sense, it can be applied to any practice, food, language, place, etc., and can be read not only as a prescriptive, but, more importantly so, as an instructive concept. In enforcing a certain taboo, first-hand experiences of danger, risk or damage could be avoided, while transgressions thereof would engender such risks – for individuals (i.e. their bodies!), but also for groups or communities, which is why transgressions can (or have to) lead to negative sanctions or even to being expelled from a social group. In this capacity, taboos are an inherent component of guaranteeing group safety, instrumental for community cohesion and part of any socialisation process. In this vein, the sociologist Durkheim considered the taboo predominantly as a “symbol for group membership”, while Lévy-Strauss regarded it as a “symbolic system, which gives expression to the interchange between nature, culture, animality and society” (Penguin Dictionary of Sociology 1988: 251). In this system, transgressions between nature, culture, animality and society are inscribed in clear imaginations of the taboo. The psychoanalyst Freud extended the theoretical understanding of the taboo’s functionalities from body and spirit to *psyche*, in introducing the subconscious and its drives, which effectively might result in the willed transgression of a taboo, especially in the realm of sexuality (cf. Jervis 1999: 157–180), where its extreme culmination is the incest taboo.

Today’s theoretical and everyday use of taboo are no longer necessarily related to individual safety or danger, which has resulted in a semantic shift (or expansion) of the word. Still, a taboo remains a denominator of an imagined social order, with the function to safe-keep the nation’s body, so to speak, as, e.g., the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states: “There is broad agreement that the taboos current in any society tend to relate to objects and actions that are significant for the social order and that, as such, taboos *belong to the general system of social control* [emphasis added]”.⁷ In this, taboos are closely aligned to ‘norms’ and ‘values’, two central sociological concepts that lie at the core of the functioning of societies and also operate as unwritten laws. The idea that a certain set of norms, values and, in turn, taboos are socially valid and acceptable for everyone, presupposes a homogenous society, which e.g., political scientist Anderson (1993) has famously decried as imaginary. Yet, even if the idea of a community is imagined, the discursive construction of norms, values (including taboos) have retained a social force to reckon with. Therefore, even if it is beyond the scope of this introduction to elaborate on the concrete relationship between taboos, norms and values, we propose to think of them as different sides of the same coin, i.e. the “general system of social control”. Taboos control what one does (i.e. action), what one says (i.e. speaking) and what one (cannot) talk about (i.e. communication) in a given society at a given moment in time (cf. Hägi-Mead 2018). In a nutshell, this means that, to this day, taboos constitute the socially acceptable limit of action, speaking, and communication (cf. Schröder/Mildenberger 2012), and that transgressions of this limit are met with punishment, as the papers in this volume testify (cf. for further elaborations on the meanings of taboo Horlacher 2010; Kraft 2004; Krajewski 2015).

We can thus summarise that a taboo is a lens through which social processes of mainstreaming, policing, disciplining and othering become evident. This remains true for contemporary society often configured as postmodern, which has a celebratory focus on the performative (cf. Butler 1990), fluid or liquid (cf. Bauman 2000), and hybrid (cf. Bhabha 1994), but retains the controlling and disciplining technologies of modernity (cf. Foucault 1975). Even if the transgression, deconstruction, and iconoclasm of grand narratives (e.g. of the alleged clear gender binary or natural social hierarchies) appear to be a necessary consequence under these (seemingly) paradox conditions, a focus on taboos highlights their residual effects and their sustainable power. Moreover, it has often been argued that it is exactly the dismantling of the grand narratives that results in

backlashes of different sorts, more often than not voiced or enacted with violence, outrage, and contempt. In the introduction above, current political consequences (or rather: uptakes) of such backlash in (post-)migrant societies were outlined. It remains to be seen whether these societies manage to find common ground and develop an equitable pluralism of values (*Wertpluralität*, cf. Terkessidis 2018), which would take into account the values, norms, and taboos of different people, groups, and communities living in one society, or whether they will resort to the reproduction of assimilationist mechanism for the sake of social control. After all, it cannot be denied that most societies nowadays are *postmigrant*, i.e. societies in which migration affects and inspires all levels and domains as well as each and every individual living in that very society (cf. Terkessidis 2018: 111f.).

3. A functional perspective on taboo and transgression

Following from this, it is an analysis of the system of social control in the context of (post-) migration and diversity that is the aim of this volume. After all, it could be argued that societies (even more so than groups or communities) rely on the social compass that is the taboo in order to maintain internal order. Literary studies scholar Horlacher writes in this respect that “taboos can be functionalized by a society to strengthen its identity (cf. the scapegoat)” (2010: 13). Thus, if the taboo had the function to strengthen community cohesion, this is even more so the case when a (seemingly cohesive and homogeneous) society is confronted with a different system of taboos, norms and values, as in contact situations resulting from migration. In such circumstances, the society (or rather: its population) is forced to re-evaluate (or actually verbalise) its own taboos, norms and values which might result in social change or, contrarily, in the re-enforcing of its existing social order, i.e. in the re-inscribing of particular scapegoats into the tissue of social structure. In any case, social changes inevitably bring about qualitative changes on the level of taboos, norms and values (one only needs to think of the African-American Civil Rights Movement in the United States or of the Women’s Liberation Movement in Western countries, both in the mid-20th century). Yet, while some of these changes occur on a legal or discursive level, other changes are slower to take hold or they actually manifest only on a surface level. Coming back to the example of the feminist movements in Western countries, it is now unthinkable (i.e. taboo) to officially refer to women as lesser human beings, as less intelligent or capable than men – but as becomes clear again and again, such opinions are still wide-spread and, thus, under certain conditions (or in certain circles) still sayable.

The question of when something is/becomes thinkable or even sayable can be approached with a Foucauldian perspective. In his *oeuvre* “The order of discourse” (*L’ordre du discours*), published in 1971, Foucault describes the regulative order of what is sayable or thinkable and, in that, rational. While the discursive order shifts and transforms over time, which manifests in changes with regards to the sayable, these transformations have to be seen as invested with power, directly linked to the social order. Thus, what *can* be said at a certain moment in time is never coincidental, innocent or random, but is indexical of what is considered legitimate (cf. for Foucauldian analyses of discourses of integration Flubacher 2016; Piñeiro/Bopp/Kreis 2009). Historicising the sayable and unsayable is thus primordial in understanding what is at stake for societies, individuals and their agency (cf. Duchêne 2008).

Summarising, taboos can be conceptualised as what is unsayable, unspeakable and undoable – most often connected to acts of violence, sexuality or consumption. While some taboos are perceptible on a linguistic surface level (e.g. swear words, cf. Jay 2009, or the explicit reference to death, cf. Hänggi/Diederich 2017, or euphemism in general, cf. Hägi-Mead 2018), others are located at deeper levels of social structure. They can be either regarded as a protective social device

or as an exclusionary mechanism. Similarly, the transgression of taboos can be experienced as liberating or, contrarily, as damaging, depending on the aim or motivation underlying the act of transgression.

4. The scope of the publication

It is the ambivalent nature of taboos that is highlighted in the analyses presented in this volume and, more importantly, their effects on individuals who do not seem to fit in or cohere with the seemingly homogeneous social order. These effects can manifest themselves in feelings of shame or guilt, in being targeted as victims of aggression or in material consequences, resulting in discrimination practices or policies. For example, in allegedly monolingual societies, studies in Applied Linguistics have described the taboo for speakers of other languages to speak their first language, which can result in children feeling ashamed of their first language (cf. Hägi-Mead, in print). Another example, as provided by Critical Marketing research, has shown how advertisement that consistently transgresses the taboo of violence against women has the effect of portraying women “as sexualised teases to be controlled and conquered” (Gurrieri/Brace-Govan/Cherrier 2016: 1462). Gurrieri/Brace-Govan/Cherrier argue that such violent advertising can, in effect, “re-state ideas about gendered subjects and [...] can produce or ‘fabricate’ certain gender identities and subjectivities that eventually become standard and seen as ‘natural’” (ibid.). Taboos and their transgression have thus real-life effects and consequences, as will be further illustrated in the individual contributions. In the following, we will provide a short overview of these contributions and discuss how they relate to the scope of this volume, bringing together different research traditions and disciplinary perspectives.

Starting with a perspective from Cultural Studies, Katja Kanzler discusses which ideas about social order are imaginatively negotiated in society. In her contribution “(Meta-)Disparagement Humour: The Poetics and Politics of Mockery in the Sitcom *Two Broke Girls*”, Kanzler draws on an emblematic television sitcom from the United States in order to carefully unpack the several layers of irony, mockery and humour that are offered as recurrent narrative devices throughout the individual episodes of the show. She argues that, on the surface, mockery appears to be applied unabashedly and indiscriminately, transgressing sexual, racial and religious taboos. Yet, in doing so, it is especially traditional dominant discourses and ideals of femininity that are subverted in the process. As Kanzler teases out, the subversive potential of these transgressive mockeries exhausts itself in that it stops short in the face of white privilege and the neoliberal dream epitomised in the narrative “from rags to riches” ubiquitous in the United States. In fact, the only element which is never exposed to mockery or irony in the show is the effort of the “two broke girls” to save money for their own business. This particular perspective from Cultural Studies with a focus on popular culture helps us understand how and which social order is negotiated; in other words: what content, form and representation is considered to offer mass appeal, what is considered cutting edge or provocative, but also ‘who’ and/or what is up for mockery and what is basically beyond mockery, i.e. untouchable.

While the question of minority representation in cinema and television is heavily contested at the moment (one only has to think of current keywords such as ‘whitewashing’ and ‘inclusion rider’ or hashtags such as ‘OscarsSoWhite’), the vulnerability and distortion of minorities in their representation(s) is also an issue for societies, their media outlets and the political sphere. It is such a discussion that is at the centre of the second contribution. In their chapter entitled “Accredited Affects: Discourses and Taboos around Migration and Threat”, Paul Mecheril and Monica van der Haagen-Wulff highlight the stakes for a (post-)migrant society from a Pedagogy and Education Research background. They link racist practices (culminating in lynching) and hypersexualised

animalistic representations of African-American men (former slaves) in post-war Southern United States via racist depictions of 'barbaric' and, again, hypersexualised, African-French soldiers stationed in German Rhineland, to contemporary German discourses on threat that are related to the immigration of Muslim men. The latter is exemplified by media reports on sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015/2016. This brief contextualisation highlights not only the political dimension of the practices of (visual and narrative) representations – in the media as well as in official political discourse –, but also their lack of historical backgrounding. Drawing on Ahmed's (2014) concept of 'stickiness' with regards to fear, Mecheril and van der Haagen-Wulff integrate not only affect into their analysis, but also the body – in this case the body of the White woman that becomes a metonym for the national body. Through the staging of (imagined or at least highly exaggerated) scenarios of fear, the protection of a (particularly imagined) social body against (particularly imagined) 'others' becomes sanctioned.

The integration of foreign elements, i.e. of migrants and refugees, into the German national body has become an institutionalised practice in its own right. A critical analysis of course material of an 'integration course' is presented by Sara Hägi-Mead, a scholar in German as a foreign and second language, in the chapter "Taboos and Integration: Welcome to Germany". In these integration courses, migrants and refugees are instructed on the norms, values, and laws in Germany, whereby these social and legal norms are located at various levels of abstraction, e.g. from "taking out the trash" to "women are equal to men", and presented irrespective of the linguistic level of competency of the course participants. This chapter offers an analysis of the norms and values taught in such courses, which teases out the taboos inherent in societal discourse and practice, the implicit anticipation of migrants and refugees as transgressors of these taboos as well as the related categorisation of migrants and refugees as both threatening but also infantile 'others'. Against this background, this chapter offers a model – in the form of a grid – on the basis of which topics, actions, statements, and language usage (in the course material, but also of any other material) can be assigned to the aspects of protection and abuse through taboos. Since questions of empowerment are always at stake in the context of integration, the grid represents a means of perceiving existing power relations in the discursive treatment of taboos.

Closely related to the discussion on taboos in integration courses is the contribution by Laura Rind-Menzel: "Taboos and Transgressions as a Result of Insufficient Consideration of Didactic Principles in Orientation Course Materials". In this chapter, while courses for migrants in Germany also provide the basis for analysis, the focus shifts to the specificity of the 'orientation course' (which is part of the integration course curriculum). In the orientation course, newly arrived migrants learn about the German political system, civil rights and duties, and norms and values. Anchored in the field of political education, Rind-Menzel presents selected examples from course material to address the empirical (and critical) question whether the principles of political education are applied, as they are meant to ensure an involvement with the political system and, hopefully, to lead to political participation. She argues that the erasure of learner diversity, of their life worlds and of their actual restricted access to political participation in the course material seems to point to a taboo in itself, thus representing a transgression in its own right.

In contrast to these analyses of discursive transgressions in media and teaching material, it is violent forms of transgression that the chapter "Virtual Platforms, Real Racism: Online Hate Speech in Europe" is dealing with. As indicated in the title, these transgressions occur in the form of online hate speech, experienced by young people (116 participants between the ages of 14–30) in five European countries (Italy, France, Spain, Romania, and the United Kingdom). Recounting the narrated (direct or indirect) experiences of members of target groups of online hate speech as well as of 'bystanders', social anthropologists Olga Jubany and Rosa Lázaro Castellanos embed this particular phenomenon in a broader historical discussion of (post-)colonial racism. The au-

thors conclude that for the young research participants, the racism encountered online appears to be an inevitable by-product of the Internet and has thus been normalised to a certain extent. Yet, in spite of the normalisation, they do take offense, but are unsure of how to counter these transgressions, feeling paralysed as a result. It is the normalisation of the experienced and witnessed online hate speech that worries the authors, as in their eyes it speaks of wide-spread legitimisation of enacting or verbalising prejudice, stigma and discrimination. As this normalisation appears to be deeply anchored in the modernist colonial categorisation internalised by society, hate speech online does not have to be but might very well be connected to offline behaviour. On the one hand, then, the constant and relentless transgressing of the taboo inherent to racism or racist slurs that happens online, be it in the guise of joke and mockery or in explicit hate speech, mirrors an internalisation of binary categories. On the other hand, the witnessing of hate speech online threateningly visualises to young people what happens to the transgressors of the idealised social order.

Finally, a similar understanding of transgression in relation to hate crimes is informative of the last chapter by sociologist Amanda Haynes and Law scholar Jennifer Scheppe, entitled "Hate Crime: Violently Policing Transgressions of Perceived Parameters of Acceptability". Rather than considering hate crimes themselves a transgression, these authors re-frame hate crime as a reaction to transgressions, most importantly of hierarchically defined boundaries that relate to gender, sexuality, race, or religion. Drawing on qualitative interviews with victims of hate crimes in Ireland as well as with their family members, Haynes and Scheppe detect a form of 'policing' on the side of the offender and their imagined community – exactly in moments when their privilege appears to them to be at stake. In the end, it is not the individuality of the victim that is attacked but their embodiment of transgressing the social order, i.e. 'presenting' a body that is indexical of 'other' religions (e.g., wearing a beard or a *kippa*), of transgressing gender boundaries (e.g., wearing clothes allocated to the 'other' gender) or simply of 'other' visible physical features (e.g., having a different skin colour). Taking on such a perspective, as they argue, allows for a broader societal discussion on hate crimes in their primary function as 'message crimes' rather than individualising acts of hate crime or pathologising individual offenders. In the end, as can be concluded, it is the responsibility of society as a whole to address hate crimes, as they are embedded in its social structure.

5. Concluding thoughts

To conclude, we want to come back to the quotes at the beginning of the introduction by Ghandi, Moore and Nin. These quotes illustrate varying interpretations of the nature of taboos (as necessary, constraining, and meaningless). Yet, within their difference, they still portray taboos as inhabiting a specific place within and for the social fabric in that they regulate action, speaking, and communication. However, what the short overview of the chapters has made clear, taboos are not only social 'signposts', but inherent social devices, which mark what is 'normal' contrary to what is 'deviant'. Transgressions, then, make visible the limits of the taboo, and provoke a reaction that aims to reconfigure the apparently violated social order and to reclaim social control. The effects of that on individuals is clearly described in these contributions, as well as the price that these individuals and their social environment have to pay.

Reading taboos and transgressions in such a critical light, the necessity emerges to ask ourselves as a society, but also as scholars and citizens, to find ways of dealing with the categories and processes of categorisation embedded in the social structure that have residual and replicating effects of exclusion, discrimination, and hierarchisation. What has become clear in this effect is that violent transgressions as well as violent reactions to transgressions will not disappear (as

much as violence in itself might be a social taboo), as long as the modernist narrative, anchored in and fuelled by its colonial past, remains dominant, in spite of the diverse/diversified reality encountered in the national contexts. While we cannot dream of a one-fit-all solution at this point, it is nonetheless the aim of this volume to raise an interest in a critical reading of why certain taboos remain intact, why others get transgressed or even broken, who profits from such transgressions and who loses. As so often, these questions are linked to processes of power. And as ever so often, it is the already disenfranchised who have most to lose.

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Notes

¹ Cf. online at <https://www.afd.de/grundsatzprogramm/> (09.07.2019).

² Cf. an article on this in German published already in 2014: “Hier wird ein ...Tabu gebrochen” (22.09.2014), online at https://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/politik-hier-wird-ein-tabu-gebrochen_id_4147884.html (09.07.2019).

³ Cf. for example “Germany’s Taboos, Once a Bulwark Against the Far Right, May Now Be Enabling It” in the New York Times (17.02.2017), online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/17/world/europe/germany-far-right-politics-afd.html> (10.09.2018).

⁴ Cf. “Who Are The AfD? The First Radical Right Wing Party In Germany’s Bundestag Since 1945” in the Huffington Post (24.09.2017), online at https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/afd-german-elections_uk_59c5053ae4b01cc57ff18158?guccounter=1&guce_referrer_us=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_cs=9MyksLATYQftwWHhIA0u6A (09.07.2019).

⁵ Cf. online at <https://tu-dresden.de/gsw/ew/iew/ewib/kooperation/zentrum-fuer-integrationsstudien-zfi> (09.07.2019).

⁶ Cf. for example The Encyclopaedia Britannica, online at <https://www.britannica.com> (09.07.2019).

⁷ Cf. the entry on "Taboo" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, online at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/taboo-sociology> (08.07.2019).

(Meta-)Disparagement Humour: The Poetics and Politics of Mockery in the Sitcom *Two Broke Girls*

Abstract

This paper attends to popular culture as a venue in which ideas about social order are imaginatively negotiated. Zooming in on the genre of televisual comedy – the sitcom – it specifically asks how mass-mediated practices of mockery resonate with and circulate ideas about social hierarchies. The paper approaches mass-mediated mockery from a Cultural Studies perspective, as a signifying practice with its own poetics and politics, whose operations revolve around the ambiguous play with taboo and transgression. Proceeding from a set of conceptual remarks, the paper outlines a case study of the US-American sitcom *Two Broke Girls*, tracing how the show uses the humour of mockery in ways that critically challenge dominant discourses of femininity and class while reinforcing oppressive discourses of ‘race’.

1. Introduction

In 2015, well-known US-American comedian Jerry Seinfeld sparked a lively debate when he complained, in an interview, that political correctness allegedly kills comedy.¹ Seinfeld related how he had stopped playing college campuses because he was sure the allegedly pc-steeped audiences there would definitely find something in his shows that is offensive: “They just want to use these words. ‘That’s racist. That’s sexist. That’s prejudice’. They don’t even know what they’re talking about” (Silman 2015: n.pg.). These remarks became a platform for heated discussions, which not only several other comedians joined but also representatives of what Seinfeld treats as ‘pc culture’. One of these is Anthony Berteaux, signing off as “a ‘Politically Correct’ College Student” in an Open Letter published at *Huffington Post*, where he suggests that the problem with some comedy is not that it is offensive – in fact, he asserts that it is the very job of comedy to provoke – but that it is how and whom comedy offends that are contentious. Berteaux ends his Open Letter with a quote by another comedian, Todd Glass, who said, “You can be crass, you can be vulgar, and it’s not about worrying about offending people. Fuck offending people. Offend the right fucking people” (2015: n.pg.).

Seinfeld’s statement and its debate highlight the eminently political quality of comedy – a quality Seinfeld may claim to be falsely projected onto comedy by ‘misguided’ college students, yet which many debaters rightly point out to have always inhered in comedic practices. Comedy’s politicality is closely tied to its reliance on mockery and ridicule – its propensity, that is, to offend by laughter. Comedy’s laughter of mockery unfolds its cultural work at the very crossroads of taboo and transgression: Designed to entertain by playfully transgressing a variety of norms, comedic mockery and ridicule are inevitably implicated in articulations of difference and hierarchy between those who laugh and those who are laughed at – an aspect of mockery addressed by the ‘superiority theory’ of humour I discuss below. This function has made the laughter of mockery a staple element of racist, sexist, and other discourses of discrimination, whose long shadows tend to travel with practices of comedic entertainment. Yet the Seinfeld-debate also illustrates that comedy’s provocations do not necessarily have to serve extant discourses of discrimination, that, to the contrary, they can work against sedimented discursive practices. Their political valence depends on the distribution of agency in the economy of laughers and laughees – and this economy is often more complicated and ambiguous than it may initially seem. Proceeding from a Cultural Studies perspective, I want to probe into contemporary comedy’s complex poetics and politics of mockery, exploring how mass-mediated practices of mockery resonate with and circulate ideas about social hierarchies. To this end, I want to use as a case study an example of the arguably most popular comedic format: a sitcom.² The sitcom I selected – *Two Broke Girls*³ – is particularly productive in this context, on the one hand, because it is formally a very conventional sitcom, featuring, e.g., the laugh track that has been the genre’s trademark, as well as the broader con-

straints that come with airing on network TV.⁴ On the other hand, the show's setting of contemporary New York City and its multicultural ensemble of characters has it immediately address issues of social diversity and asymmetry – in ways that have sparked some controversy of their own: While several commentators charged the show with racism (cf., e.g., Ti 2012), others lauded its transgressive, raunchy humour – e.g., a review in *The Washington Post* applauded it for being “the filthiest show on network television” (Yahr 2017: n.pg.).⁵ To unpack this controversial politicality, I want to focus on what I call the double liminality of sitcom laughter. This laughter, I will argue, is tied to discursive boundaries on two levels: to the boundaries of social distinction and asymmetry, in whose negotiation the laughter of mockery plays a key role; and to the boundary between the expression and the critique of hegemonic discourses about difference, which laughter notoriously straddles as it works to ambiguate meaning. My argument will be that it is at the intersection of these boundaries where the tensions and complexities that resonate in the debate on Seinfeld's statement, and in the conflicting responses to *Two Broke Girls*, originate and where they are structured.

2. The discursive ‘border operations’ of (sitcom) laughter

My discussion proceeds from the idea that the mockery-based laughter courted by sitcoms is tied to boundaries on two intersecting levels. First, laughter is deeply involved in the articulation of social difference. As a relational practice that involves (at least) one who laughs and one who is laughed at, the laughter of mockery and ridicule is implicated in the creation of a hierarchical difference between self and other: Mockery particularly resonates with what humour studies calls the ‘superiority theory’ of humour (cf., e.g., Stott 2005; Billig 2005), which argues that laughter is a key mode in which distinctions are articulated and claims to superiority are staked. This theory is typically traced back to both classical and humanist thinkers, including Thomas Hobbes who famously suggested, in *Human Nature* (1650), that “[l]aughter is nothing else but a sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others” (cited in Stott 2005: 127). The type of laughter that Hobbes aims at realises itself as self-glorification, generating a positive sense of self out of the disparagement of others. Stott accordingly notes that, for superiority theorists, “laughter is always antagonistic and conflictual, establishing a hierarchy at the moment of pleasure” (ibid.).

In mass-mediated venues of laughter like television sitcoms, such discursive work tends to go beyond the individual level on which Hobbes focused and to invoke culturally shared notions of social difference and inequality, tapping into well-established discourses of alterity like gender, ‘race’, ethnicity, and class. Stereotypes are the main currency of mass-mediated mockery – in fact, mass-mediated mockery needs stereotypes as much as social practices of stereotyping depend on mockery: This interrelationship between mockery and stereotyping has been particularly addressed in the concept of “disparagement humour” (Ford 2015), a concept primarily circulating in the social sciences. Disparagement humour, understood as “communication that is intended to elicit amusement through the denigration, derogation, or belittlement of a given target” (ibid.: 163), is seen as a significant social force, shaping social relationships in a variety of ways. Following William Martineau's (1972) influential model of humour's social functions, research has especially focused on how disparagement humour influences prejudice, with studies often arguing a positive correlation (cf. Ford 2015).⁶

While it is largely uncontested that the humour of mockery addresses discourses of social distinction and hierarchy, and that it typically speaks in stereotypes, an argument that such humour necessarily creates and reinforces prejudice stands on shaky ground from my Cultural Studies perspective – which brings me to the second boundary that informs sitcom laughter: Humour

notoriously works as an agent of ambiguation, opening up the possibility of a substantial difference between what is said and what is meant – in other words, humour carries with it the possibility of irony. A recent study in the tradition of disparagement theory throws into relief how such an ambiguity is woven into the very fabric of humour. Communication studies scholar Caitlin Brown coins the term ‘meta-disparagement humour’ to conceptualise humour that “explicitly target[s] a marginalized group while implicitly ridiculing those who would laugh at such jokes. [...] Taken at face value, these jokes are offensive perpetuations of stereotypes” (2012: 2) which, however, invite the audience to laugh at the stereotyper rather than the stereotyped. For Brown, disparagement humour becomes ‘meta’ when comedic communication re-directs its mockery from stereotyped social groups to those who engage in stereotyping. Her discussion offers compelling examples of how a humour of mockery is used to expose and ridicule prevailing practices of stereotyping and to thus challenge hegemonic discourses of social difference, e.g., when she talks about the routines of African-American comedians like David Chapelle or the early Eddie Murphy that hyperbolically mock racist humour. Less compelling, however, are her efforts to demarcate disparagement- and meta-disparagement humour as two clearly distinguishable phenomena. Meta-disparagement humour, she claims, is marked by a hyperbolic quality, yet this is very much a relative, context- and recipient-dependent property. Elsewhere, her own discussion concedes this when she notes how meta-disparagement jokes carry the potential of being ‘misunderstood’ as disparagement: “[W]hile meta-disparagement humor purports to undermine stereotypes, it may in fact reinforce and perpetuate them. [...] [M]eta-disparagement humour is a double-edged phenomenon, indulging in stereotypes to ridicule them” (ibid.: xi). Recent discussions of ‘hipster racism’ add another dimension to the (alleged) misunderstanding of (allegedly) meta-disparagement humour. As blogger Lindy West, e.g., points out, irony has become a significant technique of 21st-century ‘post-racial’ racism: “[R]acism went underground. Sure, you can’t say racist things anymore, but you can *pretend to say them*” (2012: n.pg., original emphasis). What Brown terms meta-disparagement always piggybacks disparagement, and vice versa; the social meaning-making of mockery humour is always a “double-edged phenomenon” (2012: xi).

This fundamental ambiguity takes on a new quality when we move from jokes, which are Brown’s immediate objects of inquiry, to more complex communicative structures like sitcoms. There, the roles of agents and targets of mockery tend to be even less clearly allocated – and, as noted above, the distribution of agency in humour is key to its politics. The laugh-track of classic sitcoms may seem to mark the targets of mockery, but as *Two Broke Girls* illustrates, it brings only little clarity to the question whether the stereotyped or the stereotyper are to be highlighted as objects of laughter. Things get even more diffuse when considering the agent(s) of mockery: The agency behind sitcom-mockery can be both figural and authorial – it can be distributed among several characters in its storyworld, who hand out ridicule to each other, and/or it can also disappear behind the apparatus of the medium, when the mis-en-scène and storytelling perform the mockery. In addition, an extensive text like a sitcom is prone to rotate the roles of mocker and mockee – in the course of a sitcom’s run, even in the course of a single episode, every social identification represented in the storyworld may become the target of ridicule. This dispersal and potential obfuscation of agents and targets ambiguate the social meaning-making of mockery humour even more. What I want to suggest, then, is that a dichotomy of disparagement versus meta-disparagement does not get us very far because a mainstream sitcom like *Two Broke Girls* notoriously blurs the line between them. For an exploration of the show’s politics, it is more productive to ask how its humour of mockery is structured; where and how it evokes our social reality; and how it engages with the role that distinction and denigration play in the formation and transformation of our social order.

3. The poetics and politics of mockery in *Two Broke Girls*

Two Broke Girls thrives on mockery. (Almost) everybody mocks (almost) everybody else in the series. Its storytelling revolves around moments of mockery, ridicule, and embarrassment, which fuel the laughter to which its laugh-track so explicitly invites its audience. Most centrally, however, its character- and plot-design are based on a poetics of mockery: Major as well as minor characters are conceived as social types, caricatures even, whose characterisations mock the respective social identification, especially by tapping into well-established stereotypes. This ubiquity of mockery in the sitcom's composition projects a storyworld marked by social differences and asymmetries – differences and asymmetries that evoke our contemporary social reality not only through their geographic and historical references, but also by the way in which social boundaries in the storyworld are in flux. The sitcom's narrative throws together two white female characters in their mid-20s who, in their lives prior to the onset of the plot, had been divided by class: the working-class Max and the upper-class Caroline, who suddenly finds herself without money when her father is indicted for financial fraud and loses his fortune. The two end up working together in a diner, where they jointly pursue the dream of saving enough money to open a business of their own. Next to Caroline's downward and the two protagonists' dream of upward social mobility, also geographic mobility unsettles social boundaries in the sitcom's storyworld. It is set in an acutely gentrifying neighbourhood, whose original immigrant, working-class population, represented primarily by the diner's employees, is getting displaced by more affluent white newcomers, who chiefly figure as the diner's customers.

Like all characters, these newcomers are depicted as social types – namely as 'hipsters', whose representation draws on existing hipster-clichés.⁷ Hipsters are the most consensual targets of mockery in the show: The sitcom's own character-design and mis-en-scène already ridicule them, and then characters in the storyworld additionally mock them on a regular basis. In the show's first season, episodes often open with a teaser that organises around hipster-bashing, typically by Max who derides one or several of her customers. The opening of the pilot may serve as an example:

Hipster Customer I [snapping his fingers]: Excuse me. Waitress? Dude?

Max: Hi, what can I get you? [Snaps her fingers in his face while speaking]. Is that annoying? Is that obnoxious and rude? Would you find it distracting if someone did that to you while you were working? Oh, you don't have a job. Sorry.

Hipster Customer II: Damn, dude, she burned you.

Max: Oh, no, hipster. No. Do not think we're on the same team. We have nothing in common. I wear knit hats when it's cold out. You wear knit hats because of Coldplay. You have tattoos to piss off your dad. My dad doesn't know he's my dad. And finally, you think [snapping her fingers] this is the sound that gets you service. I think [snapping] this is the sound that dries up my vagina. (Pilot 2011)

In the show's depiction of the hipster-customers, authorial and figural mockery are closely intertwined – the ridicule voiced by characters like Max resonates with the hipsters' already clichéd depiction (they all feature vintage clothes, knit hats, and a labouredly alternative style), contributing to their construction as caricatures of a particular social identification.

The same holds true for the show's recurrent characters. They, too, regularly mock each other in ways that resonate with the already stereotyped conception of their characters. There is Han, the Asian-born owner of the diner where the protagonists work, who is conceived as a sexless, effeminate man with a heavy, and heavily clichéd, Asian accent. Remarks by other characters – marked by the laugh-track as humorous – often address his Asianness, playing on well-worn stereotypes. For example, in season one's second episode, Max interrupts Caroline telling Han that the spelling of her name on her name-tag is incorrect: "You can't tell an Asian he made a mistake. He'll go in back and throw himself on a sword" (And the break-up scene 2011). Or in another epi-

sode, Oleg, the diner's cook, responds to an instruction by his boss saying, "Don't tell me what to do. I was working here when you were still a dumpling on your father's chopstick" (And the pop-up sale 2011). In later seasons, figural mockery of Han chiefly focuses on his height. Along similarly caricaturistic lines, the show features as minor characters an elderly, street-wise African-American, Earl, working as the diner's cashier, whose jive-talking remarks accentuate a past as Jazz musician and drug user; and there is sex-obsessed Eastern-European cook Oleg, who primarily harasses the female characters around him with unregenerate sexism ("Max, you look like a lady. Tonight when I dream of having sex with you, as always, this time I will ask you to stay" [And hoarder culture 2011]), but who also voices the occasional racist slur.

The two main protagonists are no less built on stereotypes, and the fact that one is a blond and the other a brunette woman is only the beginning. The working-class Max is conceived as promiscuous and financially illiterate, and she is furnished with the backstory of a difficult upbringing in a single-parent household. In addition to the obvious authorial mockery entailed in her caricaturistic character-design, Max is also regularly positioned as an object of figural mockery, namely by herself. The self-deprecating humour staged around Max especially targets the character's promiscuity (e.g., in a fight with their boss Han, Caroline quips: "I'm not as easy as Max", to which Max responds: "Said every girl in my seventh-grade class" [And the soft opening 2013]). The character of upper-class Caroline, in turn, is constructed as spoiled yet well-meaning and kind, and as equipped with an inborn sense of business. Figural mockery of Caroline is frequently voiced by Max, targeting the former's (partially lost) privilege, which is often metonymised as her whiteness. For example, when Caroline shows off her knowledge of Spanish, Max retorts: "You're the only person I know who seems whiter speaking Spanish" (And a loan for Christmas 2014). Or in the following exchange at a Jewish customer's house:

Caroline [to the customer]: I'm so happy to be in your warm and wonderful home. I was very close to my neighbours, the Kleins. In fact, they called me their honorary Jew.

Max [to Caroline]: Stop now. This is like when you tell Earl you're practically black. (And the kosher cupcakes 2012)

Socially framed mockery thus permeates the show's humour. First of all, this mockery is marked by hyperbole. There is nothing subtle about the show's use of stereotypes – they are exaggerated to the effect of flaunting their own stereotypicality. Second, the mockery is multi-directional. There is no unified agency behind it, no social position that holds the discursive privilege of handing out mockery without being mocked back. While the character of Max holds a privileged position as the most frequent dispenser of ridicule, every character, and every social group they are framed to represent, stand at the receiving end. Together, these two properties work toward ambiguating the politics of the show's humour. Its audiences can equally feel invited to indulge in the stereotypes invoked, to take pleasure at their iteration and laugh with them at particular social or ethnic groups, or they can feel invited to laugh at the practices of stereotyping that the show represents in such exaggerated, rapid-fire fashion, to laugh at stereotype-driven ways of looking at the world and the logic behind them. As a pop-cultural artefact that aims to please the largest possible audience, the show seems designed to keep open both possibilities.

While this ambiguity has varying political potentials – it can work to affirm or to challenge hegemonic discourses about social difference – its structure, I suggest, ultimately does more for reinforcing hegemonic discourses of difference and discrimination than for challenging them. For one, the multi-directional quality of the show's humour puts on the same level stereotypes and practices of mockery that are actually attached to very different contexts – stereotypes of workingclass people or of immigrant groups come out of histories and power-relations that are fundamentally different from hipster memes: disparagement, also and especially through mockery, is, of course, deeply written into the histories of oppression against marginalized groups. In smooth-

ing down these differences – claiming that all instances of mockery are created equal – the show deflects attention from the political constellations in which practices of mockery take place and assume social meaning. In so doing, the show depoliticises its own humour, thus not aiding the discussion of social justice – as progressive meta-disparagement humour does – but actually making it more difficult.

In addition, the show's economy of humour navigates the landscape of social inequality – in which several forces of discrimination coexist and intersect – in a problematic, tendentious way. Its narratives clearly prioritize an engagement with discourses and experiences of class and of gender. In the context of this priority, the show does use humour to unfold interesting, unconventional narratives. It is one of the very few pieces of US-American popular culture, past and present, that talks about poverty, celebrating the resilience of poor characters to make it through. And it offers a still rare, unconventional depiction of women, especially in the character of Max – a heroine who is self-reliant, dirty-mouthed, and unapologetically sexual. As Emily Nussbaum put it in her review for *The New Yorker*, *Two Broke Girls* stands out by featuring “a deep female friendship, raw humor about class, and a show that puts young women's sexuality dead center, rather than using it as visual spice, as in some cable series about bad-boy antiheroes” (2011: n.pg.). Yet the show reduces its engagement with poverty and femininity to the context of whiteness, ignoring the extent to which class and gender are always also mediated by other categories of social difference. While this reduction may be understandable – after all, even a television series can have only so many protagonists – the show specifically enlists its (impressively) diverse cast of minor characters as screen and foil for a narrative of emphatically white femininity and poverty: The resilience in poverty of its two protagonists is, to a significant extent, dramatized through practices of mockery directed at ethnic others. The staging of their self-reliant and refreshingly ungentle femininity similarly relies on ethnically marked characters as discursive sparring partners. The show's narrative builds its protagonists' self-making as socially mobile, self-confident, white women on the mocking denigration – yes, of white hipsters – but also of immigrants and people of colour.

A final aspect that marks the politics of the show's humour concerns a blind spot in the multi-directionality of its mockery. While its narratives heavily rotate the role of mockee among its cast of characters, there is one social position that never is laughed at in the sitcom – the position of the upwardly mobile. The two main protagonists' dream of climbing the social ladder by starting a business is never mocked: The pursuit of this dream may bring them into situations where the narratives ridicule them – in fact, much of the embarrassment that is so central to sitcoms is staged in contexts where they try to develop their cupcake-business – but the dream itself is not mocked. The show makes a point in dramatizing this subject position of the upwardly mobile as an ongoing journey and desire, using its serial form to forever defer fulfilment of that desire and its protagonists' arrival in the middle class: All episodes end with an image that shows the tally of the money that the two protagonists currently have. Over the course of the show's six seasons, this number is going up but also down, and the show ends its (yet) final episode with a tally of zero, the same number with which *Two Broke Girls* started. The show's sincere celebration of this perpetual effort toward upward mobility – something the show accentuates by exempting it from its otherwise ubiquitous poetics of mockery – deeply resonates with the discourse of neoliberalism. It advertises a perspective on social order in which the “individual is ‘responsibilized’ as a self-sufficient moral agent and social problems become failures of the individual” (England/Ward 2016: 57), denying the role that structural and collective factors play in the creation, maintenance, and remedying of social asymmetries. In a narrative set in the economic crisis of the early 2000s and concerned with experiences of poverty, this neoliberal ethos of individual responsabilization places severe limitations on what can be narratively explored.

4. Conclusion

Mass-mediated popular culture is a key venue where ideas about social order are negotiated, broadly circulated, and made evident by being tied to the experiences of pleasure that mark them as entertainment. In the United States – with its long history of immigration, of slavery and its aftermath, and of hemispheric colonialism – pop-cultural negotiations of social order have always centrally revolved around notions of difference, be they framed as racial, ethnic, or religious. These negotiations are not necessarily and only invested in stabilising the hegemonic status quo, as a Frankfurt-School critique of the ‘culture industry’ would have it. Scholarship in the tradition of Cultural Studies insists that the popular, as a cultural register primarily tied to the non-elite, also has the potential to unsettle hegemonic discourses, to try out other narrative interpretations of the world, to make different social arrangements imaginable.⁸ In a Cultural Studies approach, what is in order is a thorough unpacking of the – typically complex – politics of pop-cultural artefacts, thus encouraging literacy in the politicality of seemingly unpolitical entertainment.

It was such an unpacking that I tried to offer in this essay. I focused on the politics of comedy in an exemplary contemporary sitcom – a genre whose political valence is often overlooked. This political valence chiefly revolves around the humour of mockery that sitcoms employ. I structured my discussion around the multiple liminality of sitcom laughter revolving around transgression and taboo: its work to negotiate boundaries of social difference, its articulation of these boundaries through the provocation of various norms and taboos – of polite speech, of appropriate media content, and of ‘political correctness’ – and the political ambiguity woven into these articulations. I traced this boundary-work in the sitcom *Two Broke Girls*. The show, I argued, uses a humour of mockery for a narrative that, to some extent, disturbs dominant discourses of femininity and of class, yet that, at the same time, privileges whiteness and a neoliberal view of society.

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Notes

¹ Seinfeld is, of course, not alone in wielding the phrase 'political correctness' as an indictment. Over the last one or two decades, 'political correctness' has developed into a significant rallying cry of American neoconservatives, used to attack and de-authorize a culture and policies dedicated to the remedying of histories of discrimination and oppression by portraying them as censorship. For a discussion of this phenomenon, in the light of Donald Trump's use of this tactic, cf. Weigel 2016.

² In a United States context, the sitcom is one of the earliest genres that took root in the medium of television. Sitcoms distinguish themselves – or rather, they used to distinguish themselves, as this is changing – by a comedic orientation, a strictly episodic structure with half-hour episodes, and a shooting style that either involves a live audience or a laugh-track (cf. Mills 2009).

³ The program ran for six seasons, from 2011 to 2017, on the American television-network CBS.

⁴ These constraints include, e.g., a ban on 'offensive' content enforced by the United States Federal Communications Commission. In facing such constraints, *Two Broke Girls* differs from many of the comedies aired on cable TV and streaming platforms that make a point in being unconventional and transgressive, in terms of form as well as content, such as *Veep* (HBO), *Girls* (HBO), *Orange Is the New Black* (Netflix), or *Dear White People* (Netflix). For the concept of 'transgressive television', cf. Däwes/Ganser/Poppenhagen (2015).

⁵ Yahr (2017), in fact, also critiques the show's reliance on racist jokes, especially in its first seasons, but her review makes a point in also identifying redeeming qualities.

⁶ Especially empirical work in the field of social psychology has found that exposure to disparagement humor can encourage racist, sexist and other discriminatory forms of prejudice (cf., e.g., Janes/James 2000; Ford 2000).

⁷ 'Hipster' has emerged as a derogatory designation for a particular type of urban, white, middle-class people, typically young, with visible investments in fashion and style, who often function as spearheads of gentrification (cf., e.g., Greif/Ross/Tortorici 2010).

⁸ One of the key scholars in the Cultural-Studies tradition of Television Studies is John Fiske. Cf. his classic publication *Television culture* (1987).

Accredited Affects: Discourses and Taboos around Migration and Threat¹

Abstract

Racist actions, representations, and speech have become widespread and socially acceptable in twenty-first century Europe. Affects and ways of speaking in the European public sphere that are tied to racist differentiations between a national, ethnic, racial and/or culturally coded 'us' and the dangerous, backward 'them' (not-us), which furthermore serve to strengthen this differentiation, can be described and understood as a practice of Othering/Selfing with recourse to staged threat scenarios and scenes. In this paper we argue that societal and cultural (de)privileging mechanisms require a twofold process. Firstly, for the dominant society a process of active dissociation, aphasing and making a taboo of exactly those feelings of fear and threat as experienced by the marginal other (migrant, asylum seeker, phenotypically marked other), needs to take place. Secondly, any historical references or memories of racial oppression and violence must become the subject of taboo and thus colonially aphased. Using this affective mechanism or structure we aim to show, using the example of New Year's Eve in Cologne 2015, how fear slides between bodies sticking to some and not to others and how the different bodies in whom fear has taken residence transform and why.

1. Introduction

Fear read as a societal phenomenon means not only understanding its creation and genealogy but also understanding the role that fear plays as an articulating agent in positions of entitlement, dignity, dominance and superiority. This from the perspective of societal contexts founded on migration means asking: Whose bodies are being privileged with the capacity to articulate fear? Whose bodies are being represented publicly as human bodies that are valuable, emotional, sensitive, and vulnerable, in need of protection with rights considered worthy of defending? Whose bodies are being represented publicly as bodies that threaten humanity? Whose fear is heard, translated into threat and acted upon? Whose bodies are not considered worth protecting and what about their feelings of fear, threat and human rights? How do those bodies that mark themselves as superior manage to stage and defend their fear and emotional sensibilities as something cultured, precious and worth consideration? What are the productive mechanisms that make this kind of self-aggrandisement possible? What does it produce?

Using this line of questioning and borrowing from Sara Ahmed (2014: 62–80), who argues that fear is viscous, mobile and sticky, we aim to show in this paper, referring to the example of New Year's Eve in Cologne 2015/2016, how fear slides between bodies sticking to some and not to others and how the different bodies in whom fear has taken residence transform and why. Before we address the contemporary Cologne events, let us first go back in history.

2. Racist representations in the present and their historical contexts

2.1 History of sexualised racism

The practice of lynching first became a socially condoned, frequently practiced terrorizing strategy in America's Reconstruction-era postwar South between 1880 until 1930 and became a commonly accepted strategy of terror whereby over 3000 African Americans were lynched, often after having had to endure the most horrendous torture (cf. Ketelsen 2000; Nagel 2003). During this time free black men, former slaves, could for the first time profit economically from their own labour as well as entering the political realm. This new economic competition and political participation from freedmen was perceived as a social threat to the previously unchallenged white hegemonic power constellations. Also, the fear, particularly of whites from the south, that

freed slaves would seek revenge for the sexual violence against and exploitation of black women during slavery, intensified the feeling of threat (cf. Gunning 1996). Although rape of white women and murder (of mostly white women) was the officially documented justification for lynching of black men, in more cases than not the crimes were economically and politically motivated.

In the case of the Ku Klux Klan's castration and threatened lynching in 1870 of Henry Lowther, a married former slave, it was his political involvement in the Republican Party and having established a successful grocery business that was seen as a reversal of the natural order and the threat to white dominance. The justification for the crime carried out by the Ku Klux Klan was Henry Lowther's supposed "sexual disrespect for and illicit relations with white women" (Nagel 2003: 113). Joanne Nagel points out that "[t]his bugaboo of the white female vulnerability to black male sexuality provided cover for white efforts to stop economic competition between whites and blacks, and served as a convenient excuse for white men to reassert their control over black men" (ibid.: 112). The sex of the other was staged and consequently experienced (this not posing a contradiction) as particularly dangerous (cf. Manderson/Jolly 1997), when the other, although not yet equal, had become a potential competitor or at least threatened to do so. In the time before the Civil War, Afro-American slaves were perceived as "overabundant" (Nagel 2003: 109), equipped with a brimming physicality rather than imagined as sexually dangerous. Sex between white women and black men at the time was labelled and dismissed by white men as a sign of these women's lower class status and moral decadency: "[W]hite ideology about lower-class female sexuality [could] overshadow ideas about the dangers of black male sexuality" (Hodes 1993: 60). As becomes clear, it is the socio-historical contexts that influence how the bodies of Afro-American men and the bodies of white women who engage with them become furnished with meaning and affects. The accusation of rape by black men of white women after the Civil War developed into a central argument used by the white perpetrators. Lynching for rape turned out to be a particularly effective means of social control, not only of African Americans but simultaneously of white women (cf. Ketelsen 2000). At the same time it was a spectacle: Towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, public lynching became widely publicised, massively attended, voyeuristic consumer spectacles of maintaining hegemonic patriarchal white social control that stabilised hegemonic, racist power constructions (cf. Nagel 2003).

If it is the case that sex between white women and non-white men is reduced to expressions of violence by colonised men directed at white women, then the case is made to control, punish and ultimately eliminate the threat and, thus, those persons marked as threatening. Bringing the deliberations of Nagel (2003), Stoler (1997), McClintock (1995), and many others to mind, and the many historical examples they provide to support their hypotheses, it becomes clear that in colonial times it was this possibility of losing the racial sexual contest that was at the heart of the white male anxiety around female sexual agency and miscegenation between white women and colonised men. If native men rape, rather than freely engaging in consensual sexual relations, then white men have a reason to eliminate the threat of the other by exterminating him under the noble guise of protecting 'pure-white women' from 'savage native men'. In this imagined battle, the white woman's body becomes the battlefield, and the sexual penetrative possession of her body the trophy of conquest. Colonial white men had a vested interest in winning this battle in order to maintain credibility and power as the superior race which meant control of and access to all colonised bodies, male and female, including those of white women. Women exhibiting any form of sexual agency represented a grave threat to the colonial male because she could consciously undermine him (cf. McClintock 1995; Stoler 1997; Ware 1996). For a white woman to freely choose a non-white man was to reject empire and negate the foundation of its discursive message (cf. Dietrich 2007; Grosse 2003; Kundrus 2003; Wildenthal 2001). Women without sexual agency were more easily managed in this sexualised battle. Thus, everything in colonial men's

power was invested in keeping alive the ideal of the sexually submissive, pure, European woman, victim in need of colonial male protection. Making her the squeaky-clean upholder of empire was one of many ploys to subjugate and control her (cf. McClintock 1995; Stoler 1997).

The sexualising of others and the attribution of threat that emanates from their sexuality, in particular in reference to 'our women', is a practice that is not exclusive, albeit a characteristic component of such societal contexts that are undisguisedly racist, as they were in the USA roughly one hundred years ago. The staging of sexualised threats is however also a hallmark for such contexts that are structured by a racist tradition, which continues to be productive even when postracism is the official societal position. In summary, a logic of affect entails three important moments: firstly the dominant willingness to sexualise the other, secondly to phantasize the sexuality of the other as powerful and violent, in effect causing it to be experienced as a threat and, thirdly, to take the phantasized dangerous sexuality of the other, not only as reason and justification to explain the affect and outburst of one's own anger, but much more so as evidence for the necessity of a disciplinary sanctioning intervention and control of the others.

This affect-logic or structure is not only found in the AfD-milieu² but also in anti-AfD-milieus, witnessed across the board in the concerned speaking of parents and partners (cf. here the results of the so called *Mitte-Studie* by Decker/Kiess/Brähler 2016). Our argument at this point is that only by historically contextualising this affect-logic, in other words, exposing its origins and genealogy, the condition of possibility is granted to position one's own affective responses in a meaningful, self-reflexive relation to the culturally dominant meaning of this historically inscribed affective paradigm. In so doing, the possibility of seeing the world a little more clearly is opened – this interrogation includes directing the critical lens at the sexual violence in socially declassified milieus (in which statistically more non-whites are to be found) as well as the sexual violence of the economically better placed milieus (in which there are statistically more non-racially discreditable persons to be found).³

Certainly, the open articulation of racist images and expressions in societal contexts that present themselves as 'post-racial' becomes a subject of taboo and is considerably more complicated. Knowing that the utterance of racially discriminating thoughts and opinions will be responded to with social sanctions and critique, the speech acts require well thought through preventative follow up measures or clauses such as "I'm not a racist but I do think that ...". This parallel strategy of both articulating racist utterances while simultaneously cloaking the utterance to avoid social sanctions and disapproval is time consuming and invariably impacts, decreases, constrains and dilutes the pleasure that literally sticks to racist articulations. Excuses, denials, singling out, making a case out of context, are all probate means of a systematic discursive covering up. An effective way of performing this denial is to rely on visual imagery. On pictures, that which can (no longer) be said, for example, that the black man, based on his innate bodily nature, represents a grave sexual threat to 'our women', can be communicated visually without censorship (cf. Said 1978; Hall 2013; Torgovnick 1990; Wiggers 2007). By applying this veiled strategy, the pleasure of the taboo can be experienced by the perpetrator/voyeur while simultaneously denying any personal accountability in the violence of its articulation. A small heteronormative privilege in this visual strategy is the secret consumption of the near pornographic representation of the white woman and the pleasure gained from speaking about the projected sexuality and criminality of the phantasized oriental other (see Figure 1). Furthermore, the historically tabooed, and in patriarchally structured fields of contemporary society, still relatively unspoken topic of (white) women's sexual agency and self-determined sexuality, in which she chooses sexual partners due to her own particular desires, gets lost and goes un-reflected in the over-representation of the sexual threat of the black man of (North)-African, Arabic, Middle Eastern appearance, and so forth. The linguistic and cultural rule that produces this sequencing, this 'and so forth', this 'et cetera',

is a racist rule, because in this imagined sequence of the 'etc.', we will not find white persons as perpetrators, which is astonishing, given that in Germany most cases of sexual attacks are perpetrated by white men.

2.2 Racist representations in Germany today

Racist representations and speech have become socially acceptable in 21st century Post *National Socialist* Germany. One example: The title page of Focus magazine from the January 8, 2016 (Figure 1). Here we are dealing with a thoroughly sexualised representation of a woman. We see the body of a naked, white, presumably younger, perhaps 28-year-old, blond woman, whose breasts are covered with her left arm and a red beam that runs diagonally across her body. Her own right hand in contrast coyly shields her pubic area from view. Her eyes are cut out of the frame, but her mouth is in view and slightly open. On her body are visible five paw-like imprints of male hands that mark and simultaneously declare her as possession. They are not coloured blue or green but black: both oily and dirty at once. The title page asks: "After the sex-attacks of migrants: Are we still tolerant or already blind?"



Figure 1: The title page of Focus magazine (January 2016)

This depiction of the Focus magazine is racist because of the lurid, obtrusive and emotionally manipulative way migrants, with the help of sexualised representations, are demonised and yet in the very same breath an 'us' ("Are we still tolerant or already blind?") is constructed, that is white. The title page thus plays the black and white game. The others are black, violent, faceless, brazen, dangerous and dirty. We on the other hand are white, pure, vulnerable, civilised, chaste and ex-

alted. The 'us' that asks itself if it is tolerant or already blind, and whom the Focus magazine is addressing, consists of white women, who are groped by black migrant hands, and white men, that have to protect 'our women'.

The media representation and public commentary of the Cologne New Year's Eve 2015/2016⁴ events point to a deeply entrenched historical amnesia in relation to the racist reality. The subjectifying and disciplining discursive practice, in which sexuality is linked and melded into national, ethnic and culturally coded positions, is by no means new. The racist speech acts, declarations and actions, targeting racially othered persons in recent times, that are uttered without any reference or memory of Germany's racist history, are indicative of a time-tested affect-logic contained in the processes of colonial aphasia (cf. Stoler 2016). As we will see in the following historical reference, Germany is well experienced in sexualising nationally, ethnically and culturally coded others and in the process producing the sexualised black subject (cf. Nagel 2003).

2.3 Historical background

To recall the historical memory of this we can stay right here in the geographic locality of Cologne in Germany's Rhineland and need only to travel back in time to the Post World War I French occupation of the Rhineland. Of the roughly 85.000 French soldiers 30.000–40.000 were from French colonies of North and West Africa (Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Senegal together with Madagascar and several others). Here, much like in Cologne New Year's Eve 2015, it was a single event that tipped the tide of social tolerance when a French Moroccan soldier fired into a group of civilians with his machine gun and in the process killed several German nationals (cf. Wigger 2007).

The repercussions of this single event were enduring, state-wide coordinated protest campaigns that had widespread international support against the presence of non-white soldiers in the Rhineland. In the national parliament, all parties except the USPD⁵ and the KPD⁶ declared these soldiers and men as

[...] a pack of black brutes driven by excessive sexual instincts, that would pollute the purity of the German people. [...] The 'wild beasts' were supposed to be 'a shocking danger' for women and children, who were presumed to rape members of the white race en masse and with this threaten the entire Western cultural sphere. (Translated by the authors from Wigger 2007: 11)⁷

They were described as *eine unauslöschliche Schmach* ("an ineradicable humiliation"), *ein schwarzer Schrecken* ("a black horror") and *eine schwarze Schande* ("a black disgrace"). Many politicians, including Friedrich Ebert and Adolf Köster, tried to rally support from *die weisse Welt* ("the white world") in the fight to eliminate the *schwarze Schmach* ("black humiliation") from the Rhineland. Their justification was that "the use of coloured troupes of the most inferior culture to guard a population of high mental capabilities and economic significance such the Rhinelanders' would seriously undermine and wound "the laws of European civilisation" (ibid.).⁸

Beginning in 1920, protest campaigns took place across Europe and the USA. The US-American eugenicist and defender of white supremacy, Ray Beveridge, who was working in close collaboration with professor August Ritter, director of the German-US American organised Steuben Society, during a public lecture in the *Löwenbräu* Cellar in Munich passionately appealed to the German people to introduce lynching laws, as practiced in the USA, to keep the black population under control (cf. Wigger 2007; 2017). In the public propaganda campaign against the colonial French soldiers in the Rhineland, societal indignation erupted in what was perceived as the threat posed by the unrestrained, lecherous bodies of an inferior cultural order. Propagandistic representations in popular magazines, newspapers, flyers, posters, postcards, stamps as well as artfully

crafted and mass-produced copper medallions upon which black men were depicted as sex offenders, sexually driven, libidinally uncontrolled, polluters of the pure white race and rapists of white women, were sold *en masse* and intensively consumed during this period. In these representations, black soldiers already scarred by a history of French colonialism in Africa, recent and precarious French citizens, were once again in an act of colonially inspired thinking and an attempt to maintain and justify white supremacy in Germany, once again violently stripped of all humanity, agency and human dignity.

When placing the media representations of the contemporary Cologne New Year's Eve events side by side with historic pictures of the *schwarze Schmach vom Rhein* ("black humiliation of the Rhine") even without referencing lynch practices in North America, one cannot help but notice the similarity of patterns, justification strategies, symbolic orders and racist representations. In Germany, however, the historic connections are not remembered and not brought into discursive articulation with the contemporary Cologne events. We are dealing here with an institution-alised form of historical amnesia, or, as Ann Laura Stoler (2011) would more accurately conceptualise it, "colonial aphasia".⁹



Figure 2: Ink drawing, "The Black Humiliation: Attack and Rape of a Rhineland Girl by a Madagascar Negro", in The French in the Ruhr Region 10, drawings by A. M. Cay Berlin oz. 1923 (Wigger 2007: 87).

The propagandistic pictures of barbaric, uncivilised, *ohrenabschneidenden schwarzen Soldaten* ("ear-severing black soldiers") (cf. Koller 2001: 208) were first propagated by the French but then taken up and disseminated by the outraged German public, who felt themselves humiliated under French occupation (cf. *ibid.*). It was the representation of white women's bodies in racist demonising campaigns that served to mobilize the negative sentiments against Afro-French soldiers.

In order to secure the morally outraged support for and readiness to engage in the fight, women's bodies, in a classic strategy, are discursively staged as on the one hand oppressed and en-

slaved and on the other as honourable, chaste and pure, the innocent guardians of the German nation and in need of its patriarchal protection. The mediation of racial concepts and racialized thinking about sexualised images and discourses about sex has a (racist) tradition (cf. McClintock 1995; Ware/Back 1992), and, furthermore, sexuality is defined and constructed through concepts of race, nationality and class: "Just as ethnicity is sexualized, sex is itself racialized, ethicized and nationalized" (Nagel 2003: 55).

Contemporary sex-discourses are coupled with violent structures of debasement and denigration, of subjugation and dehumanisation. Men are attributed labels such as 'of North African appearance', 'black', 'migrant', and thus produced and fixed as a commonly recognised public threat. Non-white women, their desires and their (negative) experiences with white or non-white men, as well as non-heterosexual practices are almost non-existent in these discourses. The recognizable strategy of social control and violent subordination depends in this case on the continued production, justification and defence of an imagined, repetitively invoked, white European superiority with heteronormative, Northern European, white, Christian, enlightened men and immediately following them similarly marked women, inhabiting the highest positions of power in society.

3. The performativity of fear in threat scenarios

We read fear on the one hand as an emotion or affect – and on the other as an articulation of a cultural privilege, i.e. the privilege of being able to articulate fear, as an affect that turns its back on the subjects reduced to object/bodies, because they are associated with danger and are thus threatening. The cultural meaning of this association or articulation (the articulation of affect – danger – body) becomes apparent through a process of historiography, which for our purposes here means: referencing racist colonially inspired affects, tropes and stereotypes to do with danger and the body. Our questions are as follows: Who, based on what conditions counts as physically and morally dangerous (although it needs to be stressed that 'who'-subjects do not just exist but are produced by means of those precise historical associations)? Furthermore, we ask: Who, based on what social conditions is attributed the privilege of expressing their personal fear (in the public sphere) as an absolute fear?

These questions that we place centre stage attempt to look at the societal conditions of possibility that make the articulation of affects, fear, for instance, possible. The difficulty of speaking about racism in Germany and in many other national contexts, is virulent, thus making it difficult for those people affected negatively by racism to talk about their anger, their shame, but also their fear (for instance the fear that something bad could happen to their own non-white children). This kind of internalised, violently inscribed constraint on the possibility of articulating one's own affects, for instance fear, is intrinsic to the mechanism and continuity of power relations.

Currently this can be seen in reactions adamantly rejecting any suggestion of structural or institutional racism, as became apparent in the criminal investigation of the NSU murders (cf. Schmincke/Siri 2013).¹⁰ In these debates, as it transpired, where there was any suggestion that public institutions and players may have been involved in racist incidents, any claims were quickly, at times automatically, dismissed. As a direct response to the history of National Socialism in Germany, a defensive way of dealing with current racist appellations and the analysis of racial violence, in the present, as racial violence, has established itself. Put more simply and poignantly this means: that which cannot be, namely racism, may not be.

In situations where the possibility to analyse, deconstruct and make sense of the continuities of racist images and distinctions of speech are excluded per se, contexts arise within which experiences of racial discrimination are made, yet by the very nature of the structural subject-erasure of racism, cannot be articulated, made a topic of and thus by default not heard. As a result, experiences of racial discrimination are not only denied, and its victims accused of being oversensitive; but also, and even more to the point, because racism is not addressed, its efficacy and potency are preserved. This barrier put in the way of articulating experiences of discrimination and racism represents a violation against human dignity that can be described as a secondary form of racism (cf. Çiçek/Heinemann/Mecheril 2015).

Revisiting the injurious speech acts in the three red bars criss-crossing the naked body of the manhandled, besmeared white woman in Figure 1 (Women Accuse – “After the sex-attacks of Migrants – Are we still tolerant or already blind?”), it is the ‘sex attacking migrant’ or more specifically according to Alice Schwarzer (2016) from her recently released book *Der Schock* (“The Schock”) based on the Cologne New Year’s Eve 2015 events, it is the ‘North African, Arab, Muslim potential terrorist other’ who has become the object, who embodies and signifies the qualities that are threatening and fearful. White women, particularly young blonde white women, as Schwarzer (ibid.) points out repeatedly, are presented as the precious, vulnerable, valuable bodies inhabited by fear, in need of protection. Their fathers, mothers, boyfriends and husbands in other words their families and as an extension the wider community, that mark themselves as white and European, claim that fear for themselves and declare their status as under threat. The public outcry and collective declaration of threat resulting from the Cologne event, which seemed to grow in magnitude as the media spread around the world, was productive in several ways: firstly in that it located and inscribed the threat in the historically ‘sticky’ bodies of the North African, Arab, Muslim other and secondly in that it redrew a border that demarcates who belongs to the bodies sanctified to feel fear, and mark themselves as under threat: namely Northern Europeans versus those other bodies who do not belong, the aforementioned, monstrous, non-European ones whose fear is not considered worth mentioning thus disabling a dialogic resonance and potential outlet (cf. Ahmed 2014).

For the fear-complex (affect-danger-body) to work, the origin and historical dimension that produced it in the first place must be forgotten and historically aphasied, tabooed, and thus de-thematized, so that the fear can be presented as absolute and concrete. In the first part of the paper, by providing historical examples of the dangerous black bodies of the French occupying forces in the Rhineland during WWI exemplified in the “*Schwarze Schmach* – Black Humiliation” and the dangerous bodies of freed slaves and lynching victims in the US, we outlined how racist historical tropes and stereotypes of ‘sex offending, monstrous others’ become stuck to the bodies of those interpolated as of ‘North African or Arabic’ appearance, in the present.¹¹ Judith Butler (1997) refers to the formal structure of this recycling of historical stereotypes in her book *Excitable Speech*, in which she describes racist speech as a form of ‘institutional sedimentation’ in a similar way that Sara Ahmed in her book *Cultural Politics of Emotions* uses the notion of stickiness, namely how the “objects of fear become substituted for each other over time” (Ahmed 2014: 67). In these processes, the derogatory image or racist utterance is reduced to its form as image or utterance in the present without locating its historical referents, thus making it seem absolute, because it is not read and understood within a historical context. In other words, an absolute fear is conditioned by the absolute danger, present, but historically aphasied in the bodies of the other.¹²

Sara Ahmed (ibid.) describes this form of violence as a kind of shrinkage of social agency and space by citing the well-known scene from Frantz Fanon’s book *Black Skin, White Masks* ([1952] 1986), in which the young white boy fearing the cannibalistic consumption by the black man

seeks protection in the arms of his mother and is saved. It is Fanon, the subject in question, however, who “fears the white child’s fear, who is crushed by that fear, by being sealed into a body that tightens up, and takes up less space” (Ahmed 2014: 69). Although, by quoting this example here, there is a danger of casting the ‘feared other’ in the role of victim within an oversimplified victim-perpetrator dichotomy. It is nevertheless apparent that the ability to express fear and be heard is not attributed to everybody equally and for some, the experience of “fear works to restrict some bodies through the movement and expansion of others” (ibid.).

In her essay *Violence, Nonviolence: Sartre on Fanon*, Judith Butler takes this argument one step further and discusses Sartre’s reading of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* by focusing on the refusal of the coloniser to address the colonised with ‘you’, as an equal, in effect robbing them of the status as a human being:

The face-to-face address of ‘you’ has the capacity to confer a certain acknowledgement to include the other in a potentially reciprocal exchange of speech; without that acknowledgement and possibility for reciprocal address, no human may emerge. In the place of the human, a spectre takes form, what Sartre refers to as the ‘Zombie’, the Shadow figure who is never quite human and never quite not. (Butler 2015: 175)

The refusal to address the other as “you” as well as refusing to hear the fear, vulnerability and anger of the other, is what Butler describes as a “deconstituting ontology and orchestrating a nonlivable life” (ibid.: 177). Together with Orlando Patterson this can also be understood as a “social death” (ibid.), or, in Achille Mbembe’s words, the “living dead” (2003: 40). The death of the others creates the condition of possibility for the dominant class to live out their individually and collectively experienced affects which in turn continue to kill, silence and prevent the voices of others to be articulated in public space, thus condemning them to the realm of the demonic and monstrous.

The racist affect and racist speech acts in the German public today can thus be understood as practices of othering in the form of staged threat-scenarios. We are dealing here with two issues that we identify as the imagination of the other and the safeguarding of resources and claims to power. The affect that we are currently experiencing, the intensity with which a group is imagined and is condemned as a whole can only be explained if we are clear that we are dealing with the struggle for privilege and domination and that this fight requires pictures, beliefs and imaginations of the others.

4. Instead of a conclusion

Heteronormative racist orders of power and desire are affectively stabilised by continuously invoking the other as a potential threat. Contemporary staged threat scenarios are linked to historical precursors that continue to be productive, become modified and re-inscribed in the present. Our assumption at this point is that the current threat-scenarios ultimately gain their potency and energy from their historical trajectory and that a considerable part of the dark-diffuse, murky experience of threat also has to do with the fact that this historical connection is not thematised nor addressed and thus remains collectively unconscious. A kind of taboo so to speak.

The sexual potency, licentiousness and uncontrolled sexual drive of the other is staged against the backdrop of the chastity and innocence of ‘our women’ as the upholders of the superior German and Western culture. In this constellation, the sex of the other is constructed as a prominent type of sexuality that manifests, generates and stages threat scenarios by its very being. This threatening other is furthermore empirically speaking not always clearly differentiated from the

threatening other as terrorist. What happens in the case of actual or alleged sexual or terrorist violence by racially marked others? How is the intensity of the affective reaction in response to the severity of the threat, the magnitude of fear felt, and the resoluteness of anger expressed, to be interpreted? How can the de-escalation and neutralisation of these affects be understood when in contrast the sexual or terrorist violence is carried out by non-racially marked perpetrators?¹³

Power relationships become apparent and reproduce themselves precisely because not every affect can be articulated in equal measure as a matter of course, and the legitimacy, or illegitimacy of articulating affect becomes inscribed in the bodies involved. One example of this is that in Germany in various constellations, relationships and situations, the restrictions to address issues of racism are and can be understood as indicative of a kind of taboo. German speaking public discourses reference racism predominantly in connection to national socialism and thus it is marked by a refusal to recognise contemporary forms of racism as racism (cf. Scherschel 2006; Rommelspacher 2009; Messerschmidt 2010) as outlined above (cf. also introduction to this volume). In this paper, we argue that societal and cultural privileging mechanisms, which are logically and empirically at the same time de-privileging mechanisms, consist of two parts. The first part is yet again twofold. On the one hand, particular feelings and performances of feelings are iteratively produced as scripts of acceptable affects, such as fear and threat experienced by those who inhabit symbolically privileged positions. On the other hand, phenomenologically similar feelings of fear and threat, experienced by the marginal other (migrants, asylum seekers, phenotypically or phenoculturally marked others) need to be made a taboo of. In the framework of this articulation and de-articulation strategy, the unchallenged voice of the 'acceptable' (in other words, dominant) affect scripts of threat and fear become audible and acted upon. The second part of this mechanism is that any historical references or memories of racial oppression and violence, such as demonstrated in the history of imperial expansion, colonisation and slavery must become the subject of taboo and thus colonially aphased. This double strategy of silencing serves to maintain the hegemonic structures of privilege and dominance and paves the way for historically inspired violence to continue in the present. An un-veiling of these mechanisms and the ability to recognise their historical logic is thus of crucial importance, particularly with regard to political projects that aim to reduce the symbolic and physical violence exercised and made possible by concepts of race, nationality, or 'our culture'.

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Figures

Figure 1: Title page Focus magazine, online at http://www.focus.de/magazin/archiv/jahrgang_2016/ausgabe_2/ (31.08.2016).

Figure 2: Cay, A.M.: The French in the Ruhr Region (*Franzosen im Ruhrgebiet*). In: *Race & Class: Journal on Racism, Empire and Globalisation* 51 (3), 36, online at <https://reader.exacteditions.com/issues/6450/spread/41> (31.08.2016).

Notes

¹ This paper is closely aligned with the following published German text by Mecheril, Paul/van der Haagen-Wulff, Monica (2017): *Bedroht, angstvoll, wütend. Affektlogik der Migrationsgesellschaft*. In: Mecheril, Paul/Do Mar Castro Varela, Maria (eds.): *Die Dämonisierung der Anderen. Rassistiskritik der Gegenwart*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 119–143. This English version is made available to a different reading audience. For the purposes of this publication, the elements of taboo and transgression have been further developed and analysed within the overall context of the original German paper.

² AfD – Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*) is a far right wing, also described as a nationalistic, right wing populist, Eurocentric political party that was founded in April 2013. The AfD has close affiliations to the German based political movement Pegida – Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*) (cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative_for_Germany (29.07. 2018) and introduction to this volume).

³ According to a study carried out by the National Ministry of Families (*Bundes-Familienministerium*) in 2004, 58% of all women in Germany from the age of 16 onwards have been sexually harassed at one time or another (cf. The National Ministry for Families, Seniors, Women and Youth – *Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend* 2014). Equivalent results for

Germany 2014 can be observed in the study of the European Human Rights Agency (*Europäische Grundrechteagentur*) examining the extent of violence against women in Europe. The main and most often cited place of sexual harassment, molestation and violence against women was within their own four walls and by their own (mostly male) family members, much less outside on the streets and even less by strangers. The racist representation of the 'dangerous sexuality of the other' distracts from this reality and is one of its main (cultural) functions.

⁴ On New Year's Eve 2015/2016 in the area around Cologne Central Station and the Cologne Cathedral, a large number of sexual assaults against women by groups of young men phenotypically marked as North-African and Arabic were reported. In the days after the event, as many as 1054 criminal charges and complaints were recorded by the police, 454 of these were of sexual assaults and three among them of rape. Other charges made were of property theft and bodily assault. In the wake, the police was accused of not having had the situation under control and of trying to underplay the events. The result was a world-wide media outcry condemning the events and calling for a united front protecting women from men described as North-African or Middle Eastern asylum seekers considered to be sexually and physically dangerous. Countering these accusations were many local and international media reports critical of the racist, anti-Islamic, and blatantly demonising coverage of the event (cf. https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexuelle_%C3%9Cbergriffe_in_der_Silvesternacht_2015/16 (31.01.2018)).

⁵ The USPD, the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands), was a political party active during the German Empire and the Weimar Republic. As an off-shoot of the SPD (Social Democratic Party) its focus was on colonial revisionism, a Marxist-centrist position together with bolshevism. In 1931, the USPD merged with the Socialist Workers Party of Germany (SAPD) (Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_Social_Democratic_Party_of_Germany (23.09.2018)).

⁶ The KPD, Communist Party of Germany (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands), was a large political party in Germany from the years 1918 to 1933 and remained as a small party in post WWII West Germany until it was banned in 1956. During the Weimar Republic, the KPD held up to 15 % of the vote in the Reichstag and the state parliament (cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_Germany (23.09.2018)).

⁷ German original: "eine von exzessiven sexuellen Instinkten gesteuerte schwarze Brut, die das deutsche Volk rassistisch verseuche. [...] Die 'Wilden' sollten 'eine schauerliche Gefahr' für Frauen und Kinder darstellen, im besetzten Gebiet massenhaft Mitglieder der weißen Rasse vergewaltigen und somit den gesamten abendländischen Kulturkreis bedrohen" (Wigger 2007: 11).

⁸ German original: "die Verwendung farbiger Truppen niederster Kultur als Aufseher über eine Bevölkerung von der hohen und geistigen und wirtschaftlichen Bedeutung der Rheinländer die Gesetze europäischer Zivilisation' verletzen würde" (Wigger 2007: 11).

⁹ Ann Laura Stoler's concept of 'colonial aphasia' is more than a simple forgetting or amnesia rather it is: "an occlusion of knowledge [...] a dismembering, a difficulty speaking, a difficulty generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts with appropriate things". It draws attention to both a "loss of access and active dissociation". "Aphasia in its many forms describes a difficulty retrieving both conceptual and lexical vocabularies and, most important, a difficulty comprehending what is spoken" (2011: 125).

¹⁰ "The National Socialist Underground murders (German: *NSU-Mordserie*) were a series of xenophobic murders by the German Neo-Nazi group National Socialist Underground (*Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund*, abbreviated NSU). The NSU perpetrated the attacks between 2000

and 2007 throughout Germany, leaving ten people dead and one wounded. The primary targets were ethnic Turks but also Kurds, though the victims also included one ethnic Greek and one German policewoman" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Socialist_Underground_murders (31.07.2018)).

¹¹ Sara Ahmed borrows from Satre's concept of 'stickiness' as "[t]he sideways movement of fear (where we have a metonymic and sticky relation between signs) is also a backward movement: objects of fear become substituted for each other over time. This displacement of objects also involves the passing by of the object from which the subject seems to flee. Fear creates the very effect of 'that which I am not', through running away from an object, which nevertheless threatens as it passes by or is displaced. To this extent, fear does not involve the defence of borders that already exist; rather fear makes those borders, by establishing objects from which the subject, in fearing can flee. Through fear not only is the very border between self and other affected, but the relation between the subject and its objects that are feared (rather than simply the relation between the subject and its objects) is shaped by histories that 'stick', making some objects more than others seem fearsome." (2014: 67).

¹² In Butler's own words: "The elaborate institutional structure of racism as well as sexism are suddenly reduced to the scene of utterance, and utterance, no longer the sedimentation of prior institution and use, is invested with the power to establish and maintain the subordination of the group addressed." (1997: 79f.).

¹³ The following quote taken from a Berlin Newspaper report illustrates this point. Using the caption "The Summer Hole of Ignorance" (*Das Sommerloch der Ignoranz*), Anetta Khana comments in the Berlin newspaper on the 31st July 2016 not on the crime committed in Munich, by which nine people died but rather she focused on the discursive resonances of the crime: "One thing, however, is surprising: the terrible crime in Munich, the terrorist attack of young people, has completely disappeared in the midst of the flurry and agitation resulting from the attacks in Würzburg and Ansbach. Only hours after Munich had become a besieged city, calculating hysterics put in their demands of the State of Law, because an Islamic terrorist attack was suspected. These demands however quickly dissipated when it was discovered that the perpetrator turned out not to be an Islamic terrorist. As such, this crime was no longer useful within the discourse of the terror-complex [...]. It shows what happens when an event does not fit into the societally acceptable normative construction of feelings. Terror and mental illness do not eliminate one another. If the murderer were an Islamist, his mental state would presumably be of little public interest [...]. The perpetrator was a fan of Breivik, who five years ago killed 77 people and who was proud of his racism. The perpetrator killed immigrants and his room was full of right wing extremist propaganda and weapons. He touted his hate against Turks and Arabs and included himself as a member of the Aryan human race. In other words: The murderer in Munich was a terrorist after all, in fact in exactly the same way as if he had been driven by Islamist motives! The silencing of this politics is unsettling and dangerous." (www.berliner-zeitung.de/politik/meinung/kommentar-das-sommerloch-der-ignoranz-24483364 (01.08.2016). Translation by Monica van der Haagen-Wulff).

Taboos and Integration: Welcome to Germany¹

Abstract

The following contribution is a theoretically sound didactic for dealing with taboos in integration courses, making normative statements and substantiating them. A grid is presented, with which, on the one hand, topics, actions, statements, and language usage can be assigned to the aspects of protection and abuse through taboos. On the other hand, taboo-breaks show both positive and negative consequences for the individual in the social context, and thus opportunities for social development. Since questions of empowerment are always at stake in the context of integration, the grid represents a means of perceiving existing power relations, recognizing strategies against attributions and the discursive exercise of power, and deriving options for action from them. The central statements are illustrated by examples from teaching materials.

On the subject of integration [...] – precisely because it is so emotional in many respects – we can only make progress if we treat it with a cool head, a differentiated attitude and without taboos.
Mansour (2018: 9)²

1. Taboos and their social relevance: an introduction

For migrants, coming to Germany means leaving a familiar space, entering new social terrain, being confronted with new rules of the game. Taboos play an essential role in this: they are part of these rules of the game, which must be understood so that scope for *empowerment* can be explored. The explicit examination of taboos (cf. Flubacher/Hägi-Mead, this volume) is therefore necessary when it comes to dealing constructively with social changes such as those caused by migration in Germany. For taboos as unwritten laws, together with written and readable laws, regulate every community life (cf. Kaltenbrunner 1978; Schröder 2005: 297). Where people with different experiences in education and society now come into contact, different taboos may also come into contact, since these are not universal but dependent on society (cf. Hägi-Mead 2017: 30). In order to integrate into a new community, it is therefore necessary to observe not only laws but also taboos. For this, they must first be made visible. This is not an easy task, since taboos are usually subconscious and defined by the fact that there is no justification and questioning, that something is not said (language taboo), not addressed (communication taboo) or not done (action taboo) (cf. Schröder 2005: 295; Hägi-Mead 2017: 28). A second reason for dealing with taboos is that it is explicit transgressions or the breaking of taboos that make social change possible.³ In other words, if social changes in the sense of integration are desired, then, as Mansour (2018) puts it, unpleasant and sensitive issues must be addressed as well as taboos uncovered. In both cases, we understand an explicit and differentiated examination of taboos – i.e. according to their way of respecting or breaking them – as an awareness of socially relevant power relations and as a basis for self-empowering teaching.

Under the premise that such a debate is conducive to integration processes, this contribution assumes that it also takes place and should take place in the context of integration courses. The initial question is therefore how this debate can be perceived in concrete terms. For this purpose, a grid is presented below (Section 2), which can be used to classify taboos and transgressions or taboo breaks. This makes them concrete, visible, and, finally, debatable. A look at the conception of integration courses (Section 3) and the materials approved by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge: BAMF) for orientation courses and the test “Living in Germany” illustrates the contribution that teaching materials and examination papers (do not) make to a constructive handling of taboos in the migration society (Section 4). The contribution ends with a corresponding conclusion (Section 5).

2. Taboos and the breaking of taboos: classification and visualization

Dealing with taboos in the context of integration means, above all, becoming aware of their function (cf. Section 1). The following questions prove to be central to this:

- a. What does a taboo stand for?
- b. Who or what is protected by a taboo?
- c. What is the use of breaking a taboo – and for whom?
- d. How do the answers from b. and c. relate to the Basic Law?

It is therefore necessary, on the one hand, to emphasize the protective character of taboos (cf. Tab. 1, Quadrant I), and, on the other, to recognize where taboos do not protect, where silence violates the dignity (on the concept cf. Marks 2017) of an individual and thus a fundamental value of a democratic society (cf. Tab. 1, Quadrant II), because “[t]he dignity of man is inviolable. To respect and protect them is an obligation of all state power” (German Basic Law, Article 1, paragraph 1).

Tab. 1: Grid for classifying taboos (cf. Hägi-Mead 2018)

		Social level	
		Taboo: Yes	Taboo: Removed
Individual level	space of dignity	<p>I</p> <p>Taboo for protection: Respect for intimacy and privacy e.g. confidentiality of correspondence</p>	<p>III</p> <p>Positive taboo break Enlightenment and tolerance e.g. “meeting homophobia”⁴</p>
	degradation	<p>II</p> <p>Taboo abuse: Maintenance and abuse of power e.g. (sexual) assaults and not making it the subject of discussion</p>	<p>IV</p> <p>Negative taboo break: group-related misanthropy⁵ e.g. misogynist/sexist, racist, or homophobic statements or actions</p>

The idea of participation is linked to the space of dignity (cf. Tab. 1, Quadrants I and III): Participation is possible if the basic needs for recognition, protection, belonging, and integrity (cf. Marks 2017: 58) are guaranteed. In contrast, the Quadrants II and IV violate basic needs for recognition, protection, belonging and integrity, thus denying an individual the right to have a say or participate in society. Both Quadrants (II and IV) are characterized by the breaking of taboos.

The intermediate lines of the quadrants are deliberately erased, since the boundaries are partly fluid, and assignments of individual examples can also be made and negotiated differently. The four quadrants are described in more detail below, and characteristic examples are given for each of them in terms of action, language, and communication taboos. In this way, they clearly demonstrate the relevance for integration (courses).

2.1 Quadrant 1: taboo as protection

Essential rules of action for the protection of an individual are also protected by law in Germany, so that, for example, the physical integrity, the secrecy of correspondence or the inviolability of

the home are preserved. In the context of language taboos, there are expressions that should be avoided or not used for reasons of shame, courtesy and political correctness. These can be, for example, terms for groups of people who (in a discriminatory manner) refer to skin colour, diseases or weight or terms for (physical) concerns and curses that are taboo in society and the public. There are numerous euphemisms as socially compatible alternatives, such as words that use the same sound syllable (“oh gosh” instead of “oh god”), metaphors (“she has gone” instead of “she died”), metonymy (“powdering one’s nose” instead of “going to the toilet”), or vagueness (“they are seeing each other” instead of “they have sex with each other”).

With regard to communication taboos, the following applies: an adult person should be allowed to decide for themselves what can be talked about and when, how much personal and private things they want to reveal about themselves. It goes without saying that, depending on the communication context and familiarity of the interlocutors, such decisions will vary.

2.2 Quadrant II: taboo abuse

Even in the second Quadrant, there are themes that are not addressed because they are inconsiderate, unpleasant, or delicate. In contrast to the first Quadrant, however, it is not the intimate or private sphere of a person that is protected, but rather the individual victim, while the perpetrator is not attackable, but actually protected by the (communication) taboo. The action and communication taboos that belong in these quadrants include sexual offences against minors by teachers or representatives of the Catholic Church, violence in the family⁶ or addiction, as well as other diseases. Paternalism or censorship also belong in these quadrants, as do everyday racism, othering and other forms of discrimination, which do not have to be intended as such, but can also be traced back to a lack of reflection and non-questioning of “normality” and the “familiar”, which inadvertently still degrades an individual.

2.3 Quadrant III: positive taboo break

The “Taboo: Removed” that heads Quadrant III often results from a “No-More-Taboo”, a broken taboo. The examples from Quadrant II clearly show where changes are urgently needed to protect individuals and human rights, so that the basic needs for recognition, protection, belonging, and integrity are safeguarded, and social participation becomes possible. In order to bring about corresponding changes, silence must be broken, the unheard must be brought up, enlightened, and integrated into the existing and tolerated. But for this to succeed, the one who breaks the silence also needs a voice that is heard in the sense of a legitimate language (cf. Dirim/Mecheril 2010), and a space in which one is heard (cf. Salgado 2008). This is exactly where the work of the Federal Agency for Civic Education is to be found: the information films on sexism, racism, antiziganism and homophobia in the *Begegnen* series⁷ are representative and exemplary of a very extensive work that can be assigned to Quadrant III in the context of democracy and the Basic Law. The action against injustices, the commitment to human dignity (also in the form of civil courage) is usually preceded by questioning and critical thinking (cf. Kruse 2017), which plays a central role in Quadrant III: Critical thinking is a prerequisite for being able to name, and for breaking a taboo that protects an individual in society.

Critical thinking is not only important in education, but it is also the basis for political debate, sustainable economic activity and individual life. Only in democracies is critical thinking ultimately a desirable educational goal. (ibid.: 10)

And yet, according to Kruse (2017: 10), ‘critical’ stands less for exercising criticism than for critically dealing with knowledge about the world – and that is above all the knowledge one is currently acquiring. Thus, in this quadrant (as in Quadrant I), the legacy of the Enlightenment and human rights can be found as a critical benchmark (Hormel/Scherr 2004: 130, cited in Messerschmidt 2018: 426), but which cannot be assumed a consensus:

Human rights should not be understood as a given indisputable 'moral code' [...], but rather against the background of the social struggles for equal rights that continue to this day. Their validity is not assured and requires commitment, which must be related to the social context in which human rights are violated. (ibid.)

2.4 Quadrant IV: negative taboo break

The following applies to Quadrant IV: No one is dicing their words, their own views are formulated unembellished and clear and translated into actions, even though these violate the dignity of others. (Respect) limits are exceeded. Scientifically proven facts play less of a role than chauvinism, populism, and racism. Often, a right is accepted and a necessity is suggested, in the sense of "one will still be allowed to say that", to have to break an (apparently) existing taboo in the sense of Enlightenment, a claim to Quadrant III (cf. also von Lucke 2010). This entitlement to the role of victim on the part of the majority society, however, means twofold discrimination, firstly because actual discrimination against others is denied or played down, and secondly because it suggests discrimination of oneself, which cannot exist in the majority society, since discrimination is always structural.

3. Integration courses in Germany: an overview

In order to recognise, name, tease out, and – in the sense of a desired change – also shift boundaries, it is first and foremost necessary to offer reflection. The question arises, if (and to what extent) this space is given within the framework of integration courses, in general, and orientation courses, in particular. Are tasks in teaching materials suitable and teachers trained to create spaces for reflection and to support course participants in meeting their opinions, stances, attitudes, experiences, insights, values, and feelings (Kruse 2017: 73)? In a first step, it is helpful to be able to classify integration courses in Germany in order to analyse tasks in teaching materials (cf. Section 4).

Crossing the border to Germany with the aim of staying, one encounters a residence law that has regulated participation in an integration course since 2005. The objective of the Integration Course Ordinance (IntV) states:

Newcomers from third countries who are permanently resident in Germany and late repatriates are entitled to take part in an integration course. Eligible foreigners who do not have a basic knowledge of the German language are also obliged to participate. This integration offer is supplemented by the possibility of admission to courses for foreigners and Union citizens already living in Germany. (IntV 2004: 1)

The aim of the integration course is to introduce learners to the language, legal system, culture and history of Germany and thus to create the basic prerequisites for social participation. The acquisition of the necessary linguistic and social skills should take place in a German course (600 or 900 teaching units [TU] of 45 minutes each) and a subsequent orientation course (100 TU of 45 minutes each). This contribution concentrates on the latter due to the framework available here. The two courses must, however, be thought together (cf. Goethe Institut 2016: 6). While the overall goal of the German course is the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) language level B1, the overall goals of the orientation course are:

- Raising awareness for the German political system
- Developing positive assessment of the German state
- Imparting knowledge of rights and duties as a resident and a citizen
- Developing the ability to orientate oneself further (methodological competence)
- Acquiring intercultural competence (BAMF 2015: 29f.)

The orientation course is ascribed a high social significance, which is reflected, among other things, in the steady increase of the planned TU: The original 30 TU were initially increased to 45 (2007), then to 60 (2012), and finally to 100 TU (2016). The most recent increase in the number of TU means a revision of the curriculum, and thus a stronger orientation towards the following guidelines:

- Systematic emphasis on the importance of constitutional principles, fundamental rights, and values for constructive social interaction at all relevant points of the curriculum.
- Continuous orientation towards value-based political education, and promotion of social participation.
- Consistent reference and confrontation with one’s own life reality and with German society.
- Fundamental rights and democratic principles as a yardstick and framework for the independent assessment and individual positioning of the participants. (cf. BAMF 2017: 9)

The language course is successfully certified with the language test “Deutsch-Test für Zuwanderer” (DTZ), and the orientation course with the scaled test “Leben in Deutschland” (LiD). If both parts are passed, the course participant receives the “Certificate Integration Course” (cf. Table 2).⁸

Tab. 2: Overview integration course

Integration course					
	Duration	Content	Language level	Certificate	
Language course	600 or 900 TU	Communication in the fields of action of <i>offices and authorities, work, work search, education and training, banking and insurance, care and training of children, shopping, health, media use, mobility, education, housing.</i> ⁹	A1-B1	Language test “Deutsch-Test für Zuwanderer” (DTZ)	Certificate Integration Course
Orientation course	100 TU	Introduction (3 TU) <i>Module I: Politics in Democracy</i> (35 TU) <i>Module II: History and Responsibility</i> (20 TU) <i>Module III: People and Society</i> (38 TU) Course completion (4 TU)	A2/B1	Scaled final test “Leben in Deutschland” (LiD) ¹⁰	

The possible examination questions of the test “Leben in Deutschland” can be assigned to the three modules *Politics in Democracy* (Module I), *History and Responsibility* (Module II), and *People and Society* (Module III).¹¹ The following table (Tab. 3) also lists the number of hours assigned in the curriculum:

Tab. 3: Module assignment to TU, questions, and topics of the test “Leben in Deutschland”

Module	TU	Number of questions	Topics (number of questions)
Politics in Democracy	35	192	Constitutional bodies (31); Constitutional principles (22); Federalism (8); Social system (8); Fundamental rights (22); Elections and participation (30); Parties (7); State responsibilities (4); Obligations (8); State symbols (6); Municipality (10); Law and everyday life (36)
History and Responsibility	20	89	Nationalism and its consequences (20); Important stations after 1945 (33); Reunification (15); Germany in Europe (21)
People and Society	38	19	Religious diversity (5); Education (7); History of migration (4); Intercultural coexistence (3)

This list already shows that the division between the number of TU of the individual modules and the number of possible test questions is imbalanced. While 89 questions related to the module “History and Responsibility” (about 30%) are covered in only 20 TU, 38 TU are dedicated to the module “People and Society”, which, in effect, concerns a mere 6.5% of the questions. In relation to that, the module “Politics and Democracy” has 3 TU less, but contributing 64% of the test questions. With regard to the orientation course test, it can therefore be criticised that the requirements lie above all in the area of knowledge of structures and institutions, and do not satisfy the quality characteristics of political education (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung 2007: 4), that the language level of the learners seems incompatible with the very complex learning content and the high density of (political) specialist vocabulary (cf. Liedke 2018: 106), and that the content of the questions has little to do with the everyday reality of the orientation course participants (cf. Niedermüller 2013).

4. Taboos in test(preparation) and teaching materials

In the following, I will analyse examples from test preparation and teaching materials using the grid for classifying taboos (cf. Table 1). The underlying question is whether and how asymmetric power relations are (or can be) addressed. In the sense of self-empowering teaching, it is desirable that taboo breaks, as they take place in Quadrants II (taboo abuse) and IV (negative taboo break), are made visible, and that process movements in Quadrant I (protection by taboo) and above all in Quadrant III (positive taboo break) are pointed out as options for action.

4.1 Ideal vs. real image of Germany

What *should* [emphasis added] you do, if you are treated badly by your contact person in a German authority?

- There’s nothing I can do.
- I have to put up with this treatment.

- Threaten that person.
- I *can* [emphasis added] complain to the head of the authority.

(Feil/Hesse 2017b: Question 276)

Based on this example, a fundamental dilemma will be discussed in which the orientation course and the concluding test “Leben in Deutschland” are situated. These are the various objectives of teaching materials, which, on the one hand, prepare students for the test “Leben in Deutschland”, convey the legal foundations of a democracy, and, at the same time, explicitly contribute to a positive image of Germany. On the other hand, there is the demand to prepare for a real and, thus, very complex everyday life in Germany. The goal of social participation with corresponding scope for action falls within this context.

In the question above (276), the modal verbs *should* (“What *should* you do if you are treated badly”) and *can* (“There’s nothing I *can* do”, “I *can* complain to the head of authority”) indicate that a complaint is legally possible, but not necessary. Moreover, the question actually implies that a person can be treated badly by German authority. In this instance, this possibility is thus not treated as a taboo, but as reality that is further addressed in the course materials:

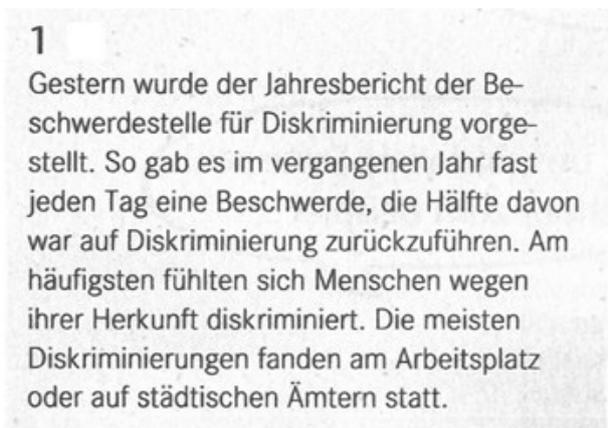


Fig. 1: Intercultural Conflicts (Zur Orientierung, Gaidosch/Müller 2017: 72)

Translation: “Yesterday, the annual report of the Complaints Office for Discrimination was presented. Last year, for example, there was one complaint almost every day, half of which were due to discrimination. Most people felt discriminated against because of their origin. Most discrimination took place in the workplace or at municipal offices.”

The rights, which an individual has in the Federal Republic of Germany and which can and *should* be claimed, can be checked with an examination question as quoted above. At this point, neither explicit experiences of discrimination are spelled out nor what the concrete claim of the right to complain means or can mean for orientation course participants. This is, because a scene as described in question 276, although the correct answer d) shows a claim according to Quadrant III (“I can complain to the head of the authority”), will certainly take place in practice in the sense of answers a and b in Quadrant II (“I can’t do anything” or “I have to put up with this treatment”). The following questions thus arise in and for practice:

- What unwritten laws apply to a complaint?
- Who can (not) complain when?
- Which complaint is (not) heard by whom and when?
- What are the consequences of a complaint for whom?

The example of the complaint has an illustrative function here. A discrepancy between the ideal and the real image of Germany emerges also in other areas in which taboos play a role, such as in the context of religion, homosexuality, undeclared work ('moonlighting'), or a conflict of interest in a domestic community. This fact is certainly taken up in teaching materials, already in headings such as "Theory and Reality", under which e.g. the topic of equal rights (Buchwald-Wargenau 2018: 78) is dealt with, or in tasks that ask: "In which situations are fundamental rights violated? Discuss in class" (Schote 2018: 13). "Also interesting!" is another section that draws attention to such discrepancies and invites learners to share their own observations. In this category, for example, the following entry can be found:

The laws form the framework for living together in society. Tolerance and respect are important for living together in everyday life. The boundary of freedom of expression is where you violate the rights of another. The General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) prohibits discrimination and regulates the equal treatment of all citizens among themselves. In *everyday life there is sometimes a difference between law and reality* [emphasis added]. (Buchwald-Wargenau 2018: 21)

Interviews with textbook authors and editors in publishing houses show that specific limits are necessarily maintained in teaching materials and that certain topics, descriptions, and expressions are taboo (cf. Hägi-Mead 2017). In the classroom itself, the discursive space is somewhat safer, and thus, the possibility may be given to address or even transgress taboos or to thematise taboo words. The following examples show that teaching materials can also help to shape such a framework. While moonlighting is not endorsed in Fig. 2, it is explicitly thematised:

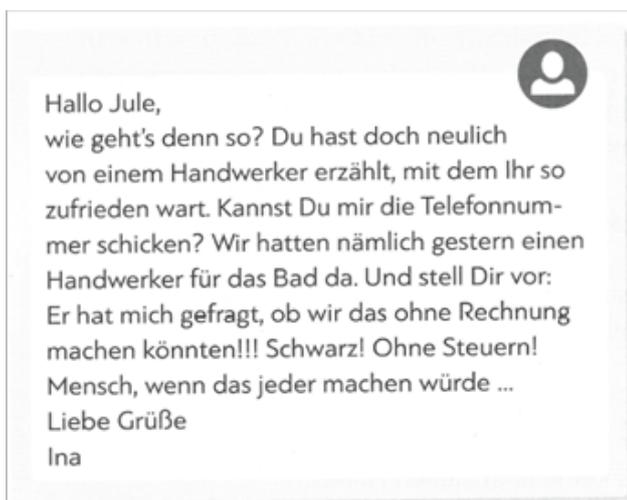


Fig. 2: Illicit labour (*Mein Leben in Deutschland*, Buchwald-Wargenau 2018: 28)

Translation: Hello, Jule, how are you? You told me the other day about a craftsman you were so impressed with. Can you send me the phone number? We had a craftsman for the bathroom yesterday. And can you believe it: He asked me if we could do this without a bill!!!! Black! Without taxes! If everyone would do that, man ... Best regards, Ina

Another example for a safe space is the info box on "How to argue better". While it explicitly discourages from swearing, it is embedded in a framework that makes it possible to explicitly name and get to know common expressions, such as "ass", which are usually taboo in teaching materials:

Don't use swear words: idiot, ass, jackass, jerk, ... (Feil/Hesse 2017a: 185)

The dots in the example above refer to this space exactly, where further taboo words may be addressed in the teaching context.

4.2 Limits

You intentionally [emphasis added] opened a letter in Germany addressed to another person. What didn't *you* [emphasis added] pay attention to?

- The right to silence
- The secrecy of correspondence
- Confidentiality
- Freedom of expression

(Feil/Hesse 2017b: Question 274)

The teaching of (action) taboos, such as the secrecy of correspondence, which protect the privacy of an individual (cf. Tab. 1, Quadrant I), and are, at the same time, enshrined in law, is explicitly demanded in the curriculum for orientation courses (cf. BAMF 2017: 29). Quadrant I, however, also includes limits that must be adhered to beyond this, and which can be particularly relevant in teaching situations, or are frequently exceeded in teaching situations. At first glance, these can be quite irrelevant questions, such as "What did you do yesterday/last weekend?", "Why are you in Germany?", or "Describe your apartment". In the documentary *Zertifikat Deutsch* (Jurschik 2008), this becomes particularly obvious: A course participant, whose very simple furnishing of a one-room apartment is shown, has to describe his living situation in detail to the other students due to a corresponding task in the course book. Another scene shows a student cleaning rooms in a hotel on weekends under inhumane working conditions. The discrepancy of the (work and living) reality in the course book and the life of the course participants is blatant, while the (certainly not intended) embarrassment caused by the unreflectingly performed tasks and nicely meant questions becomes obvious.

Tasks with the addition *And now you!* encourage learners to express their own opinions and relate to their own lives. (Buchwald-Wargenau 2018: 3)

Such tasks are only to be considered suitable, if the participants have the choice of whether they want to communicate, cf. for example:

What would you like to tell about yourself and learn from the others? Collect in class. (ibid.: 6)

In the sense of the private sphere in Quadrant 1, tasks such as the following should be critically questioned:

Who does what work in your family? Tell me. (Butler et al. 2017: 97)

And now you! What religion do the participants have in your course? Do a survey and present the results in the course. (Buchwald-Wargenau 2018: 98)

The question quoted at the beginning of this section ("What didn't you pay attention to?") should also be scrutinized: It implies the assumption of intentionally having opened a letter addressed to another person. With regard to Quadrant I and to the target group of orientation courses, such an assumption is relevant. Against the background of experiences that can be assigned to Quadrant II, it is necessary to ask which assumptions are made why and how, which conceptions of participants or which understanding of integration are produced in orientation courses. Still, othering and stereotypical characterisations are not always as explicit and obvious as in the following example:

Immer mehr Menschen kommen nach Deutschland. Deutschland ist eine Einwanderungsgesellschaft. Das ist positiv und auch eine Chance für Deutschland. Wir wissen heute: Wir verlieren uns nicht, wenn wir Vielfalt akzeptieren. Wir wollen dieses vielfältige „Wir“. Wir wollen es nicht fürchten.
Es gibt auch viele Probleme, die mit der Einwanderungsgesellschaft verbunden sind: Ghettobildung, Jugendkriminalität, patriarchalische Weltbilder oder Homophobie, Sozialhilfekarrieren oder Schulschwänzer. Für manche Gruppen spielt die Religion eine übergeordnete Rolle und führt zur Abgrenzung von der Mehrheitsgesellschaft. Ja, es gibt auch Einwanderer, die Antisemitismus mitbringen. Und es gibt auch Familien, die die Rechte von Frauen und Mädchen missachten.

Innerhalb des Rahmens unserer Verfassung und der Gesetze hat jeder die Freiheit, so zu sein, wie er sein möchte. Unsere Gesellschaft lässt andere anders sein.
20 Sie erträgt andere Meinungen und Lebensweisen. Und sie ist offen für Veränderungen, wenn sie demokratischen Prinzipien entsprechen. Das ist ihre große Stärke.
25 In einer Einwanderungsgesellschaft müssen wir vieles aushandeln, wir müssen über vieles diskutieren und sprechen. Das ist normal und wird immer öfter passieren – aber nicht, weil Integration immer schlechter, sondern im Gegenteil, weil sie immer besser gelingt.
30 Ich wünsche mir einen Alltag, in dem wir das selbstverständlich Eigene achten – und dem anderen selbstverständlich Raum geben.

Fig. 3: Gauck Speech (100 Stunden Deutschland, Butler et al. 2017: 130)

Translation: More and more people are coming to Germany. Germany is an immigration society.

This is a positive thing and an opportunity for Germany. Today, we know that we will not lose ourselves if we accept diversity. We want this diverse “we”. We do not want to fear it.

There are also many problems associated with the immigration society: Ghetto formation, juvenile delinquency, patriarchal worldviews, or homophobia, abuse of the social welfare system, or truants. For some groups, religion plays an overriding role and leads to separation from the majority society. Yes, there are also immigrants who bring anti-Semitism with them. And there are also families who disregard the rights of women and girls.

Within the framework of our Basic Law and the laws, everyone has the freedom to be as they please. Our society lets others be different.

It endures different opinions and ways of life. And it is open to change, if it is in accordance with democratic principles. That is its great strength.

In an immigration society, we have to negotiate many things, we have to discuss and talk about many things. This is normal and will happen more and more often – but not because integration is getting worse and worse, but on the contrary because it is getting better and better.

I would like to see an everyday life in which we respect what is our own – and, of course, give room to others.

In this speech, problems such as patriarchal worldviews, homophobia, or truants are addressed and brought into a direct and one-sided causal connection with migration. Although an integrated “multifaceted we” is intended at first glance (line 6), a “we” (not originally affected by the problems mentioned) and a “none-we” (the problem-makers) are presented (cf. line 14f.). It is certainly no coincidence that this speech was given at a naturalisation ceremony, and – even if not explicitly mentioned – that integration is understood and addressed as an achievement of assimilation. This “currently dominant [...] use of ‘integration’” (Mecheril 2011: 50f., cited in Knappik/Mecheril 2018: 169f.) taboos the fact that problems such as patriarchal worldviews, homophobia, or school truants naturally also exist in the majority society:

Here, ‘integration’ is a more or less one-sided adaptation effort, which persons regarded as ‘migrants’ have to make. ‘Integration’ is at the same time a system of sanctions, since symbolic and economic punishments are possible, if ‘integration’ is not achieved. ‘Integration’ confirms the attribution of strangeness, since the vocabulary is used almost exclusively by us. To talk about so-called people with a migrant background [...] The question of ‘integration’, for example, will not be answered with reference to the white-collar criminal biographies of people who are taken for granted and unquestionably understood as Germans. Nor is it posed [...] when we are dealing with a lack of moral sense in the face of the situation of others. (ibid.: 170)

An examination of taboos also means questioning prevailing representations and constructions of groups (Schweiger et al. 2015: 9). Thus, the 7th edition of *Zur Orientierung* (Gaidosch/Müller 2017: 74) also contains the particularly striking discriminatory and deficit-oriented presentation of a migrant (Fig. 4). These instances clearly call for empowerment in the context of integration, in the sense that spaces are needed in which people are taught and learn to perceive and analyse existing power relations, in which it is also possible to develop strategies against othering and the discursive reproduction of power (cf. Schweiger et al. 2015: 9).

5 Alles, was man macht, ist falsch!

a Lesen Sie die Geschichte.

b Was macht der junge Mann „falsch“? Sammeln Sie im Kurs.

c In jeder Gesellschaft gibt es bestimmte Regeln. Wie verhält man sich in diesen Situationen in Deutschland „richtig“? Diskutieren Sie im Kurs.

Fig. 4: Everything you do is wrong! (*Zur Orientierung*, Gaidosch/Müller 2017:74)

Translation:

Everything you do is wrong!

[Picture 1] Foreigner's office; Parking bicycles forbidden

[Picture 2] Oh, excuse me. Paper, Glass, Residual waste.

[Picture 3] You're too late. Your visa expired yesterday // Yes, but I had to take my mother to the hospital. Here you go – as an apology.

[Picture 4] No thanks, I can't and I don't want to accept that. And your visa – my boss has to decide that.

[Picture 5] Here is your visa. But this is an exception. Please call whenever you can't come. // Yes, I will. Thank you.

[Picture 6] Parking bicycles forbidden // I do everything wrong.

4.3 Room for reflection

Reflection always refers to an object, but the focus is on what one thinks about the object, one's own opinions, positions, attitudes, experiences, insights, values, and feelings. (Kruse 2017: 73)

Indicators of a positive response to the question above (cf. 4.2) would be questions and tasks that ask to invite reflection, allow time for reflection, provide a safe space for course participants, and provide opportunities for identification. An increase of the initial 30 units for the orientation course to now 100 units (cf. section 3) seems to offer a suitable framework. Another productive starting point is the option to determine course-specific and thematic foci in class, all the while using the course material provided:

In the orientation course, you are not able to address all pages of "living together". We made the book "thicker", so you can select what interests you most for the course.

(Feil/Hesse 2017a: 4)

However, the overall analysis of the course materials approved by the BAMF for orientation courses shows that very general, vague, out of context, and abbreviated descriptions are available, which do not do justice to the complexity of, e.g., experiences of discrimination, nor allow identification with what is going on. The following scenario examples, for which the task is "Discuss in class" or "Read and discuss the following situations" (Schote 2018: 13, 89) should clarify this point:

Mr Kästner has recently moved into an apartment with his partner. That's how it's come to be known he's homosexual. The board of the sports club in which Mr. Kästner has been active for three years, would therefore like to exclude him. (ibid.: 13)

An employer prohibits an employee from praying during working hours. (ibid.: 89)

A student has to take part in swimming lessons, although she does not want this for religious reasons. (ibid.)

It can be assumed that it is commonplaces as well as abstract or perhaps also socially desirable scenarios that are offered for discussion rather than opening up spaces of genuine and reflected discussion on orders of difference. This could only take place, if more context was offered, taboos were named in their complexity, discrimination was presented in its relevance in everyday life, and power structures were revealed, as is actually the case in the following two examples:

persönliche perfekt schwul verheiratet

3 Ich habe eine Ausbildung zum Mechaniker gemacht. Im Moment suche ich eine Arbeitsstelle. Vor ein paar Wochen hatte ich ein Vorstellungsgespräch bei einer tollen Firma. Der Job war _____! Am Anfang war das Gespräch noch richtig gut. Aber dann hat der Chef mir immer mehr _____ Fragen gestellt. „Haben Sie eine Beziehung? Sind Sie _____?“ Irgendwann hat er gelacht und gefragt: „Aber _____ sind Sie ja hoffentlich nicht, oder?“ Ich wusste gar nicht, was ich sagen sollte. Klar bin ich schwul. Aber ich wollte diesen Job unbedingt. Lügen will ich aber auch nicht.



Fig. 5: Education – simple for everyone? (Vielfalt leben, Büchsel 2018: 16)

Translation:

personal – perfect – gay – married

I trained to be a mechanic. At the moment, I am looking for a job vacancy. A few weeks ago, I had an

interview with a great company. The job was _____ [perfect]! In the beginning, the interview was really good. But then the boss asked me more and more _____ [personal] questions. "Do you have a relationship? Are you _____ [married]?" At some point, he laughed and asked, "But you're hopefully not _____ [gay], are you?" I didn't even know what to say. Of course, I'm gay. But I really wanted this job. I don't want to lie either.

So denkt Hatice Ozmul (33) über Freiheit und Toleranz:

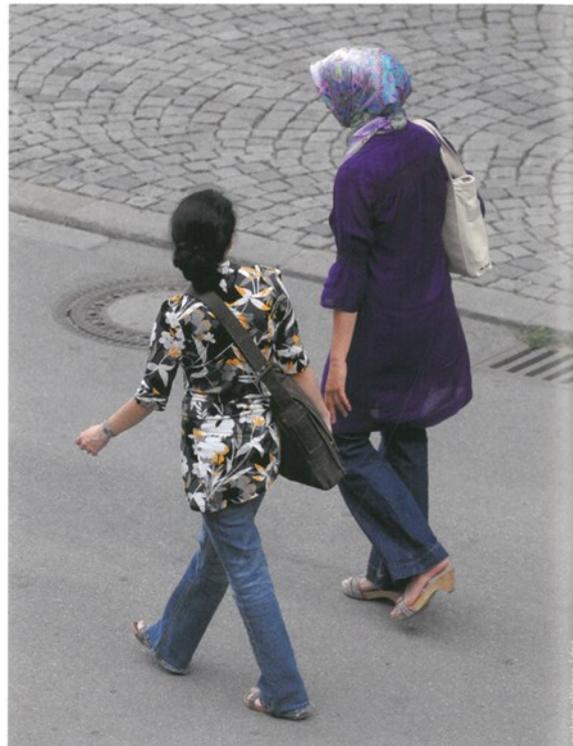
Mich nerven Menschen, die mir die Welt erklären. Meistens erklären sie nicht die Welt, sondern wie sie die Welt sehen. Dabei wollen sie, dass ich die Welt genauso sehe wie sie. Und dass die Dinge die gleiche Bedeutung für mich haben wie für sie. Zum Beispiel das Kopftuch.

Viele meiner Freundinnen haben unterschiedliche Gründe, warum sie ein Kopftuch tragen oder sie verbinden unterschiedliche Dinge damit. Aber es gibt immer wieder Leute, die uns erklären, welche Bedeutung unser Kopftuch wirklich hat. Diese Leute wollen uns ihre Wahrheit wie einen Mantel überziehen. Ist das tolerant?

Und dann gibt es noch Leute, die mir sagen, dass ich mich für deutsche Kunst und Literatur interessieren muss. Muss ich das wirklich?

Ich bin für die Grundrechte im Grundgesetz und ich lebe gerne in Deutschland. Das reicht!

Zwei Freundinnen beim Einkaufsbummel
in München



AUFGABEN UND AKTIVITÄTEN

1. Worin könnte sich das Leben der beiden jungen Frauen auf dem Foto unterscheiden?
2. Warum können die beiden Frauen Freundinnen sein?
3. Glauben Sie, dass es in der Freundschaft der beiden auch Probleme geben kann?
4. Wie denkt Hatice über Freiheit und Toleranz? Diskutieren Sie im Kurs darüber. Wenn Sie Lust haben, können Sie uns dazu auch einen Leserbrief für unsere Homepage schreiben.

Fig. 6: Hatice Ozmul on Freedom and Tolerance (miteinander leben, Feil/Hesse 2017a: 20)

Translation:

This is what Hatice Özmul (33) thinks about freedom and tolerance:

People who explain the world to me annoy me. Mostly they don't explain the world, but how they see it. They want me to see the world the same way they do. And that things have the same meaning for me as for them. For example the headscarf.

Many of my friends have different reasons why they wear a headscarf or they associate different things with it. But there are always people who explain to us what our headscarf really means. These people want to cover us with their truth like a coat. Is that tolerant?

And then there are people who tell me that I have to be interested in German art and literature. Do I really have to?

I am in favour of fundamental rights in Germany and I like to live in Germany. That's enough!
//Two friends on a shopping trip in Munich//

Tasks and activities.

1. What could be the difference between the lives of the two young women in the photo?
2. Why can the two women be friends?
3. Do you think that there can be problems in the friendship between the two women?
4. What does Hatice think about freedom and tolerance? Discuss it in the course. If you feel like it, you can also write us a letter for our homepage

Fig. 5 is taken from the supplementary material *Vielfalt leben* (Büchsel 2018), a workbook created on the initiative of the Berlin adult education centres that breaks new ground in two respects:

On the one hand the topic: Up to now, our German textbooks have lacked the diversity of roles and identities that shape our everyday lives in Germany. We search in vain for the gay protagonist, rarely a single mother appears. If something of this social diversity does appear in the textbooks, it is in higher course levels for people who have been learning German for some time. In this way, diversity is, as it were, addressed in the follow-up to the language course. This creates the impression that diversity only has a place on the fringes of our society. "Vielfalt leben" – this is the second novelty – is thus also the first material that places social topics such as gender justice and various family and life models at the centre of learning from the outset, and already deals with them at language levels A1 and A2. (ibid.: 3)

Fig. 6 from *miteinander leben* (Feil/Hesse 2017a) is a positive example of how participants are addressed directly and on an equal footing, and how learning goals are implemented that address the areas of *interest and curiosity* ("[...] I want to know which rights I have and which rules apply to all people in Germany [...]."), *openness and courage* ("I approach other people and explain to them what is important to me. I tell others what I like and what bothers me. I interfere when something is important to me."), or *understanding and tolerance* ("Anything that is important for others, I don't disregard. What's good for me doesn't have to be better for others. I can talk to others about differences and similarities") (Feil/Hesse 2017a: 3). These are areas in which (one's own) boundaries and ideas of what goes and what does not, play a major role, i.e. areas that can be captured using the grid for classifying taboos (cf. Table 1).

It becomes clear that also topics on tolerance and coexistence are narrowed down and taken up one-sidedly in a section entitled "Intercultural Conflicts" (cf. Feil/Hesse 2017a: 186f.), and that headings such as "German Culture/German Cultures", "Cultural Differences" or "Typically German?" (Buchwald-Wargenau 2018) basically essentialize cultures. The comparisons with the home country that are repeatedly called for must continue to be questioned, especially if it is implied that the participants' background of knowledge and experience can be classified in Quadrant II (taboo abuse), while aspects of 'the target culture' are located in Quadrant III (positive taboo break). More appropriate seem to be references to the (involvement of) majority society, which go to show that there are enough examples that must (still) be located in Quadrant II, i.e. topics and processes that should be disclosed and discussed in Quadrant III:

Some time ago, my female colleague commented on a Bundesliga football match on television. After that, there were many hostile e-mails and comments on the Internet. Isn't it incredible that only men are allowed to comment on football? (Butler et al. 2017: 101)

It surprised me that women in Germany have only been allowed to work without their husbands' consent since 1977. (Buchwald-Wargenau 2018: 77)

Thus, it seems worthwhile to raise the question of the current relevance for the majority society with regard to the individual topics that are put up for discussion in orientation courses. For example, as successfully implemented in *miteinander leben*, the question is raised "What does civil courage mean?" (Feil/Hesse 2017a: 107f.) while discussing National Socialism in the module *History and Responsibility*:

Civil courage is the contribution of citizens, so that the basic rights are not only respected in the Basic Law, but also in everyday life. Our example from everyday life is a teacher pulling a student's hair.

You might think now that this is rare and an exception. You're right, but civil courage is almost always about exceptions and special situations. (ibid.: 107)

5. Conclusion: the challenges

The grid for the classification and visualization of taboos (Section 2), the location of integration courses (Section 3), and an exemplary analysis of the orientation course material (Section 4) show that taboos in relation to integration processes are indeed a relevant category. For Quadrant I (Protection by Taboos), it can be stated with regard to the protection of intimacy and privacy that course participants must always be treated with respect just as their personal boundaries must be respected. Conversely, course participants should be encouraged and empowered (cf. Wildhalm 2018) to demand a safe space for themselves. In practice, this calls for a reflection on the side of the teachers and a review of teaching materials in relation to potentially inherent othering of participants. For the participants it means, among other things, an examination of the dichotomy public vs. private, which can be seen in the answers to the questions: "What do I want to share about myself?", or "What do I (not) have to share about myself?".

With regard to Quadrant II (taboo abuse), a powerful instantiation of the integration course manifests itself. Such a reflection forms a fundamental starting point for Quadrant III (positive taboo break) and, thus, the competence to behave as teachers and learners in relation to the conditions in order not to reproduce them (Mineva/Salgado 2015: 257). This relates to the following ideal:

to reflect with learners on a meta-level on society's relations, to locate them historically, and to develop and open up actions by speculation that could lead to a change in conditions. (ibid.)

Quadrant III (positive taboo break) also addresses the question of how the dichotomy between teachers and participants can be overcome (cf. Wildhalm 2019). Among other things, the social conditions under which integration courses take place must be questioned, as must the individuals' positions in the classroom as a political space (cf. ibid.). The objectives of the integration course made transparent in the framework curriculum are primarily to be found in Quadrant III with regard to democracy and human rights. Scenarios that take place in Quadrant II (taboo abuse) and IV (negative taboo break) (cf. examples in Section 4) must be addressed appropriately, disclosed, and assigned to Quadrant III. The previous analysis of the tasks in teaching materials shows that reflection is ostensible in order to achieve thematic sensitisation and increased awareness. Yet, the reflections suggested go in-depth to a varying degree, but actually often remain on a general level and, thus, on the surface. The main exceptions are the course material *miteinander leben* (Feil/Hesse 2017a) and the supplementary material *Vielfalt leben* (Büchsel 2018). Here, in relation to taboo topics, perspectives for action are actually designed and opened up – at least to some extent.

Due to the fact that the grid for classifying and making taboos visible focuses on the reference variables of *society* and the *individual*, the relevance for the entire migration society and each individual becomes evident, as it is not reduced to country-specific or cultural references. This discussion is therefore also a proposal to break down a distinction between Germans and migrants that is still myopic, essentialising, and counter-productive in the context of integration processes as well as to assume responsibility for integration in the migration society beyond integration courses. For this, however, the breaking of taboos will continue to be necessary.

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Notes

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² All quotes are originally in German and were translated by the author.

³ Thus, taboos always change with society. Examples of this in Western Europe are trousers for women that are no longer taboo today, or conversely smoking in films, which is no longer a positive stylistic device but is now regarded as a taboo (cf. Deutsches Filminstitut 2014).

⁴ <http://www.bpb.de/mediathek/197284/homophobie-begegnen> (30.09.2018).

⁵ The term was coined by Wilhelm Heitmeyer, for an overview cf. Küpper/Zick 2015.

⁶ Cf. here the violent and sexual offences in German families mentioned in Mecheril/van der Haagen Wulff (this volume) or during the Oktoberfest.

⁷ An overview can be found on the following page: <https://www.bpb.de/mediathek/213242/-begegnen> (30.12.2018).

⁸ For detailed information cf.: <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/integrationskurse-node.html> (30.09.2018).

⁹ The framework curriculum also identifies communication learning objectives that span fields of action (cf. Goethe Institut 2016: 29–70).

¹⁰ The test "Leben in Deutschland" consists of 33 multiple-choice questions, which are passed with at least 15 correct answers. With at least 17 correct answers, the test is regarded as proof of the required knowledge for the naturalisation test, the questions of which are identical to the test questions of "Leben in Deutschland".

¹¹ The assignment of the topic areas to the questions (the number of questions is in brackets behind the individual topic) is taken from Feil/Hesse 2017b: Cover page front.

Taboos and Transgressions as a Result of Insufficient Consideration of Didactic Principles in Orientation Course Materials¹

Abstract

The following contribution discusses taboos and transgressions in relation to didactics from the perspective of political education. In a first step, participation and inclusion are presented as goals of political education. The orientation course and its structures, goals, and contents form the field of action, which is presented in concrete terms with reference to the Beutelsbacher Consensus and didactic principles. In the case of questions and possibilities of implementation, a first, exemplary look at orientation course materials is informative: it shows that essentially only one single didactic principle – the orientation towards research – is fully represented. On the other hand, the analysis of the examples reveals a lack of subject orientation, action orientation, and controversy, and uncovers didactically relevant taboos and transgressions. From a political-didactic perspective, it is therefore desirable that orientation courses and their materials increasingly focus on options for action and participatory orientation.

1. Introduction

Taboos and transgressions are encountered in integration courses in several respects and at different levels. Above all, they arise on the expectation level against the background of different learning situations and interests of the course participants among themselves, but also between participants and course instructors as well as in the context of the curriculum, which is implemented in teaching materials (cf. Hägi-Mead, this volume). Taboos are defined here as something that is not said, addressed, or done unconsciously and/or unquestioningly. In addition, taboos not only manifest in silence, but also in words and images (cf. Schmidt 1999: 4). Also, the taboo functions primarily as a lens through which social processes of mainstreaming, disciplining, and/or discrimination become visible (cf. Flubacher/Hägi-Mead, this volume), which are, as it were, means of demarcation. A transgression towards someone can be considered as such when this person is made invisible, misleadingly depicted, alienated, and/or not addressed at all, when the person is present in some form and part of an event without getting a voice. This article aims to elaborate these mechanisms in relation to orientation course materials.

From a politically educational perspective, it will be discussed to what extent orientation courses in the Federal Republic of Germany – as part of integration courses – also contain taboos and transgressions of a didactic nature across the country. In particular, the way, in which the teaching and learning objects of the orientation course materials are taught, is put to the test. In this respect, the concrete question arises as to whether these textbooks (and related orientation course questions) in particular appear suitable for promoting the social participation of course participants by means of their didactic preparation. One assumption, on which this study is based, is that certain didactic decisions are not conducive to participation and can represent transgressions. In concrete terms, it is assumed that learner diversity is neglected, which in turn has a tabooing and also transgressive effect, since the claims, competences, desires and rights of individuals are ignored and/or marginalised. Thus, taboos and transgressions contribute to people not being able to participate according to their needs or being restricted in this respect. Consequently, they are often expressions of (social) exclusion, i.e. the opposite of social participation. These assumptions are referred to in more detail in the concluding chapter of this article. First, I will briefly explain what is meant by participation in the social sciences.

2. Participation and inclusion as objectives of political education

Participation is fundamentally the yardstick for social justice within the German society (cf. Göhring-Lange 2011: 8). Justice is made possible if all people are given room for manoeuvre in order to realise a way of life that they individually desire and is, equally, socially customary (cf. Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs 2005). Each person should have the opportunity to bring their interests or needs into society in order to help shape it. In this context, co-determination refers to actions and decisions that can affect both the life of the individual as well as the nature of a community. Consequently, it is always a question of a mediating relationship between the individual human being and their environment (cf. Gerhardt 2007: 14). From a didactic point of view, every teaching-learning setting also represents such a mediating relationship. In such offers, participation can be promoted above all if planning is carried out from the subject level, so that the needs and experiences of the addressees are included in the creation of a teaching-learning setting.

The question of possible taboos and transgressions in orientation courses at the subject-didactic level arises, among other things, from the current target group debates within inclusive political education, which is primarily concerned with participation and barriers to participation in political learning (cf. Dönges/Hilpert/Zurstrassen 2015). In exploring these aspects from an inclusive perspective, the focus is not on the individuals' lack of resources and their (supposed) characteristics, but on structural deficits that bar them from participation. Inclusion is defined as a process of change that takes place in a network in all areas of society and aims to enable every person to access, participate and self-determine in all areas of society on the basis of their individual needs (Besand/Jugel 2015b: 52f.).

One thesis that is advocated in inclusive political education by Anja Besand and David Jugel (2015a: 105), for example, is that especially educational offers that were designed for so-called special target groups often focus on these very groups in a deficit-oriented way and thus put them in a worse position. From the perspective of such marginalised and often alienated target groups, it can be assumed that they perceive the mechanisms in educational offers as transgressive modes of behaviour and representation. Since orientation courses and their teaching materials are a concrete offer for the target group 'migrants', an investigation of non-participation mechanisms or exclusion processes with regard to this 'special target group' seems obvious. In order to examine this assumption step-by-step and with a specific focus, a didactic instrument is presented below that illustrates a range of design principles and quality standards of political education. This instrument can also be used for the planning and didactic reflection of courses for German as a Second Language (*DaZ; Deutsch als Zweitsprache*). In the following, political education will be presented as a field in its own right, with its design principles and quality standards, as elaborated in the context of the orientation course. The following two sections explain the orientation course as an essential field of action for political education.

3. The orientation course as a field of action in political education

3.1 About its structures, goals, and contents

The article by Sara Hägi-Mead (this volume) provides a broad overview of the structure, goals, and contents of the integration and orientation course in Germany, and makes it clear that the integration course goes beyond language acquisition. In this way, particularly in the orientation course, migrants are introduced to Germany's legal system, culture, and history (cf. Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection 2005). Central to this are questions about human and civil rights, as well as questions about constitutional principles, which in turn serve as a bench-

mark for the independent evaluation of democracy and the individual positioning of the participants in society (cf. BAMF 2017: 9). In addition, the focus is on various ways of life and values of democracy that are considered central to constructive social coexistence. These subject areas are classic areas of political education, which can be described as the teaching of political and social learning. Political educators have above all the task of preparing learning settings in such a way that they express social contents and problems that require regulation and are important for certain groups (cf. Sander 2009). This also applies to disciplines and areas in which political education plays a subordinate role, but is nonetheless relevant, e.g. in the context of DaZ.

Political education is applied in Germany in school and extra-curricular contexts. In school contexts, political education is a school principle, but also a proper school subject, which is described differently in each federal state and possibly within the individual school types. For example, the subject of political education is called “community studies” in Saxony, “social studies” in Bavaria or “politics and economics” in Hessen. Political education can also be taught in combination with other subjects such as history, law, or geography, with general knowledge courses in primary schools, or it can play a special role in combination with project weeks. There is also extra-curricular political education, e.g. in clubs, associations, and/or foundations. A further distinction must be made between political education for children, young people, and adults. As such, the integration or orientation course belongs to the field of extra-curricular political adult education. In contrast to political education for children and young people, it is a relatively young field of research, for which there have been only a few studies and findings to date. Since this is particularly the case with regard to teaching-learning settings in orientation courses, and with regard to their specific target groups, this article contributes to research in this very direction.

It is one of the declared aims of an orientation course to generate opportunities for participation in society (cf. BAMF 2018: 7). The promotion of social participation is equally the main aim of political education. As the definition of inclusion previously made clear, political education commits itself to advocating for the participation of all human beings. But what is meant by ‘participation’ in the sense of political education? If political education is about empowering people, emancipation must be a declared goal of political education. This means that people are regarded as subjects with agency in learning processes who do not simply adopt norms, values, and roles without reflection in order to adapt to existing conditions (Schmiederer 1977: 108f.). However, emancipation becomes possible only on the grounds of the ability to participate. Therefore, if participation is regarded as a competence for co-determination, political education must ensure that people develop a sense of how they can interfere in decision-making processes in various ways and through individual approaches (cf. MESH Collective 2014). Here, learning about participation is foregrounded, as well as the question to what extent one would like to or can participate. In order to promote competences (or possibilities) for participation, political education supports the fundamental view that every human is a subject with agency to make their own decisions and to represent their interests. Consequently, it is necessary to take the interests, needs, and attitudes of people who are in the learning process as a starting point. Yet, in order for people to recognize their needs and interests at all on a social and political level, it is necessary that political education first of all shows how everyone is directly and daily affected by political decisions, and how one’s own life cannot be considered detached from social events (cf. *ibid.*).

3.2 Two central participatory competences of political education

Following the increasingly poor performance of participants in comparative student assessments, the conferences of education ministers of the German federal states have agreed that educational goals such as maturity, solidarity, and social participation can only be meaningfully imple-

mented if, in the future, educational programmes aim for output and outcome control. As a result of this finding, political education has adopted competence orientation as its primary educational goal. In the future, learning outcomes in the form of skills are to be placed at the centre, as they have a longer-term effect on the individual. Even if there is no general agreement on competence orientation in political education, a minimum consensus was reached, the so-called *GPJE competence model* (GPJE stands for *Gesellschaft für Politikdidaktik und Jugend- und Erwachsenenbildung*; in English: Society for Political Education and Youth and Adult Education). This model stipulates that in political educational teaching-learning settings above all the capacity to act and judge is to be imparted, which is essential for the everyday life of learning subjects. 'Capacity to act' essentially means the development of practical skills for participation in the political public. On that note, opinions, convictions and interests should be adequately represented in sound political education material in order to teach skills both in arguing as well as in finding compromise (cf. Weißeno 2005). This goes hand in hand with communication skills, tactical, and strategic skills, but also political action and civil courage. On the basis of judgment skills, political events, problems, and controversies as well as questions of economic and social development should be analysed and reflected on, taking into account rational or value-related factors (cf. *ibid.*). Consequently, the transfer of knowledge that can be queried in the form of input control should take a back seat to the acquisition of the above-mentioned competences. Thus, these skills and their promotion should be examined in the didactic settings of orientation course materials and the corresponding examination questions.

3.3 The Beutelsbacher Consensus

Teachers who are active in political education – including orientation courses – have a moderating and supportive role to play. The so-called *Beutelsbacher Consensus* of 1976 defines relatively clear ideas about the design of socially and politically relevant educational processes. It states that learners must not be overwhelmed in their opinion-forming, that teaching topics must not be one-sided, but visible in their controversial and arguable structure, and that participants should be motivated and enabled to represent their own interests (cf. Müller 2006).² These ideas correlate with the didactic principles of subject orientation and controversy. In April 2017, the Beutelsbacher Consensus was included as a didactic guideline in the orientation course curriculum of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*, in short: BAMF) (BAMF 2017: 14). This fact underlines once again that orientation courses are primarily a field of political education. The Beutelsbacher Consensus is a prime example of the need for reflexivity for political education (also with regard to the observance and application of didactic principles), whether the chosen means and ways of a teaching-learning setting are actually suitable – above all when it comes to promoting participation for the addressees.

3.4 The importance of orientation course materials for teachers

As has become clear, the orientation course conveys a variety of complex politically educating topics. The corresponding textbooks should also be regarded as part of political education. The wealth of content provided by the orientation course curricula makes it necessary for teachers to design their teaching units in a targeted and well-founded manner. A didactic reduction is indispensable, especially in view of the time frame of the orientation course. After all, the participants should deal with Germany's political order in only 100 teaching units (45 minutes each). In this time frame – so the claim – the two participatory competences of judgement and capacity to act are to be promoted. It is this task that represents a particular challenge for orientation course

teachers: Orientation course teachers are usually German teachers with an additional qualification, but without sound training in the teaching of political education for adult education. In orientation courses, however, teachers need such expertise that goes far beyond DaZ. Even though the BAMF now provides a wider range of continuing education opportunities for (German) teachers of orientation courses, and political education now plays a central role in German universities, it is assumed that DaZ teachers will adhere closely to the orientation course materials, as they are faced with complex politically-formed subject areas and unfamiliar issues. After all, it is the textbooks that guarantee reliable implementation of the curriculum. Consequently, orientation course materials should not only be understood as political education for migrants, but also as a didactic compass for course instructors who traditionally do not come from the field of political education.

4. Classical quality standards in political education

4.1 The importance of didactic principles for political education

Due to the high complexity of social issues, it is necessary to prepare mediation situations (in advance) as structured and meaningful as possible for the addressed group. In order to enable a conscious selection and structure of politically educational topics, and to make them didactically justifiable, certain quality standards must be taken into account and adhered to. They serve to operationalise general objectives of political education (e.g. maturity), which in turn form the yardstick for the creation and implementation of teaching-learning units (cf. Müller 2006).

Following, a total of six quality standards will be presented and explained. These are the so-called classic didactic principles of political education: *subject orientation, problem orientation, action orientation, controversy, exemplary learning, science orientation*. By taking these principles into account, participants are offered space for an active and self-determined discussion of various political and socially relevant subjects, according to their age (cf. Besand 2018: 28).

The consideration of these principles helps course participants to find their own ways and means to influence the situation they find themselves in. Against the background of the quality standards, the added value of the political education increases, which, in turn, increases the chances that migrant students, too, will be empowered in their arrival and social orientation in Germany, as they will learn to emancipate themselves. Since classic didactic principles contribute to a reflection on how migrants can influence their own interests and master challenges, they play a central role in the context of a constructive approach to taboos and the avoidance of transgressions. The following section explains in detail what each of the above-mentioned principles encompasses. Three central questions for each principle will be summarized below, and, in the fourth section, applied to a selection of material from orientation courses, and used to answer the research question of this paper.

4.2 Characterization of classic didactic principles

Subject orientation. Subject orientation is an interactive meaning-making process involving all persons acting together (cf. Petrik 2014: 241). It is thus decisive to start on the level of the learning subjects in order to gain access to political topics. The aim here is to find out about the multi-layered needs and situations of the addressees. In this sense, individual interests and wishes, as well as socialisation-related attitudes, opinions, and existing knowledge or experiences should be addressed or assessed in the particular teaching-learning setting (cf. Müller 2006). Such a procedure contributes to the visibilisation of an individual learner identity, can ensure that people feel

seen, understood, and recognised in learning situations, and, finally, identify with the course content. What is important here is, among other things, access via an easy, comprehensible, everyday language (cf. Autorengruppe Fachdidaktik 2015: 63). If the individual subjects' interests, knowledge, experiences, attitudes, and opinions are made taboo, the usefulness of political education also remains unclear. Moreover, if there is no room for agency, or no alternatives are discussed, there will be no contribution to the improving of one's situation in accordance with the Beutelsbacher Consensus (cf. section 3.1 in this article) nor to an orientation towards participation.

As a result of the principle of subject orientation, the following questions can be asked of any teaching-learning setting:

- Are the interests, wishes, attitudes, opinions, existing knowledge, and experiences of the subjects assessed or addressed in the course?
- To what extent could a topic be useful from the learners' perspective?
- To what extent can emancipation be promoted? Do alternatives become clear? Does agency play a role in the course?

Problem orientation. The principle of problem orientation aims to take up social problems that require regulation and include them in the teaching-learning setting. This also means addressing potential conflicts of coexistence that arise constantly, and discussing such challenging issues, to mitigate them, or even to transform them (cf. Goll 2014: 259). In the ideal case, the subjects acquire and test competences by discussing possible courses of action and trying out modes of conduct. This requires an open and honest approach to social challenges, which do not simply exist, but are socially constructed (cf. *ibid.*). Being able to solve problems in terms of content and method underlines the emancipative character of the principle of problem orientation.

In this sense, an approach that minimizes or ignores social conflicts and challenges can be interpreted as taboo. Furthermore, playing down or erasing social problems encountered by the subjects, for example, represents a transgression. As agents, participants should be given the opportunity to express themselves on issues that they themselves perceive as problematic.

As a result of the principle of problem orientation, the following questions can be asked of any teaching-learning setting:

- Is a problem / a conflict / a challenge named?
- Are competences imparted that can be used to discuss solutions and actions for problems in terms of content and method?
- Can courses of action be derived from this?

Controversy. The principle of controversy demands that everything that is considered controversial in political and scientific discourses must also be presented in a multi-layered way in learning settings. Consequently, facts should be considered in their complexity (cf. Grammes 2014b: 271). This demand also places high demands on the aesthetic design of educational media and materials (cf. *ibid.*). Consequently, a didactic setting should reflect positions as controversial or different as possible, on the basis of which independent judgements can be formed, and discussions can take place. Teaching material should provide the opportunity to try out one's own points of view and attitudes in class alongside other opinions to systematically criticise, and to imagine alternatives (cf. *ibid.*: 269). A taboo exists when diverging opinions are concealed and no possibility is offered in this respect to address such opinions on a democratic basis in a safe

space. If conflicts and the resulting controversies are tabooed as disruptive factors, they are not considered to be the motor of innovation, reform, and social change (cf. *ibid.*: 267).

As a result of the principle of controversy, the following questions can be asked of any teaching-learning setting:

- Are controversies reflected, and is a topic rendered multilayered and approached from different perspectives?
- Can criticism be expressed? Are alternatives asked for?
- Does controversy in the sense of complexity and multi-perspectivity also emerge in the presentation of an educational setting?

Research orientation. Research orientation aims to deal with educational objects of political education in drawing on scientific findings (cf. Juchler 2014: 290). Consequently, the topics that are taught must be recognised in their conditionality and determinacy by science, and transmitted accordingly (cf. *ibid.*: 285). On the one hand, the approaches and methods, through which course participants generate knowledge, must be scientifically justifiable for any setting of political education. On the other hand, no factual claims that have been invalidated can be reproduced. Finally, terminology should be used correctly (cf. Müller 2006). For research orientation in political education, primarily findings and methods of the social sciences should be applied (cf. Autorengruppe Fachdidaktik 2015: 79). For the planning of political education, however, knowledge generated from psychological education must also be drawn on for the conception of learning arrangements. Research orientation is independent of age groups and educational background. The political education scholar Ingo Juchler (2014: 286) stipulates that research orientation, in contrast to other principles such as action orientation or exemplary learning, must be respected always. In addition, research orientation requires learners in the process of knowledge accumulation to listen to different perspectives and orientations, and to critically deal with them (cf. *ibid.*: 289).

As a result of the principle of research orientation, the following questions can be asked of any teaching-learning setting:

- Are topics aligned with scientific findings?
- Is the terminology used correctly?
- Is it possible to critically (or scientifically) engage with diverse perspectives and orientations?

Exemplary learning. Due to the already discussed wide range of political education on its topics or content, it is necessary to focus on specific points in order to reduce their complexity (cf. Müller 2006). Exemplary learning – learning from examples and cases – is suitable for this purpose. Thus, the topics addressed can be presented in such a way that certain structures, rules, and central categories can be identified and derived on the basis of illustrative examples, which in turn can be transferred to a large number of similar questions and contexts. In addition, in the sense of exemplary learning, common assumptions can be differentiated or corrected in using concrete examples (cf. Grammes 2014a: 249). Here, in the sense of subject and problem orientation, issues should be chosen that are connected to the participants' experiences, such as current conflict situations or concrete everyday problems (cf. *ibid.*: 250), thus selected from current events and lines of conflict. In addition, personal role models and 'strong' texts serve as examples of learning (cf. *ibid.*: 253).

If complex topics are insufficiently illustrated by individual cases and examples, and individual concepts and ideas are made taboo, this can be interpreted as transgressive behaviour. In specific modules, for example in the orientation course materials, care should be taken to ensure that exemplary learning is made possible in every teaching session.

As a result of the principle of exemplary learning, the following questions can be asked of any teaching-learning setting:

- Are complex problems explained with illustrative examples?
- Is it possible to compare and, if necessary, correct one's own assumptions?
- Are problem situations, conflicts, and persons chosen that are oriented towards the participants' life worlds?

Action orientation. In the sense of action orientation, (socially relevant) topics should be framed in teaching-learning settings so that participants are given the opportunity to engage with them on their own and in a variety of ways. Wherever possible, the participants' own identification with issues of conflict should encourage them to find concrete solutions and explanatory approaches on their own, and to discuss them with others (cf. Autorengruppe Fachdidaktik 2015: 111). According to Reinhardt (2014: 278), the principle of action orientation combines the level of (trial) action with the action-distancing level of reflection, at which analyses, evaluations, alternative views of the matter can take place for the subjects. On that note, action orientation does not mean merely using spontaneous experiences and needs and staging mere action, but rather a cognitivization of the process, in the sense of planning and processing action through distancing and reflection (ibid.: 283). Since participants are supposed to master tasks and situations assigned to them with their own agency, the principle of action orientation is closely linked to methodical competence (cf. Autorengruppe Fachdidaktik 2015: 162). Action orientation is thus the basis for self-guidance in relation to socially relevant topics and questions, and for dealing with them.

As a result of the principle of action orientation, the following questions can be asked of any teaching-learning setting:

- Are there possibilities for (trial) action?
- To what extent do reflection, analyses, evaluations, alternative views, possibilities of distancing play a role in the course?
- Do self-guidance and agency play a role in the offer?

5. On the implementation of didactic principles in orientation course materials

5.1 Method and data

Subsection 5.3 will present three excerpts in exemplary fashion, which were selected randomly. The aim is to examine the didactic principles on the basis of these excerpts, and to explain them in more detail. For this purpose, the questions elaborated in section 3.2 will be tested and briefly answered in relation to the excerpts. Methodically, the entire analysis was based on qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2016). The quality standards of political education represent deductive categories in the analysis procedure; inductive categories of analysis play no role in this article.

In accordance with the procedure described above, which will be visualised in 5.3, instances of taboo and transgression are assessed and explained in detail in section 6. Since only three examples are analysed in this article (a broader presentation would go beyond the scope of this article), these results are not representative or generalisable. Yet, this evaluation is part of and drawing on a larger study, which is carried out in the context of my on-going dissertation project. In this project, all orientation course materials currently used in Germany are analysed.³ Here, I also examine to what extent the mentioned six didactic principles can be found in their breadth in the individual lessons and modules of the teaching materials, and what consequences this may have. In this context, it should be noted that it is not absolutely necessary for all didactic principles to be applied or taken into account in a single textbook task, even if it is desirable that several principles are combined in teaching-learning settings. Only the principle of research orientation is a quality standard that simply must be adhered to. Furthermore, it seems obvious and desirable, above all in accordance with the Beutelsbacher Consensus, that controversy and subject orientation find their way into all teaching-learning settings (cf. Petrik 2014 and Grammes 2014b).

5.2 Overview of orientation course materials and final test

Before the implementation of the individual didactic principles is discussed on the basis of three exemplary excerpts, a brief overview is given here of all orientation materials that are currently approved for use in teaching in Germany, and have a character similar to that of a textbook (cf. BAMF 2019: 4). In total, these four course materials and textbooks are: *Orientierungskurs* (Cornelsen Verlag; Schöte 2016), *miteinander leben* (LpB BW; Feil/Hesse 2017), *100 Stunden Deutschland* (Klett Verlag; Butler et al. 2017), and *Zur Orientierung* (Hueber Verlag; Gaidosch/Müller 2017).⁴ Each educational institution that offers orientation courses and corresponding tests in Germany can decide independently which of these four course materials to use in the classroom. All approved course materials contain three central modules: *Politics in Democracy* (35 teaching units), *History and Responsibility* (20 teaching units), and *People and Society* (38 teaching units). Similar content is taught in all course materials on these topics, although the way in which they are taught differs. In order to guarantee a thematically coherent insight, all the excerpts listed below refer to the first module *Politics in Democracy* of the orientation course textbooks, in which immigrants are informed about their rights and duties as potential future citizens of Germany.

The orientation course is usually followed by the scaled final test *Leben in Deutschland*, which uses single-choice questions that must be answered in writing (cf. Hägi-Mead, this volume).⁵ This test must be passed in order to successfully complete the orientation course, as well as to obtain German citizenship, for which at least 17 questions have to be answered correctly. However, the test can be repeated any number of times. The textbooks prepare the test participants in different ways for a total of 33 multiple-choice questions. The consequences of this for the quality standards of political education will be explained in the next section.

5.3 Evaluation of three examples from three orientation course materials

The following are three excerpts from three different textbooks.⁶ They are evaluated in a table below on the basis of the questions from section 4.2.

- l. A dove is depicted on the federal coat of arms.
- m. You have to pay church taxes, no matter if you belong to a church or not.
- n. The social insurance is controlled by the state, and protects the people in a social emergency.

Excerpt 2:

In den folgenden Bundesländern darf man schon ab 16 Jahren bei den Kommunalwahlen wählen: Baden-Württemberg, Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Niedersachsen, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Sachsen-Anhalt und Schleswig-Holstein. In Bayern, Hessen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland, Sachsen und Thüringen muss man 18 Jahre alt sein. Auch EU-Bürger dürfen bei Kommunalwahlen wählen, wenn sie seit mindestens drei Monaten am Ort leben.

Aktives Wahlrecht heißt, dass man wählen darf. Man muss zum Beispiel alt genug sein und die deutsche Staatsbürgerschaft haben.

Passives Wahlrecht bedeutet, dass man selbst gewählt werden darf.

Nabil Amin ist 40 Jahre alt. Er arbeitet als Maschinenschlosser in Augsburg. Seit 14 Monaten hat er die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit.

Saskia Heudorfer ist 16 Jahre alt und Schülerin. Sie besucht ein Gymnasium in Bremen und interessiert sich für Politik.

Cécile Armengaud ist Französin. Sie studiert seit drei Jahren in Deutschland. Vor zwei Monaten ist sie von Berlin nach Regensburg gezogen.

Gabrijel Pavić ist Kroatie und 19 Jahre alt. Er lebt seit zwei Jahren in Kassel und arbeitet dort als Kellner.

Sebastian Becker ist in Heidelberg geboren und aufgewachsen. Er ist Deutscher und 17 Jahre alt.

Hayriye Yıldız lebt schon seit über 20 Jahren in Bielefeld. Ihre Kinder sind in Deutschland geboren. Sie hat die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit.

Fig. 2: Voting in Germany (100 Stunden Deutschland, Butler et.al. 2017: 5)

Translation:

In the following federal states, one may vote already starting from 16 years with the local elections: Baden-Württemberg, Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony-Anhalt and Schleswig-Holstein. In Bavaria, Hessen, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Saxony and Thuringia you have to be 18 years old. EU citizens may also vote in local elections, if they have been living in the town for at least three months.

Right column: Active voting rights mean that you can vote. For example, you have to be old enough and have German citizenship.

Passive voting rights mean that you can be elected yourself.

Top row, 1st picture from left: Nabil Amin is 40 years old. He works as a machine fitter in Augsburg. He has been a German citizen for 14 months.

Top row, middle picture: Saskia Heudorfer is 16 years old and a student. She attends a grammar school in Bremen, and is interested in politics.

Top row, 1st picture from right: Cécile Armengaud is French. She has been studying in Germany for three years. Two months ago, she moved from Berlin to Regensburg.

Row below, 1st picture from left: Gabrijel Pavic is Croatian and 19 years old. He has lived in Kassel for two years, and works there as a waiter.

Row below, middle picture: Sebastian Becker was born and raised in Heidelberg. He is German and 17 years old.

Row below, 1st picture from right: Hayriye Yildiz has lived in Bielefeld for over 20 years. Her children were born in Germany. She has German nationality.

Excerpt 3:

Die Parteien

1a Was wissen Sie über diese Parteien? Sammeln Sie Informationen im Kurs.



1b Lesen Sie die Texte und ergänzen Sie die Informationen in der Tabelle.

Die Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) ist die älteste Partei in Deutschland und wurde 1875 gegründet. Ihre Wurzeln hat sie in der Arbeiterbewegung. Auch heute sind die Rechte von Arbeitnehmern und soziale Gerechtigkeit wichtige Themen der SPD. Wichtig ist für die Partei außerdem, dass alle Menschen gleiche Chancen haben, zum Beispiel in der Ausbildung und im Beruf. www.spd.de

Die Christlich-Demokratische Union (CDU) und die Christlich-Soziale Union (CSU) sind nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg entstanden. Die Parteien vertreten konservative Werte und verstehen sich als Parteien für protestantische und katholische Christen. Auch für die CDU/CSU ist soziale Gerechtigkeit wichtig. Die CSU gibt es nur in Bayern, aber im Bundestag arbeiten CDU und CSU zusammen und bilden eine Fraktion. www.cdu.de/www.csu.de

Die Partei Die Grünen entstand 1980 in Westdeutschland aus Bürgerinitiativen für mehr Umweltschutz. 1990 schloss sie sich mit der Bürgerrechtsbewegung Bündnis 90 aus Ostdeutschland zusammen. Die Partei setzt sich stark für erneuerbare Energien ein, z. B. für mehr Energie aus Wind und Sonne, und für mehr Verbraucherschutz. Sie ist gegen Atomenergie. Außerdem setzt sie sich für mehr Rechte von Minderheiten ein. www.gruene.de

Die Linke entstand 2007 aus der Linkspartei PDS (Partei des demokratischen Sozialismus) und der WSAG (Arbeit & soziale Gerechtigkeit – Die Wahlalternative). Die PDS ist aus der SED, der Staatspartei in der früheren DDR entstanden, die WSAG wurde von früheren SPD-Mitgliedern und Gewerkschaftern gegründet. Die Linke ist für einen demokratischen Sozialismus. Unter anderem ist sie für mehr soziale Sicherheit für Menschen ohne Arbeit oder mit niedrigem Einkommen. www.die-linke.de

SPD	CDU/CSU	Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen	Die Linke
gegründet 1875	gegründet konservative Werte		

Fig. 3: The Parties (Orientierungskurs, Schöte 2016: 21)

Translation:

1a What do you know about these parties? Collect information in the course.

1b Read the texts and complete the information in the table.

The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) is the oldest party in Germany, and was founded in

1875. It has its roots in the labour movement. Even today, the rights of workers and social justice are important issues for the SPD. It is also important for the party that all people have equal opportunities, for example in education and in [work. www.spd.de](http://www.spd.de)

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU) emerged after the Second World War. The parties represent conservative values, and see themselves as parties for Protestant and Catholic Christians. Social justice is also important for the CDU/CSU. The CSU exists only in Bavaria, but in the Bundestag, the CDU and CSU work together and form a parliamentary [group. www.cdu.de/www.csu.de](http://www.cdu.de/www.csu.de)

The Green Party was founded in 1980 in West Germany out of citizens' initiatives for more environmental protection. In 1990, it joined forces with the civil rights movement Bündnis 90 from East Germany. The party is strongly in favour of renewable energies, e.g. more energy from wind and sun, and more consumer protection. It is against nuclear energy. In addition, it actively strives for more rights of minorities. www.gruene.de

The left originated 2007 from the left wing party PDS (party of the democratic socialism) and the WSAG (Labour and Social Justice – The Electoral Alternative). The PDS developed from the SED, the state party in the former GDR, the WSAG was created by former SPD members and trade unions. The Left is for democratic socialism. Among other things, it is for more social security for people without work or with low incomes. www.die-linke.de

Which two parties were merged to form the Left Party in 2007?

- A) PDS and WASG
- B) CDU and SSW
- C) CSU and FDP
- D) Bündnis 90 the Greens and SPD

Fig. 4: Question from the orientation course test⁷ (Der Test, Feil/Hesse 2017: 12 [number 59])

Analysis questions of the respective didactic principle	Evaluation Excerpt 1	Evaluation Excerpt 2	Evaluation Excerpt 3
Subject orientation			
Are the interests, wishes, attitudes, opinions, existing knowledge, and experiences of the subjects assessed or addressed in the course?	Interests, wishes, attitudes, opinions, and experiences are not included.	Interests, wishes, attitudes, opinions, and experiences are not included.	Interests, wishes, attitudes, opinions do not play a role. But existing knowledge and experiences are queried.
<i>To what extent could a topic be useful from the learners' perspective?</i>	A transfer of knowledge and behaviour takes place, the concrete benefit of which cannot be assessed situation-specifically.	If participants acquire German citizenship, they may also take part in elections at local, state and federal level.	Participants should be given an overview of the party landscape. This information could be important for them as future voters.

Analysis questions of the respective didactic principle	Evaluation Excerpt 1	Evaluation Excerpt 2	Evaluation Excerpt 3
<p><i>To what extent can emancipation be promoted? Do alternatives become clear? Does agency play a role in the course?</i></p>	<p>Emancipation in the form of offered alternatives and participation does not take place. Agency is at most tested in relation to the task, in which a decision is to be made about right or wrong.</p>	<p>Agency is demanded by the task: It should be decided who is (not) allowed to participate in which elections. Yet, what this in turn means for the participants' lives does not matter.</p>	<p>Agency occurs at most in the form of the table, which participants have to fill individually with text. However, it does not become clear what possibilities there are for action in everyday life.</p>
<p>Problem orientation</p>			
<p><i>Is a problem / conflict / challenge named?</i></p>	<p>No problems, conflicts, or challenges requiring regulation are defined in this offer.</p>	<p>No conflicts, problems, and challenges become explicitly clear. Possibly, it becomes implicitly (!) clear that migrants from third countries without German citizenship are excluded from all elections.</p>	<p>No problems, conflicts, or challenges in need of regulation are defined.</p>
<p><i>Are competences imparted that can be used to discuss solutions and actions for problems in terms of content and method?</i></p>	<p>As a result, no solutions are discussed.</p>	<p>In this excerpt, no competencies are imparted to discuss solutions and actions for problems both content-wise and methodically.</p>	<p>Subsequently, no solutions are discussed.</p>
<p><i>Can courses of action be derived from this?</i></p>	<p>Options for action are not developed.</p>	<p>Options for action are not developed.</p>	<p>Options for action are not developed.</p>
<p>Controversy</p>			
<p><i>Are controversies portrayed, is a topic presented as multi-layered, and approached from different perspectives?</i></p>	<p>No controversies are depicted. Topics are not presented in a multi-layered or multi-perspective way.</p>	<p>Multiple life situations are used to decide whether the described person can participate in elections or not.</p>	<p>No controversies are depicted. Topics are not presented in a multi-layered or multi-perspective way.</p>
<p><i>Can criticism be expressed? Are alternatives asked for?</i></p>	<p>There are no possibilities for criticism.</p>	<p>There are no possibilities for criticism.</p>	<p>There are no possibilities for criticism.</p>

Analysis questions of the respective didactic principle	Evaluation Excerpt 1	Evaluation Excerpt 2	Evaluation Excerpt 3
<i>Does controversy in the sense of complexity and multi-perspectivity also emerge in the presentation of an educational setting?</i>	Different persons and things are depicted that are not controversial. Their adequacy is questionable.	Although different people with and without migration history are depicted, controversy does not play a role.	Uncontroversially, different parties are represented. Apart from the party logos and lettering, there are no pictures.
Research orientation			
<i>Are topics aligned with scientific findings?</i>	The topic is based on scientific findings. Only the answer to d) is questionable. No general statement can be made that all people without German citizenship are excluded from elections. For example, people who have migrated to Germany from the EU may take part in local elec-	The topic is based on scientific findings.	The presentation of the topic is correct. However, the presentation seems incomplete and too general. Some parties (AfD, NPD, FDP) are completely absent.
<i>Is the terminology used correctly?</i>	Terminology is used correctly.	Terminology is used correctly.	The used terminology should be explained more concretely so that it is more comprehensible for the
<i>Is it possible to critically (or scientifically) engage with diverse perspectives and orientations?</i>	There is no possibility to get to know diverse perspectives, and to critically engage with them.	The offer does not encourage a critical engaging with different perspectives and orientations.	There is no possibility to critically engage with different perspectives and orientations of the parties.

Analysis questions of the respective didactic principle	Evaluation Excerpt 1	Evaluation Excerpt 2	Evaluation Excerpt 3
Exemplary learning			
<i>Are complex problems explained with illustrative examples?</i>	On the basis of individual examples and excerpts, knowledge about democracy and politics is conveyed. No examples are given that would illustrate structures, key categories, or rules.	Yes. Individuals who are cited as examples of illustratory participation in elections are used to provide information on participation in elections, which will allow structures and rules to be identified in this regard.	Individual excerpts from the text are used as a basis. Knowledge about the parties is conveyed. No examples are cited, which are illustrative problems or key categories.
<i>Is it possible to compare and, if necessary, correct one's own assumptions?</i>	Hardly. The scenarios a) to n) offer at most the implicit possibility to get to know normative assumptions of the authors. E.g.: Stick to the constitution! You may criticize the government! There is compulsory schooling for children! However, there can be no question of a comparison.	Possibilities for a comparison of ideas and knowledge are implicitly conveyed only by the task itself. Explicitly, however, participants are not asked to explain their assumptions about participation in (municipal) elections.	By asking about previous knowledge and experiences with these parties, there are possibilities for exchanging and comparing knowledge.
<i>Are problem situations, conflicts, and persons chosen that are oriented towards the participants' life worlds?</i>	It is possible that some situations are suggested that have potential for conflict, and are oriented towards the participants' life worlds. However, this is not explicitly made clear.	Problem situations and persons are chosen that are oriented towards the participants' life worlds. However, it is important to emphasize this reference more clearly in the exercise.	No problem situations or persons are chosen who would orient towards the participants' life worlds.

Analysis questions of the respective didactic principle	Evaluation Excerpt 1	Evaluation Excerpt 2	Evaluation Excerpt 3
Action orientation			
<i>Are there possibilities for (trial) action?</i>	There are no possibilities for (trial) action.	In this exercise, there are no possibilities for (trial) action. However, in the ensuing tasks of the lesson, possibilities for social participation are discussed.	There are no possibilities for (trial) action.
<i>To what extent do reflection, analyses, evaluations, alternative views, possibilities of distancing play a role in the course?</i>	Reflection, analysis, evaluation, alternative views, distance possibilities do not play a role in the learning offer.	Reflection, analysis, evaluation, alternative views, distance possibilities do not play a role in the learning offer.	Reflection, analysis, evaluation, alternative views, distance possibilities do not play a role in the learning offer.
<i>Do self-guidance and agency play a role in the offer?</i>	Self-guidance and agency with regard to the content of this exercise are not relevant.	Self-guidance and agency with regard to the content of this exercise are not relevant.	Self-guidance and agency with regard to the content of this exercise are not relevant.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Criticism of the orientation course materials

The three excerpts show that the individual learning opportunities in Figures 1 to 3 essentially represent a single didactic principle: Research orientation.⁸ In addition, a maximum of two further principles is mentioned in each of the three exercises. However, these are not fully considered or implemented. In Figures 1, 2, and 3, for example, a link is made proportionally to exemplary learning. Moreover, Fig. 2 is more strongly oriented towards the participants' everyday life, and thus tends to offer higher subject orientation. In figures 1 and 3, there is a lack primarily of this subject-relatedness, and thus of a minimum of individual visibilisation of the learners. Potential interests of the addressees of political education are not sufficiently assessed and addressed. If the principle of subject orientation were to receive more attention in the course as a whole, a stronger identification with the topic could possibly be achieved, and, in turn, its greater usefulness for the individual underlined. After all, this usefulness is a central prerequisite for the successful transfer of knowledge and competences in teaching-learning settings (cf. Autorengruppe Fachdidaktik 2015: 125).

Of course, generalizable or universally valid assessments cannot be automatically derived for an entire textbook or all its modules and lessons on the basis of the three exemplary exercises (Figs. 1 to 3). However, they all strongly emphasise research orientation and knowledge transfer. In the comprehensive and in-depth study of the dissertation project already mentioned, it was found that similar mechanisms occur manifold, particularly in the three textbooks *Zur Orientierung*, *Orientierungskurs*, and *100 Stunden Deutschland*. The analysis of further pages and of various tasks of

these materials points to a lack of variety and consideration of didactic principles beyond research orientation and knowledge transfer. For example, specialist knowledge is not placed in a broader context for (or with) participants, and, therefore, does not seem suitable for this purpose. In this sense, terminology remains uncommented, and is not directly linked to (current) events, problems, or conflict situations that may affect the everyday lives of migrants. If participation also means the chance to realize socially customary ways of life, and to bring one's own needs and interests into society, wide-ranging and multi-perspective knowledge of those ways of life and practices should definitely be of greater importance in the teaching materials. So far, it seems that political or socially relevant topics mostly remain on an abstract level. How repetitive and politically narrowly defined specialist knowledge is taught becomes particularly visible in the catalogue of questions of the test *Leben in Deutschland*, which resembles the theoretical driving exam (cf. Fig. 4).⁹ In addition, many of the questions in this test use a rather specific terminology that most probably is not adequate for the participants' language level (generally, medium everyday language level B1) (Niedermüller 2013). Figure 4 only exemplarily illustrates this criticism, but from an inclusive political education perspective, it should be noted that, if there is to be a test at all, it should be more accessible linguistically without such specific terminology.

In the orientation course textbooks *Zur Orientierung*, *Orientierungskurs*, and *100 Stunden Deutschland*, as well as in the final test, the principle of action orientation is furthermore clearly underrepresented. Thus, participation formats are only insufficiently taken up and explained (cf. also Kaden 2012: 63). Further, actions are not practised on a trial basis. Nor are any alternative courses of action for required behaviour pointed out or made available. Moreover, existing barriers to participation are not sufficiently addressed and discussed. In this sense, interests, wishes, attitudes, opinions, and experiences play too little a role, especially in the textbooks mentioned above. Self-guidance and agency with regard to the content mentioned in Figures 1 to 3 are not relevant. The textbooks also give too little room for individual situated action. Reflections, analyses, evaluations, alternative views, or possibilities of distancing are still not addressed sufficiently. If (inclusive) political education particularly aims to enable people to participate more in society, then this is one of the most significant shortcomings of orientation materials. Above all, the citizenship or orientation course test, as it is currently designed, can hardly be perceived as helpful when it comes to exerting (future) influence on society, helping to shape it, and improving one's own situation.

6.2 Reference to taboos and transgressive actions

In the analyses of the sample material excerpts, a lack of subject orientation became visible, which goes hand in hand with a tabooing of interests, knowledge, experiences, attitudes, and opinions of the subjects. The worlds of experience of the addressees remain invisible. Thus, it is unclear whether the facts conveyed are at all useful for the learners' life worlds. Because this is the case, many of the topics taught in orientation course textbooks seem to serve only a systemic purpose of legitimation. This can mean that the learners do not even want to participate in the new society because they do not feel taken seriously as subjects.

Furthermore, it was found that a controversial debate on socially relevant topics or knowledge does not take place to a sufficient extent. Thus, certain ways of life and behaviour are presented as self-evident for Germany. It seems to be taboo both in the textbooks and in the orientation course test to mention that, due to the pluralism prevailing in Germany, there is no particular form of behaviour and life practice, but that, rather, diversity and controversy are part of democratic co-existence just as the ability to endure differences.

A lack of action orientation contributes to the fact that people are not sufficiently prepared to participate in society and to help shape it. This principle reoccurs in the materials, as can be seen in Figure 2 and the current topic "Participation in elections" in local, state, and federal government, but the explicit description of barriers to participation is usually taboo. Figure 2, for example, does not make it clear that the practices of *can*, *want to*, and *may vote* are to be distinguished from each other. The fact that migrants from third countries are not allowed to vote at any level in Germany as long as they do not possess German citizenship may be a sensitive – because exclusionary – issue for migrants from other EU countries. Then, the fact that German citizenship can only be applied for after eight years of residence in Germany may be frustrating for those who have lived in Germany for many years and pay taxes here, but are not allowed to vote. Instead, they experience exclusion and heteronomy. Consequently, existing obstacles to participation should not be made taboo, but debated with the migrants in a safe space (teaching-learning setting). The orientation course and its materials could provide a wonderful opportunity to do so, and contribute to making clear that a broad spectrum of participatory formats for migrants does exist. Finally, migrants should be prepared and invited to participate in the discourse on social rules, and on the shaping of coexistence in Germany.

Summarising, from a political education perspective and drawing on the didactic principles, it is recommended that the orientation courses and their teaching materials should become even more strongly oriented towards courses of action for the sake of participation orientation. In order for migrants to be able to have well-founded judgment and to be able to make a conscious and sound decision for or against participation, socially relevant problems, questions, and situations should be examined multiperspectively, highlighting current controversies. In order to successfully consider diversity and heterogeneity in learning settings, experiences, knowledge, attitudes, and needs of participants should be included. For example, a biographical and experience-based concept is advisable so that dialogues can be established in simple language via individual experiences. In addition to simpler language, different approaches should be made available for engaging with course topics. Tasks should be included that allow for an expression of criticism of existing conditions while observing communicative and democratic rules. In terms of political education, it is particularly important that topics that could be important for the participants' everyday lives are not tabooed and circumvented. This requires task formats that make this possible. On that note, democracy should be experienced also in the orientation course itself.

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Notes

¹ I would like to thank Melinda Hägi-Mead, who translated this article written originally in German, and Mi-Cha Flubacher, who dedicated herself to its perfection.

² The need for the *Beutelsbacher Consensus* resulted originally from the conflict over the student movement at the end of the 1960s, which also turned political education into a battlefield (cf. Besand 2018: 28). In 1976, an expert discussion among education specialists in Beutelsbach initially contributed to the ending of any (danger of) polarisation within the political education in the 1990s, i.e. the so-called *Beutelsbacher Consensus*.

³ The doctoral thesis *Politische Bildung als Einbürgerungsangebot* was developed in cooperation between the Centre for Integration Studies and the Chair of Didactics of Political Education of the TU Dresden. Further information at: <https://tu-dresden.de/gsw/der-bereich/profil/zentren/zfi/organisation/nachwuchsforschungsgruppe> (22.03.2019).

⁴ Meanwhile, new editions of the course materials examined here have already been published, with minimum changes. The results of this analysis are thus still relevant.

⁵ The test can also be taken without participation in the orientation course. Especially migrants without a German school degree, but with the wish to become German citizens are meant to take the test. The need to participate in an integration course thereby depends on the social status and the person's migration background.

⁶ This essay focuses on those course materials released by publishers with a long tradition in the teaching of German as a foreign and as a second language. For the approach of *miteinander Leben* (Feil/Hesse 2017), cf. Hägi-Mead, this volume.

⁷ It is possible to download the complete questionnaire, e.g., at http://www.i-punkt-projekt.de/fileadmin/i-punkt/pdf/Test_Gesamtfragenkatalog_BAMF.pdf (09.05.2019). Called *Leben in Deutschland*, the questionnaire serves also as additional material to *miteinander Leben*. All questions are attached as flash cards.

⁸ Regarding Figure 3, in the vein of successful research orientation, all current parties that play a role in Germany and represent a range of opinions should be portrayed. E.g., the existence of new or smaller, as well as radical parties should not be denied or rather tabooed because parties such as the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) could be especially important for migrants, as they do not represent their ideas, but want them to return to their home countries.

⁹ Moreover, the list of test questions shows an imbalance between the number of lessons in the individual modules and the number of possible test questions. While 89 questions (around 30%) refer to 20 lessons, only 6,5% of the questions refer to 38 lessons on *People and Society*, whereas 64% of the questions refer to 35 lessons on *Politics and Democracy* (cf. Hägi-Mead, this volume). With regard to the orientation course test, it is thus criticised that the requirements obviously primarily concern (measurable) knowledge about structures and institutions. Relevant topics for democracy are tabooed, while there is no action orientation for a variety of topics on power, society, life, as well as everyday life.

Virtual Platforms, Real Racism: Online Hate Speech in Europe

Abstract

Contemporary structural racism, which has its origins in modernity, is a main problem of our society, being often revealed through the ubiquitous anti-immigrant, sexist, homophobic and xenophobic discourses, disseminated throughout social networks. These discourses and mindsets have been exacerbated by the influence of recent severe economic, social and political situations and its emerging new patterns of inequalities. In this process, online spaces have become a global platform for social and moral disengagement and harmful behaviours against the 'other', while digital channels have become the new outlets for the radicalisation of prejudice and hate, boosted by emerging expressions of racism throughout Europe. Whilst violent communication is not an invention of the Internet, it is indeed a vehicle through which these destructive discourses and modern forms of racism are easily and globally spread. As the most prolific users of digital tools, young people are at the heart of this social problem, as bystanders, perpetrators, and victims of online hate speech and it is by exploring how these young users live this reality, the way they experience it, perceive and denounce it, that the social impact of hate speech and emerging online and offline racism can be revealed. Grounded on the results of an ethnographic work, this paper argues the expressions of hate speech online are not isolated practices but manifestations of behaviours that materialise in the offline reality and vice versa. As the connection between online and offline realities is indissoluble, online hate speech fostered by modern racism has become an aggravated mirror of the current social and cultural climate. These platforms have become the ultimate means to spread, reproduce and legitimate racist messages and meta-messages about the 'other', causing dramatic suffering and damage both to individuals and to society as a whole.

1. Introduction: online experiences and social context of hate speech

Whilst the Internet is a communicative space that can have positive impacts and influences and has created a multitude of new opportunities for communication and information, it has also brought many new challenges, revolutionising different forms of social interaction, particularly for young people as the greatest users of digital tools. In this period of transformations, the difficult current economic, social and political situation has created the need for an outlet for the tensions and increased polarisation between the various social groups and individuals in cyberspace, often manifested in expressions of hatred based on growing levels of racism throughout Europe. Every type of information and discourse circulates in different forms in cyberspace – from imagery and symbolism to events and advertisements, alongside behaviours, ideologies and campaigns, many of which are purposely designed to defame individuals or groups. Through the analysis of different channels of virtual communication, the rise of violence and hate speech in online social networks in recent decades becomes evident, and particularly the rise of those voices that make use of racism and prejudice to intentionally offend and incite violence in social networks.

Due to the magnitude of digital social problematics, research and studies related to expressions of hate speech on the Internet have tended to be approached from a quantitative lens, adopting a macro or virtual perspective, often overlooking the individuals that are on the other side of the screens. Also, the limited research on online hate speech in recent years has tended to address content, dissemination and prosecution from a legal perspective (cf. Glaser/Dixit/Green 2002; Waldron 2012; Foxman 2013) or in specific groups that pay particular attention to the case of Islamophobia in the most recent academic debates and normative political discourses (cf., e.g., Ekman 2015; Awan 2014). There is thus a significant gap in terms of research that addresses the phenomenon in relation to social networks and the Internet with a qualitative and ethnographic approach to expose the correlation between the experiences of young users and hate material

on the Internet. In other words, an approach that takes into account the motivations, actions and interactions of those that produce the speeches as well as the impact on those who are affected by them. It is crucial to know more about the principles, norms and social and cultural patterns that underlie the motivations of the reactions of Internet users to the content of hate in social networks.

With digital technology, new challenges have emerged for the ethnographic study of cyberspace in terms of how practices, subjectivities and relationships are constructed in digital communication (cf. Marcus 1995). In this paper, we argue and demonstrate that research on hate speech must take into account the experience of the people, the way they experience it, perceive and denounce it. Also, we argue and show how speech online is clearly correlated with offline life. Whilst online written language is not neutral, nor are acts of hatred of isolated individuals, but rather expressions based on socially constructed valuations and perceptions on the categories of class, gender, origin, sexuality, racialized identities and religion. Thus, in order to offer a critical view of hate speech and its specific forms of discrimination, we must be able to articulate the virtual reality and the offline.

In order to do so, the paper is structured in two main parts along critical debates on hate speech. The first part deals with the phenomenon of hate speech in networks, from an analysis of racism as a structure that classifies people into categories (of sexual orientation, gender, class, origin, religion). This is questioning the process that rests on the axis of domination superiority and inferiority, of certain people, or groups, to the detriment of other people or groups. The significance of such social order is what cybernauts (i.e. expert users of the Internet) will eventually reproduce in the online space in the form of offensive language. Adopting an anthropological approach, it is argued that the construction of a violent and racist language is found in the classification system, which circulates unreservedly inside and outside the network. In this sense, the ethnographic data shows how the expressions of hate speech online are not isolated practices but manifestations of behaviours of users that materialize in the offline reality and vice versa. On these grounds, the paper argues that hate speech is not and must not be treated as individual acts, but as practices justified and rooted in a social hegemonic order establishing hierarchies of racialized identities, class, gender, origin, and sexuality. The connection between online and offline realities is indissoluble as hate speech relies on the way young people have grown up through a pedagogy of hierarchies and an institutionalized form of violence. The signs and signifiers of this social order are eventually reproduced by netizens, as popular Internet users are commonly known, in the form of racism, intolerance, ethnocentricity, nationalism, discrimination and hostility towards minorities and racialized groups.

The second part of the paper discusses the analysis of the empirical findings obtained from the recent ethnographic study "Preventing, Redressing and Inhibiting Hate Speech in New Media" (PRISM, 2014–2016). This was a two years research involving 11 institutions located in 5 European countries (Italy, France, Spain, Romania and the United Kingdom, hence: UK) including research institutions, civil society organisations, and an Equality Body. The aim was to explore the experiences of those who have been subjected to or had witnessed hate speech, looking at how they act, interact, and react to the experiences of racism and other forms of violence in social networks. The empirical data was gathered mainly from 148 in-depth interviews, of which 32 were with lawyers, prosecutors, NGO representatives, journalists, academics and social network providers, and 116 with young people between 14 and 30 years old; it is the interviews with the young people that this contribution draws on, translated to English. Besides socio-economic, gender and age representations are taken into account, the sample was selected to reflect youngsters' different experiences with hate speech: While one third of young people were direct victims of hate speech, because of their origin, gender, class, sexual orientation, or religion, we will

focus on experiences of racist hate speech in the context of this contribution. The second third were young people who were part of the main 'target groups' of hate speech and had experienced indirect hate speech, whilst the remainder of respondents fall into the group of 'bystanders', who had not been direct victims nor did they form part of the groups most affected by hate speech, but they were regular Internet users. The results demonstrate that to understand hate speech we must integrate the experience of the people who have lived it in order to contribute critically to current debates.

2. Conceptual and methodological approaches to hate speech

2.1 Digital communication and main debates of hate speech

The term 'hate speech' is widely used in different fields and disciplines, yet its broad application and diversity of interpretations depends largely on the contexts of place and time. In legal terms, and according to the intense debate of the last decade (cf. Waldon 2012), the definition refers to any communication that focuses on an expression of hatred against a group of people on grounds of their origin, religion or sexual orientation, seeking to demean, intimidate or incite violence on grounds primarily based on racism, sexism or homophobia. This social phenomenon has increased exponentially, leading academia, international organisations, NGOs and monitoring agencies to pay greater attention to the impacts of hate speech.

In digital societies, social online networks have developed a capacity to influence key sections of the population, particularly the young. Statistically, young people (under 30) use technology more intensely than other age groups. In the European Union nine out of ten young people between 16 and 19 use the Internet daily and 74% of people between 16 and 29 use their mobile phones to connect to their social networks (cf. Eurostat 2015). In contemporary society, digital communication increasingly supplements face-to-face relationships. Whether this is mainly due to the lack of time, comfort or shyness, young people prefer to interact over the internet, with social networks and communication tools such as WhatsApp as their main avenues for dialogue and communication.

Through digital communication, young people pass on stories, share information, photos, videos, articles, and ideas that they express through writing and the creation of different languages and emojis alongside other multimedia signs and symbols, which replace the missing corporeality of oral conversation (cf. Rubio/Perlado 2015). Through the screen, people often feel more at ease expressing themselves, without the need to filter their responses or to feel responsible for their actions. This is a negative aspect of communication mediated by technology. Netizens are more likely to verbalise ideas that in other situations they would refrain from voicing for fear of being punished or criticised (cf. Jubany/Roiha 2017; Miro 2016; Carrillo 2015). In this sense, social networks are governed by choices made by users about who is seen and listened to. Yet, the limits of what is socially accepted have become so blurred that any comment can generate controversy, especially as users can attack, humiliate, disparage, discredit and antagonise persons and groups that do not share their ideologies or characteristics. The Internet can appear to be a battlefield without rules, where apparent impunity creates a medium through which violent communication, anger, hatred and transgressions can easily spread.

Violent communication is not an invention of the Internet, but it is a vehicle through which this discourse is easily, and globally, spread. For this reason, messages and expressions of intolerance, aggression, and hate are significant features of social networks as users take advantage of the perceived anonymity of cyberspace. However, we can also find people who practice hatred in networks using their real name, justified by the defence of national, cultural or religious identi-

ties. In any case, the majority of perpetrators present their aggressions as a form of online 'activism', made possible through the depersonalisation and anonymity produced by the web (cf. Jubany/Roiha 2017).

2.2 Current hate speech debate trends

Whilst historically it is the legal perspective that has been concerned with hate speech in terms of addressing offensive, harmful, hateful or incitement to violence (cf. Miró 2016), today it is a topic of interest to all social sciences. In several academic disciplines, extensive debates are taking place on the violence unleashed in social networks, mainly due to the amplifying effect that the Internet has, the seriousness and the consequences for offline reality. Furthermore, social networks can have the effect of amplifying the gravity and impacts caused in these interactions as they grow. Extensive debates have addressed the uncontrolled violence that these spaces exert on society (cf. Oksanen 2014).

We can distinguish two major trends in hate speech studies. The first current trend focuses on the psychological effects and the direct and indirect damage caused to those affected by hate speech. These studies take into account the detrimental effects on the individual and group caused by the dissemination of hate speech. They maintain that the damage caused to victims and target groups tends to be long lasting and are cumulatively experienced (cf. Gelber/McNamara 2015). In this sense, the distinction between the constitutive and consequential damages is of interest, that is, between the damage that occurs directly and immediately (in our case, what is written) and the damage that arises from these (or the consequences) including effects such as the silencing of hate speech objectives, and personal injuries, such as psychological suffering. The organisations that work with victims emphasise that the subjective consequences for victims of hate speech are felt by those who are subjected to it, their relatives, and friends and in terms of collective identity, alongside wider societal impacts (cf. Ibarra 2016). Furthermore, the effect that hate speech can generate in the environment is to normalize racist expressions, negative stereotypes or discriminatory practices.

Another major trend adopted from a legal perspective focuses on rights and freedoms with a particular interest on the social impacts that violence can have within in the European countries. Studies like that of Glaser/Dixit/Green (2002), Henry (2009), Waldon (2012), Foxman/Wolf (2013) explore the content and dissemination of hate speech to show the relationship between prohibition-to-prosecution alongside legal restrictions and regulations. In this regard, Gelber/McNamara (2015) warn us of the indirect effects, including how hate speech maintains unequal relations of power, and its effects on the dignity of victims.

In order to move away from dualistic accounts and focus on the contexts that give rise to online hate speech, we must build a multi-dimensional analytical framework to help us understand the motivations that incite violence. In this, we should also incorporate an intersectional perspective, to argue that racial construction stratifies societies and legitimizes the exercise of power in terms of privileges and exclusions (cf. Crenshaw 1989). The intersectional approach is particularly revealing when it comes to exposing how axes of differentiation interact in the Internet. Thus, we understand that violence in digital communication is part of the reproduction of social systems of oppression: racism, patriarchy, class, ethnocentrism, and the idea that Western society is more developed and superior to all others. However, we also share with the de-colonial perspective the assumption that these global hierarchies have their origin in the modern world system, a period in which Europe stands as the 'centre' of the capitalist world and other cultures as its periphery (cf. Quijano 2000).

To address hate speech through the intersection with oppressive systems is to explore the ways web users internalise and reproduce a set of values and interpretations that perpetuate inequality.

3. Hate speech: the construction of social order and the standardisation of differences

People and groups targeted by aggressions, insults, jokes, mockery, negative commentary and verbal attacks online tend to be those identified with factors outside of the norm enforced by the homogenous group. These factors relate to unchangeable personal characteristics, such as racialized identities, which are central to an individual's identity and permanent in time (cf. Ibarra 2016). These characteristics define an individual's status as a member of a minority and can relate to the persons ritualised identity, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, body, religion, and political affiliation.

Discrimination along these lines is not arbitrary, but based on the reproduction of a form of knowledge through which the world is classified and organised (cf. Quijano 2000). This is a classification of the world as a supposedly rational and logical hierarchy of racial, religious and gender-based oppression that emerged through modernity (cf. Espinoza 2014). Yet, these are still present as they are internalized in people, and emerge on a daily basis through a set of values and interpretations that perpetuate differences. These categories function as labels through which people are observed and understood, consequently conditioning the way they are treated, excluded, rejected and discriminated against as inferior. It is a process grounded in the multi-layered and intersectional processes of dominance and subordination that determines 'us' versus 'them', in which the construction and denial of the 'other' emerges as the ultimate expression of social control (cf. Jubany 2017b). This humiliates and excludes those who look, think or act differently (cf. Ibarra 2016) and leads to a behaviour learned and reproduced as social patterns and norms. Thus, web users who send hateful messages are doing nothing more than reproducing a particular vision of a social order, especially in instances of transgression (cf. also Haynes/Schweppe, this volume).

To understand and address such patterns, we must refer to their origins in modernity and modern capitalism. As de-colonial feminism debates have shown (cf. Mohanty 2003), ethno-racial, class and gendered oppression are born within Western modernity, and, in focusing on racism, we find their distinctive signs of identification and differentiation in life-style politics and practices of consumption, racist and prejudiced acts and behaviours. These are categories and factors that emerged in the period designed to mark inequality, to dehumanise and to legitimise hierarchies of power between people. As the age of colonisation began, stereotypes were developed that determined the limits of socially acceptable 'otherness'. With this, racial fictions were created that rationalised and intellectualised the classification of the colonial population as inferior and inserted them into a hierarchical system of control (cf. Galceran 2016). These hierarchies drew lines of inferiority and superiority, which delineated how subjects would be treated and, ultimately, their perceived value and place in society. At the time, racialized identities were the key signifier for the oppressors along which inequalities were marked out. Racial discourse justified the domination, exploitation and cultural extermination exercised by Western colonial powers. Following racial criteria, men were constructed as human-Europeans and non-human non-Europeans, while women were reimagined also along a particular sex-gendered axis (cf. Garzón 2014; Mecheril/van der Haagen-Wulff, this volume). The inferiority of non-white men and the subordination of women not only implies that racialized identities are inseparable from class and sex-gender, but affirms the relative value and supremacy of one culture over others (cf. Chirix 2014).

While on the whole, racist attitudes are no longer 'politically accepted' in Western societies, stereotypes persist and emerge in diverse ways on a daily basis (cf. Jubany 2018). These are expressed as fears of the other (cf. Cohen 2002); in the sexualisation and exoticised images of women (cf. Solomos/Collins 2010); through exploitative labour practices targeting those with or without residency papers; through the humiliation of the poor; when ethnic minorities are seen as inferior and through ideological intolerance and violence against sexual, ethnic, or religious diversity, amongst many other forms. Both in the online reality and in the virtual, scorn towards the person or inferior group appears in the form of gestures, sarcasm, jokes or ridicule.

One of the distinctive features about hate crimes is that the victims are chosen because of their ascribed identities, so that intimidation and attacks are aimed at the wider community as well as the individuals. When an individual is attacked, this is an attack on other members of that community because neither the victim nor the community can, or want to, change aspects, which characterise them. Hate, then, implies a symbolic act not just against one person but also against all who share those characteristics. People and groups exposed to discrimination, violence, and hostility are mainly immigrants, homeless, homosexuals, Muslims, Jews, and gypsies (cf. Cabe/Garcia 2016). From a racist subjectivity, these groups embody the negative characteristics, which are seen as contrary to the values of the dominant group. Dehumanization allows the person, or collective, to be inferiorised, attacked, excluded, discriminated against, and even killed because it represents the condition under which the right to kill is exercised (cf. Chrix 2014)

While traditional forms of racism resulted from and are constitutive of colonialism, emerging forms of racism are linked to a crisis of modernity. Most specifically, this relates to a political and economic system, which fosters and consolidates a climate of racism, intolerance, xenophobia, and Islamophobia. The political and electoral uses of racism in bestowing political legitimacy on a language of fear and exclusion is used to designate those who are seen as others and, as Galo (2014) and Wodak (2015) argue, these consolidate or create political power. In the case of Europe, the defence of so-called 'national identities' is mainly focused on those of immigrant origin and on members of the Muslim community (cf. Carrillo 2015; Miró 2016). Both these communities are seen to challenge the established narratives of national identity and are thus seen as a threat to the dominant cultures. These discourses have subjective consequences, transmitting the message that migrants are unwelcome invaders of a homogenous space. In the face of social and labour exclusion, the local population may become more disposed to affirming their 'national identity'. The discourses produced during economic crises pass through the social network where they influence interactions and attacks against migrants. The apparent 'threat' becomes the axis through which the non-recognition of the other and the denial of their rights is justified. Hate spreads online on the grounds that the 'other' is made responsible for any misfortune or perceived loss of privilege, which must be defended (cf. Lázaro 2014).

The fear of the European middle classes, which feel threatened by the breakdown of the welfare state, is capitalized by governments to point to the 'other' non-national, non-citizen, non-person, as being responsible for the social and economic crisis. Although the enemy is built, the fear of ethnic minorities is real. This is the fear of the cultural impact of foreigners: a culture of scapegoats, of essentialism, of divide and conquer, directed towards the 'other'. These are perspectives that can, and have in the past, lead society in Europe to the brink of collapse (cf. Jubany 2017). Discourses directed towards specific 'minorities' or people are justified either by the defence of national, ethnic, religious identity; or in relation to the assumed identities of groups through LGBT-phobia and other forms of sex-gendered prejudice (cf. Galo 2014). In any case, a hierarchical and political interpretation that does not recognise the other as an equal, and thus seeks to deny them their rights.

As a heterogeneous Europe continues to develop, cultural differences become a springboard for a more dynamic and fluid society, yet racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination and hate are growing and finding new impact platforms. Amongst these, hate speech has become the ultimate means to spread, reproduce and legitimate destructive messages and meta-messages about the 'other'. The suffering and damage that these discourses cause, both to individuals and to the whole society, is dramatic, as will be exposed in the subsequent sections.

4. Between online and offline reality

For young people offline and online worlds are interconnected and form part of their everyday relationships, although they interpret the boundaries and interrelatedness of the two worlds in different ways. On the one hand, they perceive social networks as an extension of their everyday life, where online and offline worlds are a continuum and both contexts are assumed to behave in the same way. They use the Internet to interact with people they know or are familiar with, outside of the web. Whilst not all participants of the ethnography experienced hate speech online, all of them had been witnesses to it. This increases the normalisation of the phenomenon as for young people, social networks are seen as a tool to communicate with friends (cf. Boyd 2014), to browse and follow pages reflecting their values and interests, as one participant explains:

Firstly, I use it to entertain myself and secondly to socialise, to see what others are publishing, send messages to friends to see what's happening in their lives. (English, 23, United Kingdom, UK-YP8)

On the other hand, and simultaneously, most young people create online "characters", which allow them to act in a completely different way in the digital sphere – often described as an *alter ego* to which they attribute specific characteristics. This virtual self gives users a sense of anonymity and they are thus more inclined to express themselves with total freedom online, expressing that "[i]t's as if there were a wall between me and them, and because of this they feel free to say what they want" (Woman, 27, Italy, IT-YP3). Behind a screen, young people perceive that it is easier to express one's opinions more aggressively than in real life and expressions of hate speech are more widely accepted than expressions of hate in face-to-face contexts.

However, the conceptualisation of hate speech by young people is confused. While there is a clear understanding of an over-presence of hate speech in the digital domain, there is also a lack of familiarity with the wider discourses about it. The majority of youngsters have never received information about hate speech at school or through any other formal channel, nor were they able to recall any organised campaigns against hate speech online (cf. for a critical examination of civic education in Germany Hägi-Mead, this volume, Rind-Menzel, this volume). Nevertheless, they have intuitive ideas about the concept, which they associate with contempt, rejection and cyber bullying and most are aware that the concept of hate speech entails a discourse on racism linked to harmful behaviour, threats and insults. Another difficulty for the young people to conceptualise hate speech is connected to the different forms hate speech takes depending on the specific channels used. On Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, hate speech may be articulated in many ways: as part of normal conversation; in comments and likes on news articles and images; and in jokes and replies to posts by other users.

4.1 Target groups and bystanders

Whilst all youngsters interviewed have witnessed or experienced hate speech or racism on the social network, users of Facebook, especially those in the UK, had seen messages of hate on

images and in the titles of news headlines, particularly directed towards Jewish, Muslim and black communities and/or individuals. This changes depending on the closer context of the users. For instance, in Romania a further target of these attacks are the Roma community, with youngsters from Romania accordingly reporting on “comments against gypsies and Roma. There was so much hate in those comments” (Woman, 20, Romania, RO-YP27). The perception of what is hate speech also depends on the background of the young person. Young people of a migrant origin and ethnic minorities tell diverse stories in which they have been subjected to attacks, directly related to their migrant identities:

When he posted, “all this because of the bougnouls¹”, and so on. I told him not to mix everything up – that Muslim doesn’t mean terrorist and that not all Muslims are terrorists. He said, “Shut up bougnoul, you should burn right now!” (Man, 23, France, FR-YP6)

When the post of a person in the networks is attacked, it generates different reactions, some of which can generate an increase of the attack and in the offensive speech of the people who attack or humiliate. In the previous case, for instance, after the original poster was confronted for making racist or Islamophobic comments the perpetrator resorted to personal attacks on other users. Thus, when an individual, who has written insulting or derogatory comments about people or groups, is confronted, he*she usually reacts aggressively and abusively:

I recently saw the profile of a girl who said she wanted to meet [new] people, but not Arabs, blacks or any foreigners. Only people from her country. When I read it my heart ached and I said to her, “you should leave because nobody loves you either” and she responded “go back to your shitty black country” (Man, 20, Spain, ES-YP1).

These types of encounters are very common in online communication. In taking an active stance against hate speech, the respondents are seen as targets and they receive further personalised abuse. Others do not wish to fall into polarised debates on discourse and violence between those who defend themselves and those who attack from an ethnocentric perspective. As a result, users of social networks often remain passive when confronted with hostile comments to avoid becoming targeted themselves.

The participants in the study are part of a generation that increasingly consumes digital tools and communicates through visual messages. Image-centred blogging platforms like Instagram or Tumblr are hugely popular and, as such, create a common medium through which hate speech spreads. Through images, often in the form of memes², negative stereotypes based on racism and prejudice are shared and spread widely, with images becoming a major articulation of hate speech:

The photo was of a woman on the bus wearing a burka and she had a plastic bag with her...on the bag it said, “boom”. But it was a photo in the metro or something like that and the phrase said “You’re dying of fear, right?” (Woman, 23, Spain, YP-11)

These images are so common that they tend to be normalised and, in turn, discrimination and racism are also normalised with the images presented as jokes, sometimes without users considering that they can be offensive or can lead to further disputes in the comments. Even when images are not meant to offend, they often lead to racist comments and discussions on social media influencing individual and collective behaviour (cf. Bajt 2014). Furthermore, these discourses and narratives are shared through private messages on WhatsApp, Snapchat and closed groups on Facebook beyond the public gaze, contributing to further normalisation of the actions and beliefs of the users.

A further critical element in the spread of hate speech is the context of specific situations, or ‘triggering events’, like terrorist attacks. This can be seen in the follow up to any major attack in

Europe. For instance, following the attack on the editorial office of *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris in 2016, young French and Spanish Facebook users in particular described a wave of negative reactions and an increase in hate speech against Muslims. This act generated polarized debates on social networks and youngsters explained that “Facebook the day after was a fight to the death between ‘Je suis Charlie’ and ‘Je ne suis Charlie’, and it was like Boom!” (Man, 25, Spain, ES-YP13). However, at the same time the Internet became flooded by racist and hate speech comments related to the same event:

The same stuff as always, “it’s always the Arabs”, “it’s always the Muslims”, “we shouldn’t let them in”, and these banal but horrible phrases. They always hated us but this time you heard it ten times louder (Woman, 22, France, FR-YP2).

While the impacts of these discourses spread into the offline worlds, the voices of those who called for limits to be placed on the freedom of speech tended to be ignored. In the case of *Charlie Hebdo*, the collective opposition and rhetoric against the terrorist threat left no space for nuanced debate and further contributed to the spread of intolerance, reactive racism and Islamophobia. This was expressed by heads of state and governments all over the world in their supposed defence of freedom of speech (cf. Carrillo 2015). These so-called ‘triggering events’ are, however, more a pretext than an explanation for the expression of hate speech. This is clearly seen when they are linked to other happenings that have nothing to do with violence like sport and cultural events. The World Cup or beauty contests are often a platform for the spread of hate speech on social networks:

About sports they make comments, racist comments about the players, or the people from the club... Racism above all though...it was on Instagram, can I say it? They say words like “n****r and paki” a lot (Woman, 16, UK, UK-YP14).

In these contexts, different racialized identities are frequently the target of discriminatory practices and comments that circulate throughout the network. These derogatory slurs are constructed on characteristics of identification and aim to dehumanise and humiliate others (cf. Chirix 2014). Elevation and denigration are all accomplished through meaningful symbols and communicative acts in which saying it is doing it. As MacKinnon points out, “Segregation cannot happen without someone saying ‘get out’ or ‘you don’t belong here’ at some point” and therefore certain words are “not seen as saying anything (although they do) but as doing something” (1993: 13). In this sense, as Butler argues, the oppressive language of hate speech is not a mere representation of an odious idea, as “language acquires its own violent force” and as “the threat begins the performance of that which is threaten to perform” (1997: 10). This is emphasised by the fact that social networks are composed of connections and links between users and unknown people. A user does not necessarily need to be a ‘friend’ to see the wall of another user where he*she can post racist comments, depending on the privacy settings. Although young people are aware that not everyone shares these beliefs, they sometimes reflect on their roles in normalising this type of communication as they admit to laughing at and sharing racist jokes and memes in private because “[f]or example, in smaller groups amongst friends there are always racist jokes because we are amongst friends. I don’t know, in some way you become an accomplice of those who laugh at inappropriate things. And there are racist, sexist and homophobic comments” (Man, 25, Spain, ES-YP13).

4.2 The subjective impact of hate speech

The research findings show a tendency to normalise racist and homophobic messages that circulate on the Internet. This tolerance is often justified because a joke is found to be funny or in

defence of free speech. However, this can change when someone is directly offended by a comment or post:

About my nationality, they said we were coffeemakers, *indios*, and how could people possibly vote for me. They said that we did not have food to eat, that we don't have social networks, and that we were the worst. (Woman, 23, Spain, ES-YP6)

This young woman had participated in an online competition to be featured on the *façade* of a shopping centre, where the winner would be chosen based on the amount of likes they received on a photo shared on Facebook. The woman, whose family originated from Colombia, became a target for abuse after she had asked friends and family members in her network to vote for her. This caused other contestants to accuse her of fraud as they said the votes arrived at the last minute. However, the attacks did not focus on the alleged fraud but began to racialize and insult her country of origin, as she explains above. As this case illustrates and has been reinforced by many other statements, anybody can accuse an individual or a group of something on the Internet without pretext, illustrating how unverified information can go on to encourage further abuse. Also it is clear that messages and opinions voiced online become transcendent and have a significant emotional impact on targets:

I was scared and even had to see a doctor because all the things I was reading online were driving me crazy. I didn't leave any comments but as I didn't reply that hurt me in another way because I didn't express how I felt. (Woman, 23, Spain, ES-YP-6)

Naming the emotional impact, caused by the offensive language, represented a challenge for the young aspiring model, especially when it is shown in written form. To the girl, processing the attack took a while, which her body registered in the form of physical and emotional damage.

When young people are unaware of the pain that racism causes, they assume and reproduce the imposed discourse. This is especially found in the context of Islamophobia. Many young Muslims describe daily encounters of Islamophobia online. The reification of discourse becomes a part of everyday life that is accepted. In order to counter these negative stereotypes, some prefer to avoid identifying with the target group as this young woman explains: "Today I don't want to be, or consider myself Muslim or Moroccan...so, frankly when I hear these things I really cannot relate to the social group they are addressing" (Woman, 21, Italy, IT-YP8). When confronted with aggression, some people become paralysed because, as members of certain collectives, they have been conditioned along modernist lines of inferiority/superiority. They, as this woman from Italy, accept that racism and prejudices are part of the society they live in and as a response refuse to identify with them. This illustrates how personal experiences of hate speech can lead to partial or total renunciation of religious or cultural identity (cf. Gelber/McNamara 2015). Despite this, it remains a phenomenon rarely discussed in academic or public debates.

5. Users' response to hate speech

In terms of responses of users confronted with messages of hate speech, the findings displayed four main trends: passivity, detachment, reporting, and counter-narratives. The first and most common response is passivity. Hate speech is perceived by most users as a normalised aspect of digital communication and thus an aspect that just has to be assumed and 'ignored'. This does not mean that users will agree with the content of hate speech, but rather that they tend to refrain from intervening in any form because they consider it pointless. This often comes from experiences where young users have previously engaged with comments, which have incited further hatred, or where they have reported abuse to system administrators on social networks with no results. In addition, as has been pointed out, some users fear the reactions of others and are

scared to become actively involved in the conflict as they state that “[s]ometimes I feel annoyed because it’s not fair and I feel I have to say something, but I’m scared of other peoples’ reactions and how they might see me as a ‘problem person’” (Man, 17, Romania, RO-YP28). The impact of passive outsiders in cybernetic aggressions is more pervasive than in real life, as there may be large numbers who observe offensive and hateful content (cf. Macháčková et al. 2015), but refrain from intervening or supporting the victim.

The second most common reaction is for users to detach from hate speech. In digital terms this relates to ‘unfriend’, block, or unlike groups or pages that share and spread abusive content. Although not the most common response, some users believe that to suppress or block is more efficient than reporting content to network administrators – which they believe to be useless. However, this form of response is not effective in combatting hate speech nor racism as any challenges to these narratives remain invisible.

A further, less common response is to use the network’s reporting mechanisms. While most of the participants knew how to report pages, messages or content on Facebook, they stated that they did not use these mechanisms as they felt they were useless. All interviewees who had made complaints to Facebook coincide that this platform did not take any action, but just informed them that the highlighted content did not violate community standards – a factor seen by victims and other users as very disturbing and discouraging. The inaction of the media platform encourages users to refrain from making formal complaints and reinforces the normalisation of hate speech amongst young people. This includes more politically minded young users who believe that reporting does not make sense. The offensive language is so normalised within the population that not only the young people who have been directly attacked in the network avoid making a complaint, but also the witnesses of the attack, who do nothing to stop the hate speech or censor the attacker. Several sources indicate that between 60% and 90% of hate crimes, both for racism and for sexual discrimination, are not reported; e.g., a report by the *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights* states that an average of 82% of people from minority groups who have been victims of discrimination have not reported the fact (cf. FRA 2009).

The least common response is to develop counter-narratives contrasting the arguments based on hate and intimidation. Those who engage in online debate try to do so with an open mind and believe that to listen and gently challenge others is a fruitful way to combat hate speech. Others choose to express themselves through liking the comments they agree with, without getting directly involved. However, the majority of users prefer not to engage in discussions that incite hate speech online. A common reason for abstaining is to avoid drawing attention to ‘trolls’³, who comment just to attract attention. In general terms, online discussions are quick to blow up and young users prefer to talk face-to-face about offensive posts if they come from someone they know, whilst others have given up because they feel it is pointless: “My position is I’m not going to talk to them because we think differently. They position themselves on their side and I’m on the other and there is no real dialogue” (Woman, 30, Spain, ES-YP10).

Finally, it is significant that no participant had gone to the police to report hate speech online. While some youngsters have had the chance to make a complaint, they did not always trust the police, or they felt that what they had witnessed was not serious enough to merit making a complaint. While some young people are aware that there are other means to report hate speech, such as through NGOs and independent monitors, only one participant in the whole research had made a complaint through these mechanisms, but without outcome.

6. Concluding remarks

Whilst the experience of young people with hate speech in social networks is nowadays pervasive, as argued and evidenced, the way this discourses are lived and suffered, and the responses to these experiences vary enormously. Even when it is a common situation for young people, things like remembering the exact phrases of hatred used are more common among target groups or direct victims, whereas viewers tend to remember only who was targeted or the context. Groups that, according to the users, receive more attacks usually coincide with the reference groups in each country identified as suffering the most from racism. This indicates a certain level of awareness and knowledge among young people of the existence of this, yet also a high degree of forbearance in front of it by bystanders, reinforcing the premise that hate speech online and offline are directly related.

Still, there is little familiarity with such discourses about the concept and the legal, institutional or academic terms with which hate speech is defined. Despite this awareness of racism and its widespread rejection, young Internet users tend to perceive hate messages and offensive comments as a standard phenomenon and an inevitable part of the Internet. To confront the challenge of racism in Europe, we must thus place a more intense focus on the digital world, on the one hand, and on rights and freedoms, on the other. In order for these concepts to work however, we must link virtual realities to the offline world. Furthermore, it is time to take the impact seriously that consolidated hegemonic identities have on the diverse experiences of those living in societies divided by these social hierarchies.

Web users appear to be aware of the consequences of online violence, but almost no one takes responsibility for confronting or making a complaint about racism or hate speech online. Furthermore, many are disillusioned about taking responsibility, as they believe there is no real interest to counter hate speech, as current political conditions rather have contributed to increasing racism. This phenomenon is worsened by the attitude of the main social networks, which prefer to ignore the effects of hate speech on their platforms, especially in political contexts. This lack of action is grounded also on a strong normalisation of hate and racism, as much in the real world as in the virtual. If young people understand that racism and hate are an inevitable part of the Internet, it is because they subjectively reproduce the axis of differentiation informed by the modernist categorisations of the social world that are internalised in society.

The impact of this new face of the expression of racism and hate across Europe is enormous and only through analysing the internalisation of a set of dominant values can we understand that, while young web users largely reject racism (at least publicly, whilst they still make jokes in private), in their virtual practices many of them are paralysed and accept its normalisation. The significance of this normalisation is even greater when we take into account that it entails a virtual phenomenon of legitimisation of racism through prejudices, stigma, dehumanisation and defamation, creating a spiral of silence against hatred. Western societies display high levels of symbolic racism, which condition young people to believe it is easier to be accepted and valued if they assimilate rather than actively and openly embody themselves as the 'other'.

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Notes

¹ This is a derogatory term used for Arabs in France.

² A meme is typically a humoristic image usually accompanied with text, which in some cases may portray negative stereotypes.

³ Online, a ‘troll’ is someone who intentionally tries to start arguments or upset people online either by attacking them, posting offensive material or by taking over message boards by going ‘off-topic’.

Hate Crime: Violently Policing Transgressions of Perceived Parameters of Acceptability

Abstract

Hate crime can be understood in multiple ways – in terms of the individual offender’s psychology, in terms of cultural prejudices, in terms of territoriality (cf. Perry 2009). In this chapter, we examine lived experiences of expressive hate crime (cf. Herek 1992) through the lens of transgression, to draw out implications for our understanding of targeted violence as street-level imposition of a hegemonic acceptability, and consequently suitability for inclusion in the body politic. Drawing on original interviews and secondary survey data, and influenced by Perry’s (2001) treatise on hate crime as a site of identity performance, we show that expressive hate crime involves the policing of victims’ perceived transgression of hierarchically defined boundaries, which privilege the offender and their imagined community. Drawing on victim narratives, we evidence that hate crime consequently attacks victims’ sense of belonging, as well as their personal safety and security. The *in terrorem* effect of hate crime (cf. Perry and Alvi 2012) disseminates that message of rejection to the wider identity community to which the victim belongs. The hate crime act reinforces the privileging of the offenders’ criteria for inclusion in the body politic. We conclude by arguing that the response of the State and wider society to hate crime victimisation is an important factor in whether the offender’s evaluation of the targeted identity group as transgressive is accepted or rejected.

1. Introduction

A hate crime is a criminal offence, which is motivated by, or involves the demonstration of, the offender’s prejudice against or hatred towards the victim based on their personal characteristics, or what sociologists would consider aspects of their social identity (cf. OSCE/ODIHR 2009). The crimes committed are most commonly assault, harassment, criminal damage, public order offences, sexual offences and theft and fraud offences. Victims are most often from racialized, ethnic and religious minorities; the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) community, and people with disabilities.

So, while hate speech is about expressing prejudice verbally, textually or graphically, hate crime happens when an individual *acts out* that expression of prejudice on another person (cf. Haynes et al. 2015). Offenders enact their prejudice against the victim’s identity on their property, on their personal space and on their bodies. Victims are threatened, caused to fear for their safety, and sexually or physically assaulted.

Those who are subjected to hate crime are victimised twice – first by the criminal act itself and secondly by the harm inflicted in the targeting of their identity. That targeting – often also aggressively *verbalised* to the victim in the course of an assault, or *marked* on their home or property in spray paint – tells the person that the offender’s actions towards them are informed by their identity. Hate crime is understood as a message crime, not just in the moment of the act, but also in its aftermath. It serves as a warning – that the victim is marked as a target – by their skin colour, by their religious dress, by their disability, by their sexuality, by their gender or its expression – and that, as such, they remain at risk (cf. EUFRA 2012).

The stress associated with that risk helps us to understand why those who have experienced hate offences report a wider range of negative psychological impacts, which also last longer, than victims of similar offences who were not targeted because of the identity community with which they are associated. Victims of hate crime are more likely to report emotional distress, and report higher levels of depression, anxiety or panic attacks, fear, feelings of vulnerability and loss of confidence (cf. BCS [British Crime Survey] 2009 onwards).

Of over 500 respondents in Wales, who were self-identified victims of hate crime (cf. Williams and Tregidga 2013) one in seven reported having had suicidal thoughts as a consequence of their victimisation.

In addition to its emotional and psychological harms, hate crime also elicits behavioural changes in its victims, shaping how they live their lives in very consequential ways. Victims report avoiding places they have previously frequented; restricting their use of, and their transit through, public space; avoiding public transport; seeing friends less often; retreating from local community life; and even attempting to conceal the identity for which they were targeted (cf. Williams/Tregidga 2013; Walters and Patterson 2015).

It is not just the direct victim who is affected however; each crime creates waves of victims: beginning with the person or family directly attacked and extending out to the community, which shares the characteristic for which they were targeted. That community is effectively placed on notice that they too are at risk. Commonly targeted communities have spoken to the authors of an expectation of violence and a normalisation of hate crime victimisation.

So every time there is a new incident it feeds into this expectation that that is what can and does happen to trans people and then you know feeds into fears of people going places and doing things. Because they expect that this is going to happen to them. And when you expect that something is going to happen to you, when it does it's obviously horrific but it doesn't perhaps have the same impact as it would to somebody who didn't expect it. Cos somebody who doesn't expect it would then go 'Absolutely that's unacceptable and I shouldn't have had to deal with that' and all of that and then you know you go into that process. Whereas I think for a lot of trans people and there are exceptions of course but for a lot of trans people 'Ah well it was just a matter of time really'. And that's totally unacceptable. (Broden Giambone, TENI cf. Haynes/Schweppe/Carr/Carmody/Enright 2015: 33)

This ripple effect, or *in terrorem* effect¹, as it is known (cf. Perry/Alvi 2012), produces behavioural changes in community members that reflect those of direct victims.

The purpose of this chapter is to deepen our understanding, developed through interdisciplinary research at the intersections of sociological and legal scholarship framework, of the social aspects of hate crime by applying the lens of transgression to the message that victims perceive and receive in the experience of hate crime victimisation. We understand transgression, in this context, to mean non-conformity to dominant perceptions of acceptable ways of acting, or – as we shall show – being: Transgression can be understood as the exceeding a limit which may be physical, racial, aesthetic, sexual, national, legal, and/or moral (cf. Jenks 2003). In this chapter, we engage directly with first-hand accounts of hate crime victimisation occurring in Ireland. We argue that the selection of victims and their targeting on the basis of immutable personal characteristics serves to highlight the criminal sanctioning of transgression – and the communication of the victim's position as external to the in-group (cf. Perry 2001).

2. Structural and individual approaches to understanding hate crime

The concept of hate crime has been denigrated by some as encouraging an individualised understanding of bias-related hostility, placing the blame on individual offenders and consequently relieving society of responsibility for the culture from which such acts emerge. Goldberg (1995), for example, critiqued the construct as responsabilising individual psychology for manifestations of structural racism. In the context of Northern Ireland, Robbie McVeigh (2017) has suggested that a focus on addressing hate crimes committed by individuals may be used to distract from state sponsored violence.

However, the construct of hate crime does not inherently privilege either individual or structural approaches to the phenomenon. Hate crime can be understood in multiple ways – in terms of the individual offender’s psychology, in terms of cultural prejudices, in terms of territoriality (cf. Perry 2009) (that is, a sense of ownership over or claim to place).

Within the field of hate studies, the construct of hate crime is for the most part carefully bounded. It excludes hatred directed towards the individual as an individual; it is reserved for use where the object of hate is, in fact, not the person per se, but their (perceived) group identity. We can be even more particular here, in that, although some policy makers and scholars have sought to apply the construct to a more amorphous range of group identities (cf. Bakalis 2017), there exists agreement within the field of hate studies and among related practitioners and policy makers that the concept of hate crime is used specifically to refer to the targeting of victims on the basis of identities related to their personal characteristics, and these are most commonly specified as their gender, gender identity and expression, ethnicity, skin colour, religion, disability and sexual orientation.

The social aspect of hate crime is emphasised, if not particularly well theorised (cf. Perry 2017) in the field of hate studies. It is accepted that the communities who are targeted on the basis of their personal characteristics reflect very clearly the forms of prejudice, which dominate in contemporary culture. Barbara Perry (2001), whose works are a touchstone within the hate studies field, operates a sociological understanding of the ‘hate’ to which the term hate crime refers:

[...] acts of violence and intimidation, usually directed toward already stigmatized and marginalized groups. As such, it is a mechanism of power and oppression, intended to reaffirm the precarious hierarchies that characterize a given social order. It is intended to simultaneously recreate the threatened (real or imagined) hegemony of the perpetrator’s group, and the “appropriate” subordinate identity of the victim’s group. It is a means of marking both the Self and the Other in such a way as to re-establish their “proper” relative positions, as given and reproduced by broader ideologies and patterns of social and political inequality. (2001: 10)

This chapter seeks to contribute to our understanding of the social aspects of hate crime, via an analysis of transgression as a theme in narratives of hate crime encounters.

3. Data sources

The authors of this chapter are the co-directors of the *Hate and Hostility Research Group* (HHRG) at the University of Limerick, the only research group in Ireland dedicated to the study of hate crime. The HHRG, which is affiliated to the International Network for Hate Studies, was set up in 2012 to initiate scholarship in the area of hate and hostility studies in Ireland from an interdisciplinary perspective. The group emphasises cross-sectoral engagement and works in cooperation with community, civic, and government partners. The HHRG has conducted research in partnership with the *Transgender Equality Network Ireland*, *European Network Against Racism Ireland* and the *Gay and Lesbian Equality Network Ireland*.

Since 2012, the HHRG has completed four funded, two pro bono, and one unfunded research project examining the phenomenon of hate crime in Ireland. Each of these projects has required analysis of quantitative or qualitative data relating to hate crimes occurring in Ireland. This chapter draws on narratives of hate crime offences gathered and published by the authors and their research partners throughout this period to theorise the nature of hate crime offences via the lens of transgression. The narratives in question relate to the experiences of the Irish trans community, but also to the experiences of racialized and religious minorities and, to a lesser extent given the data available, to the experiences of LGB persons. The data relates to the Irish case, but

the authors assert the transferability of the findings. The chapter draws on published literature in the field of hate studies, i.e. the field of scholarship, which focuses specifically on understanding and addressing hate incidents to contextualise their relevance and their significance. The data is derived from three main projects, *Out of the Shadows*, *The Life Cycle of a Hate Crime*, and *STAD: Stop Transphobia and Discrimination 2014–2016*:

Out of the Shadows was a 2014/15 research project funded by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties. The project, which was the first in Ireland to examine the phenomenon of hate crime from a cross community perspective, involved over 70 interviews including with community organisations, legal professionals, police and probation officers. As part of this research, the HHRG interviewed ten victims of hate crime and two family members of victims with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The 12 narratives discussed in this chapter include the experiences of people with physical disabilities; people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; members of ethnic (including Traveller), racialized and religious minorities; lesbian and gay persons; transgender and gender fluid persons; and one person from an alternative subculture.

In May 2015, the HHRG was awarded a funding grant from the European Union *Directorate-General Justice* under its *Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme*. The grant was made to support projects to prevent and combat racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, and the project itself seeks to determine best practices for preventing hate crime. Entitled *The Life Cycle of a Hate Crime*, the project examines the application of criminal laws and sentencing provisions for hate crime across five EU jurisdictions, capturing best practice in the tools utilised to combat hate crime across Europe in relation to both the strategies of legal intervention and the implementation of these rules. By engaging with both actors in the criminal justice system and victims and perpetrators of hate crime, we show how each participating jurisdiction manages the prosecution of hate crime at key stages of the criminal process: (1) Proof Requirements and Making the Decision to Prosecute; (2) Court Procedure and Rules of Evidence; and (3) Sentencing. The project partners include long-term collaborators of the HHRG, the *Irish Council for Civil Liberties* and the *University of Sussex*, as well as *In Iustitia* from the Czech Republic, the *Latvian Centre for Human Rights* and *Umeå Universitet* from Sweden. As part of this project, the HHRG conducted interviews with 19 victims of hate crime.² In this project, most interviewees spoke about being targeted on the basis of their skin colour, but others described encounters in which they were targeted on the basis of their ethnicity, their sexual orientation, religion, and gender identity.

In all cases, self-identified victims of hate crime were recruited through the advertisement of the research objectives and criteria for inclusion through channels likely to reach suitable participants, requesting people who meet the criteria to volunteer to take part in the study. We advertised through civil society organisations who advocate for and/or support groups who commonly experience hate crime and through key influencers in commonly targeted communities. We sought participation from individuals across a range of identity groups and did not operate a quota. Data were subject to thematic analysis.

This chapter also draws on narratives of hate crime submitted by the trans community in Ireland to *STAD* (Gaelige for 'Stop'), the *Transgender Equality Network Ireland's* third party hate crime reporting mechanism for transphobic hate incidents, which the HHRG analysed and reported on with that organisation for the period 2014–2016. Across the three year period to which this analysis relates, a total of 46 reports were submitted to *STAD*. Most provided a detailed narrative account of the hate crime to which the respondent was subject. The respondents identified the grounds on which they were targeted as including gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation. Respondents who perceived sexual orientation to be a factor identified variously as gay, bisexual, straight, queer and asexual.

Across the three projects, the most common types of crime to which victims have been subject are public order offences, criminal damage, assault, harassment, and among the trans community, sexual assault. In respect to narratives drawn from interviews it is worth noting that we spoke with each participating victim for between one and two and a half hours. In that time, victims frequently recounted to us that they have been subject to multiple hate crimes. The 12 research participants with whom we interacted for the purposes of *Out of the Shadows* alone detailed a total of 18 hate crimes in the course of the fieldwork. The 17 victims whose data is analysed in the *Lifecycle of a Hate Crime* project each discussed between one and three reported hate crimes. In total, the participants discussed 26 hate crimes. In the case of both projects, more incidents were referred to in the course of the interviews but there was not time to delve into every experience of bias-involved victimisation. In respect of each interviewee, we have tended, therefore, to focus on those crimes which victims themselves regard as the most significant. These caveats speak to many victims' experience of abuse as an aspect of everyday life. The commonplace nature of bias-related hostility, including hate crime, was one of the many worrying features of the interview findings, as was the degree to which many of the interviewees had normalised their experiences of hate.

4. Narrative themes in Irish hate crime discourse

The theme of transgression manifests in our narratives of hate crime encounters in a number of ways. It arises in respect to the discourses the offender draws on in constructing the victim as an object of their hate. It arises in the resources upon which the offender draws to justify their actions. And it arises in respect to the role which onlookers are allocated in the encounter.

4.1 The victim as an object of hate

Ahmed asserts that "violence against others is one way in which the other's identity is fixed or sealed; the other is forced to embody a particular identity by and for the perpetrator of the crime, and that force involves harm or injury" (2001: 351). Certainly, the narratives, which we analysed, evidence this fixing of identity. In the hate crime encounter, victims who are multifaceted individuals, with complex personal identities in which multiple group memberships intersect, are reduced to a singular characteristic, the selection determined by the offender. The narratives that we examined reference the reduction of victims to their skin colour, their ethnicity, their religion, their sexual orientation, their gender identity or expression and their disability, the latter being the least well represented in our sample.

Victims across all grounds cite the use of pejorative terms to refer to the identity targeted:

[T]hey kept calling me a "tran*y", a "fa**ot", and a "d*ke bitch"³ as they beat me up. (STAD 2017: 8)

[W]hat impacted me the most – they said [...] "You are a fucking ch*nk" and to me, I was just taken aback, ... but I am really angry as well so I retaliated, so I was just like you know pretty much like, "Fuck you, what are you doing?" [...] [A]nd so one of them spat at me and it just got in my hair. (Haynes et al. 2015: 19)

I heard "Kill f*gs. As much as you can". (Interviewee, *Lifecycle of a Hate Crime*)

Other discursive devices through which the offender constructs these singular identities as hateful reflect prejudicial discourses and also have transnational as well as local currency (cf. Haynes et al. 2006). A small minority of individuals who are targeted because they are racialized as Black relate encounters in which they are described as animals or children. Much more common, and also deployed against white ethnic minorities, is the label of welfare fraud or 'sponger', abusing

the country's system of social protection, and the instruction directed to ethnic and racialized minorities alike to leave Ireland and return to their 'own' country:

[Y]ou should go back to where you come from, to the jungle you're coming from. (Interviewee, Lifecycle of a Hate Crime)

He did say that I'm a ni**er and I don't belong there. I must leave and go back to my country. (Interviewee, Lifecycle of a Hate Crime).

[G]o back to your country you shit Romanian gypsies. (Interviewee, Lifecycle of a Hate Crime)

Ahmed argues that

[w]hat is so significant in hate stories is precisely the way in which they imagine a subject that is under threat by imagined others whose proximity threatens, not only to take something away from the subject (jobs, security, wealth and so on), but to take the place of the subject. [...] It is this perceived threat that makes the hate reasonable rather than prejudicial: "it is not a hate motivated by ungrounded reasoning. (2001: 346)

Ahmed (ibid.) asserts, too, that the identities to which 'hate' becomes stuck – using her terminology – may also be perceived as hateful because they are constructed as threatening imagined 'pure bodies'. In a minority of narratives relayed by Black men, but also in the experiences of trans women, this notion of threatened impurity – particularly associated with sexual deviance and promiscuity – is present. The discourse is familiar in the Irish context. As long ago as 2001, Meade described Ireland as a country, which regards difference and dissent as equally poisonous to the corporeal body of the nation. People who are subject to transphobic attacks also cite being labelled as mentally ill: "I was told that transgender people are 'crazy and unpredictable' and that's why he wanted to hurt me" (STAD 2017: 28).

People who are targeted on the basis of Islamophobia cite being publicly labelled as terrorists and are forcibly removed of their religious clothing:

[T]hey were laughing and they were name calling Osama Bin Laden [...] I [told] them please be quiet and don't disturb me and even before I can say that one of the guys actually grabbed me from behind [...] he pulled my turban like this from [the] back as I was driving and we were on a [...] dual carriageway. (Haynes et al. 2015: 19)

"[Y]ou fucking Muslim, you fucking terrorist, wait until I rip that thing off of your heads." (Interviewee, Lifecycle of a Hate Crime)

This latter group includes people who are not Muslim, but who are nonetheless targeted as such because of an offender's misperception (cf. Haynes et al. 2015). For the period of the encounter, the offender forces them to take on the burden of Islamophobia and in its after-math they live with the risk that being perceived as Muslim can entail.

4.2 Transgression as embodied

These devices produce the victim as an object of the encounter. They reduce them to the role of signifier of the group identity, which the offender seeks to target. During the deployment of these discursive devices, the victim is forced to embody the social identity which the offender ascribes to them (cf. Ahmed 2001), even when it is not an aspect of their multifaceted group memberships. The physical and emotional violence, which hate crime entails (cf. Iganski 2008), is entwined with classificatory violence (cf. Tyler 2013). The offender imposes a singular identity upon the victim, as a result of which their body – Black, trans, disabled, veiled – is made the objective representation of the identity which is the target of the offender's ire. As a Sikh victim of Islam-

ophobia stated, “before you even can say something people ascribe your identity” (Haynes et al. 2015: 21).

Beyond these largely identity-specific discourses however, we want to draw your attention to a more transcendent theme that we perceive in the hate crime narratives which we have analysed – one which is apparent across a wider range of targeted identities. This theme relates to the offender’s policing not just of these forcibly assigned categories of identity, but of the categorical boundaries, which hierarchically order bodies, and indeed identities, and to that transgression as an attribute to which hate ‘sticks’.

The discourses, which are deployed as weapons during hate crime encounters frequently, problematise not only the essentialised identity against which the offender has expressed prejudice, but also the boundary crossing activities associated with the presence of that identity within the community and its territory. Denials of legitimate claims to resources, and intimate relationships, are founded in a rejection of the incursion of the migrant into the corporeal body of the nation, into the categories of citizen, local, neighbour, family. The pathologisation of non-conforming sexual and gender identities is founded in a defence of the privilege conferred by heteronormativity and cisnormativity.

From this perspective, the victim represents not just the embodiment of a threatening identity, but the embodiment of a threatening transgression of the categorical boundaries – the conceptual borders – that distinguish us and make possible our hierarchical ordering.

4.3 Relationship to the community

Most of hate crime encounters we analysed were very public in nature. This is not unusual as Michael (2017) notes that a high proportion of reported racist hate incidents in Ireland for example are described as occurring in public spaces.⁴ In the narratives, which are the subject of her analysis, crimes were often committed in front of, with the support of, or with the participation of bystanders. It is evident from the narratives that offenders did not anticipate resistance either from their own companions or from bystanders. Indeed, Lucy Michael (ibid.), writing about racist incidents in Ireland, asserts that there is a performative aspect to the commission of racist incidents in public places and that offenders ‘play’ to what they perceive as a supportive audience:

This is marked by shouting and continued harassment in public spaces, often escalating as the perpetrator attracts the attention and intervention of others. Attention is loudly called to the blackness of someone’s appearance and this serves as a means of identifying a wider audience of support or tolerance for further forms of abuse. (ibid.: 283)

In our own research, both victims and legal professionals have mentioned instances of offenders continuing to aggressively communicate their bias motivations, or to simply express their prejudice, not only in the presence of ordinary bystanders, but after police have arrived at the scene of a crime:

[W]hen the guard [police, note from the author] came he repeated those statements, [...] he said we don’t want this Black, let them go back to their fucking country where they come from. (Interviewee, Lifecycle of a Hate Crime)

Whether actively seeking public support for their acts, or operating without expectation of resistance, this sense of impunity supports the proposal that offenders perceive that they are defending a shared and socially acceptable order. This assertion is further supported by the appearance of the pronoun ‘we’ in statements attributed to offenders, including those who were to all intents and purposes acting independently of others.

In the narratives, which we analysed, it was not unusual for victims to report that offenders referred to themselves in the plural, i.e. as acting on or with the support of a collective:

Interviewee: We don't want you here. Next time you come here, we're going to break your head [...]

Interviewer: When he says "we", who is he referring to?

Interviewee: The general public. (Interviewee, Lifecycle of a Hate Crime)

[H]e said "Behave child, behave. Because we're going to throw you away". (Interviewee, Lifecycle of a Hate Crime)

In the above examples relating to the experience of Black immigrants at the hand of white offenders, the "passion of these negative attachments to others is re-defined simultaneously as a positive attachment to the imagined subjects brought together through the capitalization of the signifier, 'White'" (Ahmed 2001: 345). In defending what they perceive as the victim's corporeal transgression of an agreed order, the hate crime offender assumes the support of those whose interests are served by the maintenance of that order – an imagined, but also very real, privileged 'we'.

4.4 Constructions of the victim as transgressive

In depicting themselves as defending a collective against the transgressive intrusion of 'others', offenders construct their *own* identity as adhering to the criteria for inclusion in that community, and the identity, which they have ascribed to the victim, as external to the collective.

This self-defined status as a member of the in-group also gives them grounds for assuming the authority to defend its classificatory borders. Their actions in this respect manifest in two main ways in our data. First, through the policing of the physical presence of 'the other' within the territory of the collective. This form of policing is common where the interaction between offender and victim begins with the intense expression of aggression by the offender, which turn is more common where the minority identity can be ascertained or presumed on the basis of visual difference. The veiled Muslim women, the lesbian couple holding hands, the woman whose assigned gender and gender expression are perceived as incongruous – difference on display threatens the hegemonic order:

[W]e kept walking ahead and the next thing they turned around and came back and one guy came over to [other victim, note from the author] and said "I wouldn't hit a girl but sure you're not a girl". [...] [T]hen one guy shoved into me and then I shoved him back and all of a sudden he was just punching and shoving us to the ground. (Haynes et al. 2015: 18)

[He said that] we should be hung to save children from seeing us; that we were sick and would die from AIDS soon anyway. (STAD 2017: 23)

The second form involves policing the behaviour of minority group members within the territory. This form of policing was particularly evident in hate crime encounters which followed the formation of what Walters (2014) refers to as temporary relationships, i.e. where the initial interaction between the offender and victim begins not with an aggressive overture but as a result of a transactional relationship, for example where either the victim or the offender is providing goods or services to the other. In the scenario below, the demonstration of hate follows a refusal on the part of the victim to provide a service:

Last time I was driving and someone flagged me. And then I looked at the person through my window and asked "Good night. Where are you going?" He said, "[place name]". I said, "No, I'm not going to [place name]" – by then he was holding a screwdriver [...] the screw driver punched my car. [He said] "Fucking n****r". (Haynes et al. 2015: 20)

In our analysis, this type of policing behaviour was characterised by escalation on the part of the offender in response to assertive or agentic behaviour on the part of the victim. The presence of the minority group is tolerated, but transgression of their perceived position in the hierarchical order, from which the offender benefits, is not. Particularly prevalent among Black male participants, the minority member who challenges a refusal of entry, who declines a transaction or who refuses to accept a disadvantageous deal, becomes the victim of an assault in which their transgression of the ascribed 'status' is a key feature:

I didn't hear them coming. Just at that wall we walked past, [...] they just came up behind me and whack on the back of the head. Now I've been punched in the head before and it's gonna hurt him more than it hurts me which is the only comfort I took from it – but [...] he just thumped me on the back of the head and [said] "fucking fa**ot". (ibid.)

I was approached by two men, both in their late 20's, they asked me "are you a boy or a girl" and before I could answer him, he proceeded to grope my chest and say "definitely a girl", I wear a binder every day to hide my chest and pass as male, but this incident has made me extremely dysphoric, if I wasn't dysphoric enough already. (STAD 2017: 28)

In the course of transphobic crimes, offenders often communicate their "intention to verbally and physically interrogate the victim's gender identity to figure out where they fit into the offender's binary understanding of gender" (Haynes/Schweppe 2017: 117). The offender's aggressive rejection of the trans person's outward expression of their gender is also inherently a demand to conform to essentialist and binary understandings of gender. Both forms of policing overlap in the case of the Black Irish citizen whose experience of a hate motivated assault seems to have been prompted both by his claim to the category of citizen and his refusal to accept the offender's denial of that status:

"I've told you I'm an Irish [citizen, note from the author] and that's it, you can't change it." [...] I said "Look please can we just forget about this topic?" [...] [H]e give me slap [...] My eye was all swollen up. (Interviewee, Lifecycle of a Hate Crime)

4.5 Impacts on the victim

The negative emotional and behavioural effects of hate crime detailed in the introduction to this chapter are reflected both in our analysis of STAD 2014–2016 and in the narratives gathered by the HHRG through victim interviews.

Respondents most commonly talked about being afraid, scared or anxious in the aftermath of their victimisation. That fear impacts upon their capacity to display differences that transgress the hegemonic order:

The incidents float around in my head all the time, causing anxiety and panic attacks, I wake up at night and this is going around in my head, I should be able to go about my day to day business in peace. (STAD 2017: 8)

I am also more afraid to go outside as I have been threatened to be beat up – not to my face. (ibid.)

The behavioural effects in evidence in STAD and the interview data mirror those cited by Walters and Patterson (2015) where many participants alter their behaviour to enhance their sense of security and reduce the risk of repeated victimisation. For some victims, these behavioural responses to their victimisation have limited their lives in meaningful ways:

I have had to postpone my education, go to a regular therapist, and have trouble going outside or even leaving my bedroom/bed. I am getting better, but apparently I am suffering from PTSD as told

by my therapist. I feel like I live under a constant threat, and I have trouble sexually or intimately engaging with a potential partner. (STAD 2017: 30)

The amount of name calling, verbal abuse and insulting comments caused me to relapse and become unwell. I was hospitalised due to intense stress and isolation. (ibid.)

HHRG interview data also indicates that victims targeted in or near their homes often feel compelled to move away. In one case, a person became homeless rather than remain at a location in which they had been repeatedly abused.

The *All-Wales Hate Crime Project* found that almost one fifth (18 per cent) of their respondents attempted to conceal the identity for which they had been targeted in the aftermath of victimisation, increasing to one third among victims of homophobic and transphobic crimes. Williams and Tregidga (2013: 205) found that trans respondents were most likely to say that they had tried to conceal their trans/gender identity to reduce the risk of becoming victims of hate crime. Respondents reporting to STAD also report changes to their confidence in expressing their gender identity:

I felt [...] ashamed of myself [...] [m]y sense of identity has been hugely affected. I was deeply distressed and desperately wanted to somehow not be transgender anymore as it brought so much daily criticism. (STAD 2017: 30)

I was very shaken up. My anxiety to be myself out in public has risen significantly because I'm afraid it will happen again. (ibid.: 8)

But victims targeted on other grounds also practiced concealment. For example, one member of a religious minority discussed friends shaving off their facial hair to reduce the risk of re-victimisation. Another interviewee noted that some people avoid wearing religious dress for the same reason. A third asserted that gay and lesbian couples avoid holding hands in public. A fourth interviewee who was targeted because of her racialized identity discussed keeping her face concealed in public so that she would not be the target of hostility:

[I]'s kind of sad admitting this but I usually go around face down like looking at the ground when I am walking. Sometimes it is hard when you make eye contact with people you almost feel as if they are going to say something to you and sometimes they do say something and you are like "Well what did I expect?" [...] [Y]ou kind of stop doing things just to avoid any sort of interaction and I am sure that I am not the only one to do it [...] after that incident I still very much had that feeling of you know keep a low profile. (Haynes et al. 2015: 25)

This type of conformity under threat, this forcible denial of one's authentic self is expressed eloquently by this interviewee as a manifestation of oppression:

I'm just trapped in my own culture. Not trapped in my body, because I know who I am and I'm very comfortable in who I am. I love my body. [...] But I'm very, very guarded and very scared and I'm trapped in my own culture. (ibid.: 29)

Hate crime can therefore be understood as a relatively effective means of repressing its victims. Full and equal participation in community life becomes stunted for many of those who experience the violent targeting of their identity. Juang describes violence as "the best means by which we have been warded off from attempting to make rights claims or pointing out unjust inequalities" (2006: 714). We understand hate crime, and societal failures in addressing it, as part of a larger pattern of oppression. Hate crime targets people's expression of their fundamental selfhood and, in doing so, it attacks their authentic participation in the community, both as private individuals and (if they choose) as advocates for their community, and is in both instances an obstacle to achieving equality.

These behavioural responses also support the conclusion that victims do receive the message of hate crime as a message regarding their position in respect to the collective. The hate crime encounter is not experienced as one of anomaly, but as a sign of the generalised risks involved in displaying difference, of challenging the hegemonic order through one's difference.

5. Conclusions

Viewing hate crime encounters through the lens of transgression deepens our understanding of the relationship between the commission of hate crimes by individuals and the existing social order. Offenders' expressions of hate can be understood as a defence of and demand for the retention of the status quo. The verbalisations of hostility, which accompany their actions, speak to a rejection of the display of difference, which might undermine the stability of the existing order. Their demands are for homogeneity – not just of people, but of ways of being, ways of doing. They target those whose presence as equal participants in the community threatens existing hierarchies of privilege.

Although the targets of hate crimes are often lone individuals, the intended audience is far larger, incorporating both the identity community to which the victim belongs, and the imagined homogeneous geographic community, which the offender seeks to defend. The message of hate crime is one of unbelonging, but also a reinforcing of the existing hierarchy and the bases on which privilege is distributed within the society.

The stability of the existing hierarchy aids the offender in legitimating their actions. Our quietude regarding the inequitable position of targeted minorities feeds their perception of the social acceptability of the status quo. Those communities who are violently targeted by hate crime offenders are also the communities who experience identity-based discrimination from employers and providers of goods and services, and micro-aggressions directed at their identity from their fellow citizens. The violence that manifests as hate crime does not occur as part of a vacuum; it is the extreme end of a continuum of hostility.

The significance of these conclusions lies in the breadth of response indicated. Individual pathology implies response at the level of the individual. The fault lies not with society, but with the deviant peculiarities of an individual mind. When we understand hate crime as part of a continuum of hostility directed towards those who challenge the existing social order, we must claim the offenders as our own. Individuals are culpable for their own actions, but when those actions are legitimated by a social order which we all participate in and maintain (and which many of us benefit directly from) we are all responsible.

In this context too, the State's reaction to hate crime is understood not as a response to the anomalous victimisation of some members of minoritised communities by pathological individuals, but as a response to the structural vulnerability to violence created by inequality. The onus on the State then is to address the needs of victims of hate crime, not just as crime victims, but as identity communities disadvantaged by the prevailing social order.

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Notes

- ¹ The terrorising effect of hate crime which goes beyond the individual to generate fear and anxiety among the broader community of which the victim is part.
- ² Two of those interviews were excluded, one because of a lack of data relevant to the subject matter of the research; and the other for ethical reasons.
- ³ Heterosexist slurs.
- ⁴ We note that this pattern may simply reflect the existence of additional obstacles to reporting hate crimes occurring in the private sphere and recognise the dangers of uncritically associating hate crime with the public sphere only.

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